

***National Museum of the Pacific War***

***Center for Pacific War Studies***

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Dr. Glenn Ivy**

**3198<sup>th</sup> Signal Corps Messenger – CBI Theater**

Date of Interview: July 14, 2009

**Mr. Franklin:** This is Michael Franklin and today is July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and I am interviewing Dr. Glenn Ivy at his home in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Now, Dr. Ivy, let's start with where and when you were born.

**Mr. Ivy:** I was born in 1924 in San Angelo, Texas. My father was a bridge building foreman on the Santa Fe Railroad and he and my mother lived on the railroad and so their housing moved to wherever there was work to be done. So she took a leave from being the cook for the gang and had a house in San Angelo where I was born. After about six months I moved back in with the family on the railroad and spent the next six years on the railroad as my home.

**Mr. Franklin:** So, as you were living on the railroad, where did you get your schooling?

**Mr. Ivy:** Well, as soon as I got to be about six years old we moved to Sweetwater and they enrolled me in school.

**Mr. Franklin:** So you went to elementary school in Sweetwater?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yes.

**Mr. Franklin:** Did you go to high school there as well?

**Mr. Ivy:** All twelve years.

**Mr. Franklin:** What was the name of your school?

**Mr. Ivy:** Newman High School was the high school's name.

**Mr. Franklin:** Did you have any brothers or sisters?

**Mr. Ivy:** I had a sister who was already 26 years old when I was born. I was born with a nephew and niece in tow.

**Mr. Franklin:** Do you have any memories of the time that you were living on, was it the Santa Fe Railroad at that time as well?

**Mr. Ivy:** Very hazy. Small things like when I burned my hands reaching for the globe of a coal oil lantern, or something like that.

**Mr. Franklin:** Did you live in railroad cars?

**Mr. Ivy:** Railroad cars converted into housing.

**Mr. Franklin:** After you graduated from high school, did you enroll in college after that?

**Mr. Ivy:** I enrolled in Texas Tech College, at that point in time, right after high school.

And I was in college for a year before I was incorporated into the Army.

**Mr. Franklin:** This would have been after the attack on Pearl Harbor?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yes. This was in June of 1943 that I was inducted into the Army.

**Mr. Franklin:** Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

**Mr. Ivy:** I remember exactly. I was asleep in my bedroom and the newsboy threw the paper into our yard and yelled, "Attack on Pearl Harbor." I remember that distinctly.

**Mr. Franklin:** What was the reaction of your family?

**Mr. Ivy:** Well, of course, everybody was terribly upset. My father was still on the railroad and wasn't around. But we all were upset about it.

**Mr. Franklin:** So you were drafted into the Army in 1943. What branch were you drafted into?

**Mr. Ivy:** I was drafted into the Army and was sent to Fort Francis C. Warren in Cheyenne, Wyoming in the Quartermaster Corps.

**Mr. Franklin:** What sort of basic training did you have?

**Mr. Ivy:** It was minimal basic training in terms of gun control and things like that, and basic as far as handling merchandise that the Army would dispense through the Quartermaster Corps.

**Mr. Franklin:** Now, you were telling me earlier why you were put into the Quartermaster Corps.

**Mr. Ivy:** I had restricted eyesight and they put me in a place where I would not be exposed to direct fighting, I suppose, at the start. After completing my basic training I applied for and was accepted to the Army Specialized Training Program, which was training people who were intended to go to Europe to be occupation forces after that war was over. And I was sent to the University of Missouri and enrolled in the foreign language, or Italian, and European history so we'd have some basic understanding as to what had gone on before us over there. The program was supposed to have been a nine month training program after which we were supposed to have been Lieutenants in the Army. But because of the fighting in Europe, and in particular the Battle of the Bulge, they discontinued our branch of the ASTP and put us back into the organized service. I was then transferred to the Signal Corps back in Missouri and spent several months there training for Signal Corps operations.

**Mr. Franklin:** What kind of training did you have with the Signal Corps?

**Mr. Ivy:** Encoding and decoding messages, primarily, and transferring messages from one place to another.

**Mr. Franklin:** So that was going to be your primary role? What was your rank at the time?

**Mr. Ivy:** I emerged as a T Corporal; two stripe corporal.

**Mr. Franklin:** From your training in the Signal Corps, where were you sent to next?

**Mr. Ivy:** I was sent to China. We moved across the United States by railroad and then got into a thirty day troop ship transfer from San Francisco to Bombay and from there across India by narrow gauge railroad until we got to a place called Kharagpur, India outside of Kolkata. We then flew over the Hump; my first plane ride, flew over the Hump into China and landed in Kunming in the middle of China. I have a little map which indicates where Kunming was in the principle sphere of things.

**Mr. Franklin:** You were assigned to the China, India, Burma Theater of operations, is that correct?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yes.

**Mr. Franklin:** So, explain a little bit about the difference of that theater, as opposed to the European or Pacific.

**Mr. Ivy:** The CBI Theater was, of course, where the Japanese were contesting the allied forces and so on. The Japanese had cut off the forces' supply to the troops hiding in China. There was an independent air force, actually; Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers. They were stationed in Kunming along with the Fourteenth Air Force and a contingent of U.S. Army service people. Our function in the Signal Corps was to transfer messages back and forth among these different elements that were stationed there. And because of the way the war had gone, the Japanese had essentially quit fighting for this part of the world. We heard about one or two air raids after I first got there, but there was essentially no wartime activity going on. What was going on was area chiefs contesting various places in China that they were going to try to hold onto after the war was over. It was usually called, "the war that time forgot." Nothing much was happening in Kunming,

China. But, we had 1398 Signal Corps Battalion stationed there serving the message needs of these various elements that were there.

**Mr. Franklin:** When was it that you actually arrived?

**Mr. Ivy:** It was in early January of 1944, I guess.

**Mr. Franklin:** So, by that time, the Japanese were moving their principle fighting forces elsewhere?

**Mr. Ivy:** The story was that the Japanese moved up to claim the rice harvest and then move back after that was over each year. And there were contingents of warlord-type operations in various places around there. But the Japanese were not in our area. They had cut off the supply route from India by the Burma Road and they had rebuilt it as what was called the Ledo Road. And we were at the end of the Ledo Road, as far as transferring supplies to the live forces was concerned. I happened to be driving a truck the day the Ledo Road was opened and I was given the chore of escorting the journalists over to the opening ceremony, which I did with great glee!

**Mr. Franklin:** So at this time, you said, there was warlord activity. Was it Japanese warlords?

**Mr. Ivy:** No, these were Chinese warlords and they were getting ready to contest the communists. And it was a question of trying to find the most strategic place to set up their defense once the war was over.

**Mr. Franklin:** So, if I understand correctly, we were working with Chiang Kai-shek.

**Mr. Ivy:** Chiang Kai-shek, the Flying Tigers, and the Fourteenth Air Force.

**Mr. Franklin:** So, in general, who was in charge of the CBI?

**Mr. Ivy:** I don't really know. There were different generals who were supposedly in charge and once in a while messages came through addressed to one of them, and so on, but I really didn't have that level of understanding.

**Mr. Franklin:** Was there any combat activity that you were exposed to in the time that you were over there?

**Mr. Ivy:** Not really. I was there; I had got into the messenger service because I didn't want to be in the Signal Corps Office. And some of the people who were in the messaging service were delivering over-land mail to outposts away from Kunming and they were occasionally fired upon by outlaw Chinese outfits. But I never had anybody shoot at me. And it was really fairly quiet.

**Mr. Franklin:** What was the living situation like?

**Mr. Ivy:** It was pretty good. We had converted quarters that had been used for various other European operations. And we had food service, you know. It was really a pretty nice place.

**Mr. Franklin:** You had regular meal times?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah.

**Mr. Franklin:** Did you stay in the same location?

**Mr. Ivy:** Until the end of the war, yes.

**Mr. Franklin:** So, overall, did you have a lot of contact with other Allied forces who were not U.S.?

**Mr. Ivy:** Not really. As I said, I wanted to get out of the message center and drive around seeing the countryside and having fun. And I ended up being a messenger carrying messages from the Fourteenth Air Force to Chiang Kai-shek's quarters, to the Flying

Tigers, and whatever. And what we did was take a satchel of messages that we had signed for in one place, delivered them by jeep to another place, turned them in, and then had them signed for there. And this was considered a pretty good gig for most of us although it was often at times that you would not choose as it was round-the-clock service.

The thing that I am concerned about, was that on one of these sessions when I was delivering mail messages, I picked them up at one place, delivered them to another place, and then another place, and so on. And after one of these sessions it was reported that two of the messages were missing. Actually it was only one that was reported missing and I got to checking and found out that there were two gone and they had been gone on my shift when I had been in the process of delivering them. And one of the guys in the message center who had worked on the decoding of messages told me that these were supposed to be (*begins choking up*) two halves to a plan for invading the China coast. And, of course, we had lots of activity going on after that. The CIC of the Counter-intelligence Corps had two people interviewing. We walked the pathway of every place that I had been, checked everything. They never could find the messages. I was restricted to quarters for three weeks to six weeks, had my two stripes taken away, and they never could find any trace of the messages or any indication as to what had happened to them. And then they dropped the bomb.

And I was . . . I looked at this problem of what might have been the invasion of the China coast. I have some material here that was recently published in the Wall Street Journal describing some of that.



**Mr. Franklin:** So essentially there was a plan in operation to invade China as well as Japan?

**Mr. Ivy:** Until they dropped the bomb. The idea was to come in through China up the coast to Japan like they had been coming up the islands one by one; Saipan and all of those places on the way to Japan. And it was expected that there would be millions of casualties and that it would be a long, drawn out war and that everything would be. . . I'll show this article that came out in the Wall Street Journal just this last month. So, when they dropped the bombs, the possibility of an invasion in China or Japan was terminated, of course. And nine days after the Japanese surrendered I was on a plane delivering Signal Corps equipment to Shanghai and was then (incorporated?) about the mission.

**Mr. Franklin:** But at that time they had taken your stripes?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah.

**Mr. Franklin:** Was that as a pre-cursor to a potential court-martial?

**Mr. Ivy:** I think they understood that I had not done anything wrong and that there were some problems with the operation. According to the manual, top secret messages were supposed to be delivered by an officer with an enlisted man to do the driving. And the officer was supposed to be signing for the messages and whatever. They let that slip over time and they would just send one guy out. One of the nights that I was out, and I don't know if it was the same night that the messages were lost or not, but my jeep stalled. It just quit. And I got out of the jeep shortly around midnight or after. It was dark. I went out looking for help and got a little ways away from the jeep and realized that I wasn't gonna find any and went back. It's possible that somebody may have actually taken something out of the jeep at that time. There are other possibilities for it. Maybe

somebody just screwed up. Or maybe the allied forces dropped the plans someplace so that the Japanese would pick them up and not be anticipating the bombs. Nobody knows, essentially. And that is my question; what happened?

**Mr. Franklin:** Right, because it ends up being you taking the blame regardless.

**Mr. Ivy:** Well it never became an issue. I lost my stripes but I got them back. It never came up again and nobody ever held me accountable for it or anything like that. It's just that, it seems to me that this is a chink in history that ought to be filled, if it was real.

**Mr. Franklin:** As far as an invasion of China goes, it's nothing that I've heard of.

**Mr. Ivy:** This is the Wall Street Journal article from June 15<sup>th</sup>. The landings were scheduled for November, 19<sup>th</sup>, 1945 and March of 1946. And combat troops had been salvaged out of Europe and they were being trained for the invasion. You might want to read or incorporate that in there. (Has recorder turned off)

**Mr. Franklin:** So we were just discussing your two part message, and did you ever hear any more details about what the plan was called or what it was supposed to entail for China?

**Mr. Ivy:** Not me, but one of my friends that decoded the message when it came through to the message department told me, basically, what it was about. We had a Major that was in charge of 3198 Signal Corps Battalion. He called me in and cried on his bed, and said that he was about to make Colonel, and I lost the plans and he wasn't gonna get it. Turns out, he strung some wire from a General to a Red Cross place and he got his (promotion). Then later, in Shanghai, when we were having a basketball banquet my name came up and the Colonel said, "well I hope he's not losing plans like he did before," or something like that. But when the time came for me to go home, my mother

was ill and the Red Cross called me home. I went by and talked to the Lieutenant and he restored my stripes and gave me a couple more so I'd go home as a sergeant. That's all that ever came of it, as far as I know. But, what I want to know is what happened to those plans. Of course, I'll never know.

**Mr. Franklin:** Unless they turn up at some point. Were they marked in a different manner?

**Mr. Ivy:** No. They were in a little envelope stamped "top secret." There were nineteen of them total and these two that turned up missing. I discussed this with one of the retired Generals here, and the thing that infuriated him was that the officers in charge had permitted the system to get to the point where it was just one enlisted man who was doing the delivering instead of the officer and whatever.

**Mr. Franklin:** Uh-huh, an officer and driver.

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah. That's what happened in China when everything went to pot. A lot of the things that you were supposed to do didn't get done.

**Mr. Franklin:** I suppose this would be a good example of an Army SNAFU.

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah. And it more than likely was a SNAFU of some kind. It's just hard to realize that out of nineteen messages . . .

**Mr. Franklin:** That those two specific . . .

**Mr. Ivy:** That those two were gone. And at that point in time they were still for real. There hadn't been a bomb at that point.

**Mr. Franklin:** So what was your feeling then when you found out that the bomb was dropped?

**Mr. Ivy:** Hooray, I'm off the hook! (Laughs)

**Mr. Franklin:** So it gave kind of a special meaning for you, then?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah. And I'd say nine days after the bombs were dropped they put me in charge of a load of equipment and sent me off to Shanghai. So it wasn't like they were holding it against me or anything like that.

**Mr. Franklin:** Right. After the bomb was dropped and after the war ended did you remain in the same location?

**Mr. Ivy:** No, I was in Kunming when the bomb was dropped and within a very short period of time we were transferred to Shanghai. The plane I was on had a load of Signal Corps equipment to handle message services in Shanghai and it landed on the airfield and stuck its landing gear in one of the bomb craters and went spinning around, and I almost didn't have anything else to worry about! But it just damaged the plane. It didn't blow it up or anything.

**Mr. Franklin:** But it gave you quite a scare?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah.

**Mr. Franklin:** So how long did you remain in Shanghai?

**Mr. Ivy:** It was from sometime in August, I think, until the following February when the Red Cross called me home. My mother was ill.

**Mr. Franklin:** So the Red Cross brought you back?

**Mr. Ivy:** In February, I think. That was my third plane ride.

**Mr. Franklin:** So you got to take a plane back instead of a troopship. Do you remember how many points you had at that point?

**Mr. Ivy:** Points?

**Mr. Franklin:** Yeah, before discharge you went on a point system, is that right?

**Mr. Ivy:** No, I think that I was supposed to have been in until sometime in the summer, about three years, but because my mother was so badly sick they called me in and discharged me.

**Mr. Franklin:** Where were you discharged from?

**Mr. Ivy:** El Paso.

**Mr. Franklin:** So you stayed pretty much the whole time in the same signal battalion?

**Mr. Ivy:** Yes, 3198.

**Mr. Franklin:** Do you remember who your commanding officer was?

**Mr. Ivy:** The commanding officer of the 3198 was Colonel Fettig, but I don't know his first name or really anything about him.

**Mr. Franklin:** Did you keep in contact with anybody that you had served with in that battalion?

**Mr. Ivy:** Not really. I have two guys that I still keep up with once in a while. One of them went to Italy and the other one went to, I don't know if he was in China at the time I was or not.

**Mr. Franklin:** As far as your overall experience in the war, what did you take from it the most?

**Mr. Ivy:** Well, I was very fortunate. I didn't get shot at. I didn't get pushed around. I got to see the world. I felt awfully bad about some of my friends who died. This shows you where Kunming is. And it was at the end of the Ledo Road that came across Burma right here.

**Mr. Franklin:** Okay, so you were basically in the middle, southern end of China.

**Mr. Ivy:** It was a city of probably a million people but it was such a poor down-trodden place.

**Mr. Franklin:** Do you feel fortunate that you were sent to the CBI instead of completing your training and being sent into Europe.

**Mr. Ivy:** Not necessarily. One of my best friends was sent to Europe and he served in Italy and got a chance to use his Italian language. (Garbled)

**Mr. Franklin:** But you were telling me earlier that you had a chance to use that in China as well.

**Mr. Ivy:** Yes, I did. I think it was the easiest of the languages to learn and I think that I got more practice on it than I did on the others. But Shanghai was a marvelous place to be. It had been the terminus for a lot of the European refugees that had run in front of the Communists or the Germans. The White Russians came down the China coast and they ended up in Shanghai. Some of the Europeans were in some fashion or another transferred to Shanghai or dropped off in Shanghai. And when we got there the people were still dressed as they had been in 1934 or 1935. They had never seen modern customs in clothes or whatever else and it was like going back in time. All the little German bands were playing music from the American dreams and so on. It a fun place to be.

**Mr. Franklin:** So you had quite the different cross section of different culture.

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah. A lot of White Russians.

**Mr. Franklin:** After you returned home, how much longer did everybody else that stayed have to remain?

**Mr. Ivy:** I don't really know. I think most of them had to stay until summer but I didn't really keep up with the people that were left behind. I went back to school, got back into college late in the semester and kept on going.

**Mr. Franklin:** Was there anything else that you would like to add?

**Mr. Ivy:** No. I think this is a little piece of history that might be of some value some place along the line. I don't know how or what but it seems to me that it's something should have somehow or another come to light over time.

**Mr. Franklin:** Yeah, it's definitely interesting to wonder where those two messages would have ended up.

**Mr. Ivy:** And whether they were dropped off by the Americans on purpose to let the Japanese think we were going to invade.

**Mr. Franklin:** As kind of a faint.

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah, which I suspect might have been the case. And, given the characters involved, between Chiang Kai-shek and all the rest of them there's no telling how it would have been handled.

**Mr. Franklin:** So it was quite a mixed variety of commanders in that theater as opposed to any of the other theaters.

**Mr. Ivy:** Yeah, and of course the Claire Chennault Flying Tigers were an independent force that pretty much operated on their own. And they were stationed there.

**Mr. Franklin:** And there was Merrill's Marauders?

**Mr. Ivy:** I don't know anything about them.

**Mr. Franklin:** Well, on behalf of the museum and on behalf of myself I want to thank you for your service and thank you very much for sharing your story with our archives.

**Mr. Ivy:** Well, thank you very much. I hope that some place along the line somebody gets really inquisitive and finds this piece of information and tries to follow up on it.

**Mr. Franklin:** Thank you, Dr. Ivy.

**Mr. Ivy:** you did a nice job.

Transcribed from copy of master tape

By Mike Franklin

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