

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR
(ADMIRAL NIMITZ MUSEUM)**

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Billy B. Tune

Big Spring, Texas

July 7, 2005

Aboard *President Polk* when Torpedoed and Sunk

Landed Tarawa 7th Wave

On a British Mine Sweeper

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is July 7, 2005. I am interviewing Mr. Billy B. Tune by telephone. His address is: P. O. Box 2084, Big Spring, Texas 79721. His phone number is area code 432-267-6463. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific Wars, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Mr. Tune, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II. Let me ask you first, is your first name Billy, or is it William?

Mr. Tune

Billy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Nimitz Museum.

“Agreement read.”

Mr. Tune

Yes, I think so.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you the first question, what is your birth date?

Mr. Tune

My birth date is June 15, 1926.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Tune

Lynn County, Texas. I wasn't born in a hospital neither. My mother was out in the cotton patch working.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Tune

Yes I did. I had a brother, Joseph quite a bit older, he died at 75. He lived at Lamesa and he was in the electronics business.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he in World War II?

Mr. Tune

No, he was too old for it and had kids. I had a sister that was born in; I was born in Lynn County, the rest of those were born in Eastland County. I had a sister and she died about two years ago at 92. Then I had twin brothers that were born in 1916; they're all deceased. One twin died at 65 years and 2 days in Oklahoma City and his twin brother lived to be 82 and he lived in California. Then I had a sister that was born in 1923 but she passed away as an infant. I just vaguely remember when she passed away. She had meningitis.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were the only one that was in World War II is that right?

Mr. Tune

No, both of the twins were. One brother, the first one he went into the Army Air Corps in 1942. They were 9 ½ years older than I was, the twins were. The one brother, he lived in

O'Donnell; he went into the service there. He volunteered and went into the Army Air Corps and spent 99% of his time in Illinois and Oklahoma. I went into the Navy and the other twin he went in the service, he lived in California, and he went into the service, into the Army. I don't know when he got out.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Tune

Farmer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you grew up during the Depression, how did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Tune

It didn't affect us. The only thing, we all worked. We milked cows; we had a bunch of milk cows and hogs. We had a small farm and everybody had their chores. I worked from the time I was 10 years old until I was 79; I'm still working.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Tune

O'Donnell High School.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Tune

May 1943 and I went into the service immediately after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went into the service in May of 1943?

Mr. Tune

No I went in August of 1943. I graduated from high school in May.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went into the Navy?

Mr. Tune

I went almost straight into the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Tune

I volunteered. You didn't have to register for the draft until you were 18 but I volunteered. I wanted to get out of milking cows and feeding pigs. (laugh) We had jersey cows; we had about 50 and you milked them twice a day.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Tune

I wanted to get out of the sand and dirt and dust. I wanted water.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you actually go in at?

Mr. Tune

Lubbock.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take your boot camp?

Mr. Tune

San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go straight from Lubbock to San Diego?

Mr. Tune

Yes, by train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Tune

About 5 days.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a place to sleep or did you have to sit up the whole time.

Mr. Tune

We had to sit up. We didn't eat. We stopped at farm houses on the way up.

Mr. Misenhimer

They didn't have a diner on the train then?

Mr. Tune

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this strictly a troop train, or were there civilians on it also?

Mr. Tune

No, it was a troop train. It was a recruit train is what it was. They picked us up and some people out of San Antonio, Texas that was in this same deal. We met them out there then, we were in the same company.

Mr. Misenhimer

What company were you in?

Mr. Tune

I can't remember, the 360 I think, I'm not sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do in boot camp?

Mr. Tune

Just about everything you could do. The reason I joined the Navy is because I didn't want to walk. I still don't like to walk. I've had two knee surgery replacements and both hips. I live outside the city limits here in Big Spring and I have donkeys on the place. I used to have goats until they got in my pea patch and then I got rid of all of my goats. I've got some miniature donkeys.

Mr. Misenhimer

So what all did you do in boot camp then?

Mr. Tune

We just marched and eat and tied knots and trained. We had one day of training with the rifle. That was my experience with a gun.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just one day?

Mr. Tune

One day. I was well trained.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have swimming?

Mr. Tune

Oh yes we had swimming and diving; jumping off an aircraft carrier into a swimming pool with a Mae West jumper on, a life saver on. If you didn't get a hold of it right, were you in the Navy?

Mr. Misenhimer

No I was in the Army.

Mr. Tune

If you were in the Navy and you jumped off a 55 foot tower into that water; if you don't hold that Mae West down it will take your head off.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you didn't inflate it until you got in the water is that right?

Mr. Tune

It was full; it wasn't inflatable.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, the kapok or whatever.

Mr. Tune

Then of course we had to drop off of a lower one into the water and take your dress whites off and tie your pants legs at the bottom and make water wings; all of these little things like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

To make water wings, how did you do that?

Mr. Tune

You just take your pants and tie off the bottom of the legs; take it out of the water and flip it over your head and get air in it; that was tied to your pants.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you recall from boot camp?

Mr. Tune

There was a lot of walking.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were trying to get away from that and here you got it.

Mr. Tune

Well yes. I wore a 10 ½ shoe when I went in and the little old boy that was issuing your clothes sat a size 12 up there and I said, "That's too big." He said, "It won't be." When you march the leather off and they resole it, half-sole it for you in boot camp so you know how far you walked.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh man yes a lot. What uniform did you have in boot camp?

Mr. Tune

We had un-dress whites, dungarees blues; our dress uniform, believe it or not was dress blues. East Coast they usually wear dress whites but on the West Coast, no dress whites.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished boot camp where did you go?

Mr. Tune

I came home for five days and went back. I went from the Naval Training Station over to

Balboa Park. We lay out on the ground there all day. Finally a truck came up there and they called your name and you got on the back of a stake bed truck and it would take you where you were going. I was one of the last ones to leave there. We went around to the harbor and boarded a ship; the USS *President Polk*. We went on that and I think we were there probably getting acquainted with the ship and all. There were only two of us out of my company that went to it. I believe my company was 364 but I'm not sure. Then we got aboard ship and we shipped out with some Marines. We headed out in a convoy. We met a convoy out of San Francisco and San Diego; I don't know where all they were coming from but it was a pretty good sized convoy. I don't even remember where we lost the ship. We caught a fish, a torpedo, that's what they called it. Everybody survived, no deaths but we lost our ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was the *President Polk*?

Mr. Tune

Yes, the *President Polk*

Mr. Misenhimer

That was a troop transport?

Mr. Tune

Yes, a troop transport.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave on it?

Mr. Tune

Probably in September.

Mr. Misenhimer

September of 1943?

Mr. Tune

Yes I believe that was right, I'm not sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went in August; it was probably a little later than that.

Mr. Tune

I was only in boot camp six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was probably October or November.

Mr. Tune

It wasn't November. It was October, September or October.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was this torpedoed at? Do you recall where you were when it happened?

Mr. Tune

Somewhere in the Southwest Pacific. You don't know where you are.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had left the West Coast. Did you go to Hawaii or anything?

Mr. Tune

No, we went, hell I don't know where we were going, we just left with this convoy because we picked up some from San Francisco and I don't know where else to get in this convoy. I think there was aircraft carrier, I'm not sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there other transports besides the *Polk*?

Mr. Tune

Yes but I don't know how many though, I couldn't tell you to save my life.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were sunk how were you rescued?

Mr. Tune

We got in life boats. An LST picked me up. From there we went on, I don't know how long, how many days or what, but we wound up down in the islands down there; a long way from home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which island was that?

Mr. Tune

Tarawa. We didn't stop until we got there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went straight to Tarawa?

Mr. Tune

From LST's. See we had the LCI's aboard it. There were several of the LST's. When we got down there they needed some help. You are always short I guess. I wound up getting on an LCI, a landing craft infantry. We carried the 7th Marine Division in on Tarawa.

Mr. Misenhimer

The 2nd Marine Division?

Mr. Tune

The 2nd Marine Division, yes; whatever part it was, I believe it was the seventh wave.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think it was the 7th Regiment right.

Mr. Tune

We didn't go in first. There were six others that went in ahead of us. The eighth wave was shelled under. Our destroyers put those under; men, equipment and all. I guess I was a good solid 17 years old. We went in; we carried the Marines and their business in. We lowered the ramp and they went off and I said, "Well, let's go back." You leave the front down and you put it in reverse and the Ensign told me to get my ass off of there and I said, "What do I do?" He said, "Hunt you a damn hole and find a gun if you can." We were there five days. The destroyers shelled the eighth wave under; the ones that were behind us. What they did was take these LCI's and back them out and shell them under where the others could come on in. That was what I was told. They shelled the eighth wave under; the destroyers shot low instead of where they were supposed to. They were supposed to shell our boats under so the eighth wave could get it; but they didn't make it. Then of course your heavier artillery came on in.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now I understand there was a reef out there that they had trouble getting across; is that right?

Mr. Tune

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you get across it?

Mr. Tune

I don't know. We just puttered right across it because that LCI was a flat bottomed boat with a front end where it would come down. It was a pretty good size; several armed Marines were on there.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how many do you think were on there?

Mr. Tune

I think there was probably, I imagine 100 to 125.

Mr. Misenhimer

On your boat?

Mr. Tune

That's my guess, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

That had ladders down the side that went down didn't it?

Mr. Tune

No, the front.

Mr. Misenhimer

The front came down.

Mr. Tune

The front came out and you went out. I stayed there five days I think, I'm not sure. We were picked up by a mine sweeper. Then we puttered around all over. We were down in there somewhere on some more islands. Once we got off of there I was an old salt then. I'm a gun hater now because you go hand to hand in battle it's tough. I have guns. I have a shotgun and a .22 pistol and a 410 rifle but that's for my personal use here. I have a son-in-law that is a hunter and he believes in all kinds of big-time guns. I don't go hunting. I may go dove hunting or quail hunting or something like that. Anyway, I'm at a point blank of where we went from there. It was an English minesweeper. Then I wound up on a; I mean a U.S. minesweeper, then I wound up on an English minesweeper. New Hebrides and New Caledonia I believe we made down in there. Then I finally caught a destroyer and from there we were on one island, I don't remember what it was and we were unloading an LST, supplies. One hot summer day, well it was always hot

down there. They just beached it up as far as they could go and we were standing on dry sand, sand, wet sand and we were passing whatever we were passing; nobody knew, they just had a convoy, in other words you were unloading that thing. There come a little thundershower and I never came as close to drowning in my life standing on my feet. I was standing there and it rained 11 inches of rain right then in an hour. I had on my Navy cap and I finally turned the front of it down just to keep the rain from there where I could get some air to breathe. That's about the extent. I don't know how many ships I caught coming back but it was over a period of time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back. When you were on Tarawa you were there for five days; were you acting as a Marine at that point, or what?

Mr. Tune

Yes, that's what I don't want to talk about.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand. I understand there were three different beaches; Red Beach One, Red Beach Two and Red Beach Three. Do you happen to know which one of those you might have gone in on?

Mr. Tune

I have no idea. They didn't give it to peons like me; instructions. This old boy that went in, he got killed; my boatswain.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your boatswain, okay. What was your job on the boat there, the LCI?

Mr. Tune

I was just a peon.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just a seaman?

Mr. Tune

Yes, just a seaman; a Seaman Second. My first paycheck was \$21 for the first month, and then it went to \$56 I think it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

The boat that you on into Tarawa; did it have any guns on it?

Mr. Tune

The Marines had guns.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean did it have machine guns or anything on it?

Mr. Tune

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that they used a lot of what they called LVT's, the landing vehicle tracked; do you recall seeing any of those going in?

Mr. Tune

No, I don't. There was some that came in later after our wave. Just like I say when we got off I asked him what to do and he said, "Find you a hole, get in it, find you a gun if you can and shoot anything that moves." They had tree snipers.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Japanese were pretty violent there I understand.

Mr. Tune

Oh yes, they were mean. It was either shoot or be shot; no choice. My choice I'm here.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tarawa was really a rough landing and engagement there.

Mr. Tune

Oh yes. I guess it was; it was pretty brutal. A lot of dead people around there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you left there and went down to the New Hebrides and New Caledonia.

Mr. Tune

New Hebrides and New Caledonia. We came back, I think it was on a troop ship but I'm not sure; a hospital ship or something. I'm not sure. We docked at Pearl Harbor but we didn't get to get off. We went back into San Francisco. Then they sent me back to San Diego to the hospital.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been wounded or what?

Mr. Tune

No, I have asthma. I was having it every once in a while, pretty bad. Anyway, we didn't get off ship there and we came on back to San Francisco and they trained us to San Diego. I went to work out at the submarines there for a couple of weeks I think it was. Then they sent me over to the Naval Hospital which wasn't a Naval Hospital, the hospital was full. I was allowed up-patient because I could navigate and get around. They had Balboa Park over there; they had a bunch of buildings over there that they used for a hospital. I was there; that's where I got discharged from.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were on the *Polk* going over, was it pretty crowded?

Mr. Tune

Oh yes, you couldn't stand with a stick.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness?

Mr. Tune

I don't know. Most of mine was below.

Mr. Misenhimer

So not many people were getting seasick around you then?

Mr. Tune

No, occasionally some old boy would upchuck but I don't whether it was from what we were having to eat or what?

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food on that ship?

Mr. Tune

Terrible. The food that we had on the island there was canned food.

Mr. Misenhimer

C-rations or whatever?

Mr. Tune

C-rations. I said I would never eat anymore Spam but I kind of like it now, which is a surprise.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up a little. On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall where you were when you heard about that?

Mr. Tune

Yes I do. I just had got out of the movies in O'Donnell, Texas on Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Tune

Well I didn't have any idea; I was just mad at the Japanese. I still don't have a great deal of respect for them but I drive a Toyota pickup. (laugh) I think they were doing just what they were told to do, just like I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank that you got to?

Mr. Tune

I got Seaman First. I lost a stripe or two because I was put in solitary. I made Storekeeper Third; that was the highest rank I got but I lost that. I couldn't get into the hospital over there, they were full. Then they opened Balboa Park up. I don't know if you have ever been there or not.

Mr. Misenhimer

No, I haven't.

Mr. Tune

The Ford building and a bunch of buildings; and they had one that was for patients. I got in on the good side. There was an old boy there from Colorado City, Texas and he got discharged and what he done, he fixed the doctor breakfast. There were three ladies that came in and prepared bed patient meals and the doctor's. He got discharged and he got me that job. I was the peon for the doctor at the hospital. So all I had to do was be up at 5:00 to open the doors to the galley so that these three ladies could come in and prepare the bed patients' meals. The doctor liked steak and eggs for breakfast. Just be sure you had steak and eggs and hot biscuits. That's the best job I had while I was there.

Mr. Misenhimer

On Tarawa did you ever see the medics or the pharmacists' mates treat anybody?

Mr. Tune

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

They were pretty good were they?

Mr. Tune

Well, I didn't see but one because they were busy with people injured and hurt.

Mr. Misenhimer

They would take care of them pretty good is that right?

Mr. Tune

Well, the best that they could do. There were some that were really wounded badly and some were just like I was, suffering with asthma.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Tune

I got home with a sack full of chewing tobacco. No, I wasn't a souvenir collector; I'm still not.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anytime?

Mr. Tune

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Bob Hope or anybody?

Mr. Tune

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Tune

Yes, it was poor.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened?

Mr. Tune

When I got off ship, when we got back you come down they give you a little ditty bag of toothpaste, toothbrush, a bar of soap and all, but they wanted 25¢ for it. Anyway that was my experience with the Red Cross.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were overseas from the fall of 1943 until what, you came back in 1945?

Mr. Tune

1945 I guess that was in December; maybe even 1946, I don't know. I was there for quite some time.

Mr. Misenhimer

A little over two years.

Mr. Tune

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were on a minesweeper part of the time is that right, and then a destroyer?

Mr. Tune

That's right I was on an English minesweeper for a while.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all do much minesweeping?

Mr. Tune

I guess they did. I was just a passenger. Why I was on there, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said that you were on a destroyer also?

Mr. Tune

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know which one?

Mr. Tune

No, I have no idea.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were just a passenger on it also?

Mr. Tune

I was just a passenger on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

So after you left Tarawa did you actually have any duties anywhere?

Mr. Tune

Just unloading and work. I did have the Chief Boatswains there but he was older than the hills. A time or two they put me off on another ship, shuffled me around. It didn't seem like anybody wanted me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear of Tokyo Rose anytime?

Mr. Tune

Yes we heard of her.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of her?

Mr. Tune

She was pretty convincing, sexy sounding old gal. You know for a 17 or 18 year old that was something.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever have any interaction with any of the natives on any of the islands anywhere?

Mr. Tune

We had some on New Hebrides and New Caledonia both, but not much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they friendly?

Mr. Tune

Oh yes, they were real nice.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think New Caledonia was French wasn't it?

Mr. Tune

I don't know. I can talk a little bit of Spanish and poor English.

Mr. Misenhimer

But no French?

Mr. Tune

No. We were on the beaches all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

In April of 1945 President Roosevelt died, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Tune

I do.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the reaction to that?

Mr. Tune

Well it was sad, extremely sad. We didn't know what we would do. Of course we knew who was going to be President then, which wound up to be the best President we've ever had, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was one of the top ones, right.

Mr. Tune

Well he called a spade a spade. If you don't like it, the heck with it. This is for the people, with the people, for the people.

Mr. Misenhimer

In May of 1945 Germany surrendered, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Tune

Yes we heard about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Tune

Yes there was; anything that we could find to drink we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you think that you all would be getting more help in the Pacific then?

Mr. Tune

We had no idea.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when Japan surrendered in August do you remember where you were?

Mr. Tune

No I don't.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Tune

I think so. That was a long time ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you hear about the atomic bombs being dropped?

Mr. Tune

Yes we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you hear about that, do you remember/

Mr. Tune

I don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Tune

I didn't get any, just Theater Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about battle stars?

Mr. Tune

Nope.

Mr. Misenhimer

You should have got one for Tarawa.

Mr. Tune

Well I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Tune

Going over on the USS *President Polk*, one of the Ensigns fell overboard. I don't know but he wasn't too well liked. That's what they told me, that he fell overboard.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he rescued or not?

Mr. Tune

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got home did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Tune

Sure I did; the freedom. I thought everybody owed me everything. World War II veterans didn't get treated very well. Times were pretty hard then. My father had died. My mother was trying to farm. I hung around there; it was maize farming and cotton farming. I have asthma. Thanksgiving Day of 1946, I had a sister that lived there in O'Donnell, my mother had remarried and moved to Brownwood. Well she hadn't then, but anyway she married shortly after that. I tried to help gather the crop but I got a real bad case of asthma. On Thanksgiving Day of 1947, my sister carried me over to an old lady's house and gave me a spray, an asthma spray, because she had asthma real bad and she said I won't let you borrow it, but I'll let you have it for just a few minutes. It had a Solution A inhaler in it. She sprayed me with that and I cleared up with asthma. Then I went to Lamesa to see a doctor about it and he told me, "Bill, the best thing for you to do is to leave here. You are free and single and all that. What you need to do is to pack up and leave this part of the country." So I hitchhiked from O'Donnell to Big Spring which is 60 miles. I had a brother that had a place here. He was the one that got out of the Army Air Corps and he had a restaurant. I went to work in that and met my wife. I worked around there and then I started piddling around the oilfield. This little old café had a lot of oilfield people come in there. I started working around there and tried to go to school on the GI Bill. I was trying to get a little more education and wound up working. My brother sold the damn café out and that's when I went to work on cable tool rigs. I just kept on doing that and hanging around Big Spring. When we got married I was working on a big rig then. We moved around. We moved to Midland for one rig.

With the oilfield you have to move around. Anyway, I kept hanging around Big Spring here. I made driller on a drilling rig for Rowan Drilling Company and Urice and several other companies. But I always wanted to stay here in Big Spring. In 1949 I bought a house in Big Spring; a little two bedroom house. I bought it on the GI Bill. We lived there when our daughter was born. Then our son was born and my wife's dad was living with us. In a two bedroom house we had a boy and a girl and he was living with us; anyway we bought another house, a three bedroom down the street from where we were. Then we lived there about 10 years on Circle Drive and then we bought the place where we are right now in 1966. I've owned a wrecking yard. I've owned a used car business and politics. I went to Texas Tech and decided to be a geologist and came to find out they didn't pay anything. Anyway, my education is basically not very much.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went to Texas Tech on your GI Bill then?

Mr. Tune

Well, I went whenever I could. I went there some, I didn't go much because I was working seven days a week, eight hours a day.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned about the Korean War.

(tape side ended)

Mr. Misenhimer

You said they took you to El Paso.

Mr. Tune

We caught a bus at Tahoka, the county seat and we went to El Paso. We got out there and there were three different lines, the Army, Navy; Army and Army Air Corps were both the same then; and Marines. I got in the Marine line. I walked over there and they said, "Any previous military experience?" And I said, "Yes." They looked up at me and said, "When did you get discharged?" And I told him and he said, "What the hell are you doing out here?" I said, "Well I got drafted." I had to sign up for the draft and I got drafted. He said, "Man you just need to go back home and do whatever you want to do." So anyway, he turned me down.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you a question that you may or may not want to answer. What would you consider the most frightening time you had?

Mr. Tune

That would be the landing on Tarawa.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would have been, right. Were there any humorous incidents anywhere, anything funny along the way?

Mr. Tune

There was some after I got back to the States. There wasn't anything funny down there. When we were unloading that LST with supplies, we were standing on dry ground. When it come it an 11 inch rain in an hour, water was up knee high on us. That was kind of comical for an old West Texas boy that when it rains 15 inches in a year, you've got a bumper rain.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you recall what island that was on?

Mr. Tune

New Hebrides or Caledonia, I don't remember which one. That's been a long time ago. Time, days and months and all that just didn't register much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Tune

Military?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Tune

No. I made friends with two or three different guys. One was in the Naval Hospital in San Diego and then in boot camp I had a pretty good buddy there. We were the only two left on the ground and we were both assigned to the USS *President Polk*. When it went down I don't know where he went but he was a boxer and I thought I was until I fought him. I weighed about 190 pounds and he weighed 140 and he wanted me to spar him. I

put the gloves on with him and he beat the crap out of me. That ended my boxing career right there. He was from Crookston, Minnesota. I have had no contact with any of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Tune

I just don't watch battle movies because Tarawa comes back. My family doesn't know anything; my wife, my kids, neither one of my kids. I have a nephew here that is nine years younger than I am. I have two at Lamesa; one is eight years younger than I am and one is 10 years younger than I am; my oldest brother's boys. This boy that is here now is from my sister. He was closer than my brothers. They would say Uncle Bill taught us everything that was mean and sorry; smoke and chew and drink a little beer and all that; but I've never discussed this with any of my family. My wife, we will be watching TV and they get into one of these battles and I just get up and walk out. I just can't stay with it.

Mr. Misenhimer

I can understand that because you went through a lot there on Tarawa.

Mr. Tune

Too much. It's just not good. You block these things out from your mind and your head. My brother, one of the twin brothers, lost a daughter in 1976. She was grown and teaching school and had a brain hemorrhage and just keeled over. Then when we lost our two grandsons, we carried both of our kids and their spouses to Las Vegas. We went up there and said we'll pay for all of it; let's get up there. I went with my brother when he lost his daughter. I called him and told him about the death of our two grandsons. He always said, "You never get over it, you've got to learn to live with it." I wanted my son and my daughter to get in; we got in there and talked about it. In other words, this is my motto, you never get over anything like that, you have to learn to live with it. That's what I've done with my naval career, which wasn't much. It's a tough old world.

Mr. Misenhimer

So after Tarawa you weren't in any other battles then?

Mr. Tune

Not anything like that. We made some beachhead landings but I wasn't involved like I

was there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were some of those?

Mr. Tune

New Caledonia and New Hebrides.

Mr. Misenhimer

But those were not any fighting there?

Mr. Tune

No, that's what I'm saying.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, anything else.

Mr. Tune

That's about it. We had hogs and all this milk that was separated in the separator. You would get the cream and set the milk out and let it clabber and pour it in the hog trough with some maize on it. Put some maize in there and put some milk in there. We had, my mother was a big gardener. We had a water well there and a windmill pumping into an overhead tank; the overflow would run out into a stock tank there, cement stock tank. It would flow from there over into another stock tank and then it ran out of that and run down through a grape arbor and then on down to the garden. We had a water ditch down there and you would just have to go down there ever so often and open that ditch up and let the water run to the other end.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that's the way you made it through the Depression then?

Mr. Tune

Yes. We ate fine. We had ham, bacon, eggs, chickens, pork and beef, whatever.

Mr. Misenhimer

And vegetables from your garden?

Mr. Tune

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Billy, I want to thank you for taking time today to do this.

Mr. Tune

I appreciate it. You said about my old buddies. I didn't have any good buddies. I'm sorry to say that. I've never met a stranger. But to me in politics, you have got to be that way.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's right.

(end of the interview)

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