

***The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)***

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Arthur Bohus

May 12, 2001

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Today is May 12, 2001. My name is Floyd Cox. I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. We are part of the Oral History Team doing oral histories with veterans of World War II. Today we are interviewing Mr. Arthur Bohus of New Jersey concerning his experiences during World War II and particularly his experiences with the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO).

Mr. Cox: To start out with Arthur, I'd like to ask you a little background. Where you born, when you were born, where you went to school.

Mr. Bohus: I was born in south Philadelphia in 1917. Currently I'm a "notch baby" they tell me. That means that Congress has not paid me my Social Security because of a defect in the law that they never corrected.

Mr. Cox: Where did you go to school Arthur?

Mr. Bohus: Well, at an early age my folks moved to Palmyra, New Jersey, which is located on the Delaware about opposite the northeast section of Philadelphia, known as Tacony. Currently there is a bridge leading over from Tacony to Palmyra in Burlington County that is known as the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. I aspired to be an amateur radio operator. I started at an early age tinkering around with a galena crystal set. I was also able to contact with the crystal set Pittsburgh, PA. I got in the bad habit that I had to listen to the radio. Usually I use a transistor now. I wanted to learn to be a radio amateur, so I worked with a chap who was enlisted in the

Naval Reserve. His name is Martin Hansen. He was a good friend of mine. He finally became Mayor of Summerdale, New Jersey. He was called to active duty. He took me down to the Reserve Center and I volunteered for the communication reserves.

Mr. Cox: Now how old were you at this time Arthur?

Mr. Bohus: I was twenty-three at the time. They recruited me and I was as low as you could go in the Navy, a Seaman. Of course there were other reserves who had been on active duty, they were there to help. We only had one hour of practice. It was called the Volunteer Reserve of the Fourth Naval District, Communications Reserve. So my main duty at that time, because Navy men get training on the job, was cleaning the cigarette butts out. Everybody smoked, which I didn't. Possibly that is why I'm still here today. Everybody got lung cancer and stuff from it, but fortunately I avoided most of those diseases.

Mr. Cox: Good. Were you still in high school?

Mr. Bohus: Yes, I was in high school. I didn't like to dance. In those days we did jitterbugging, etc. I'm too old to know what the modern dances are.

Mr. Cox: So, to get back to our conversation Arthur, you were still in high school when you were in the Reserves?

Mr. Bohus: No, I was twenty-two. That was in '39 when I joined the Communications Reserves. I guess it was about September of 1940 all of the enlisted men who had been in the service, who were volunteering at that point in

Camden, New Jersey, they were called to active duty except me. I reported in every Monday night and there was no activity as far as learning radio communications, CW as they called it. So I got a little discouraged, but I went to the Commander of the unit, and he said, "Well what were you doing?" I said, "Well, I was mainly cleaning up after everybody left their cigarettes and stuff." He said, "Well continuing doing it." That was in September. So in May of '41 I got orders to report to active duty at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. It must have been a coincidence, but at most Naval Stations they have what they call a Receiving Ship, so I reported in there. I'm walking around like a youngster would, and one fellow says, "Hey, didn't I see you in China?" I said, "No, I've never been out of Pennsylvania or New Jersey." We laughed about it. He said, "You look just like a fellow that I did duty with over there." I said, "Who knows, maybe I'll end up there." So, I had forgotten about that. I hung around there for a couple of days and they gave me a set of orders to report to the Naval Training Center at Newport, Rhode Island, for Recruit Training. Before that I had volunteered to go in right after I had graduated from high school, in June of that year. I think I was around seventeen or something. I volunteered to go in the Navy. They said, "No, your eyes are bad." During the interview the Captain who had been called to active duty, I'm walking around there with shoes on in my birthday suit and he says, "You have flat feet." I said, "Captain, how can you say that, I have my shoes on." The Pharmacist mate says, "Come here. If the Captain says you

have flat feet, then you have flat feet.” He says, “Off the record, we have our four recruits for the day, maybe next week you will hear from us.” So I went on home and I went dancing on the weekend. At that time they would send us a communications report for the Fourth Naval District. So my Mother said, “There’s a letter for you.” I said, “OK.” Then I went dancing over the weekend and ended up taking a few girls home. We got home about 2 o’clock in the morning and I’m sitting there reading, “You are ordered to active duty on Sunday,” but it was really Monday morning. At that time I was working for RCA and I didn’t know what to do so I went into work, told the boss I had to report to the Navy Yard for an interview. So that is how I got on active duty and went to Recruit Training. They told me after I completed the course, if I did well I’d get a pay raise to Third Class Radioman at my next duty station. They issued orders and I ended up in the Commandant’s Office working with a bunch of civilians that had teletypes and they contacted all parts of Philadelphia, whatever the Fourth Naval District was at the time.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you this Art, did you go through radio school at any time?

Mr. Bohus: Right after I got out of Recruit Training. They cut that short a week and they sent me to Groton Heights, Connecticut. At the time they told me it was a Retired Army Home for the Spanish American War Veterans.

Mr. Cox: Old Soldiers’ Home.

Mr. Bohus: That was in Groton Heights Connecticut. So I’m now at the Philadelphia

Navy Yard and I was getting along good. I liked it because it was only about ten miles from home. I figured the war was imminent. It looked like there was going to be a war. So my Mother and Dad were pretty happy that I was close. In January of '42 my Dad passed away. I guess that is a little ahead of the story. Anyway, at the Commandant's Office they had mimeograph machines and my job was mainly to mimeograph and sort them out, etc. And do a lot of filing. You only had two uniforms issued to you at the Naval Training Station. At that time you got one day off a month at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. They owned you body and soul. The week before this Commander told me, he said, "I want you in a clean uniform tomorrow." That was on a Monday. I said I had to grab a bus and go home tonight. He said, "I said you will be in a clean uniform." I said, "Yes sir." So, of course, I couldn't get off the base. The next morning I'm still there and he says, "I see you don't like it here. You are going to Cape May." That is how I got to Cape May. So I was there as a messenger. I never got my increase in pay, which meant Third Class. At that time if you were in long enough they would advance you. I think you had to be in there at least three and a half years or something before you could even make Seaman First Class, which meant another ten dollars in your pay. Since my Father died I was a little concerned about that because being of a working group, a family, my Mother had to pay taxes and stuff, and \$32 a month there wasn't much left after I had a couple of ice cream cones. Anyway, so I got to Cape May. I was the lowest man on the totem

pole.

Mr. Cox: Now that is “Cape May?”

Mr. Bohus: Cape May, New Jersey. It used to be that at that time they had blimps. They were more or less adjacent to Lakehurst, New Jersey. Usually if they couldn't get the blimp in at Lakehurst, they would send it down to Cape May. After I got there, one day they called me out at 3 o'clock in the morning. We are hanging onto the blimp rope. One guy held on, the wind chewed it up and then dropped down about 20 feet and he broke a leg. Of course they told us not to hang on more than 5-6 feet off the ground, which most of us did. I'm the messenger at the Radio Station. My job is to do anything that somebody else higher up didn't want to do. That was always the joke. So I ended getting up once in a while at 2 or 3 in the morning, and I was a messenger for the rest of the day. If I was lucky I got time out to grab my meals, which I always made sure that I managed to show up at the right time. So life was going along pretty good. Of course they insisted that I keep my code speed up. So after working 10-12 hours a day with no overtime, I was practicing code work. Most of the communications were in code groups. Plain English was a little hard to copy so I would practice that. So this message came in, I guess it was December 1941, right before Pearl Harbor. Said, “Transfer beyond continental limits one First Class and one Third Class, which I would have been if I had got my rate. So I typed it up. At that time they were creating all of the Radio CW Operators they could. There were a lot of young fellows about my age and we had a

nice time. Of course we got one day off a month. That was the break. I said, "Hey, look at this fellows, this is interesting. All of you fellows that are sleeping and waiting to go to war. I don't think it is going to happen." They said, "Well you are qualified." I said, "No, I'm a dumb Seaman." I was just joking with them.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Bohus: It ended up a couple of days later the Personnel Officer called me in. But before that, I didn't know it, but at that time I was assigned to the Naval Air Station, and they were supposed to have monthly upgradings. If you were a Seaman then you could go to Seaman First. Sine I passed the Radio Course they said that I was qualified and so I asked this one Personnel Officer, "How come I couldn't take the test?" He says, "There are no openings." There was a Captain Warner, who was Captain of the Station, and when delivering some of my messages, he says, "How come a young fellow like you isn't Third Class?" He was an Annapolis man. I didn't know it at the time but he was a flyer. Occasionally he would go down to Washington to see some of his friends I guess. They were setting up the Air Station at that time. So he got on the phone and he wanted to know how come I wasn't Third Class. I don't know what the Personnel Officer told him, but he said, "Lt, if Bohus isn't Third Class pretty soon you're not

going to be Personnel Officer either.” I made, what they used to call jokingly, the Shit List. So a couple days after I copied that message he called me in. He said, “Bohus, we are considering making you Third Class.” I was kind of nervous, you know. He called me in and I figured it had something to do with the Captain reading him off so I forgot to salute him. I started to laugh. He says, “What is so funny?” I said, “When did you say I was leaving?” He said, “Who said anything about that?” I said, “Well, I thought I was the one that copied the message.” Fact is, no one wanted to volunteer, neither did I. I said, “I guess I’m the lowest man on the pole.” He said, “Well, as a matter of fact, how would you feel?” I said, “Well, Lt I aim to live after I leave here, maybe things will be better.” So they issued orders and we were ordered to report to the Naval Gun Factory. That is where they made the big 16 inch guns. So when we got down there we reported in. It was New Years Eve 1941, right after Pearl Harbor. We reported in and the Chief said, “Well how many days over leave are you?” I was lucky there was a man who had been in the Nicaragua campaign by the name of Andy Faust. He had been the Radioman. Things were so messed up at that time he didn’t even have a uniform, but he was First Class. I had one that didn’t have the stripes on. He says, “I’ll borrow your uniform and I’ll sew this patch on.” He sewed his Radioman patch. He was First Class and I was Third Class. We reported in and I asked where we would sleep that night. He said, “Who the hell cares?” I found out later that Washington, D.C., this Captain was

the most lient Captain on the East Coast, everybody that was absent without leave. That is why the Chief asked me “How many days over leave are you?” We were up until 3:30 and we were down there at 9:30 so we didn’t tarry too long anywhere. Of course in those days you got a big Sea bag and a hammock and all your gear. It was pretty heavy. We spent the night at the barracks which was located in the basement of the Naval Gun Factory. The Chief took the records and he threw them in a corner, and it just so happened I looked over and I saw a corn flakes box. The following Monday they told us report to the Personnel Office in the Gun Factory. So we reported in. Nobody knew anything about it. The Personnel Yeoman said, “We had no orders and don’t have any form yet. Were you absent without leave?” I said, “No, we gave the Chief at the Gun Factory our orders.” “Well, we will find them. Report tomorrow.” Andy Foust said, “Boy this is great, I’ve never visited Washington. We’ve got the whole day.” So we had a few bucks. We visited a couple of parks in Washington. The Zoological Gardens was one of them. The second day we reported, the same thing happens. He said, “But before you leave each day, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, get in line and get your picture taken.” I guess they wanted to be sure they got the face of the guy. I said, “What is that for?” He says, “That is for an ID card.” I said, “Well, I have one from Cape May.” Andy told me, he said, “No sailor is any good unless he has at least two ID cards.” So I let Andy do most of the talking after that because I was giving away the secrets of the trade I guess. So

eventually they caught up with us after about two weeks they finally found the records. They had taken the Kellogg's box to Anacosta Naval Air Station at the same time we were there. I'm over there cleaning one day and I said to Andy, "I think maybe that is where our orders are." He was happy because he was married and he wasn't too anxious to go for extra hazardous duty either I guess. So after about a week or so, we'd spent most of the money. He said, "Maybe we could get a couple days leave." I said, "That's great. I don't have any money, but maybe I could borrow a couple of bucks from my Mother so I could get on a trolley car and ride around Washington." Anyway, we asked the Personnel Yeoman because they were the ones that would have to issue your leave papers to go home, so Andy was pretty savvy about how to work on the Personnel Yeoman. The Yeoman was a Chief and he was First Class, so they got along pretty good. He told them his wife was sick, and a couple of other stories. Anyway, we got leave a couple of weekends. I got home and borrowed five or ten bucks off of my Mother and we'd come back Monday morning. About the third week this man from ONI comes down and says, "Where you guys been, we've been looking all over for you?" Well we've been here all the time. They got that straightened out so we had to go up to ONI and they gave me a book that said, Naval Liaison Office Karachi. This is what happens and what you are supposed to do when you get there. So I'm reading and I'm supposed to do typing and do this and that, whatever the routines were. It said if it were possible you should have Secret clearance.

Well I had just come in from civilian life and I didn't have that, but anyhow they gave me orders to Karachi, India. In those days they had just started flying a couple of planes out of Anacosta, which is across the river from the Gun Factory. So my orders read "By the highest priority report to the West Coast." To the Huntington Navy Yard. They were converting the USS America to a Troop Transport. It later became the West Point from what I could gather in talking to other people. So we are assigned to go out by highest priority. Well that was on a Tuesday, I guess, or a Wednesday. Thursday we are still sitting there. The man from ONI that gave us the orders, he said, "What are you doing here?" Every time we'd get to go on a plane, I think it was the Army/Air Force or, it wasn't the Navy, a Colonel or General, whoever was issuing the orders, it was a General or a Captain or somebody higher than us that we sat there for two or three days. He got all upset, so he says, "Give me the orders." He tears them up, throws them in the wastebasket. After a while we go back and get us new orders to go by train.

Mr. Cox: Now you said the ONI, that is the Office of Naval Intelligence?

Mr. Bohus: Yes, Office of Naval Intelligence. The room that we had to report to you couldn't walk around, they had guards all over. You had to have a pass to get into it, 2732 was the number. So we go in there and they would tell you, "Well nothing, come back tomorrow." We'd go back and the guy would say, "Get lost." We were like being on vacation. I remember Andy saying, "This ain't the Navy. They don't expect us to come back."

I was getting more worried all the time, but there was nothing that I could do about it. By that time they had set up a routine that you had to have all your shots before you could go on foreign duty. So a couple of days before we got the train ticket to Chicago and the West Coast, to San Francisco, the Pharmacist Mate said to me, "How many shots have you had?" I said, "Well I got the routine stuff when we went to boot training." He says, "You have to get sixteen shots. It usually takes about three weeks." I said, "Oh, I don't think I'll be here, but what are you going to do?" He says, "Never mind, I'll give them to you all at once." It was pretty cold in Washington at that time. I remember walking across the field there. Everybody is holding their real heavy overcoats, nice navy blue. I got my coats flapping open. I guess I must have been running a fever because I didn't feel cold. It ended about 9 o'clock I started getting chills, I guess the fever had broken and I'm shaking. Andy said he wasn't feeling too good either. He had the same amount of shots.

Mr. Cox: So you were having a reaction to the shots?

Mr. Bohus: Yeah.

Mr. Cox: All the shots.

Mr. Bohus: At that time we were traveling on our own orders. We got on the train and it was full. I walked down the isle. In the first car there was nothing. They had told us you couldn't take your seabag and hammock, but you had

a little ditty bag and I'm walking down and this one officer, he is sleeping across one seat. I said, "Pardon me sir, there don't seem to be any seats and I have to go to Chicago." He said, "Yeah, we are all going to Chicago." So he moved over. He was very pleasant. That was about 8 o'clock. At 9 o'clock after we got started he said, "Did you bring your sleeping medicine?" I said, "no, what's that?" He brings out a bottle of Canadian Club and says, "It is a rough ride between here and Pittsburgh and Chicago." About ten o'clock he says, "Are you about ready to go to sleep?" I says, "Yeah, I've been getting kind of tired." So he says, "Go up and get a couple of Dixie cups." He gave me a nickel or dime, or whatever it was, and he pours about half a shot of Canadian Club and he says, "Bring the other couple of cups of water." So I had four cups, two of them filled with water. He says, "Now take your medicine and you'll go to sleep." He was right. About three o'clock in the morning we wake up in Chicago. Don't remember too much of Pittsburgh. I know we stopped there. A few people got off and some came on. We made it from there to the Huntington Navy Yard in San Francisco. We got there on a Sunday. The orders read that we were to report to the Captain in the Post Office in Oakland. So we got there about six o'clock in the morning. We wait until about seven. Of course the Post Office was locked up, but they did have a place you could go in and mail letters. We went in there and we heard a girl typing. She was behind a wall and everything was closed up. Andy banged on the door. So she looked at him and said, "What do you want?"

He says, "We have to report to the Port Director's Office." "Well he is home for the weekend," she said. I said, "Well what do we do?" She says, "I don't care what we do, but we can't see him until tomorrow." Well we needed to report in. She says, "Well what do you want me to do." She said, "Sign the orders." That was how we signed in. We asked where the billets were. He said, "Well the YMCA would probably have a couple of bunks for you." That was where we slept until Monday morning when we went to see the Port Director. He wanted to know what the writing was on the orders. We told him what happened and he said that was OK and he would take care of it. He told us where to go to the Huntington Navy Yard. They were taking all of the civilian structure out of the ships and putting in bunks for the troops. As I recall, they had about 13,000 troops on it when we left. It took about two weeks to put in all of the bunks. We went down around New Zealand, the Tasmanian Sea, into Melbourne. We stopped there for a while. In the meantime they found out that I was a radioman and they put me to work to keep my code practice up. I lucked out. The Chief said he would give me a break and give me all of the liberties of the crew. I thought I had made out like a bandit because I got two meals off the Army, and three meals regular duty from the Navy. So I had five meals if I wanted them. Of course I was supposed to be working too. So luck was with me I guess. So we made Bombay and I think Andy was assigned to go to Calcutta. I did not get off at Bombay because they pulled my name up and I was to get on the ship to go up to Karachi, India. I didn't even

know where it was before I started all of this. The ship was a coastal ship. It was made for the warm weather. It was really a freighter. It had three hulls. One had nitroglycerin in it according to the Armed Guard on board. Black powder was another and some kind of high test gasoline in the other. So I woke up at night and I saw him swinging back and forth in the gun seat and I thought he was asleep, but by the time I got to him I guess he woke up. I said, "You weren't sleeping were you?" He says, "No, get out of here." He was the one that had told me when I came aboard about the nitroglycerin and stuff on there. I wasn't sleeping too well.

Mr. Cox: Don't imagine so. Did you know by this time that you were assigned to SACO? Had they already told you?

Mr. Bohus: No, I had never heard of SACO.

Mr. Cox: OK.

Mr. Bohus: I didn't even know there was a Naval Intelligence when I joined the Navy. I guess they had it all the time. There was "Wild Bill" Donovan. He headed the OSS. He had a been a General in World War I.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Bohus: As I remember, there were three or four guys from each unit interviewing me. A couple of them were Chinese Colonels from Chiang Kai-shek's group.

Mr. Cox: Did they interview you at Karachi too?

Mr. Bohus: No, the interview was before they issued me the orders for Karachi.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Bohus: As I was walking out the door they said, "I think he'll do." Now I'm in Karachi and I'm working with an Ensign from Louisiana. He was a major in English and a stickler for punctuation. English wasn't my major desirable subject. I knew that sometimes if you put a comma there, you could get away with it. I knew a little about punctuation, but not enough. On courses of communication you have your high case, and he wanted me to keep the files. He wanted me to use the regular typewriter, but they didn't have one. He always used that, it was his typewriter. They were going to get me one, but I'm typing in high case. He is always giving me heck because I put an exclamation point with a pencil and they didn't have that on the communications equipment. So I was supposed to do it by hand I guess. He didn't want me to know anything that was going on. There was a Captain that came through about two or three weeks later after I got these three antenna poles up. Well before that somebody in an Army outfit, I think he was a Colonel in the OSS, and he told me he wanted three antenna poles, 30 feet high in four feet of concrete. He told me where to go get them. There was an English Army Depot that lend-lease and all that stuff was coming through. This was in Karachi. So I did that with the aid of Commander Smith, the Liaison Officer. We got all of the stuff. About that time Captain Miles came through and they introduced me to him. He wanted to know what I was doing. I told him that I was working in the office, decoding a couple of messages when they let me look at them, and

keeping their messages and things in the files. He asked me if I had ever been to China. I said, “no.” He said, “Well, maybe I’ll see you.” I told him that it would be interesting to get to China. I got my wish a week or so later after he left. I’m breaking a message down and my name came up and Andy Faust, and another fellow by the name of Shane from Philadelphia. There was another chap, but I don’t remember his name. So that is how I got to China.

Mr. Cox: So how did you get there?

Mr. Bohus: Well they issued me orders and we flew from Karachi. I think it was a civilian plane. The British were running the airlines. I landed in Calcutta and then I went by CNAC over the “hump.” We landed in Chungking, China. We were flying around there and I asked “when are we going to land?” The pilot says, “Well we have to wait until the Yangtze goes down.” We landed on a sandbar. They didn’t have a landing field that was long enough. We finally got off and there was about a thousand steps (they tell me). It looked like a thousand. Of course I had a diplomatic pass that they strapped on my arm. In one of the packages from the Liaison Office they were shipping 30 caliber machine gun bullets. It was some kind of ammunition. Of course that was heavy. They had told me to hire some coolies to help. There was two cases of the ammunition. The big coolie wanted to take our seabags and hammock. That was a lot lighter than the ammunition. I wasn’t a smoking man myself, but I always carried a half-opened package of cigarettes. So I said to the big guy, “You take

these.” He refused to do it, so I gave it to the small guy and he was a smoker I guess. I don’t think they could afford cigarettes. They told me they couldn’t with their wages. So he takes the ammo. The other guy takes my gear up the thousand steps. I thought I was in good shape, but I was puffing and could hardly make it myself. We got into Chungking and they had somebody waiting for us from Happy Valley. All I knew from what I had read it was called Radio Hoc Wan China. I think the call letters were NKN, I’m not sure. I went from NCR at Cape May to NKN.

Mr. Cox: And they called it Happy Valley?

Mr. Bohus: That was called Happy Valley. The only thing that was there they told me when I arrived that it was a Chinese Girl School. I thought, “What am I doing here.”

Mr. Cox: What year was this?

Mr. Bohus: It was 1942. Right after Pearl Harbor. I guess it was May or June by that time. It was almost the end of ‘42 I guess. What I didn’t know at the time, Karachi was one of the driest place on earth, and Chungking was one of the highest in humidity. It was always about 80-90% humidity. The first couple of days I thought that was great, but I remember if you took your shoes off and didn’t wear them for a couple of days they would be full of mold. They wanted Andy and I to set up a radio station. I thought that was no problem, where are the receivers and transmitters. “Well, we only have one transmitter that came over the Hump. The Chinese tried to get it up there and dropped it in a rice paddy.” That was the transmitter. It was

full of mud. I don't know how long it had laid in this rice paddy, but it took us about two weeks to get all of the mud out so that we could almost recognize it. We got the thing working pretty good. When we got all of the mud out we didn't know if it would work. Except there were a couple of meters that we couldn't rescue from the mud so we were minus those. Andy said that we couldn't tune it unless we got the meters.

Mr. Cox: You mean frequency?

Mr. Bohus: Yes. So in my education record I had taken a course called Radio and Sound Engineering. That is what inspired me to become a radio amateur. I thought I was a genius, I knew all about radio and sound. I didn't have any experience. So in that course they had power supplies, you know different electronic stuff. I remembered there was what they called power regulators. They called them voltage regulator tubes. If you had a certain voltage on the tube the neon would fire and ignite. So I said to Andy, "We ought to try that. Maybe if we get the voltage across there, it will show us that we have voltage there." He said, "Well, we could try it." So we had the two wires hanging out for both meters. We were waiting for them to come over the Hump. I guess that a couple of small meters they could have gotten easy, but nobody knew what type of meter we wanted and we didn't know either. So we tried that. We got the darn thing working and eventually they got the other meters too. They did work San Francisco once or twice when the propagation was favorable. We also worked Honolulu, which was putting out to the Naval forces in the South Pacific.

So here we are, we have the transmitter working. We also had the receiver, so then they had me on schedule, copying these different stations in China that were observing weather and stuff.

Mr. Cox: So you were copying weather observations?

Mr. Bohus: Yes. I would take like the 6-12 and Andy would take the 12-6. Andy, being more experienced, he handled most of the transmitting. I did most of the copying. They set us up to keep us in practice to copy the Fox Schedule they called it, which was a broadcast to the fleet with all of their coded stuff. They kept us busy and we finally got more radios and they built up the quality.

Mr. Cox: Now, when you copied, how many words per minute were you copying then? Do you remember?

Mr. Bohus: Well, Fox, or the radio fleet, they used to be 15-18. Sometime it would be a little slow. Sometimes it would be a little faster. But it never was more than about 20 words per minute. You know, me not being too experienced, I would have a little trouble. Andy told me to hang in there or I would get fired.

Mr. Cox: And you built your speed up as you get experience.

Mr. Bohus: When you copy code it has a certain rhythm and you get used to the rhythm. The thing to do is if you copy one or two letters behind and you listen to two groups. Well I never got to that point. Of course as soon as they tried to break it down, if you goofed up or anything, they would know it.

Mr. Cox: OK, so you are on station there and basically you are just receiving code?

Mr. Bohus: Yes.

Mr. Cox: From the fleet?

Mr. Bohus: Now there wasn't very much radio operating at all. It was mostly receiving. The idea was to keep all communication at a minimum because the enemy could copy the message, and if they had enough intelligence and enough information on your system they could obtain your information. At that time, there was a man by the name of Ted Wildman and he was what they called, a Radio Intercept Operator. He had been there for a year or two with Captain Miles and he had set up what they called Radio Intercept. Then I guess they decided they had enough radiomen. I got sick with malaria and they sent me up to Camp Three. On the way up we were taking supplies and radio gear, and we finally got to Balgi and the roads were very rough. There was a Lt Prescott, he was from New Hampshire, he told me "If you get back, look me up after the war is over." He was owner or part owner of a ski lodge. I did hear from him after the war. **Mr. Cox:** Well at Camp Three what did you do when you finally got there?

Mr. Bohus: Well we were taking radio gear and I set up a radio station along with a couple other radiomen. For some reason or other, I had been there about two years or so, and at that time, I found this out later when I came back the second time from the Swiss representative. The Swiss Counsel in Hankow, they had bombed Hankow and the reason Congress before the war, they never got around to passing the immigration laws that if you were out of the country over two years you lost your citizenship. Anyhow, ONI

had a system and they called me back to ONI. In other words, I was transferred back to the States. When I came back to be reassigned, the man at ONI, I think he was a Marine, but he was in Personnel and knew all the ins and outs, and he probably worked in security and all that stuff. He said, "Well the Captain thought very highly of your work and if you care to volunteer to go back, he would like to have you come back. I thought, well that is pretty good. I guess he wasn't too mad at me. I never had any problems except do the work. You had no place to go. All you did was work. I said to him, "Do I have any choices?" I thought maybe I would get some grand duty in Washington with all the girls. Well that didn't happen. He said, "Yeah, I have landing craft." I said, "What does that consist of?" He says, "You don't want that. That's with the Marines." At that time they were getting reports from the South Pacific, so many Marines were killed, so many were captured on this or that island. He says, "If you are smart you'll take the Captain's offer." I said, "Well at least I know I won't get seasick." Away I went again to Chungking.

Mr. Cox: You went back to China.

Mr. Bohus: This time I landed in Bombay. Went around with a G.M. Randall. Oh, I crossed the equator the second time. So I was a shell block. I didn't get my ass beat. One of the initiation things was they had a bed pan, they had hot dogs chopped up in it and they had mustard on it, looked like somebody had crapped in it. You had to drink that. I showed my card, and they let go right by.

Mr. Cox: You didn't have to go through that initiation again?

Mr. Bohus: I said, well I don't like your combination of vinegar and hot dogs. That is how I got back the second time.

Mr. Cox: And where were you the second time now?

Mr. Bohus: Well I went back to Chungking. I'm not sure. I was always busy working on the gear and stuff and I didn't have time to find out where we were going, but we went down south somewhere and we went south of Shangshaw and bombed that out. The only recollections after that we ended up on a railroad with all of this radio gear plus a couple of flatcars and it was right near the end of the war, but I was in Chungking for a while. We ended up in Hankow. By that time I had made Chief, but I didn't have any uniforms so I got a couple extra pairs of khaki pants, which I got from somebody that didn't need them or had left for home and I had a jacket made and fortunately there were enough gold buttons around, or maybe they manufactured them. I don't know whether it was original Navy stuff or not, but anyhow I had a khaki jacket and khaki pants. So I made Chief and ended up in Hankow, which was bombed out pretty well and they told me the Swiss Counsel by the name of Mr. Shock who was representing the U.S. interests and the Swiss interests and he had been in the Army of the Phillipines. He said there were more Germans and Swiss and other foreign people in the Army of the Phillipines at that time under Douglas

MacArthur's Father, Douglas Arthur MacArthur, than there were Americans. Once being in the Army he could claim American citizenship. I didn't know that at the time. He also told me that if you were out of the States for more than two years you automatically lost your citizenship because he was representing only Americans. There were a lot of Americans that had married Chinese girls that were living in Hankow and they got bombed out and he was using Swiss funds because they didn't have any American funds. He was paying them out of his embassy. He told me this in confidence of course. Once in a while he'd get me a treat. He'd invite me down because he had married a Chinese girl himself and she was very accommodating and we'd have somebody to talk to in English. She was pretty well educated. They decided to close that down and he ended up in the American school, all these radiomen and everything. They were going to set up in Shanghai. We got there around the end of June or July. It was pretty warm in Shanghai and we were having a ball. The Germans had a concession. The French had a concession. We were in the American cluster in the American School. I don't understand much French. Before I left Hankow, before the war they had a customs all the Europeans or Americans would hire a doctor to come over in case they got sick. Well this German Doctor by the name of Schneider had charge of the Swiss and the Germans. Of course all of them got bombed out. Of course there was a lot of Nazi infiltration and all that stuff. Mr. Shock told me, he said, "This Dr. Schneider had not heard from his daughter for about four

years, all during the war. Would I take a personal letter down?" I said yes. He said, "It is no infraction of security or anything." I told him to leave it open, you can read it. Of course I didn't know that it was in German. I opened it and I said, "Well I'll just give it to the girl." He read it to me and explained what was in there. Whether it was or not I don't know. All it was that he wanted to know where she was and that she was safe, etc. So I got the letter and I got down to Shanghai, and we don't have much to do so I'm browsing around and finally found out, through the Chinese I guess because they probably knew about it all the time to see whether I was a Nazi. I go around and knock on this door. Right out in front of the place there is a Chinese soldier, and it happened to be about 6 o'clock at night, and it was starting to get dark. So I banged on the door. I guess it was an elderly woman, I don't quite recall. Don't even know her name. She says, "Who are you?" I says, "I'm a friend of Ingrid Schmidt." She says, "What do you want with her?" I could tell she was German. Must have been one of the Gestapo, and I found out later she was. So they had her, this Ingrid Schmidt and Hildegard Kress was also a secretary to H. Bair and Company and I think they both worked for Bair & Co. And they had to come to this house every night after working all day. They were in there for 2 ½-3 years. So the first night the woman said, "She's not here. If you come back tomorrow maybe we can find her." Something like that. So I says, "OK." So the next night I wasn't even sure that I was going to go back -- to the heck with that. I decided to go

anyway. I had a friend of mine by the name of Emerson, he was a radioman, and he was a little younger than I, but I said, "You want to come with me?" He says, "How do we get there." I said, "Oh we'll get a rickshaw." So we got one and got there and were told, "Oh yeah, come in." The girls had dinner for us, the second night. I don't know what happened to the head Gestapo, but she disappeared. Maybe she was under surveillance too. Maybe they grabbed her too. I don't know. They never said anything and I didn't inquire. We did take the girls dancing. They were familiar with the German Club and the Italian Club, but mostly they had dances at the YMCA. They were good heavy vodka drinkers. They could drink a tumbler full of vodka and I'd tag along. That is about the extent of my stay in Shanghai.

Mr. Cox: Was the war still going on then?

Mr Bohus: Oh yes. That was in like June and July. They had all kinds of American officers and stuff and of course we were enjoying the evenings dancing at the YMCA or the German Club and having a few beers and getting steady pay from Uncle Sam. We managed pretty good. I left in December, the 23rd, a couple of days before Christmas, but before that I was going to, well my friend Claire Emerson, he was a little shorter than I and Hildegard was a little taller than I, so he said, "You dance with Hildegard." So Hildegard and I got along fine. Her last name was Kress. I danced with both of the girls, but usually at the YMCA. I always remember there was more Russians in Shanghai than there were Chinese. In the YMCA there was

this person related to the Czarina or somebody or other back, but she chased them out when the Commies came in. She donated the money and everything. There were a couple of Russian girls that we were dancing with and they were always trying to get married to American GI's so that they could get away from Shanghai and come over here. That was the situation. But the officers had it made in the shade really.

Mr. Cox: During any of your time over there, at like Camp Six or anything, did you ever have any Japanese intrusion any time? Was there any gun fire in your area.

Mr. Bohus: Once in a while you would hear that five or ten Japanese soldiers would be shot or something. I guess they had mistreated some of the Chinese or something. At that time they had a custom that if anybody was caught stealing they would chop one finger off, and the second time they got caught the other index finger went off and the third time they took them out to the race track on Saturday and Sunday and shot them. I've also seen a couple of the atrocities. Like there was one Chinese woman. I don't know what she was. All I saw was that she was hung up by both hands, both wrists were cut off and blood was dripping down. A couple of boys took some pictures, but I figured I'd seen enough.

Mr. Cox: The Chinese had done that to her?

Mr. Bohus: I figure that it was the Japs that had done it to the Chinese. I don't know who they were. I just happened to be going by. We were told not to interfere with anything.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Bohus: In other words, keep your mouth shut and you won't get into any trouble.

Mr. Cox: Well then you were still over there when the war was over?

Mr. Bohus: Yes, at the end of the war. I left in December of 1945 and the war was pretty well over. I got on a ship that had something wrong with the propulsion. Every time the shaft went around, the whole ship would vibrate. I didn't think we were going to make it back to San Diego, but we did make it. The fact is they said they were working on it. You know, they were always working on something that didn't work. I had my doubts about that, but one night about two weeks out of Shanghai everything was very quiet. Everybody woke up because they were used to that banging and they could sleep through that. I wondered what happened, there must be subs out there getting ready to torpedo us. Finally they got the screw going again, or whatever they did. I don't know. Then the thing ran pretty quiet. You could hear vibrations and stuff, but nothing like that banging like somebody was hitting a bell and it was ringing in your ear. So we made it back to San Diego, and I got discharged in Lido Beach after about a week or two in San Diego. I remember the first night out on San Diego we went into a Tap Room. I said, "Give me a beer and a ham sandwich."

Mr. Cox: I suppose it had been years since you had either.

Mr. Bohus: I expected a big beer, you know. They gave me one of these little pony jobs. I looked at it and I didn't say anything to the bar tender. I did say,

“Well it looks like a good sandwich.” I bite into the sandwich and it was a real thin slice of bologna or whatever it was. I don’t think it was even ham. He says, “What is the matter don’t you like the ham sandwich? You expect everything, just because you were in the war or something?”

Mr. Cox: So you got your discharge and you went home.

Mr. Bohus: The thing that surprised me was that before the war for 15 or 20 cents you could get the biggest beer, you know. But of course I was comparing that to the East Coast. I don’t know what it was on the West Coast. I got such a thin piece of meat I could hardly taste it. His object was to make a buck I guess as bartender.

Mr. Cox: Sure.

Mr. Bohus: I guess that everything was rationed then anyway. Of course we were living high on the hog. We had lend lease overseas. I remember in Shanghai one time we went into the British Officers’ Club. The China man said something about “are you allowed in here?” I says, “I guess so, we were allies.” Well we went in and sat down. But it was an Officers’ Club, and they could see I was a Chief or an Enlisted man. Finally one of the officers said, “Would you boys like a drink.” We said, “Yeah, we’d like to have some of that lend lease or something that we’ve been giving you guys.” That didn’t go over too good. So after about a beer, but the ham sandwich was better in China. It had some ham on it.

Mr. Cox: Some real ham.

Mr. Bohus: I guess everything was rationed in the States. But anyway, we made it

back.

Mr. Cox: Have you ever gone back to China?

Mr. Bohus: No. I put in to go back to Taiwan. I had a friend that I met in Balgi. We needed electricity and he was an engineer who had been educated in Oxford. He was an electrical engineer. He also set up a paper mill for the cotton mills, which was a friend of his father or something. But his Dad, his name is Young, Frank Young. He had a brother that lived in London and was an engineer and Frank went back to China and he told me his Dad was the first to set up the first telegraph after Alexander Graham Bell.

Mr. Cox: So you got back in civilian life. What did you do in civilian life?

Mr. Bohus: I really only had two jobs in my whole career you might say. I worked for Campbell Soup. That was during tomato season and almost anybody could get a job. I was glad when they laid me off because I thought I was in pretty good physical shape, but after working ten hours I just about had to hang on to the banisters. Anyhow we survived. I think they did me a favor because I got a job at RCA. At that time they were manufacturing record players and stuff like that right after the war, or before the war. You'd get an order for maybe 100,000. When I was finished they laid everybody off. So you worked two or three months and get laid off. So I ended up, before going on active duty, I was laid off and hired 13 times at RCA, which I didn't think was very good. So I bumped into one of the fellows that I worked with on the troop ship coming back and he asked if I was going back to RCA. I said, "Yeah." He said he wasn't going back

and that Every time he went back there and thought he was going to be working, he would get laid off. So I went back to RCA. During the war this friend of mine I went to school with he had been in the service, but he got back in September or something. He was working at RCA in Personnel. He said, "What was your job before the war?" He interviewed me. At that time I think they had a law on the books that they had to give you your job back. But before the war they had maybe three or four 30 or 40 machinists. During the war they must have hired about a thousand or two. He said there was no openings in machines. I asked what openings there were. He said, "Well what were you in the service?" I said, "Well I was a radio operator and I made Chief." He said they were looking for test men. I says, "What does that pay?" He said it paid a nickel more than machinists. I said, "I'll take it." So, for about, including the five years I was in the service, all total I worked 43 years for RCA. I retired early at 62 or 63, or something like that. I drew some of my social security. You know, you sacrifice something if you retire early.

Mr. Cox: Sure.

Mr. Bohus: Well, that's it I guess.

Mr. Cox: Well Art, I want to tell you thanks for taking the time to give us a little story of your experiences during World War II, and I want to thank you personally. I was a young kid when you were over in China as a young man, and it is because of people like you that we have the freedom we have today.

Mr. Bohus: Well, we like to think so, but you never know.

Mr. Cox: It sure is.

Mr. Bohus: But, like I say, the Good Lord was good to me. Even if I was tough to get along with He steered me in the right direction.

Mr. Cox: Well thanks again Art.

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Wanda Cook
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