

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

**Center for Pacific War Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview With  
Herbert E. Merritt  
Co. B 511 Parachute Inf. Reg.  
Manila, Leyte, Philippines  
6/17/05**

Mr. Misenhimer

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is June 17, 2005. I am interviewing Mr. Herbert Merritt by telephone. His address is 412 South Bothwell Street, Palatine, Illinois 60067. His phone number is (847) 359-7567. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. Your first name is Herbert, is that right?

Mr. Merritt

Correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a middle initial?

Mr. Merritt

E.

Mr. Misenhimer

Agreement read. Is that okay with you?

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

*Break in tape.*

Mr. Misenhimer

The first question I was asking you, I said, what is your birth date?

Mr. Merritt

April 5 of '23.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Merritt

New Jersey.

Mr. Misenhimer

What town?

Mr. Merritt

Maplewood.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many did you have?

Mr. Merritt

I have an older sister, a younger sister, and a younger brother.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your brother in World War II?

Mr. Merritt

No, he was in after.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Merritt

Oak Park, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did your family move from New Jersey to Illinois?

Mr. Merritt

1929, right in the middle of the Depression.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned the Depression. How did that affect you and your family?

Mr. Merritt

Well, we had to live close to the belt.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Merritt

He worked for an insurance company.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he able to keep a job during most of the Depression?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, all the way.

Mr. Misenhimer

Good. What year did you finish high school?

Mr. Merritt

'41.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the Service?

Mr. Merritt

'45 I believe it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

It would have been before that. It must've been sometime in '44 or '43.

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished high school, what did you do?

Mr. Merritt

I worked for General Motors.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of work did you do there?

Mr. Merritt

Ran a turret lathe.

Mr. Misenhimer

Making what?

Mr. Merritt

We made PT boat engines.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were doing war work then.

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you went in the Service, were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Merritt

I volunteered.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branch did you go into?

Mr. Merritt

Well I tried to go into the Air Corps. I passed the IQ test, didn't make it on the physical.

Then I volunteered for the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take your basic training?

Mr. Merritt

Toccoa.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where is that?

Mr. Merritt

Georgia. Toccoa. I volunteered for the 511<sup>th</sup>. It was right there in Toccoa.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you took parachute training for basic training.

Mr. Merritt

At the Mount Currahee.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that basic training, pretty rough?

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do a lot of marching and things like that?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yes, a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished basic training, what did you do then?

Mr. Merritt

I volunteered to be a Scout.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you first jump out of an airplane?

Mr. Merritt

At Fort Benning, and I think it was the summer after I went into the Service.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did it feel like to jump out of an airplane?

Mr. Merritt

The first jump was the easiest. I can remember the tail of the plane going over my head.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was the DC3 or C47?

Mr. Merritt

C47, right.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then when you finished your basic training, and your special training, where did you go then?

Mr. Merritt

Camp McCall in North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

Mr. Merritt

I continued training as a paratrooper.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave there?

Mr. Merritt

We moved from there to Camp Polk, Louisiana. We went on maneuvers down in the Bayou Country.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of weapon did you have at that point?

Mr. Merritt

Garand M1.

Mr. Misenhimer

How were those maneuvers?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, they were rough. A lot of wild boars down there. We made a railroad and the tracks went underwater. It was all swamp.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then after the maneuvers, what did you do then?

Mr. Merritt



Came home on furlough. That was the last furlough before going overseas. When I reported back, we got shipped right away to Camp Stoneman, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel out there?

Mr. Merritt

By train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Merritt

Boring. We went through Salt Lake City and we had to get off the train and run through the city. People were hanging out of their windows.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you got to Camp Stoneman, what did you do there?

Mr. Merritt

We got shipped overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of ship were you on? Do you recall?

Mr. Merritt

It was a Sea Cat. It was one of those ships they put together in a hurry.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, a liberty ship.

Mr. Merritt

Liberty ship, yeah. A Norwegian crew. We were in the chow line all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it pretty crowded?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, it was very boring. I was on the 5-inch gun on the fan tail of a ship. I didn't want to sleep below deck. It was too hot.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness?

Mr. Merritt

There at the beginning, yes. After we got out of the Golden Gate Bridge, we were all right. We played a lot of poker.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was the first place that you went on the ship?

Mr. Merritt

Milne Bay.

Mr. Misenhimer

In New Guinea.

Mr. Merritt

New Guinea.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did that trip take there?

Mr. Merritt

It took about 30 days to get there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in a convoy?

Mr. Merritt

No, we zigzagged all the way across. It was about 30 days to go across.

Mr. Misenhimer

You don't recall what month or what year it would be when you got down there.

Mr. Merritt

1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do in New Guinea?

Mr. Merritt

Did a lot of reading.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get into any combat in New Guinea?

Mr. Merritt

No, mostly training.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then where did you go from New Guinea?

Mr. Merritt

We got to Santo and then we got over trained I think. We had bats that would fly over every night. We got our rifles out and we began shooting at the bats. When we got to Luzon, they took all our weapons away from us.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were shooting at bats you say.

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when did you leave New Guinea and where did you go?

Mr. Merritt

Eventually, we went into combat at Leyte. We joined a convoy and went into Leyte.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you arrive there on the first day?

Mr. Merritt

Around the first, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about what happened there?

Mr. Merritt

We were below deck and there was an awful lot of shooting going on up there between the boats and aircraft. You could see the tracer bullets.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a ship were you on?

Mr. Merritt

A Navy ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it a troop transport or was it an LST?

Mr. Merritt

It was a transport. I'm thinking the weather was hot.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you land on the beach? Did you climb down the side into a landing craft?

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was it climbing down?

Mr. Merritt

It was kind of hard climbing over with all that equipment.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did anybody fall into the water?

Mr. Merritt

Some guys did but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

If they fell in the water, could they get out?

Mr. Merritt

It would have been difficult. Those landing craft were bouncing around very badly.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you didn't parachute in then.

Mr. Merritt

We made it to shore, they put the loading ramp down, we got off the landing craft and we moved off the shore. One, because Japanese planes were coming up and down the beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what did you do?

Mr. Merritt

We then got our orders to cross the mountain through the jungle. It was all uphill.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then what happened?

Mr. Merritt

It was slow going. It was wet and hot. I think it rained most of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you went across the mountain, what did you do?

Mr. Merritt

Well when you got up there, that's where we began getting assigned into combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that. What happened then?

Mr. Merritt

Then we got orders to go inland over the mountain across the island to the beach. I think we were to meet the 77<sup>th</sup> Division on the other side of the island.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have quite a few battles with the Japanese?

Mr. Merritt

That's when I got wounded, yes, going up over those jungle trails.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you get wounded?

Mr. Merritt

I was a scout for the company, I was scout number 2, we were out on a mission. Tried to find part of B-Company, which had already been ambushed.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what happened?

Mr. Merritt

We went up a trail, rainy and wet, slippery. First thing I knew, we came to a trench on the side, on the right side of the trail and a big log across the trail. On the log was a GI helmet with a hole right through it. We picked it up and looked at it, someone said whoever wore that helmet made a bad end because it was all covered with human debris. Hole went right through it. Then we looked on the side of the road and there was a guy in that slit trench covered with a poncho. Poncho neckpiece was open and flies were flying in and out. It didn't take long to realize it was one of our guys. And so the Japs just threw him in the trench. Our captain came over and joined us and he told us to keep on going and advance up the trail. Actually, it was down the trail because we were already at the top, so we started down. I was 2<sup>nd</sup> scout in line. We came to a turn in the trail, a left-hand turn, at the bottom of the hill, and the first scout and I saw somebody at the same time. We couldn't tell whether it was a Jap or an American but we both whispered back and forth, and we agreed to wait until he turned around to see whether he was a friend or an enemy. And that's what we did, we waited. And after a couple of minutes, he turned around, and well there was no doubt, he was Jap. Well the first scout and I both opened and hit that guy with tracer bullets. We saw him slump against the side of a tree and that was it and all hell broke loose. There was a machine gun nest about 20 yards from us. Hail of bullets between us and right in front of us. We both

dove. I stayed out on my side of the trail, 1<sup>st</sup> scout jumped out to the other side of the trail. We could see each other but we couldn't talk. We both stayed there and tried to do what we could to try to keep that machine gunner active and busy. I got off a shot or two and I threw a grenade, the 1<sup>st</sup> scout and I both waited until the grenade went off then we stuck our head up. We could see another Jap going forward so we knew where the machine gun nest was. They were reinforcing the gun. We tried to shoot that guy but we couldn't. There was a sniper up on the tree to our left. He was shooting down right across us and we were occupied to stay out of trouble. Pretty soon, I heard the Japs arm a grenade and it was sizzling. I looked up and I could see the smoke. It was coming through the air. It went right over that log and went right on top of me. I looked around thinking I could retrieve it and throw it back, but I couldn't find it and when I saw it, time was up. I started to roll back, get out of the way. I made it about halfway and the grenade exploded. Of course, I got hit in the knee and my thigh, the left knee and left thigh. It felt like a sledgehammer had hit me then it began to get hot. I looked down and I could see right down through my pants. I knew I'd been hit. The blast of that grenade blew my helmet off and it went out into the clearing. Without much thought, I went out to retrieve my helmet, I got it. I put the helmet back on and waited to see what was gonna develop. Next thing I know, the Company Commander came down the trail. I pointed out where the machine gun was. He made one comment and said, "Well, I'm going back up to get some help. Go around and flank them." He took off back up the trail. To keep what ground we had, we had no choice. We were pinned down, but we'd come back around. After he started back up the trail, the enemy mortar opened up. The mortar shells going through the trees, I seen a branch ever now and then make it go off



prematurely. Then one made it through the trees, landed behind us, further down the hill. We were pretty safe from their mortar fire because they couldn't lower it enough. So we held on to our land, the ground we had. A little while later we got the word to get out the best we could. We did. I could barely hobble with my bad leg, but I climbed up that trail with his help. I finally made it to the top. When I got up there, I found out that our own machine gun had been wiped out. Part of the crew had been killed. The gun was lost. One of our guys at the machine gun, he was a BAR man, took a BAR and tried to shoot these machine guns, destroy them. I'll tell you what happened there. While we were up there waiting, another company come to our rescue from behind. They came up the same trail we had just crossed. When they came up across the rear echelon of our Company and they opened fire on the Company before they identified each other and they quit fighting each other. But we lost one guy to our own troops. I think things then quieted down and they made a litter for me out of my shirt and cut poles and put them through the arms and they loaded me into it. It was a litter and they carried me out of that jungle. They operated on me that night under a poncho. Someone had to hold the light while the medic probed and got some of the shrapnel out and bandaged me up. And they stayed and loaded me onto a water buffalo, terrible. They evacuated me on the back of that animal. We got to the first creek bed then started down the bank, I fell off, I couldn't stay on. They ended up, they had to carry me all the way back to the rear echelon air base, the airstrip. We had L-5 could land there. It was big enough to handle an L-4, or L-5. That's how I got evacuated. In fact, I was on an L-5. I was stretched out behind the pilot. I was against his back. And that's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When they evacuated you, where did they take you to?

Mr. Merritt

To the beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there a hospital there?

Mr. Merritt

The hospital ship was there, the Mercy.

Mr. Misenhimer

How bad was your wound?

Mr. Merritt

I couldn't walk. They loaded me on board that ship - it was Christmas Eve. I was wounded on December 5. And we sat up on that mountaintop for quite a while before I got evacuated. Those who could walk were taken out first. They had to fly me out.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got on a hospital ship, is that right?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, the Mercy.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you on that?

Mr. Merritt

Probably 2, 3 days. We went to Los Negros. There we were unloaded, they operated on me again in a Field hospital. Then you go before a committee where they decide whether

you stayed there and went back into combat or get to go back home. It was decided I would stay there, recover and go back into combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then what happened?

Mr. Merritt

I was loaded on to another hospital ship and moved to another island. We ended up on Guadalcanal. I was in a General Hospital there for about a month.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they do to you there?

Mr. Merritt

More operation on the leg, they removed more shrapnel. The doctors said there's a little bit left in your leg on both sides. He said, "We'll do more damage trying to get it out. It'll come out by itself." Which it did eventually.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did you stay on Guadalcanal after that?

Mr. Merritt

I'll bet you it was a couple weeks. They say something got inside our nets because they blew up our supply ship. The supply ship had depth charges on board and they blew up, the whole battalion was wiped out.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was where, on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Merritt

That's on Guadalcanal, right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go back into combat?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, from there yes. I got sent back on another ship, an A.P. I think it was. And went back in. We got in on the Battle of Manila.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you still in the 511<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that battle.

Mr. Merritt

We were where the rich people lived because we had to battle where the swimming pool was empty, trapped some Japs down in there. We liberated them. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was that battle in Manila?

Mr. Merritt

We weren't in there very long.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then what happened?

Mr. Merritt

I was moved south of Manila. I went down to Lake Paal. We were guarding the waterfront down there.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then what happened?

Mr. Merritt

We saw a small boat coming across Lake Paal with people in it. We decided to wait and see who those people were. As they got closer, we could tell they were Japanese. We opened fire on them, wiped them out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you open fire with rifles or machine guns or what?

Mr. Merritt

Probably both. If we had non-commissioned officers, they must've had machine guns.

The rest of us had rifles and carbines.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which rifle did you have, the M1.

Mr. Merritt

Had the M1, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever use a BAR?

Mr. Merritt

I never did myself.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Merritt

Things quieted down and that was the end of that escapade.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the next thing that happened then?

Mr. Merritt

We went out for a battle up in the mountains. I was part of a detail carrying ammunition and food up the mountain. We heard that our guys had been kicked off that mountain, and turned out that was true, so we had a carrying party made up of Filipinos, and our own guys. Part way up the trail, one of the Guerillas came to our officer and some of the \_\_\_\_\_ in the party was anti-American. They had a way of telling them they tattoos on them because he talked the officer into taking him off, throwing him out of our line, taking him on the hilltop and find out whether they were friendly or enemy.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what happened?

Mr. Merritt

They did go over the mountaintop. After a while, we heard a lot of shooting. We supposed they had caught some of them that were anti-American and they annihilated them. Cause then they joined us and we continued to march up the trail. We were carrying a 75mm Howitzer along with our own equipment. When we got to the top, that Howitzer was set up to fire at the next mountain range right across the valley. We dug in because this is enemy territory. And during the night, we set our booby traps around our perimeter and the booby traps started going off. Turned out, there were wild horses up there and they were rummaging around and were setting off the booby traps. They'd go off, why, they'd neighing going on. The horses got wounded. The next day, we go out there and kill them off if they were wounded, secure our line again.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of booby traps did you set out?

Mr. Merritt

Hand grenades.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tied to a wire or something?

Mr. Merritt

Yeah. We tied them to the branch of a tree.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that would pull the pin on the grenade, is that right?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then after that, what did you do?

Mr. Merritt

We eventually were evacuated. The fight for the mountaintop was over, we secured it. There was no more enemies to respond. We went out on a lot of patrols on a daily basis. We couldn't find any more Japs or evidence of them, so then we evacuated and went back to the beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all fire that 75mm Howitzer up there?

Mr. Merritt

It was fired, but not me.

Mr. Misenhimer

But it was used though.

Mr. Merritt

It was used, yes, because they had war correspondents up there to watch. They pulled in some A20s, B25 bombers to bomb the hill over there. Then they sent one of our companies, I think it was E-Company, over to check it out. They went over there and secured it. When the planes came and did their bombing, you could see the Japs running all over the top of that hill. We saw the incendiaries and they were dropping more than just bombs. They were dropping tanks of gasoline on them. That was very effective.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did the war correspondents do up there?

Mr. Merritt

They just were writing up the events. That's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you got back to the beach, what did you do?

Mr. Merritt

We set up a permanent type camp. It's called a lipa. So we waited there, we'd go and look at the bulletin board each morning, we found out the atomic bomb had been detonated. Naturally, that was good news. The fact that it sounded like the war was about over. They say no we got earmarked, we are to be the first troops to land in Japan, itself. We were earmarked for that. They lined up a squadron of B24s and they took the crew off and they were gonna load 10 of us on each plane. The morning of that flight, one plane got off, the 2<sup>nd</sup> plane crashed. The airstrip was too short. Killed everybody on



board. They called off that and they switched from B24s, they went back to the DC3, the 4-engine transport planes. That's what we took.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went from there to where?

Mr. Merritt

We flew to Ansugi Airstrip in Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer

When Japan surrendered, did y'all have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Merritt

We, personally, yeah, we drank our beer. That was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you landed in Japan, what did you do there?

Mr. Merritt

I caught a jeep, there I could drive vehicles, so I was put in charge of driving trucks to and from Ansugi Airstrip. And I had many different personnel riding them. Some were the officers coming in to go out on the Missouri and join MacArthur when they surrendered. So I would pick them up at the airport and take them into the Imperial hotel in Ansugi. That's where MacArthur was staying. We set up our bivouac in the park across the street from his hotel. That was good duty.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you anywhere close to the Missouri for the surrender?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, that's where we began to get some decent food for a change.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the people in Japan friendly to you, or how were the people?

Mr. Merritt

Yeah, aloof. One of my first guard duties was on a beer pub, a brewery. I stayed in the house with the guy that owned it. And he realized I couldn't eat like they did, so at mealtime, I'd sit on the steps and they'd push a table over where I could eat from. They knew I couldn't sit cross-legged like they did. So I got fed very well, treated very well.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you the only American staying in that house?

Mr. Merritt

That was in Marioca, Japan. North of Sandai.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you in Japan?

Mr. Merritt

The main part of our Company was in Sandai. The other company went to Marioca.

They took over a Cavalry barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else did you do there?

Mr. Merritt

Well we got an opportunity to do different things. I signed up to take some college type instructional courses. I wanted to go back to college. That didn't last long.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave Japan?

Mr. Merritt

Around Thanksgiving time.

Mr. Misenhimer

In '45.

Mr. Merritt

In '45, I got home between Christmas and New Year's '45, '46.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you come home? What kind of transportation?

Mr. Merritt

I came home on a troop ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip home?

Mr. Merritt

It was kind of tedious but at least we ate well.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it crowded?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yes, yes. It was when we landed in, I think it was Pittsburg, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

You did what from there?

Mr. Merritt

I went by train all the way back to Rockford, Illinois. That's where I got my actual discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back. When you first landed on Leyte, I missed part of that. You were on the beach there, right?

Mr. Merritt

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you say people set up their hammocks?

Mr. Merritt

Some of the guys did. We set up camp. Most of us dug a slit trench.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you bombed or attacked while you were there on the beach?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yes. Bombed. No physical attack.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about artillery attack?

Mr. Merritt

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then from there, you moved inland into the mountains.

Mr. Merritt

We moved to the town of Beuren.

Mr. Misenhimer

There's an airfield there and the Japs sent in some paratroopers. Is that right?

Mr. Merritt

Yeah, they flew right over me that night. The sky lit up, we were told to keep quiet and we did. They landed on our airstrip, the Jap paratroopers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all have to get them off of there?

Mr. Merritt

No, we were way inland. We were way up in the mountains.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were up in the mountains when that happened.

Mr. Merritt

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall there from your time in the Philippines?

Mr. Merritt

I want to say that some Jap firing at the crew in a C47, we was getting re supplied by air, come over with the door off of a C47. And they would drop ammunition to us and food. They'd just shove it out the door into the air. We had to hide behind trees to keep from getting hit by our own packages. One time the plane came over and was on its way back around for the second attempt to make a drop. It did a complete flip in the air and the motors raced. We saw it go behind the mountain and just moments later, we heard a crash and a loud noise, explosion like. So we knew he had gone in. Speculation it was a Jap sniper might've got the pilot when he had banked going around that mountain. We never did find out. So we put together a rescue party. I was part of it. We went up into

the mountains. It must've been about 8 or 10 of us. We could smell the gasoline and the fumes, so we followed our noses and we found the wreckage. We found 2 guys walking around up there in a daze. We got them under some kind of control. One of them turned out to be a Crew Chief. We never did get the pilot and co-pilot. They were buried in the wreckage. We never did find them. But we put together a carrying team to carry out the guys that were hurt. The Chief was pretty banged up. We had to take him out by litter.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many people were there that you all rescued?

Mr. Merritt

I think we saved about 3 out of the whole crew on that plane. They just didn't have anything left. Found a package of rations and carried them back. We didn't want the Japs to get the food. They were obviously as bad off as we were. That was the end of that episode up there. I was wounded the day after we rescued those guys. That must've happened on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you all pretty short on food and ammunition?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yes, we were starving. I went down to 112 pounds. I used to weigh 187.

Mr. Misenhimer

And down to 112, huh.

Mr. Merritt

And if we wouldn't have gotten on that hospital ship, I don't know if I would have made it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your leg heal completely?

Mr. Merritt

Yes. I've still got the scars, though, and the memories.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons or medals did you get?

Mr. Merritt

I got the Bronze Star. I got the Purple Heart, Asiatic Pacific Theater, 3 Stars, Battle Stars I guess. I got the American Defense Ribbon.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the Combat Infantryman's Badge, did you get that?

Mr. Merritt

3 Combat Ribbons, 4 Stars.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the Combat Infantryman's Badge? The one with the rifle with the wreath around it?

Mr. Merritt

Oh, yes. The Combat Medal, yes. Yes, I have that displayed here on my wall with all the other medals. That was given by an Officer, an Admiral. The second part we hit, not Los Negros. It's the one after that. I think it was Manus Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were over there, did you ever hear Tokyo Rose anytime?

Mr. Merritt

We heard her quite often. She welcomed us when we first got over to New Guinea. She knew we were coming.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of her?

Mr. Merritt

She didn't influence us at all.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Merritt

Yeah, I got home with a Japanese carbine, Japanese bayonet. The carbine I turned in here to the gun drive, they were collecting weapons. So I turned that one in and got a receipt for it. I think it was a 25-caliber carbine.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Merritt

I knew most of them real well.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Merritt

We were treated quite well. PFC.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Merritt



Oh, yes, a lot of them, several.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you been able to go to several of those?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, down in Clearwater, Florida; Reno, Nevada. That was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill when you got home?

Mr. Merritt

I signed up for courses at Northside College.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life when you got home?

Mr. Merritt

No, not at all. I got a job pretty quick.

Mr. Misenhimer

What job did you get? What did you do?

Mr. Merritt

An insurance adjuster, claims adjuster for an insurance company.

Mr. Misenhimer

In April of '45, President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Merritt

Yes, I remember that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have to that?

Mr. Merritt

Just a serious event, that's all. Nothing spectacular.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Merritt

That battle up on Leyte. It didn't look good for a while there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall about your time in the Service?

Mr. Merritt

No, I think I got all the highlights.

Mr. Misenhimer

I want to thank you for your time to do this interview today.

Mr. Merritt

Thank you much, Richard.

Mr. Misenhimer

I want to thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Merritt

Okay.

Transcribed by  
Christa Granger  
Alice, Texas  
December 5, 2005

Oral History by  
Richard Misenhimer  
P.O. Box 3453  
Alice, Texas 78333  
(361) 664-4071