

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**Alvin J. Kendzora
West Chester, Illinois
June 26, 2008**

**Radio Operator on C-47
Headquarters Squadron, Far East Air Force**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is June 26, 2008. I am interviewing Mr. Alvin J. Kendzora by telephone. His telephone number is area code 708-531-9782. His address is 2901 Buckingham Avenue, West Chester, Illinois 60154. 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

Al, 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. The first thing I would like to do is get an alternative contact. We have found out that sometimes in two or three years we try to contact a Veteran and he has moved or something has happened. Do you have a son or daughter or someone that you might give us a name and phone number in case we can't reach you?

Mr. Kendzora

My daughter Kathy O'Rourke. She lives at 3S079 Blackcherry Lane, Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137. Her phone number is 630-790-1229.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the next thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Nimitz Museum. When I do these in person I give them to the man to read and sign but since this is by phone, let me read it to you to make sure it is okay. "Agreement Read." Is that okay?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes that's okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birth date?

Mr. Kendzora

October 25, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Kendzora

I was born in Chicago.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Kendzora

I had two sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they involved in war work of any kind?

Mr. Kendzora

No they weren't. They are both older than I am and they weren't involved in any war work or anything. One was married to a soldier. In World War II he was in the service too. He was in the Air Force. But other than that she wasn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

She didn't work for a defense plant or anything like that?

Mr. Kendzora

No, nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Kendzora

We were really lucky. We didn't have any adverse effect. We were considered middle class at the time. My dad was lucky to have a job all through the Depression with Western Electric in Chicago. He worked all the way through and never got laid off or anything. He just happened to be in the right department.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where did you go to high school?

Mr. Kendzora

I went to Farragut High School here in Chicago. It was a two-fold thing. I went to Farragut for one year and then at the time, trades were kind of a big thing if you weren't going to college, which at the time, not too many went to college. I decided to take up a trade so I transferred after one year to Washburn Trade School in Chicago. I went there actually 3 ½ years until I was drafted into the service.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you graduate from that high school?

Mr. Kendzora

I got a graduation diploma although I missed the last few months because I went into the service. Not actually at the graduation, but I got my diploma.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Kendzora

April 9, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Kendzora

I volunteered. What it was at the time, I thought I was going to be drafted because I got my draft notice. But then from a friend of mine I found out I could go down and take a test for the Air Force, which I did. I went downtown Chicago and took my Air Force test and made the grade. I actually went into the Air Force rather than being drafted into the Army. That's how I happened to get into the Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went in there in the Chicago area?

Mr. Kendzora

I was inducted in Ft. Sheridan. Then from Ft. Sheridan for the Air Force, I went down to Sheppard Field, Texas for basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that is at Wichita Falls?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. That was 6 or 8 weeks of basic training at Sheppard.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel down to there?

Mr. Kendzora

We went down by troop train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Kendzora

Fine. It was just the normal cars with sleeping quarters on them. They were kind of like sleeping cars from the old train style.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you done much traveling before that?

Mr. Kendzora

No. The fact is that was the first time that I had been away from home. I had never been away from the city of Chicago for any length of time. It was all new to me.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was pretty common back in those days.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, it was kind of a new thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got to Sheppard Field what all did you do there?

Mr. Kendzora

Just the normal basic training thing. Every day you got up and did your calisthenics or whatever in the morning. Then they had different field procedures that you went through like camp outs. You went on an all day march with a full backpack. You took rifle training on the range and pistol training with a .45 caliber gun. They also had a test for you while you were there for what division you might be qualified for. Like they had tests for pilot, copilot and the commissioned officers. Other than that you had the radio operator and the mechanic or engineer on the plane. There were like five tests but at the time just being toward the tail end of the war, they weren't really taking any

commissions anymore like pilot, copilot or navigator. They weren't admitting any into school anymore. So it was a matter of going to radio school for radio operator or engineer school, which was down at Biloxi, Mississippi, I think. I happened to qualify better for radio operator. So after basic training I was shipped to Scott Field, Illinois for radio operator school. It was a 22 week radio operator course. It involved a lot of code. During World War II they used the Morse Code for message sending back and forth, other than voice code. We had to learn to take 30 or 40 words a minute of Morse code with the headphones on. You would sit there and gradually work your speed up. Sending wasn't really that much qualified; as far as speed goes, you had to be able to receive at least 30 words a minute. That was one of the things and while you were there you got some of the history of flying and what you needed to do and procedures. Also you built your own radio set, a sending set and a receiver both in the class that you went to daily. Other than that, you had your daily exercise that you did too. That was all part of your training. Every day you had calisthenics and exercise in the morning and then your classes during the day. General procedures like that. After the 22 week course you got your diploma for radio operator. Then it was time to make up the crews. At this time I was sent down to Malden, Missouri. That was where you started getting your flight training. There we were split up into crews. We got a mechanic or an engineer to work with and yourself and then we would go out on flights. Usually you would be assigned daily or every other day to go out on a flight. It might just be about a half hour or maybe an hour. We actually never handled paratroopers for training purpose. But we did pull gliders. That was part of the training. We would go out and hook up to a glider and we would take off and then we would pull the glider for maybe 15 or 20 minutes and then the glider would be released.

They would gradually come down on their own and land in some cornfield somewhere or even back at the airstrip, wherever. If they came down accidentally they would end up in a cornfield but usually they would try to release them to where they could come down at the airstrip itself. That was part of the training there, the air crew training.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane were you flying in there?

Mr. Kendzora

C-47's. The commercial plane was the DC-3. Twin engine. The old transports.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many people were in the crew?

Mr. Kendzora

There were just the four of us. The pilot, copilot, radio operator and engineer. There wasn't a navigator required on those crews because most of the flights, where they were dropping troopers or pulling gliders, were maybe 200 to 300 mile flights where they would pull the glider and release it. So they weren't long distance flights. For that reason, navigators weren't required on these flights.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you would take paratroopers from time to time?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, depending on where you were assigned. I think they were used more in the European theater than they were in the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's true.

Mr. Kendzora

I think we only dropped troopers once or twice in the Pacific in areas where they were cleaning up in the Philippines. We dropped troopers in there to sweep the area.

Mr. Misenhimer

Before you got to Missouri, had you done any flying at all?

Mr. Kendzora

No I had never been up in the air in a plane of any kind. So everything was new to me, really.

Mr. Misenhimer

Of course, your pilot and copilot had been in training somewhere else and came in there then?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. They all went to their own training schools. I don't remember where the pilot were trained. After we got into our training at Fort Wayne we had a crew that was assigned, a pilot, copilot, engineer and radio operator. From there we were shipped overseas as a crew. We didn't fly over because we weren't assigned our own plane. Another reason would be that the C-47's don't have that kind of range. Our C-47's range was maybe about 400 to 500 miles, something like that, without refueling. What we did was, they flew us to San Francisco. In San Francisco we got on a liberator bomber.

Mr. Misenhimer

A B-24?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes and from there we flew overseas. I think there were about three or four crews that

went as passengers. We flew over there and stopped at Hawaii and refueled there and then went to Tarawa. From there we went to New Guinea, which was our final destination.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave from San Francisco?

Mr. Kendzora

This was in May of 1945. The actual date of departure was May 22, 1945. We got back to the States from overseas on April 19, 1946. So it was almost a full year.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip down there?

Mr. Kendzora

Fine. We didn't have any adverse weather or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you in Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Kendzora

Really not long. We stopped at Hickam Field and we weren't allowed off the field. We went into the Red Cross station. We were able to go in and get a coffee and donut or something like that while they refueled. Then we flew out of there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it the same pilot and copilot that took you all the way?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. They were like a transportation crew.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then you got to New Guinea?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. We landed there and we were assigned to a tent area. From there we were assigned to different squadrons. I think I was originally assigned to the 364th Troop Carrier Squadron which was stationed, not on New Guinea itself but there is a little small island which is maybe a half hour's flight from New Guinea. That's where I was originally assigned. I stayed there about maybe a month to a month and a half. That was when they were moving everything up to the Philippines. Our group was there for that short time. We weren't really assigned to many flights or anything. Then, as a group, we moved up to the Philippines. There I was reassigned to the Headquarters Squadron of the Far East Air Force, which was stationed at Leyte, or part of it was on Leyte anyway. We stayed there a couple of months. I think we got there in June and stayed there for a month or two. That's where we were notified that they dropped the atomic bomb. They came through about 2:00 in the morning when the bomb was dropped saying that they had dropped the bomb on Japan. Then several days later they did the same thing. They woke us up at 2:00 in the morning saying that the war was over and that Japan had surrendered. All that news was received while we were stationed there at Leyte.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you in Leyte, Tacloban or where?

Mr. Kendzora

Tacloban, right. We had a tent city there right outside the city itself.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all do any flying while you were there?

Mr. Kendzora

I think we had a couple of flights where we took troopers. There were still in the Philippines, in Luzon, some pockets of resistance that were in the back areas. They didn't bother anybody but they put the troopers back there to clean it up as much as they could. To get the stragglers and whatever.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you dropped some back there?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. Most of them were under starving conditions and they didn't have food and they more or less surrendered on their own.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this before the war was over?

Mr. Kendzora

No this was after.

Mr. Misenhimer

They dropped paratroopers on Corregidor I know, but you probably weren't involved in that were you?

Mr. Kendzora

No. We didn't get in on that. The war ended and after the war ended they flew us up to Manila. They moved us up to Manila and we stayed at Fort McKinley at Manila. It was an old fort that had been there for years. That was our barracks in Manila. From there we

operated mainly doing trips from there up to the Tokyo area flying back and forth with a lot of supplies or maybe officers that would be going up there for some reason and we would ferry them up there. That was about all it amounted to at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you make that trip nonstop?

Mr. Kendzora

No. That was another thing. We had to stop at Okinawa because that was too much of a flight without refueling.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is quite a ways.

Mr. Kendzora

It was about four hours and then another four from there to Tokyo. So it was kind of an all day trip. We would stop and refuel and then keep going and make it to Tokyo the same day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Would you spend the night in Tokyo?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, we would spend the night there. We had headquarters right across from the Emperor's Palace. It was an old office building. I think it was 10 or 20 stories high. They converted the office space into barracks for the Occupation troops. We were right there and MacArthur's headquarters was in the next block, in the building next to us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see MacArthur?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, actually one time. We were just out there, I don't know what we were doing, if we were just walking down the street or driving up or what. He came out with his entourage, the three or four guys that were supposed to be his bodyguards or people to escort him out. That's how I happened to see him.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were there in Tokyo did you get a chance to go into town or anything?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. We got around town. We had jeeps available there for us. One thing we had to do, the airfield was maybe a half hour from the downtown area. So we had to drive through Tokyo itself to get out to the airstrip where we had our plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was it? What kind of condition was Tokyo in?

Mr. Kendzora

It was pretty sad really. You see aerial views of big cities. If you see an aerial view of Tokyo, all you saw was just flat buildings really. Because what it was mainly at that time, the normal residence was, the working class people lived in one story type residences. Naturally with the bombing they were pretty well flattened. Plus another indication of the bombing were the smoke stacks. You see these big 40 or 50 or 60 foot smoke stacks from office buildings or factories, they were all standing. Which was kind of an odd thing with bombing. You would think a bomb would fall and flatten the whole area. It would flatten the building itself but for whatever reason, it wouldn't knock the smokestack down.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes and we did a lot of firebombing too, so fire did a lot of that.

Mr. Kendzora

Maybe that was partly it too. They weren't actually hit by high explosives but probably by incendiary.

Mr. Misenhimer

They did a lot of that, I know there.

Mr. Kendzora

They probably didn't bomb that area for military reasons, but the downtown area, the main street, the main shopping areas, all those office buildings were pretty much intact. They must have purposefully steered away from bombing those areas and the palace itself. Those were in pretty good condition, but the outlying areas were really pretty well flattened. You could see that a lot of either bombing or incendiary bombing was done. It was in pretty sad shape.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any interaction with the local people?

Mr. Kendzora

They used to serve our food. They worked in our kitchen. They had them working in our kitchens, cafeterias or mess hall. So they were there and for the most part they were pretty meek. There were very few that spoke any English. There was hardly any talking.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were driving through the town from the airport, did you see any of the people on the streets or anything?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes there were people walking or doing whatever they were going about. The kids would run after the jeeps looking for candy or a handout, which a lot of the soldiers did throw candy or gum to them or whatever they had. There was no military contact of any kind.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't go to any local stores or anything like that?

Mr. Kendzora

We kind of walked through some of the department stores to see the way they displayed their merchandise. It was not too much different from what we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

When was your first trip to Tokyo?

Mr. Kendzora

I think it was probably around September of 1945. It was the 16th of September for our first flight up there.

Mr. Misenhimer

So it was not too long after the surrender, then?

Mr. Kendzora

Right. We were up there pretty quick after the surrender was over with.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you make quite a few trips up there?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. I made, probably, ten or twelve. Then later on, right around the holidays, I actually spent Christmas and New Year's up there. We were up there for about a two or three

week stretch there at the holidays.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you there for R&R, or what?

Mr. Kendzora

They considered, that not being combat troops, we didn't get any R&R. It was just time off that we didn't have anything to do. Luckily, we even got a trip to Shanghai there. I don't know how our pilot wrangled that. But that was kind of like an R&R because we spent about a week in Shanghai. We had lodging there in the city itself. We got to tour the city and see what it was all about. That was quite an interesting city too. It was kind of a mixture. There were a lot of different sections. It was kind of split up into different nationalities. There was a Russian section and an English section and a few different nationalities. They were kind of segregated into different areas. The bulk of that population were right there in that spot. It was kind of interesting. The rickshaws. That was one thing that you didn't see in Tokyo very much, rickshaws. But when you got to China, they were all over the place. That was their main transportation. Either the rickshaw with somebody running or a bicycle type rickshaw with a rickshaw attachment on the back. It was a pretty poor class of people. China was a lot more poor as far as the people itself than Japan was, the way they lived and the things they did. In Shanghai, a lot of the rickshaw drivers didn't even have living quarters. You could see them huddled up in a store front somewhere sleeping or things like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of shape was Shanghai in?

Mr. Kendzora

It was very good. It didn't have war damage of any kind. It looked like a natural city.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened?

Mr. Kendzora

We got to Korea too on a flight. We got to see right around Seoul, Korea. Again, there was no war damage of any kind. It was just a sightseeing flight I guess. The pilot got a chance to get a flight over there, so we did that. There was no sign of any war damage of any kind.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you take to Korea?

Mr. Kendzora

It was just a flight. We had our own plane that we kept there right in Tokyo on the airstrip there, that was assigned to our crew. What it is, if you are over there, you are required, in order to get flight pay, you are required to get 5 or 6 hours a month flying time in order to get your flight pay. Some of those were more or less a flight to get our time in so that we could receive our flight pay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all fly the same plane all the time?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, it was the same plane. Our engineer would check it out. If there was anything that wasn't up to par or needed work, some times it was things he could work on. Otherwise, they would have it worked on there at the airfield.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all have a name for it?

Mr. Kendzora

No we didn't. One thing we didn't do, like a lot of the bomber crews did, the bomb squadrons. I have a number of pictures that I took over there of the plane sitting on the strip. We didn't have any ID's of any kind on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you still with the Headquarters Squadron?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, the Headquarters Squadron of the Far East Air Force. That was where my discharge was from, the Far East Headquarters Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened?

Mr. Kendzora

Really not a whole lot to get excited about. Once the war ended it was kind of a time thing, waiting. You had to have so many points. I don't remember exactly how many, but it was a point system, how many month's service, plus how long you were overseas as far as getting back to the States. I had to stay there until April of 1946 until I was able to get transportation back to the States. We got on a liberty ship. It was in April, towards the end of the month. It was a 17 day trip from Manila to San Francisco on a liberty ship. I think we had 2,500 to 3,000 returning on that ship. I don't know if you've ever been on one of those. I think it was six bunks high. I don't remember exactly how many were on each level. I know there were a few guys that we didn't see them the whole trip. They

were up on the top, the third or fourth or fifth bunk and stayed there. You weren't required to make roll call or anything. So you were more or less on your own unless you got assigned KP or something.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness on that ship?

Mr. Kendzora

It's funny. There was and then there wasn't. A few of them got sick before we got out of Manila Harbor. Just standing by the rail, I guess just the motion of the ship just got to them. I was lucky, I didn't get sick. 17 days and I even had KP or whatever they called it in the Navy. I had that a couple of times. There were a few times that I got a little woozy. But we didn't have any bad weather all the way, 17 days across the Pacific, and no what you would call a bad storm, big waves or anything. Pretty uneventful weather as far as the weather was concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were over in Japan, did you get down to Hiroshima or Nagasaki?

Mr. Kendzora

No, I didn't. I got some nice pictures out of the window of our plane as we were flying by. We flew right by, either coming or going on the plane. In fact, I've got a 5" X 7" picture that I had blown up. It was a nice shot of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did they look?

Mr. Kendzora

We did fly over where they dropped the atomic bomb but we were at a higher altitude so

we couldn't really see a lot of the damage down below. We flew over the area.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened while you were still overseas?

Mr. Kendzora

I don't know how this happened. There was a man that lived about a block away from where I did in Chicago. He was in something in the medical corps where they made artificial limbs and that. He was in that division. When I was stationed in Manila, all of a sudden they said that Al Kendzora come up to the main gate and they told me, "You have a visitor." So I came up to the main gate and here was this guy that lived about a block from me where I grew up. He was there to visit me. I still don't know how he knew I was there. He's passed away now. But that was one thing that I always wanted to ask him, "How did you ever get in touch with me or find me there?" Here he was visiting me and we were all the way over there in the Philippines. However he did it, I don't know. He was there to visit me and we spent the day there together and then he went back to his outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branch of the service was he in?

Mr. Kendzora

The Navy. I don't know how he happened to get in there. He was into tool and die making before was what he did. But how he got into that branch, I don't know. That was always a surprise to me how he found me way over there. Whether it was accidental or he knew how to look for it or what.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your family in contact with his family back in Chicago?

Mr. Kendzora

No. I had lost my mother when I was 14 years old and my dad passed away when I was still at Scott Field in Illinois, so I didn't have any parents.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened?

Mr. Kendzora

Nothing really exciting. Nothing that I can think of right off hand.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you some questions. Back on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

Do you recall where you were when you heard about that?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. I was out in Indiana about 100 miles from Chicago. I was on a farm out there. We had some friends that lived on a farm out there. My sister was living there at the time too. We were all there on Sunday afternoon. I think we were listening to the Bears football game on the radio. I remember that. We were all gathered around in the livingroom listening to the game and the announcement came over the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Kendzora

At the time I didn't really think so. I was 16 years old at the time. I wasn't even thinking about the service. I think the draft was in effect at the time but that was another couple of

years away. I didn't even have a thought about it really.

Mr. Misenhimer

I don't think they were drafting anyone less than 21 at that first point.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, that's right. They had certain restrictions too at that time. Then later on they started drafting everybody pretty much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, it went down to 18.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, because my brother-in-law was drafted and he had two young boys. At the time he didn't go overseas or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer

Are you talking about Ken Alberding?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. There were certain things that if you had family you weren't shipped out for one reason or another. If you had more than one in the family.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Kendzora

I think I saw a Bob Hope show there at the Philippines and a few lesser shows where they didn't have big stars. They were USO entertainers but not big names.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Kendzora

No, not really. I think I had a Japanese camera that I brought back with me. I had it for years and then like everything else, it eventually got discarded (laugh).

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you took some pictures over there. What kind of camera did you have for that?

Mr. Kendzora

That was one like these old box cameras. *(Tape side ended.)*

Mr. Misenhimer

So just a small, like a box camera you say?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, a box camera. In fact I made up a scrapbook with my service pictures. I must have 100 to 150 pictures in it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any trouble getting film for it?

Mr. Kendzora

It seems to me it was one that wasn't hard to get film for. I don't remember having trouble getting film for it. It must have been something that I could use one of our films for. I don't recall having a problem with it anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Kendzora

No. I think there was a Red Cross right across from our building in Tokyo. They were set

up right across the street from our building. They had donuts and coffee there all the time. But other than that, I didn't have anything else to do with them.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in the Philippines, could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. It seems to me we didn't have any problems. Our mail was pretty regular.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were over in the Philippines, did you get paid regularly?

Mr. Kendzora

That's another thing. I was over there for just short of a year and I never got paid. I think I took one or two partial payments. They ran out of money or something. Actually there was nowhere to spend money there anyway unless you got to Tokyo or some big city. All I had, I think, was two partial payments of \$50 I think for the time that I was overseas. I got a check, I don't remember what, but I think with my overseas pay and my flight pay, I think I got a \$150 a month or \$175 a month. It wasn't a lot but when I got out, I got a check for \$2,200, I think. Which was enough for me to buy a new car. As soon as I got a chance I put an order in for a new car. Back then, cars were like \$1,200 or \$1,500 and you got a pretty nice car. That was the one thing that was unusual. I didn't get paid all the while. My records were going all over the place. They were shipping them here, shipping them there. But there was our salvation to anybody that needed money. They could go in and get a partial payment and get it straightened out later.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got paid, what kind of money did you get paid in?

Mr. Kendzora

I think they gave it to me in Philippine Pesos because I was in the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard that they would get paid in the local money.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, that's what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Kendzora

It was pretty good. The guys that I was with, in my general group there, hadn't been over there too long. I know when we first got to New Guinea at Biak, we were relieving some guys that had been over there for over a year. They were anxious to get going. That was the one unusual thing that kind of bothered me for a while. The yellow skin of the people out there. Anybody that had been over there for over a year, their skin had turned a yellowish color because of the Atabrine they had to take for the mosquitoes, for the malaria. It didn't affect everybody the same, but whatever their skin texture was, it turned a yellowish color.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have to take Atabrine?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. They had them at the mess hall. Whenever you went in for mess they had the Atabrine tablets.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you take those in the Philippines also?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Kendzora

No, I never did that. We had a problem with the International Date Line. The pilot missed his birthday when we were coming overseas because his birthday had already passed when we went over the International Date Line. His birthday was right on that date and it had already passed. (Laugh) I never got around to the equator.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Kendzora

No, I never heard her. She was probably one but we never had much to do with the radio. I think some of the guys would have music playing but I never heard her on the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. You were still in the States then, right?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of reaction to that?

Mr. Kendzora

I think we were just getting ready to ship out somewhere. I think that was when we were getting ready to go down to Missouri. There was no great reaction to it that I can remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would have been just before you went overseas.

Mr. Kendzora

Right. I don't recall that there was any great reaction.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. Did you have any celebration then?

Mr. Kendzora

We were on base but I don't think we got any liberty to go into town or anything. We probably had a celebration, a few beers or something like that. We didn't get to go into town or anything. We were right in a smaller town in Missouri too, so there was no great reaction like you would have in a big city.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in the Philippines, before the war ended, was there talk about invading Japan?

Mr. Kendzora

It seems to me that I heard it from somebody but that may have been recently. A few of the senior groups that I get in with now, one of the guys was part of one of those outfits that were getting ready for the invasion. It was pretty close you know. If it had gone on for another month or two, maybe.

Mr. Misenhimer

November 1st is when they had planned to invade.

Mr. Kendzora

I don't think a whole lot of word got out about it unless you were actually involved.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know a lot of people in Europe, when the war got over there, they prepared them to go for the Invasion of Japan.

Mr. Kendzora

That was the sad thing about some of them. Here they had ended that European war and they were going to ship them over to get involved with this one over here.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the higher up officers that you had? Your CO and others up there?

What did you think of those?

Mr. Kendzora

As I remember, we didn't have any complaints about them. They were all pretty good.

We were treated well. We had no complaints as far as I can remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any time that you felt frightened or threatened?

Mr. Kendzora

No, I didn't, not personally. We had a few shaky flights when I wished that I was on the ground. You get over there in the Pacific where you have a lot of water between islands.

If you get caught in a storm, you don't feel very safe because there's no place to land. We had one really shaky experience. We were just out on a flight, I think one of the

Colonel's wanted to get his flying time in for the month. He was doing the flying on our plane and our pilot was the copilot and we had myself and our engineer. We were headed up away from Manila just for a short flight. We ran into one of these thunderstorms. The pilot was the Colonel and not that experienced either. He got tangled up on his altimeter there and he wasn't in control of the plane and we were diving at the water. Luckily the pilot caught it and was able to get us out of the dive. Then we got up out of that and landed on an airstrip there on northern Luzon. When we got on the ground, the pilot wouldn't get back on the plane. So we left the plane there and the next day we got a jeep there and drove the jeep back to Manila to our base because he wouldn't fly with that Colonel. He said he wasn't going to fly with that guy again. So that was kind of an odd experience. It was a rather close call.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did the Colonel fly back then?

Mr. Kendzora

Yes he got back later on and he didn't have much to say. He knew he was wrong.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would be pretty scary.

Mr. Kendzora

You get into those thunderstorms and get to bouncing around and those weren't what you would consider a big plane. They were big enough but you could feel it when you got bounced around. That's one thing I always noticed up there, flying up to Tokyo, you would get up to Japan itself, and flying over those mountains, how rough it was because of the air currents. That was one thing that I always noticed there, the bouncing around.

We were limited in our altitudes too. We never had oxygen so we never went above 12,000 feet. That was our limit for flying without oxygen.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever get into any of the typhoons?

Mr. Kendzora

No, not really.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know they had some pretty bad ones down there from time to time.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes. One of the times when we went up north we did get back to Okinawa just after they had been hit by one, about two or three days before. It really flattened a lot of the Quonset huts. We never actually got caught in one but they said they could pretty bad. Just like the hurricanes really. You over 100 mph winds.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any ribbons or medals?

Mr. Kendzora

I got a couple but they weren't much. Just credit for Occupation Troops.

Mr. Misenhimer

Japanese Occupation Medal.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

American Defense Medal probably?

Mr. Kendzora

Right. I think I did get a Bronze Star for the Battle of Luzon.

Mr. Misenhimer

One Battle Star.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, but no other citations.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you weren't actually involved at combat at any time thought?

Mr. Kendzora

Right. I never had to get into any really.

Mr. Misenhimer

When were you discharged?

Mr. Kendzora

I was discharged on May 24, 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Kendzora

Not really. I took some time off and then started looking for employment. I wasn't employed before I went it so I didn't have a job to go back to. I didn't have any trouble adjusting.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you join the 52 / 20 Club?

Mr. Kendzora

(Laugh) Now that you mention it, that was kind of it. The 52 /20, that was the thing back then.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh yes, \$20 a week for 52 weeks.

Mr. Kendzora

If you didn't do a lot it was alright. It all depended on what you wanted to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned about a new car, what kind did you buy?

Mr. Kendzora

I think it was a Chevrolet Coupe.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year?

Mr. Kendzora

That was the thing. You would put in your order and you couldn't get them right away. I got out in 1946 and I got it in 1947. It was a 1947 Chevrolet. There was quite a waiting list for that one at that time. All these guys getting out wanted a car.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Kendzora

No. That was the one thing our outfit never got. There are a few of the guys that I hang out with that have had reunions but for whatever reason, we didn't have anybody that was interested in pushing it I guess. The one thing I knew, they made up the air group.

My engineer happened to be from Berwyn, the same area that I lived in. He passed away last year, but I knew him all those years and we used to get together every year, once or twice during the year. We would go out and have dinner together. About a year ago, he passed away. He was 89. He was a little older than I was. That was the one contact that I had with the old group.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the same crew the whole time?

Mr. Kendzora

No, I had a different engineer once we got up to Manila. We kind of got split up and we flew with different pilots. We kind of disbursed and got broken up as a crew itself.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that's another reason for no reunions.

Mr. Kendzora

Yes, that's right. It's not like we were together for a long period of time. That's part of the reason for not having any reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Kendzora

No. I kind of regret that I didn't. Some of the guys that I had palled around with did go to school but I didn't do it. I wished that I did later on but it was too late.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your career? What all did you do after you got out?

Mr. Kendzora

The odd thing is it wasn't what I went to the trade school that I attended. I wanted to go into the printing trade. I had got my high school diploma. I got out of the service and I was looking around for a job in the printing trade and the department that I wanted to get into wasn't that available at most places. I ended up with a fellow that lived down the street from me and they had an opening in their drafting room in their engineering department. So I went in there and saw them and got a job there. I ended up staying there for 35 years in industrial engineering. We did a lot of industrial furnaces with open hearths for steel mills and other industrial furnaces. We had a construction that was repairable. You would make castings and put brick on there and they could be repaired without relining the whole deal. That was our construction and it was really good. It was a good business. Around 1980 it started to go downhill because of new ways of producing heat for like steel and some of the other things so they got away from our construction and our business went down too. In fact, I was let go when they did what they call downsizing because of the decline in business. We got packages to retire to lower the payroll. I enjoyed it and that's the way I met my wife. I was up in Canada. I used to go out and install these units too. So I was up in Canada for nine months back in 1953 and I met my wife up there while I was working up there. We got married and we we've been married 55 years. We're doing something right I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

I want to thank you for your time today . This has been very interesting.

Mr. Kendzora

You're welcome. It was a little unusual but I guess they're all different.

(End of Interview)

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