

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Arelius J. Hall
Sheboygan, Wisconsin
June 17, 2010
PT 246
PT Squadron 20
Solomon Islands

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is June the 17th, 2010. I am interviewing Mr. Arelius Hall by telephone. His phone number is 920-452-2383. His address is 617 Grand Avenue, Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53083. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Arelius 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.

Mr. Hall:

Okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a middle initial?

Margaret Hall:

It's Arelius J. – John – Hall.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, good. Now, the next thing need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum.

When I do these in person, of course, I let the man read it and sign it. Since this is by phone, let me read this to you to make sure it's okay with you.

“Agreement Read.”

Mr. Hall:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road we try to get back in contact with a veteran he's moved or something. So do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact, if we needed to, to find you?

Margaret Hall:

Yes, her name is Margaret Hall. I'm living here at the moment, but my cell phone number is 504-473-5642. That's a New Orleans exchange because we're Katrina persons. We love drama in our family. My brother's address in Austin is Dr. Matthew J. Hall, 1517 West 30th Street, Austin, Texas 78705.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have his phone number?

Mr. Hall:

He's in Germany with his family right now, but he'll be back the middle of July.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's fine. I hope we'll never need it, but you never know.

Mr. Hall:

Yeah, right.

Margaret Hall:

512-478-1635.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay Mr. Hall, what is your birth date?

Mr. Hall:

November 30, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Hall:

Marathon, Wisconsin.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Wisconsin, okay. There's a Marathon, Texas, too.

Mr. Hall:

Oh, there is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Hall:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many brothers did you have?

Mr. Hall:

No brothers. I had two sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your sisters involved in war work?

Mr. Hall:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Hall:

My father was a contract builder. By then I was a nineteen-year-old teacher at a rural school.

Then when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you when you heard about that?

Mr. Hall:

I happened to be home at that time visiting for the weekend. So, I finished the school year, and then I did not sign up for the next year.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you go in to the service?

Mr. Hall:

I can't give you the exact date, but it was, I would say, within eight months I was looking for a job in the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in the Navy.

Mr. Hall:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About eight months after Pearl Harbor bombed?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, so that would be like August of '42.

Mr. Hall:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Hall:

Well, I wanted to be in the Air Corps, and I went through some tests and they sent me down to Chicago for finals. I got on a train and went down to Chicago. I went in to the office there, and they put me through that test, physical test, and said, "I'm afraid we can't help you. You don't pass the Schneider Test." You know what that is?

Mr. Misenhimer:

No sir, what is that?

Mr. Hall:

It's a heart and blood pressure test. So, I said, "Well, what do we do now?" She said, "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get you a room for tonight, because you been awake all this time coming down here. So, maybe if you come back in the morning when you're rested there may be some changes." Which I did. Went to bed, got up, went over there, checked in, did the tests. She said, "You not improve, we can't take you." I said, "Now what do I do?" She said, "Join the Navy." (laughing) Which I did, eventually.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your boot camp?

Mr. Hall:

It was down in Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Great Lakes?

Mr. Hall:

Great Lakes, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that boot camp?

Mr. Hall:

It was good, a very nice place. Very, very good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty rough on you?

Mr. Hall:

No. When you take a bunch of recruits and getting them ready for whatever, you know, what you will be assigned to. That went on for quite a long time, about six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any particular schooling there?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah. I was in training for Quartermaster. I went to different schools, then they sent me to a Quartermasters' school, and that was a very, very tight school. We had to learn everything, all the communications, all types of communications and everything else for talking to other boats, what do you call that? Semaphore. I think I was there a matter of five months. One day in this whole class, the class was about fifteen men, I got two offers, one of which was in the submarine service, and I'm not interested in being under water. So I did not have any interest, I was not going to sub school. Two weeks later, a couple of officers came, wanted to talk to me again, and they were from the PT boaters. The Navy was looking for PT men because that was the very fast moving boatmen. So I said, "I think I'll go with you." They put you on a PT boat, send you out, you get a year of service in combat, and you get to come home on leave. So I signed up there, and they took over right then and you are under a whole new program. Now they sent me to the

school to put all of what I had developed there in to operation, and use it. They sent me to Quartermasters' school over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have quite a few night patrols?

Mr. Hall:

Oh all were at night.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you sink any barges?

Mr. Hall:

I think we did, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job on the PT boat?

Mr. Hall:

Well, as the Quartermaster, I was responsible to see that everything on the boat would be ready for anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All the supplies, the gasoline, the ammunition and all of that.

Mr. Hall:

Yeah. I did not do anything with the engines and so on, however. I was responsible for all the other things. Most of the time I was kind of crew captain.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were on patrol, what was your job on the PT boat, then?

Mr. Hall:

Well, let me see. I was on the twin 50mm machine gun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it a 40mm gun or the .50 caliber machine gun?

Mr. Hall:

A twin .50 caliber machine gun. We had two of those, one on the port and one on the starboard.

Mr. Misenhimer:

One on each side, right?

Mr. Hall:

One on each side. I took that pair of .50 caliber, and your orders were to fire it, fill the air with lots of fire going in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What PT squadron were you in?

Mr. Hall:

Squadron 20.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was in the Bougainville area, right?

Mr. Hall:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you spend any time on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Hall:

I'm sure I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever come across John Kennedy?

Mr. Hall:

I know where he was, but I did not get to see him. They were there and within a week, he went back home. That was the end of John Kennedy. I got there, I know he was there yet, but I didn't get to see him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get in to those islands around like New Georgia or Ghizo or any of those?

Mr. Hall:

I don't think so, no. We stuck pretty tightly around Bougainville because that was where the action was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right, it had moved up there by then.

Mr. Hall:

The Japanese had a huge, huge...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Base up there, huh?

Mr. Hall:

They had everything, and on the Bougainville it was the same way. They had two huge airfields: one on the north and one on the south, and we were right in the middle. We'd have to move out and get them and anything that moved up and down that line we had to work on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever attack any large ships?

Mr. Hall:

No, I did not. They had been... in that area there were really no large ships anymore. They'd all been sunk, but you heard the story of the combat at Ironbottom Sound that was right in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was between Guadalcanal and Tulagi in through there.

Mr. Hall:

Yes, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by Japanese airplanes?

Mr. Hall:

Yes, constantly. At first we got there, we did not really have a decent harbor, you know, so we had all the boats we could put the anchors out on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your anchor?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah, put out the anchors, and you were right out into the ocean.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever shoot any Japanese airplanes?

Mr. Hall:

Yes. Yeah. We went on the patrols, and that was pretty important.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you shoot any of them down?

Mr. Hall:

Nope.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever fire your torpedoes at anything?

Mr. Hall:

No. No, no. There were no big ships there anymore. All there was, was all these small boats running all over the place.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a 37mm or a 40mm cannon on your ship?

Mr. Hall:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You just had the two twin .50s?

Mr. Hall:

And then there was a larger one we had in the tail.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Either a 37mm or a 40mm, I'm not sure which you had.

Mr. Hall:

40, I think yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

40 probably, yeah., right. That could really hit those barges, couldn't it?

Mr. Hall:

Yes, oh yes. We would send out a row fire like a Fourth of July party. When we quit firing, all of a sudden, they fired back right over us. Everything went over us. They'd hit our flag, tear that up. One of the things that lead to the engine room, that thing was open and there was a shell through there, but that's all that hit us that night. Everything went right over the top of us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you went on patrol, how many boats went together?

Mr. Hall:

Two and three, sometimes three.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And would you stay pretty close together?

Mr. Hall:

Yes, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time out there?

Mr. Hall:

Well, when you're standing there and watching just about twenty, thirty red trails from bullets coming at you and trying to avoid them as much as you can, and you were really fortunate that night that they did not have the proper coordinates.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Didn't have the proper range on you, huh?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah, right, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was anyone on your boat ever wounded?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah. Yeah. We had one. That was that night, he was hit then. There was another night when the Skipper came down early afternoon and said, "Well, we're going to go on a mission." So we were all the way up to where they'd had the big fleet of barges up there, and they were going way south. So, we started like about two o'clock and went up to the top, we got up there maybe outside of their sights, way, way, way back. Then we had to wait until it really got dark, and

slowly we moved in to right near where the boats come in from Japan in to that area. The Skipper gave the order, “You have to lie and wait in absolute silence, nothing running. Nothing was to be running, it had to be absolute silence, and it was pitch dark.” So, we got to that location, maybe a half a mile off of the coast. Two boats, barges in the water, and all of the sudden there was a roar above us. I looked up and saw a big bomber coming down; it looked like he was coming down right over us. He dropped two bombs and the two bombs went right over us and hit the water. We’d thanked God for that. Looked up again and here come another one. I looked up inside of that bomber and saw the light up there and the bombs in there that they were dropping. Again, the two bombs that came down from that second plane went over us and did not hit the other boat, either. So, we had unbelievable luck. If any one of those had gone off and hit us we were dead. The Skipper says, “To hell with the rules, turn on the...” we could not even, because of that, we could not even use our radio and stuff. We’d just sit there, and then we put power in everything and to hell with it, we waited out until almost morning and came home, thanking the Lord. There were many of those kinds of things.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that around Rabaul or where was that?

Mr. Hall:

Rabaul, now let’s see where is Rabaul again?

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think that might be on New Britain, I’m not sure where it is.

Mr. Hall:

I don’t think I know it that well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That’s a little further on up north and west of you, I think.

Mr. Hall:

Yeah. Now, Buka, is where this happened right off of their _____. That was a _____
_____.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now there at Bougainville was where Admiral Yamamoto was shot down.

Mr. Hall:

Oh is that right? That's right, that's right. I forgot that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, off the corner down there, right. What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Hall:

(laughing) Oh Lord, I tried to forget them. (laughing) When we first got there, _____
was _____ ship. They were pretty close in to the harbor there. But I was on P-46,
yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Just what else happened while you were there? What are some other things that happened?

Mr. Hall:

Almost every night, they would send out a couple of bombers go right over us and right over the
area where we were stationed and drop bombs on us, you know do that every night it was a
nuisance. It went on for a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any dogfights between American fighters and Japanese fighters?

Mr. Hall:

No. No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see American bombers bombing Bougainville?

Mr. Hall:

American bombers, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your Skipper's name on your boat?

Mr. Hall:

I've forgotten that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Hall:

Oh, they were good. We got along very well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever in any typhoons there?

Mr. Hall:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

None of those big storms, huh?

Mr. Hall:

No. We missed all that weather.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Hall:

(laughing). Well, I'll tell you what, we shipped down to New Zealand, you might say. Get on the ship and go home. I made a ring from a nut that you screw the propeller on to the shaft, and I made a nice ring. And then inlaid it with mother of pearl, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Hall:

Not to my knowledge or memory.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Hall:

Yes, mm-hmm.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of her?

Mr. Hall:

Well, we didn't spend much time on her, either, but she was there. That was at Bougainville.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah, we had a number of visitors from the United States, and we would have a little gathering in the evening, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Hall:

_____ ship and that's
when the 242 exploded. It blew three men right off the ship. Then the people on the ship were lost. When we got back that morning, one of them was sunk right out there, and the other came back all shot up, and we tied right up to them, then, and that's when I saw the hole in the head, warhead, of the torpedo. That's where all the power is. I looked in there, we were nice and close, looked in there and here was a big shell, you know, it didn't go off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A dud, right.

Mr. Hall:

They had already gone to shore because they wanted to get off, they didn't know why. Anyway, I yelled at them and everything else and told them to get there out there you've got a shell ready to go out. They came and _____ our Skipper said, "It's time to leave you guys." So we got out of there, and waited a while and somehow or another got it moved around so that they could hook up _____ the shell _____. _____ back to the ground and then it was destroyed. How lucky can you get?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, you were lucky several times, right.

Mr. Hall:

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you went down to New Hebrides, when you crossed the equator did you have any kind of a ceremony or anything?

Mr. Hall:

Yes. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what did they do to you when you crossed the equator?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah. We had a little ceremony. We _____ a day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they make you crawl through the garbage or anything like that?

Mr. Hall:

No, no, no. There was nothing like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you get home? After the Philippines.

Mr. Hall:

1945, the Philippines, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You got home from there. Where were you when Japan surrendered August the 15th?

Mr. Hall:

I was in the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did y'all have a celebration then?

Mr. Hall:

No, I think we _____, no, tired out, _____.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard about the atomic bomb what did you think about that?

Mr. Hall:

Well, it took two days because the communication was not that good. We didn't know who had this monster of a bomb, yeah, and then it took a third day before they said that we had it. Then we celebrated and I think I brought out a bottle of whiskey that I had in my bag for six months and celebrated.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you found the date when you came back home from the Philippines?

Mr. Hall:

_____.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bunker Hill, you said. The aircraft carrier *Bunker Hill* you came back on.

Mr. Hall:

That's the one, *Bunker Hill*, yeah. Then we went to California, and then _____ out to Chicago and Milwaukee, and then wherever I could get a train up to _____ I would take _____ and then I finally hitchhiked the last fifty miles to _____ City.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date were you discharged? Would it have been the fall of '45?

Mr. Hall:

Yeah, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Hall:

No, I had to get going and finish my education, which I did, so I went to school, _____
_____ College in Stevens Point and finished my bachelor's degree, and then went right down to
Madison to the college down there, the university, spent another year getting a Masters' degree.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your GI Bill to go to college?

Mr. Hall:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use it for anything else?

Mr. Hall:

No, I was asked to join the Reserve, and I said, "Sorry, I've just had too much of this and do I
not want to join the Reserve." And he says, "Okay, I understand."

She said I had to learn to eat again because I was starved.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions since you've been out?

Mr. Hall:

Yes, we have. We had one here for this part of the state of Wisconsin, and I have pictures of
that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now that's the PT boats or what was that reunion for?

Mr. Hall:

This was PT boats.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Hall:

I'm sure there is, but there's so much I don't remember _____ can
tell. _____ more visible _____.

Transcribed by:

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