

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Colonel Clarence A. LeMieux

Spokane, Washington

August 25, 2006

**One Bombing Raid to Rabaul
Crash Landed on New Guinea on Return
Six Weeks to Get to Port Moresby
Plane is Being Returned to U.S.
“Swamp Ghost”**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is August 25, 2006. I am interviewing Colonel Clarence A. LeMieux by telephone. His address is: 636 East Magnesium Road, # 205, Spokane, Washington 99208. His telephone number is area code is 509-468-5992. 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.

Mr. Misenhimer

Colonel LeMieux, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today.

Colonel LeMieux

I spent all day yesterday looking through as many records as I could find. I hadn't looked at them in 35 years. Most of them are brown now and I can hardly read them.

Mr. Misenhimer

I appreciate you doing that. I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II also. The first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the National Museum of the Pacific War. When I do these in person I give it to the person to read and sign but since this is by phone let me read this to you to make sure it is okay with you. "Agreement read." Is that okay with you?

Colonel LeMieux

Okay by me.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I would like to do is get an alternative contact. Our experience tells us that after several years the person may not be where we can contact them when we try to get back in touch and we can't find them. Is there a son or daughter or someone that we might be able to contact in case we can't get to you?

Colonel LeMieux

I have no sons and no daughters. I have only one brother left living. His name is Joseph LeMieux. His address is 209 Broad Avenue, Spokane, Washington. 99205 I believe is the zip code. His phone number is 509-237-8750.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you might be moving to San Antonio, is that correct? Are you still planning on that?

Colonel LeMieux

Not as of this date, no. I can hardly use my legs so there's no use going any place.

Mr. Misenhimer

My first question is what is your birth date?

Colonel LeMieux

December 24, 1916.

Mr. Misenhimer

You'll be 90 come December 24th?

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Colonel LeMieux

Virginia, Minnesota.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Colonel LeMieux

I had two brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was either of them in World War II?

Colonel LeMieux

Both of them were. One of them was in the Coast Guard and one was in the Army. The one in the Army got a couple of shots in him over in Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

Joseph, what was he in?

Colonel LeMieux

He was in the Coast Guard. He was in Seattle loading boats with bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is your other brother living also?

Colonel LeMieux

No, he died two weeks ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Colonel LeMieux

Lewis and Clark High School here in Spokane.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Colonel LeMieux

1934.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you finished high school?

Colonel LeMieux

I tried to get a job and I was very ineffective. I got a few jobs around here. That was just ahead of the biggest depression this country ever had. Finally I got one down here at the State Theater. They were changing over from a pipe organ to oral talking on the screen. I was helping them tear out the pipe organs and all that. I worked there for about two weeks and then they told me that the Evergreen Theater Company in Seattle had bought the State Theater here and would be taking it over real quick. So that put me out of a job again. Some friend of mine came up and said, "Hey the Army out here at Fort George Wright is recruiting a bunch of soldiers." They had them coming in from Missoula and all over. They had about 300 to 400 out there, volunteers. I went out there and volunteered to join the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day did you join then?

Colonel LeMieux

I forget the date but it was 1935. They must have about 300 people wanting to join out there. I was very fortunate. I was one of five that they picked to send to Hamilton Field, California because that was where the Army was starting up an Aviation Corps. So that's where I went, to Hamilton Field, California. That's just south of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Colonel LeMieux

Very much. We lived in a small town out here called Clayton. They had a big brick yard and a terra cotta plant and everything closed up. My dad was a barber. Nobody got a haircut. So it was pretty tight. That was the reason I wanted to go to work as soon as I could to help them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went down to Hamilton Field in California; what did you do there?

Colonel LeMieux

I washed dishes and learned how to march. Then one day they said, "We're going to send you off to school." I went to Chanute for a course in engines and airframes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Chanute Field, that's at Rantoul, Illinois, right?

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct. It lasted 38 weeks or something like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up. Down at Hamilton Field, how long were you there?

Colonel LeMieux

I was there about two or three years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Before you went to Chanute?

Colonel LeMieux

No, I went to Chanute the first year I was there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were at Chanute how long then?

Colonel LeMieux

I think it was 38 weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

You studied engines?

Colonel LeMieux

Engines and airframes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that schooling?

Colonel LeMieux

It was one of the best that I've been to.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there?

Colonel LeMieux

It was a big Army World War I base and they turned it into a school, into a training base.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you lived in a barracks then?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Colonel LeMieux

It was good. I got stuck on the job there for about six months.

Mr. Misenhimer

A job doing what there?

Colonel LeMieux

KP.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this after the school, or during the school, or when?

Colonel LeMieux

Before the school.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some things you studied in that school?

Colonel LeMieux

We studied engines, engines overhaul, airframes, maintenance, structures of airplanes and the problems that could exist with them. We had to do a lot of work changing spark plugs, putting oil in, checking lines and all that kind of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

These were radial engines, or in-line engines, or what kind?

Colonel LeMieux

Radial engines; Pratt and Whitney, B-10 Aircraft. That was the aircraft that they had. They had B-10's and B-12's coming up which were the same but they had a little different lubrication system on the B-12's.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything in particular that you recall from that school?

Colonel LeMieux

I recall all the studying that I did there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you first went in what was your pay?

Colonel LeMieux

\$21 a month.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were there at Chanute Field, what rank did you have there?

Colonel LeMieux

I was a Private First Class.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your pay as a PFC?

Colonel LeMieux

I think it was \$30.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which in those days was quite a bit of money.

Colonel LeMieux

Yes it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had your housing and food furnished. Were you able to send some home to help your family?

Colonel LeMieux

Not much. You had to pay for your laundry and buy your clothes and get them washed and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you didn't have a lot left. Anything else that you can recall from your time at Chanute Field?

Colonel LeMieux

Not really.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished there where did you go?

Colonel LeMieux

I went back to Hamilton Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there then?

Colonel LeMieux

I got assigned to one of the air crews out there and an airplane and I started working with them. I did that for about a year.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a plane was that?

Colonel LeMieux

B-10.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who makes that plane?

Colonel LeMieux

I've forgotten. It's a two engine aircraft.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did it have a single tail or a twin tail?

Colonel LeMieux

Single. They built the B-10's and B-12's; those were the next new planes they were getting. The B-10 engines had a big fault in them. The upper rocker boxes on the cylinders in order to be greased you had to take the rocker box cover off and put some stuff in there that was only good for about five hours of flying and then you had to change it. On the B-12's they put new engines on them and did some refining on the airplane and they put an oil pressure thing with grease and you didn't have to do that anymore. They could fly longer missions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who made these engines?

Colonel LeMieux

Pratt and Whitney.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know what the horsepower on them was?

Colonel LeMieux

No I don't.

Mr. Misenhimer

The B-10 and B-12; were they all metal or were they fabric?

Colonel LeMieux

They were all metal.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were assigned to a crew on one particular plane or what?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes I was assigned; the crew chief put me to work and told me what I had to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else happen during that time?

Colonel LeMieux

About that time they came out and said that we should do a little studying. If we had some time off I could go down to the base where they had the final maintenance business, the big ones, and study there to take an examination eventually for me to be licensed by the United States. I did that. I got a license that I could work on any airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the airframe as well as on the engines, right?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that considered to be an A & E?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have then?

Colonel LeMieux

Private First Class.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

I got ordered around there and they were building a Depot in Sacramento, California; a depot to overhaul airplanes and so forth. I saw an ad in the paper that said you could apply for a job up there. So I went up and took some tests and applied for a job. Of course that was about nine or ten months before the thing was to open. I came back to the field and I got to talking to some of the troops around there. The Squadron Commander heard about it and I was getting close to my third year of service and that would be the end of my first hitch. He heard about it and he called me in and said, "What the hell are you doing going up to Sacramento?" I said, "That's where I'll get more money." So he made me a Corporal and gave me a choice coming up on three years. So I stayed there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your original enlistment was three years, is that right?

Colonel LeMieux

That's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

This is the Army Air Corps?

Colonel LeMieux

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

It became the Air Force later on but it was the Army Air Corps then.

Colonel LeMieux

In 1947 it became the U. S. Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened there?

Colonel LeMieux

Not too much that I can remember. I finally got assigned to a crew that was flying. We were up shooting targets towed by another airplane. If you hit them with so many shots with a machine gun you got an extra \$6 a month. So we trained the guys that were picking up the targets that what color shells we were shooting. They put some paint on the front of the shells before you shot them. They were towing a target behind the airplane. If there weren't enough holes they punched some so they might assume you might have done, so I got the training on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane were you flying in when you did that?

Colonel LeMieux

B-10's.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you shooting a machine gun or did you say a rifle?

Colonel LeMieux

A machine gun.

Mr. Misenhimer

30 caliber or 50 caliber?

Colonel LeMieux

50 caliber.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that you did there?

Colonel LeMieux

That was about it I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you considered to be a flight engineer at that point?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Colonel LeMieux

The whole Unit got assigned to Salt Lake City, Utah so we moved up there. There was an Army Base there that had been vacated and we moved into that. The airport was at the civilian airport; that's where our airplanes were parked. That's where we had our lunch at noon and so forth. We didn't have any hangars to put them in to work on for a while. They were building barracks down by that civilian airport for us later on. I went to work out there. We made our routine missions and bombing practice runs and all that stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you still flying the B-10?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes, B-10's and sometimes B-12's.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened there?

Colonel LeMieux

We stayed there until the war was about to break out and they were sending all the airplanes overseas. We were supposed to go back to Hamilton Field and there were a bunch of other squadrons that were on bases that were due at the time. They were supposed to fly to the Philippines. We started off and they said that we had two crews that did not have enough over water training, so we didn't fly with them. A bunch of the rest of the airplanes took off and those are the ones that got shot up in Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer

These were B-17's or what at this point?

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct. We got those at Salt Lake City.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was it to transition from a B-10 to a B-17?

Colonel LeMieux

It took quite a bit of instructions and investigation and reading up on it because of the size of the airplane and the amount of equipment that it had; what it could do and what it couldn't do.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right and of course four engines compared to two and a lot of other things.

Colonel LeMieux

We had better communications and more people; ten people.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in an outfit at that point?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes the one that came from Salt Lake City.

Mr. Misenhimer

What outfit was that?

Colonel LeMieux

I forget the number of the damn thing. I can look it up for you later.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Colonel LeMieux

We got into Hawaii after the Japs had left there. It was all shot up and the airplanes were on the golf course and so forth. Every other day we had to make a mission out to search for Japanese boats in the ocean. We would come back and get a day downtown in the hotel. The next day we would go out again to do that. We did that for about two weeks I guess. They had sent a bunch of airplanes down to Australia. They didn't have any gun chargers with them. So we were supposed to take these gun chargers down to Australia. We started out on that and about the second night out, I forget the island we stopped on, they were practically without runways. The rain was so heavy in the morning that we tried to start the engines and we got three of them started and couldn't get the fourth one started. We took the magneto off and figured out that was the problem. It had got wet and

was dead. I put it in the oven and dried it off and it still wouldn't start so we went back to Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer

You flew back on three engines?

Colonel LeMieux

Before we went to Hawaii they said that we could go up to Sacramento, which was now open of course, and get it ready to go overseas. We were told that we were supposed to leave Hamilton Field because they thought there were some Jap boats out there that were going to bomb the place. So they sent us down to the field out of Los Angeles. It got dark so we stayed there because we were supposed to wind up in the Mojave Desert out there. They figured the boats couldn't shoot anything out that far. We were using that as a bombing range only and it only accommodated about 60 people. We took off and we got in there and my assistant and I went up to the club and got a steak. We just got ready to start eating and they said, "Get your butt back in here." They told us to go out there anyway because this place was under the possibility of being shot at. So we had to fly a night flight down there. On the way we spotted some light down on the ground so we landed. It was an airplane company down there that was testing one of their airplanes. They told us that we had to taxi about 15 miles up the road to get to where the Army was, so we taxied up there. They told us that we wouldn't find a place to sleep because there were people standing up or laying around on the ground all around because there were too many airplanes up there. They told us that if we would load bombs on three airplanes that we could take off in the morning and go to Sacramento to be the first ones to get clearance there to get the guns installed. So that's what we did and the next morning we

went into Sacramento. They said it would take them about ten days. They had to get the flight equipment that we didn't have and weatherization things in the airplane and I don't know what all they did to it. Then we took the airplane and started off to go to Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up and ask you some questions. When you went to Pearl Harbor the first time, you flew your airplane over there, right?

Colonel LeMieux

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long after December 7th was it that you got there?

Colonel LeMieux

About the 8th or 9th.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, just a day or two afterwards. There was an awful lot of the damage still there then?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes. The airplanes were still on the golf course.

Mr. Misenhimer

What field did you land at over there?

Colonel LeMieux

Hickam.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's right close to Pearl Harbor where all the ships were?

Colonel LeMieux

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you see a lot of the sunken ships and all of that?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes I saw that. I saw a lot of signs of the damage that they did and I saw a lot of damn people that were hurt.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have to do any clean up or rescue any people or anything?

Colonel LeMieux

No we just took the airplanes and ran those missions out searching for Japanese.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you left there to go to Australia you were taking some type of equipment did you say?

Colonel LeMieux

Gun chargers for some fighter airplanes that we had given to Australia. They weren't with the airplanes and so they wanted them in a hurry.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when your plane wouldn't start, you came back to Pearl Harbor, is that right? Then you came back to the States from Pearl Harbor then, right?

Colonel LeMieux

No we went on down to Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer

So when did you go to Sacramento and all of that?

Colonel LeMieux

That was right after the war started.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had been to Hawaii and came back is that right?

Colonel LeMieux

We hadn't been to Hawaii yet. We went off with the gun chargers and then we got back with the gun chargers to Hickam. They told us to take this airplane that they had and go to Australia and haul the gun chargers. We came back because we couldn't get the engine started. Then a little later they formed a lot of airplanes to go down at the same time towards Australia, about six or eight at a time going down there. They took off at different times because the fields on some of these islands they had to land on were just nothing but dust. You had to wait for 30 minutes after the airplane ahead of you took off before you could go. So we got down to Australia and went up to Townsville. That's where we were stationed from then on.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there then?

Colonel LeMieux

About three days after we got out there we got a mission to go bomb Rabaul. They said the Japanese had a lot of ships up at Rabaul. We had seven airplanes that were supposed to get together and take off on a night mission. There were heavy clouds and there were no lights on the ground. Two of them ran together and we were down to five airplanes.

Instead of flying out in formation we never saw another plane until well after daybreak. Something happened to the others and two of us went on up to Rabaul. We started the first run around Rabaul to drop the bombs we had and Rabaul is protected by a bunch of volcanoes. The wind was just blowing that smoke over us so that we couldn't see the target of the ship down there. We decided to make another circle. We didn't see any airplanes in the air and we made another flight around there to come back and bomb it again. The first crew that was up there with us they bombed it on the first run across there through the smoke and headed for home. We took that extra path around there and came back and dropped our bombs. We started away and looked up and there were about seven Zeroes up there. We started shooting at them to keep them away from us. We had to put full pressure on the engines to get out of there, climbing to get to a higher altitude. So there went our fuel. We finally got away from them. I had one up there; I had the front gunnery business up there in the cabin. I just kept that gun pointed at the one that was about a half mile up above us. I would shoot one up every now and then but I couldn't hit him. Anyway it kept him away from us and we got away from there. We got down and got almost to New Guinea and you could see a field. It looked like a wheat field, just as flat as could be. The pilot said, "Let's land there." There was a river there that we could have landed in and made a water landing and been safe for sure. But he said, "That looks like a nice field; we'll just move into that one." So we went down and landed in there and he made a perfect landing. He was up about 40 or 50 feet and made a right hand turn, the whole airplane did and then stopped. We found out that we were in about six feet of water in a big swamp of Kuni grass. That's what we got into; it was about ten feet tall and we didn't know anything about it. So we went out and put a life raft off the tail of the

airplane to get into it. We put in what little water we had aboard the airplane left and we had a couple of knives and guns that we took. We got in that boat and we couldn't move it at all because you had to cut that Kuni grass down. We had to drop everything except what we could carry and we took off and went through that for three days.

Mr. Misenhimer

How deep was that water?

Colonel LeMieux

It was up to waist deep and sometimes deeper. We had no drinking water so we drank from the swamp. We had no food. About the third day out there we came to a little island where some natives were pounding on a log. They were taking the guts out of a log. I don't know if they were making a boat for fishing or if they did something with that internal stuff from that tree. They knew enough to know that they were supposed to take care of us if anything happened, so they took us to their village. We got to their village and we found out that each village in New Guinea had to have a house built up on stilts for Australians and so forth coming through there for any particular purpose. They put us up in that and lit a fire underneath it at night time to smoke the mosquitoes out. Finally we contacted, or they contacted us, Alan Champion, who was the Resident Magistrate in New Guinea. He told us that we should get them to get these boats together; these canoes that they had made out of logs, and bring us down to the coast and he would meet us. So that's what we did. We went down to the coast with them and he met us at the coast down there. We went to a place called Buna. That was his headquarters. We stayed there. It was quite an interesting deal to see how things were operated down there. One day we were there and a native policeman, who was identified by a robe with a leather belt around it

and two pockets; everybody knew they were policemen. He told us and Alan Champion that some of the natives were up there gambling. Evidently they had seen some of these troops come through there and sit around and gamble. Champion said, "Go bring them back in and we'll put them in jail. They are not supposed to gamble." So a couple days later they came back in with about five or six of them. While Alan was holding court on them I went down there because I had become pretty friendly with Alan Champion and he had a court. They brought the first one up and he asked him about this; a big boy and he said, "Did you gamble?" The boy would say, "Yes sir." So he said, "Take your clothes off", and they gave him a small pair of britches that made them look like prisoners; all six of them and they put them in jail. Jail was a Quonset hut with a fence around it about three feet high. They liked it in that place. They got fed good and they would let them go out and play volleyball for exercise. When he was going to let them go they didn't want to be turned back, they wanted to become policemen. Then one day Champion got notice over the radio to take us up the coast. There was a man and his son who had run a plantation up there. He was to bring us up there. We would probably have to walk across the Owen Stanley Range because they couldn't arrange for any water transportation from Buna. So we went up there to stay with this man and his son. They were raising different types of fruits and vegetables. It was an experimental deal. He had been a former Australian that ran some kind of shop manufacturing engines. There was something wrong with his son or something which is why he went up there and did this. We stayed with them about ten or fifteen days. We got a call to take off and start walking across the Owen Stanley Range. We were getting everything ready. We had these natives that with the sticks that they put the stuff on, blankets or whatever. We started off and we got a call

that they finally got a boat down there and we were to walk back down to the coast. So it took two days and we walked back down to the coast and got on a boat and started back for Moresby. Something happened that the boat had to go up the river to get fixed. We got dumped off and we sat there. It was a little sort of town for fisherman. In a couple of days a boat came by and picked us up and brought us into Moresby. From Moresby we went home to Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you landed in this swamp was any of your crew hurt?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

And there were ten of you, right?

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

You walked through the water for several days and came up to a little hill?

Colonel LeMieux

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you all sleep at night, or what did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

The first night we took those knives and chopped down a bunch of this grass and chopped some little bushes that were growing in there and tried to make something that we could

lean on to sleep. We started that and about an hour after that the damn stuff sunk. So we didn't sleep much we just hung on to the branches of some of the bushes around there and slept as well as we could. We drank water from the swamp because that was all that we had.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did it make you sick?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

What about food; did you have any kind of food at all?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

No berries or nothing like that?

Colonel LeMieux

Nothing. All that was there was that grass.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you met the natives did they talk English? How did you communicate with them?

Colonel LeMieux

Pidgin English and they knew what their jobs were. "I am fellow down here." They knew that when you wanted them to put you down. They called you "fellow". They said, "Fellow sit here." They didn't say sit but they made a motion with his hand and you would sit down.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did these natives look like?

Colonel LeMieux

Just black.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they have big fuzzy hair?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes. Some of them wanted red hair and they would take and put something in their hair and then tie themselves to a tree to let it make their hair look red.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then they took you on down to the coast to Alan Champion?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes. First they took us down there by the boat. We took the canoes down to the river and met Champion at the mouth of the river. He picked us up and took us to his place.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then you finally got back to Port Moresby. How did you go from there to Australia?

Colonel LeMieux

They picked us up in a British flying boat and flew us back to Townsville.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

We sat on our butts. I was taken off of a crew and given responsibility for any airplane that got damaged while flying around there and needed something, an engine change or

something like that. I would get me three or four mechanics and I would have to go do it. They had landed on some of the other airports in Northern Australia there. We would have to go up and change an engine, change a prop, change a wheel or whatever had to be done. If there was any major function to do and I couldn't do it or get it done. We would come back to Australia and fly the airplane. They did have a sort of sub-depot up there in the center of Australia. We would fly the airplane up there and they would fix it up there.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of planes were these?

Colonel LeMieux

B-17's.

Mr. Misenhimer

All of them were B-17's?

Colonel LeMieux

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your crew; what happened to them?

Colonel LeMieux

They got assigned to other crews or other jobs around there. I don't know what all they were doing.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you all didn't stay together after that then?

Colonel LeMieux

No. they broke the crew up and took me off of it because I was the Crew Chief.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you crash land there in New Guinea?

Colonel LeMieux

I don't remember the date.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think I saw something that said February 22nd or 23rd.

Colonel LeMieux

Could have well been.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you got back to Port Moresby around April 1st I believe it says.

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you see any of your crew anymore after that?

Colonel LeMieux

I've seen a lot of them since then; what's left of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean while you were there in Townsville.

Colonel LeMieux

The rest of the crew was assigned to different crews.

Mr. Misenhimer

But they were still around in the same area?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes we stayed there. Fred Eaton was the pilot and he kept the crew together.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go on anymore missions after that?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened there in Australia?

Colonel LeMieux

I got malaria. I started getting at noon time everyday a fever. One day I couldn't stand it any longer and I went down to the little doctor deal they had there. They had one doctor and one nurse and one boy working in the office. About 5:00 I went down there and told them, "I just can't stand this. Where's the doctor?" He said, "They're on the beach." (laugh) I said, "I would like to get some help here." So he said, "I'll see what kind of transportation I can get you and I'll haul you out to the hospital." He went out and found one of these bomb loading trucks where they sit on the backseat of them and load the bombs. We sat on that and stopped on the way at a liquor store and got a drink. We went down to the hospital. The hospital was a row of houses in town there that were built on stilts. They put beds underneath the beds in the houses that they had. One of them was a big office there for the doctors. We went into the doctor's place to report in and they had a bunch of crew that had been shot up lying on the floor in there on stretchers. They told us to go across the street and down underneath the house where there were two beds in the corner. There were two of us there at the same time. So we went over there and got

beds and went to bed. They came in and started feeding us these pills. They brought the food in a mess kit to you. They had no nurses. There were a lot of Army people in there too, a black outfit was in there. They were great kids. They would get up sick and walk to where there was an ice cream shop about a block and a half from there and they would go get us some ice cream. It was pretty good. So we didn't want to get out of that hospital too soon.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you catch malaria?

Colonel LeMieux

Just being up in New Guinea because of all of the mosquitoes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you sleep under mosquito netting or anything in Australia.

Colonel LeMieux

No. The only thing that you slept under was if you were in one of these houses that the natives had, they would build a smoking fire underneath it.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was in New Guinea. When you were in Australia, did you take the Atabrine tablets.

Colonel LeMieux

Not that I know of.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know a lot of times they gave Atabrine tablets because it was supposed to stop malaria.

Colonel LeMieux

I think that started a little later that they found out about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

After you got out of the hospital, then what did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

I was assigned to a crew to fix the engines and to take care of airplanes that landed on this station. If they needed a prop or an engine change we would have to call the depot and they would haul an engine up there and we would change it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you there in Townsville?

Colonel LeMieux

I would say maybe another five or six months and then we went back to the States.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel back to the States?

Colonel LeMieux

By boat.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of boat was it, do you recall?

Colonel LeMieux

It was an Army boat. It went down the coast of Australia and crossed over to South America and up past Panama and then into San Francisco.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip coming back?

Colonel LeMieux

It was horrible. They had a bunch of people down below that never got up on top of the

deck. They were sick and puking and all that kind of stuff. I was able to stay on the top deck of the boat under a machine gun; on for four hours, off for four hours. That's what we did on the machine gunners. We finally got home in I guess a couple of weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have then?

Colonel LeMieux

My rank then was Tech Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you get back into the States?

Colonel LeMieux

I would have to look that up again and get with you later.

Mr. Misenhimer

Would this have been in 1943 or what year?

Colonel LeMieux

We went down there in 1941 so yes it would be about the beginning of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you come back to in the States?

Colonel LeMieux

We came into San Francisco. They gave us some time off. When we came back we had to report back to a base in Texas, Smoky Hill or something like that. They were going to form a unit back down there when they all got back. First off they sent us up to Pocatello. After we had the vacation they sent us up to Pocatello by train. Pocatello wasn't ready so we had to get back on the train to get back to this little dump in Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

What town was it near in Texas do you know?

Colonel LeMieux

No I don't. It wasn't close to anything of any size. That was where I got commissioned.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that.

Colonel LeMieux

We got in there and the Commander told me that if I would get three pilots to give me a recommendation he would write me a recommendation and put me in for a commission.

So I did that. I didn't hope for anything to come of it but one day I got a message that I was appointed a Second Lieutenant. So I said, "Where in the hell do I get the uniforms?"

They had a training base about 30 to 40 miles from there, out in the desert. I went out there and there had been people that hadn't passed the training but had ordered uniforms.

A uniform dealer was there and that's where we got our clothes.

Mr. Misenhimer

This would have been about how long after you got back from Australia? Six months, or a year or what?

Colonel LeMieux

Three months.

Mr. Misenhimer

So this was in 1943 then.

Colonel LeMieux

Yes. My job was to inspect all the people that I had been working with, enlisted people

and their bags and whatnot to see if they had any contraband in it. Which I didn't do very well. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

You probably knew what they had already, huh?

Colonel LeMieux

Sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what else did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

Then I got reassigned from there eventually and I think it was to Rapid City, South Dakota. They had a B-17 deal up there where they were sending the airplanes from the factory up there. Any airplane that Boeing made there was probably something in there that the Army wanted that wasn't on the contract. Those things would come up there and we would have to fix them. So we had to go up there and report in. We had a Captain running the thing and a First Lieutenant and had about 10 or 15 Second Lieutenants that had just gotten out of school in Massachusetts. We would have to get these airplanes ready. In the belly of them we put a container that we could put all the sparkplugs and tubes and batteries and anything they needed overseas; we used it as a cargo ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

I think I went to Salina, Kansas. I don't remember the years. I got in the outfit there and I was made an Engineering Officer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now this is still during the war, right?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes this was part of the war. I think that was where I was appointed First Lieutenant.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then what?

Colonel LeMieux

I may get you all screwed up on this because I'm not sure. I don't know if it was in that place that they had some B-17's and they were trying to get them to be able to carry more bombs. They set up a deal down in Florida, near Mac Dill Field where they were going to test some jet engines, or engines of some kind that they were going to put on the tail of that thing. I've forgotten what it was but it was red fuming nitric acid and something else that they were going to do it with. They sent me down there on that. I reported in at Mac Dill. I told them what I was down there for and they said, "That thing isn't starting for another six weeks." I said, "What the hell am I supposed to do?" The man up there that I was talking to, the Colonel, he said, "You can become an assistant to the Recruiting Officer." So I went down to the recruiting officer and he said, "I've only recruited two people in the last month. People aren't enlisting." He said, "You do what you want, but let me know where you are every day." So my wife was down there and we traveled around Florida every day. I don't remember which place I got sent to from there.

Mr. Misenhimer

What you were putting on the B-17's; was that what they called the JATO units?

Colonel LeMieux

They were putting them on the B-17's but then they cancelled it because they found after they did some experimenting with it that the fluid that they were using in the nitric acid would burn the tail off the airplane if there was a malfunction. So that thing was cancelled and I was sent to Guam from there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel to Guam?

Colonel LeMieux

I traveled to Guam from Hamilton Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane did you go on to Guam?

Colonel LeMieux

It was a B-17.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you arrive in Guam, do you know?

Colonel LeMieux

I don't know. I need to look on some records. I could probably find them. I had a thousand pages out here last night. This was after the war was over. I got a job down there salvaging all the stuff from those little islands, like Okinawa, where we had airplanes. They were salvaging it and bringing it into there to salvage. I had a bunch of Japanese prisoners I had to work with to do it. The first thing we worked on was a bunch of cameras; motion picture cameras in leather in cases; Bell & Howell, 8 mm. The only thing we saved on them was the lens. We threw everything else into the ocean. A lot of

the other stuff coming through there was the same. We had about 10 or 15 refueling trucks from the various islands there and they were down in the mud. Some inspectors came down and just raised hell and that we should have gotten them out of the mud. I don't know why. But that's where we stayed there.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was on Guam?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes this was on Guam. I stayed there for a year. Then I got transferred to headquarters which was up in Manila. I was assigned there as Chief of Maintenance. There was a depot there. They were taking in a lot of airplanes and checking them out. The C-47's they were selling and anything else that they could sell up there, they were selling. A lot of stuff we just had to throw it away. The rest was junk. They had the streets there in Manila full of food that they brought in on an airplane, or on a boat; cases and cases of it. The top ones would rot. We would have to take about three or four off the stack to find a can of peas.

Mr. Misenhimer

This would have been in 1946 or some such?

Colonel LeMieux

About that I would guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Colonel LeMieux

I don't remember when I left there. I didn't get that far in the digging here last night.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back and ask you a few questions. On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you?

Colonel LeMieux

I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have to it?

Colonel LeMieux

They figured it was a big deficit; we lost something.

Mr. Misenhimer

On May 8, 1945 Germany surrendered. Did you all have any kind of a celebration then?

Colonel LeMieux

I don't believe we did. I don't remember it.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in the States I'm sure. Then on August 6th they dropped the first atomic bomb.

Did you hear about that?

Colonel LeMieux

No I didn't, I don't think.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when Japan surrendered on August 15th, did you have a big celebration then?

Colonel LeMieux

No. I think I was transferred to the Philippines or Puerto Rico. I got sent to Puerto Rico for three years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Puerto Rico; when was this now?

Colonel LeMieux

Damn I don't remember the date but that was about the time that I went to Puerto Rico for three years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that after you were in Guam and Manila?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then that had to have been in 1947 or so.

Colonel LeMieux

Approximately. I stayed down there for three years as Chief of Maintenance for that outfit. I was a Major at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, now from World War II, did you get home with any souvenirs?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were overseas could you get your mail with any regularity?

Colonel LeMieux

I never had any mail delivered over there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Never any? Not when you were in Australia or anywhere?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get married?

Colonel LeMieux

When I got back from my original deal over there and I was sent back to Sacramento to get the airplane fixed up so we could go over with all the equipment; that's when I met my wife. About a year later we got married.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date did you get married; do you remember?

Colonel LeMieux

I'll have to look these all up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes. We got into New Guinea and up to Moresby. We hadn't brushed our teeth or anything so we went up to the Red Cross and asked them if we could get some toothbrushes and stuff. We got two toothbrushes for ten people.

Mr. Misenhimer

For ten people, wow. Did they charge you for them?

Colonel LeMieux

No but it was like they were giving their right arm. .

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in Australia did you get paid regularly?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes I did.

Mr. Misenhimer

What money did you get paid in?

Colonel LeMieux

U. S. money.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Colonel LeMieux

I got three Commendation Medals. I got a bunch of little things for firing the guns or whatnot; that little red stripe you put on your sleeve. That's about all.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get an Air Medal or anything like that?

Colonel LeMieux

No. I didn't fly enough.

Mr. Misenhimer

You probably got the Asiatic Pacific ribbon.

Colonel LeMieux

Yes I got a lot of those ribbons. But the only medals that I received were these three Commendation Medals. They were for my job in three different assignments and were given to me by Major Generals or higher.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes (laugh).

Colonel LeMieux

What did you think of her?

Colonel LeMieux

Just another program.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a chance to meet many of the Australian people down there?

Colonel LeMieux

No not really. We were out on the edge of town and we stayed pretty much in the compound.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you didn't get to go to the pubs or anything like that down there?

Colonel LeMieux

We could if we wanted to but we didn't do it too much; didn't need to. When I was in Australia I was in the same tent as the Mess Sergeant and the Transportation Sergeant. The First Sergeant there called out that there were some troops, we were getting our rations from Australia, and beer was one of the rations that we got, but it wasn't very much. He found out that people in the Army outfits that were in there were drawing this out before they would go out. They were getting rations. He would go up and ask for two chits from them. We would get two rations of beer from them; one for our tent and one he gave to the troops.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was your food there in Australia?

Colonel LeMieux

Not too good. Bread for example, they made bread with a crust that you couldn't cut with a knife practically. They would drive in back of the mess hall and just dump it off the back of the truck on a porch, with no wrapper on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a lot of mutton?

Colonel LeMieux

Quite a bit. We would put money in a pool and go out and buy chickens and stuff like that and we traded a lot of tea. We would get the same rations of tea that they did and we would exchange it with them for the coffee that they got.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, they wanted the tea and you all wanted the coffee.

Colonel LeMieux

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened down there?

Colonel LeMieux

I can't think of any.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that on Guam or the Philippines you were helping to dispose of a bunch of the surplus material.

Colonel LeMieux

For example down there we had one island where we had all the bases ship their jeeps to. We had 300 of them. The Chinese bought them. The Chinese bought a couple of the airplanes that we sold.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all take any stuff out in the ocean and dump it in the ocean?

Colonel LeMieux

We gave it to the Navy to do that. They washed our clothes too. We had to go up about 30 miles to the place where the jeeps were. He bought one. We came back and stopped at an Army base there on the way back and he told them that he had just bought this thing. They looked at the tires and said they weren't that good and they put a new set of tires on for him. He brought that back.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said that you sold them for \$300 a piece, the jeeps?

Colonel LeMieux

We sold them for \$300 a piece.

Mr. Misenhimer

As I recall they cost something like \$550 back then.

Colonel LeMieux

I don't know what they cost, but that's what they got for them. They also had a boat come in there with a bunch of food and clothing and stuff on it. It was just after the war. It had a bunch of troops on it they wanted to send home on the same boat. They just took all that stuff off the boat, stacked it in the street and put canvas over it and sold it. When the Cold War ended it was the same thing. We had three bases in England, three bases in Morocco and three bases in Canada. They had all this stuff stored there for fighters and all that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Colonel LeMieux

I don't know. The day I enlisted I guess. I was never really frightened or worried about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers that you had over you; not the pilots but the other officers?

Colonel LeMieux

I had some damn fine ones.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you think they knew their jobs?

Colonel LeMieux

They sure did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did any of them have any weaknesses?

Colonel LeMieux

Not that I would know of. I associated with a lot of them. A lot of them became Generals in fact. I got a letter from the first General that I worked for. He wrote me out a letter and got me that Commendation Medal.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you finally leave the Air Force?

Colonel LeMieux

1965.

Mr. Misenhimer

You retired as a Colonel?

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

A full bird?

Colonel LeMieux

That is right. I'll tell you a little thing about that. At the point in time on the orders where I was promoted to Colonel it had 86 Lieutenant Colonels on there to be promoted; 85 of

them were out of the Army School or Air Force School. I was the only one in Reserves.

Mr. Misenhimer

Since you went from an enlisted man to an officer were you considered to be what they called a Mustang?

Colonel LeMieux

I never heard of that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, that may have been the Marines; one of them called it that. Were you involved in Korea at all? During the Korean War what did you do?

Colonel LeMieux

I was in England.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were you doing in England?

Colonel LeMieux

I was over there in the 7th Air Division over there. I was Chief of Maintenance of the 7th Air Division. We had three air bases there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were finally released from Active Duty did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Colonel LeMieux

Not at all. When I got discharged my wife and I decided that we were going to do a little traveling. We traveled up to Alaska and saw that. We went to Japan for a visit. We went to China for visit; came back and then went to Brazil and Panama City for a visit. We

came back home where we stay and there was a letter that said the Chief of Maintenance position of this Air Division has been eliminated and they are going to make a civilian out of it. They said, Why in the hell don't you put your paperwork in, which I did. I became a Chief of Maintenance of the Division for three years. Then retirement came up. This was after I retired that I did this. So I got back home and they said why don't you put in a letter to get this job. So I had to write to St. Louis to Civil Service. I came back and I got the job and I stayed there for nine years. They changed it back to where they wanted to make it a military position again. So I got a transfer to San Antonio to the depot down in San Antonio. I had some property in Mexico and I was going to go down there and build on it. I went down there and spent a year and retired from that. So I retired from 10 years as a civilian and 30 years as military.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions with your different outfits?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes but now they're all dead.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that the plane that you all crashed in New Guinea they have now given it the nickname of *Swamp Ghost*. They are trying to bring it back home; is that right?

Colonel LeMieux

That is correct. We've been trying to get that airplane back home since the war was over. No, no, we couldn't have it and we couldn't have it. Finally one day they said, "Yes you can have it but you have to pay for it." We developed enough money to pay for it. I don't know what they wanted; I wasn't in that part of the deal. There were some civilians doing

this outside of me. They got all that ready and the money down in the bank in Australia but then they cancelled that out. Then about a month and a half to two months ago they made a decision. They said, "You can have it." So they sent a bunch of people down there with equipment to dig it out of the swamp. They had to borrow a helicopter from Russia to do it because the Russian helicopters can lift more than any American ones. They got down there and dropped the engines off. They picked it up by helicopter and had it ready to put on the barge out there. Some guy came up with a law that you couldn't take any of that stuff out of the country and that's the last I've heard about it. They have spent millions of dollars on that thing so far.

Mr. Misenhimer

It would still be in pretty good shape wouldn't it?

Colonel LeMieux

They said it was. I talked to some people that were down there when they rescued the airplane. He's a lawyer in Texas; the Texas Air Corps. His father was one of the pilots with us and he has been quite associated with this. He flew a flight down there and got a helicopter and landed on it while it was in the swamp to get pictures of it. I've got a whole bunch of those. Right now, as far as I know, they haven't gotten the airplane back.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever use your GI Bill for anything?

Colonel LeMieux

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Colonel LeMieux

Not right now.

Mr. Misenhimer

I appreciate your time today and thank you for your service to our country and all that you have done for us.

Colonel LeMieux

You wanted to know what schools I went to.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes; what schools did you go to?

Colonel LeMieux

I've got all of them out here. Defense Atomic Support Agency School, Headquarters Skill Command, Sandy Airbase, New Mexico; August 22, 1969. United States Air Force Air Training Command Certificate of Proficiency from Chanute. This was the second time that I went to Chanute. This was in October 26th, but I don't see the year on it. It was after World War II. Here is one before the war. I went to Super Charger Service School that was run by General Electric Company out of Boston. That was in 1941. United States Air Force Military Personnel Policies, Practices and Procedures School, July 19, 1977. Department of the Air Force Director of Training. I completed a Supervisor's and Planner's Course Number 31000-15, Headquarters Technical School, Sheppard Air Force Base, 1964. In 1973 Ballistic Missile Staff Course. I got involved in a bunch of those damn missiles after they started putting them out. I've got a listing I got while I was in there. 1938 was when I went to Chanute for Airplane Engines and Mechanics School. 1940 I went to Turbo Maintenance School at the General Electric Factory in

Massachusetts. 1943 was a Cold Weather Maintenance School at Buckley Field, Colorado. That was where they were trying to figure out how to stop a bunch of seals from leaking in cold weather and so forth. We spent about three weeks on that. In 1945, Maintenance Management School at Orlando, Florida. 1946 Technical Inspection School, Manila, Philippines. 1951 Aircraft Maintenance Management Course, Chanute Field. 1966 FB-111 Staff Maintenance and Familiarization Course. This course covered all systems in the FB-111 Aircraft. May, 1969 Civilian Personnel Management Course, Barksdale Field, Louisiana. Major functional areas of civilian personnel management contained in the Air Force Manual for the placement, performance evaluation and so forth. I think that's about all of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

I noticed some of those were after 1965 so that was when you were a civilian then, right?

Colonel LeMieux

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you have there?

Colonel LeMieux

I have a membership in the Knights of the Round Table up at SAC Headquarters: In Recognition of Outstanding Contribution in the Maintenance Field and Service to the Missions of Strategic Air Command, John D. Ryan, General, USAF.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever know General LeMay?

Colonel LeMieux

Yes I met him several times. I was in several meetings with him up there. I completed a Missile Management Maintenance Course in 1961. That's about all of them that I can find, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there any funny incidents along the way?

Colonel LeMieux

Not that I can recollect as of this moment. There were probably a lot of them; some of them I probably wouldn't want to speak about. Oh here's another one that I went to; Staff Maintenance Familiarization with the U.S. 1-F Helicopter course.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of General LeMay?

Colonel LeMieux

One of the best Generals in the service. He got right in the middle of things. I know that sometimes we would get bogged down with a maintenance problem and he would have his staff call you up there and raise hell with you. If the Air Force didn't keep up, of course each division in the Air Force, they would report you to the headquarters at SAC. If anybody started falling down they heard about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was a hard task master but he got the job done.

Colonel LeMieux

That's right; I don't think that he hurt anybody. For example, the Army was digging these holes to plant these missiles in. They were doing some up there near Denver and they

were too damn slow on it. My boss at that time of the 15th Air Force sent a Colonel up there to straighten those people out and get them busy and get them to doing it right. The Corps of Engineers said, "You can't do anything to me Colonel." The next day he called up SAC and they took all those people out of there and the Colonel had the job of putting all the rest of those missiles in. He wouldn't stand for that horse stuff that he was getting.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, they had quite a few of those missiles around Ellsworth and that area.

Colonel LeMieux

They had them all over. In fact when I was in England we had four missiles that we gave to the British. Each base that had them had to have a place there where we had a glass window between our shop and their shop so we could watch what they were doing since we gave them the missiles. I had to go up and watch those areas ever so often. I had to see what they were doing. I got involved in that. I look at it now and I got involved in too damn much. I enjoyed ever bit of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Good. Is there anything else that you can think of?

Colonel LeMieux

No. If you want to call me back in about a week or so I may have some factors for you but I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay. Now the one mission that you flew to Rabaul, was that the only bombing mission that you flew on?

Colonel LeMieux

That was the only bombing mission; yes. We flew out of Java on the way down. I forgot to mention that. The British had reported some Japanese boats coming into that area. So we went into Java with about five or six airplanes I guess it was. We stayed there for six days. We had to go out every day and search the seas for those Jap boats but we didn't see them. One of the interesting things there, a British troop that blew the bugle for the British came down and was talking to us. He had his bugle with him. We had a bottle of whiskey and he had never tasted whiskey before. He got drunk as hell and said, "I'll never blow another bloody note." (laugh) He went home and I guess they raised hell with him.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's a funny incident; anything else?

Colonel LeMieux

Not right now.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well thank you for your time today and I'll check back with you in a week or so and see if you've come up with any dates or times for me.

end of interview)

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