

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

**Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas**

An Interview with

**Robert V. Keefe
Shelton, WA
August 25, 2010
CBMU 573
Heavy Machinery Operator**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is August 25, 2010. I am interviewing Mr. Robert V. Keeffe by telephone. His phone number is 509-670-9143. His address is 1138 E. Northcliff Rd., Shelton, WA 98584. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Bob, I want to thank you for taking time today to do this interview today and I want to thank you for service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Keeffe

Thank you, I was glad to do it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, the first thing I like to do is read this agreement with the museum. When I do this in person, I hand the paper to them and let them read and sign it but since this is by telephone let me read it to you. "Agreement Read." Is that ok with you

Mr. Keeffe

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing we would like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that several years down the road, we try to get in contact with a veteran and he has moved or something. Do you have a son or daughter or someone we could contact if we needed to?

Mr. Keeffe

As a matter of fact, I lost my wife about a year and half ago and I am in the process of moving in where my son and I have bought a place that has an in-law apartment and I am

very shortly going to be living with my son and his family in a private apartment. This living by yourself is for the birds.

Mr. Misenhimer

You don't happen to have that address at this point do you?

Mr. Keeffe

The new address?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes sir.

Mr. Keeffe

Where we will be yes, 1138 E. Northcliff Rd., Shelton, WA 98584

Mr. Misenhimer

The phone number will be the same for awhile?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, I have found out that I can maintain that phone number with no problem.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know what his number will be at the new place?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, he has a cell phone number.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, do you have that?

Mr. Keeffe

Yes, his name is Glen and his cell phone is 360-280-1780.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birthdate?

Mr. Keffe

My birthdate is July 9th, 1924.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Keffe

Sioux City, Iowa.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Keffe

Yes, I got 3 sisters and 2 brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were any of your brothers in WWII?

Mr. Keffe

Yes, my older brother was a bomber pilot out of England over Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is he still living?

Mr. Keffe

He is still living but its getting very chancey.

Mr. Misenhimer

I see, I was just wondering if I would get a chance to interview him.

Mr. Keeffe

As a matter of fact, he retired from the Air Corps as a Lieutenant Colonel. There is a book called "Cloud Corridor"

Mr. Misenhimer

Cloud Corridor, is that his story?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, it is a story of a bunch of prisoners that were in the same camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

You don't think it would be possible to try to interview him?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, yeah, you could do that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, what is his first name?

Mr. Keeffe

Jim Jr.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where does he live, what town?

Mr. Keeffe

He is in Bellevue, WA.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Keeffe

425-747-4444

Mr. Misenhimer

And he was older than you?

Mr. Keffe

He is a year and half older, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your other brother, was he in WWII?

Mr. Keffe

He was in the Korean War, he was in the Chosin Reservoir fiasco.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was in the Marines there?

Mr. Keffe

Yep.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Keffe

Uh, it was pretty rough. My dad owned a brickyard, he had a construction business and one other, but I can't remember what the devil it was and he built a brand new house in 1928 that we lost in 1932. He was with the FAA, now let me see if I can remember what that means, Federal Aviation Authority that was what it was. Have you ever been into or out of Sea-Tac international airport? Well before it was Sea-Tac airport it was Bow Lake airport and my dad was the surveyor that laid out that airport which was eventually turned into Seattle-Tacoma International.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he able to keep employed during most of the depression?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, I can't answer that, I was pretty young in those days but I know that we lost the house and we had to move in with my grandmother.

Mr. Misenhimer

There were 5 of you children?

Mr. Keeffe

6

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Keeffe

Seattle Prep, which is a Catholic School.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you graduate there?

Mr. Keeffe

I never did graduate but I got two years of college. (laughing) I went in the service I realized that there was a "greetings" in the mail somewhere and there was no way they were going to get me in the Army. So, I went down and joined the CB's because I already had a little bit of mechanical experience.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the CB's?

Mr. Keefe

Uh, early 1943 or perhaps the mid year of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

June or something like that?

Mr. Keefe

Uh, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the CB's?

Mr. Keefe

Like I said they weren't going to get me in the Army. It was either Marine Corps or CB and actually in those days they were Navy, they were part of the Navy, both of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you actually go in at?

Mr. Keefe

In Camp Perry, VA., I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you take regular Navy Boot Camp?

Mr. Keefe

Uh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you joined, did you just join the Navy or did you actually join the CB's when you first went in?

Mr. Keeffe

I joined the CB's. I will never forget the guy who was interviewing me, he said "Where in the hell did you ever run machinery at your age?" I said "Well my grandpa is a farmer and he use to run the thresher machine and pulled it with a CAT" and he was "Oh, ok." (laughing) Of course I was lying through my teeth. The first place that they sent me was to heavy machinery school.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your birthday is July 9th, did you go in before or after your birthday?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, I believe it was before. Yes, it was before.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you had been 18 at that point?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Turned 19 in a few days, a few weeks or whatever?

Mr. Keeffe

I was 18. It was a long time ago, my friend. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

I know what you mean, I know what you mean. (laughing) How was that boot camp?

Mr. Keeffe

The boot camp wasn't bad. Anything that had a motor in it I could run it by the time I went overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did your boot camp last?

Mr. Keeffe

I think they shortened them up quite a bit because they were in a hurry to get people overseas, but there were only 4 or 5 weeks if I remember correctly. That is what I think, that was a long time ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

Learning to run machinery, was that a school after your boot camp or was that a part of boot camp?

Mr. Keeffe

That was after boot camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went through boot camp and then you had a machinery course of some sort?

Mr. Keeffe

That is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

How were your drill instructors, were they pretty rough on you?

Mr. Keeffe

In those days they were, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in during boot camp?

Mr. Keeffe

Barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh boy, it was edible. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished up there, where did you go?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, I think it was, of course we had gone to the rifle range and I think from there we went to Gulf Point, MS and that is where we shipped out.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you ship out?

Mr. Keeffe

I can't answer that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you ship out on?

Mr. Keeffe

Liberty Ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go on that liberty ship?

Mr. Keeffe

We went down through the Gulf of Mexico, through the Panama Canal and out and, lets see, I think our first stop was the Guadalcanal. We were only there for 2 or 3 days and, uh, I can't remember went from Guadalcanal on that ship into the Russell Islands. I don't

think we had any piers at the Russell's at that time. No they didn't, we had to get off on a barge.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it like to go through the Panama Canal?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, if I remember correctly as we were entering the channel it came over the bullhorn "attention all hands, there will be a man on the bow, and there will be a man on stern, port and starboard on the bridge. Anyone will be shot before they get to shore trying to get off this ship." It was at that point that we realized "Hey, this aint a fun trip, this is damn serious."

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you able to be up on deck when you went through the canal?

Mr. Keeffe

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that interesting?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, you betcha! Very interesting.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to stop on either end of the canal?

Mr. Keeffe

Not that I recall, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't get a liberty on either end of the canal then?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, oh, heavens no, no, no. We were not allowed off that ship at all.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went from there straight to the Solomon Islands, Guadalcanal or did you go to Pearl Harbor first or somewhere?

Mr. Keeffe

Nope, I went by Hawaii twice and never stopped.

Mr. Misenhimer

On that trip down there, were you escorted or were you in a convoy?

Mr. Keeffe

We were, lets see, not until we crossed over the equator. Then we had a celebration and all that crap going across the equator and then we picked up another 2 or 3 ships but I can't remember what they were.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now those liberty ships not real fast, so....

Mr. Keeffe

No, they aren't.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you didn't have any kind of escort from the states all the way down there?

Mr. Keeffe

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get off at Guadalcanal?

Mr. Keeffe

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You stayed in the ship there?

Mr. Keeffe

After we got to the Russell's I was sent to Guadalcanal once or twice to lift pontoon barges up on the sides of LST's for going up north.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you were mainly on the Russell Islands then?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh-hum.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about what you did there?

Mr. Keeffe

Well I was heavily involved in pontoon construction, not the actual pontoon construction but the construction of mounting pontoons into barges. String of pontoons that were connected all together, maybe 5 or 6 strings into barges. And, uh, I ran a shovel out the coral pit for building roads and, lets see I believe, the airstrip had a couple of bomb holes in it when we got there it was one of the first jobs that we had which was fixing that air strip.

Mr. Misenhimer

These pontoons, what were they used for?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, for barges. Oh yeah, they would put a bunch of them together and they had a big stiff legged crane on a barge, on a big barge, and we used to lift them up and put them on the sides of LST's and then when they got where they were going with them all they had to do is cut them loose and they would fall into the drink and they would hook them together.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there at the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

On the Russell's we lived in tents, 14 x 14 tents for the first, oh probably 6 or 7 months and then they brought in Quonset huts. We assembled Quonset huts, they brought in the materials for them and we put them up. Those suckers were hot! No insulation.

Mr. Misenhimer

You are talking about hot weather, it was pretty hot down there wasn't it?

Mr. Keeffe

Just a bit, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay on Russell Islands all the time?

Mr. Keeffe

Yeah, but occasionally I would be sent to different; lets see I was over to Pavuvu, I was over to some other islands, oh man I tell ya.....

Mr. Misenhimer

But I mean you were mainly stationed on the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

Yes, yeas, basically I was stationed on the Russell's, yeah. I have just, in the last couple years, learned that it was Banika. I never heard that name until the last couple of years here.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you mention Pavuvu?

Mr. Keeffe

I mentioned Pavuvu, yes. I was over at Pavuvu having to do with more pontoon work.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Marines had a camp that they all came back to but they didn't think much of it there on Pavuvu.

Mr. Keeffe

Pavuvu was a hell hole.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is what I have heard. How many air strips did they have there in the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

Well in all the islands I have no idea but where we were the only air strip I saw was a single and it was used by the Marine Corps with those, what do you call those Gull wings?

Mr. Misenhimer

The Corsairs.

Mr. Keeffe

The Corsairs, right. That was our first job when we got there was fixing up that air strip and we no sooner got it compacted and got it leveled and we were moving our equipment out and they started bringing in trucks with those, what the hell they call it a landing mats, Marsden Mats, something like that and the only thing I had to do with those landing mats was unload from point A to point B, I think they were in 2000 pound bundles.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever attacked by the Japanese?

Mr. Keeffe

No. Well, wait a minute, yes, yes we were. It wasn't an attack, I don't believe. It would be more like a harassment thing. It was what they called a Betty, would come over maybe a couple times a week just to drop a bomb or two, not trying to hit anything. It was more of a harassment more than anything, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

Would this be in the middle of the night?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Keep you awake?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh yeah, oh yeah. It was the only time that they would come over was at night. And then, what the hell was it, I think our air strip wasn't big enough for P-38's so they got one out of Henderson, down at Guadalcanal and they came up there one night. He played

around with that bomber for about 15-20 minutes shooting little pieces off of it. Finally he said "I'm getting low on gas and I have to go home." That bomber never came back.

Mr. Misenhimer

These Quonset huts that you constructed there, were they real large?

Mr. Keeffe

Well lets see, down both sides I think that there were 6 guys. There were 12 of us I believe, if I remember correctly.

Mr. Misenhimer

That lived in them?

Mr. Keeffe

That bunked in them, yeah. Well that's it with a Quonset hut, you can keep going on with that sucker just as long as the ground is flat enough to hold it. They are an add on building, you can make them 15 or 20 feet long or you can make them a 100 feet long if you want to.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've seen some that were also quite large; they were probably 40 or 50 feet wide and 30-40 feet high.

Mr. Keeffe

Yeah, they did, that's the kind we had for our shops. To get the guys in and out of the weather if the monsoons came along.

Mr. Misenhimer

They used them for storage and stuff like that?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh-hum.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened there in the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, we were mainly; I think that we were mostly receivers of goods and storage until they needed it up north. Yeah, I remember one time they brought in a D-8 that didn't have a blade on it, took it right up to the shop and they armor plated that sucker. And it was going up north. I never did find out where they sent it but I thought, man I would hate sitting in that seat, it would get hot. Because, well, they armor plated around the operator's seat and around the engine and the radiator and the only thing that he could see was in front of him there was a slit about a foot long and maybe an inch in height and that was all that he could see out of, the front and the sides and the back. And if a shell ever got through that damn thing it would ricochet around in there like a, holy cripe; that was a steel coffin for somebody. I have run an awful lot of Cats and that is getting down into a pretty restricted area.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else did you do there?

Mr. Keeffe

Built a lot of roads. (laughing) I just thought of a funny incident, we had a beach that was in pretty good shape for LST's and stuff like that, that would bring in this material or pick up this material and take it on north. And this one guy came one time, I think he was only a JG, a junior grade lieutenant, as the captain of one of these things and he came

in without dropping his Stern Anchor. Have you been around LST's at all?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, a little bit.

Mr. Keeffe

Well, they are supposed to drop that Stern Anchor so that they get a load and they can pull themselves off the beach with that Stern Anchor. Well this guy didn't do it and I had to walk that Cat about 7 miles to come back down to the beach and get him off and the Beach Boss, I can't remember what rank he was, he was CPO but he was the big nuts of the beach and he was pissed because that guy didn't drop his Stern. And I said "you want me to teach him a lesson?" and he said "Yeah. Poke a hole in his door. He has to lay over and get his ass chewed on." And I did. Instead of hitting him with the flat part of the blade, I hit him with the corner bit. Dug about a foot and a half oval in the door. And, oh, he was up there screaming. (laughing) Next time he came in he dropped that Stern Anchor. There were quite a few of the LST's but they were ashore and they weren't out at sea but I have heard that, uh, that during a halfway rough sea, if you were on the bow and looked back towards the stern you could see that sucker bending in the middle. That doesn't sound to me that I would like to be on that ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

I have heard that. About when did you arrive on the Russell's? Do you have any idea?

Mr. Keeffe

I believe that it was not too long after the first of the year of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you spend Christmas of 1943? Do you recall that?

Mr. Keeffe

No, I don't.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you on the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, my whole time overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was how long?

Mr. Keeffe

It was damn close to 2 years, very close to 2 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you stayed there on the Russell's the whole time?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh-huh. Well, I did get sent over to the Canal twice.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean as a base?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh yes, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you traveled other places?

Mr. Keeffe

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you would go to Guadalcanal how long would you stay there?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, just overnight.

Mr. Misenhimer

As I recall, the Russell's are 50-60 miles from Guadalcanal, is that right?

Mr. Keeffe

If you get on one of the high points at Banika, if it is a real clear day you can see the hills on Guadalcanal. So, it's not too far away, probably 45-50 miles I would presume.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened?

Mr. Keeffe

(laughing) well, we had ways of entertaining ourselves, like fishing with hand grenades.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows there?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh yeah, yeah, Bob Hope, Frances Langford, Jerry Colonna, oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that they flew over in a small plane one time.

Mr. Keeffe

I have no idea how they got there, I'm sure that they didn't come by boat though.

Mr. Misenhimer

I heard that from some of the people that saw them there.

Mr. Keffe

As a matter of fact I can remember the generator that they had between the chow hall and the movie theater that was the same engine that is on a D-8 cat. It had a big generator on the end of it and when they got those projectors going it would make that generator smoke pretty good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any time that you felt threatened down there?

Mr. Keffe

Not that I recall other than that damn Betty that was coming over once in awhile. You never knew if that sucker would get lucky one day.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Keffe

Well, we as operators and stuff we had little to do with officers. We were mainly under skills, the Chief Petty Officers.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand the CB's were not as strict in some ways as the regular Navy, is that right?

Mr. Keffe

I think so, yeah, because mainly I found out that I was among the youngest of that group of people. You got to remember that most of these guys were construction hands and had been at construction for years and like I said I was just a punk kid at that time. Where as some of these guys were in their 30's and some of them were in their 40's.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that it was a different type of arrangement then regular Navy would have been.

Mr. Keeffe

Yeah, they weren't near as strict.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have then?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, lets see, I cant remember what the hell I started out at but I think it was Motor Mac, either second or first, I can't remember which when I got out. Machinists Mate they call it. Boy, they changed all that crap too; I have no idea what a lot of these insignias are anymore when I see them.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know what you mean. About when did you come home from over there?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, lets see, that would be; I will never forget coming under the Golden Gate Bridge but, uh, I can't remember when that was. I would imagine it was in the fall of 1945. I remember when I called home, the first thing that I heard was a grandfather clock and I now own that.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned the other day something about after the war getting rid a lot of equipment there and stuff, tell me about that.

Mr. Keeffe

Oh boy, my favorite; I don't know if you are familiar with heavy cranes and stuff at all, do you know what an 80-D by Northwest?

Mr. Misenhimer

Not by that name, but go on.

Mr. Keeffe

Alright, they had taken my favorite crane that usually had a 90 foot boom on it and they pulled the middle section out, 30 feet and made a 60 foot boom and they increased the size of the wire, in other words the hoisting lines, by not quite a ½ inch but anyway they put larger wire on it. I don't know what they got in mind with that thing but it looks like I am going to be doing some heavy work. I got up the next morning and they had moved that crane out just off of the shoreline on top of a reef on the side of the island and at high tide I'd be sitting there in about 2-3 inches of water and I was told that anything that they bring down to this machine; oh by the way it had a clam shell bucket on it, you know what that is?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Keeffe

Ok, it had a yard and half clam on it and anything that they brought down to me was to be picked up and heaved out into the ocean out over that reef. And that took me, you know what a 6 by 6 truck is?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes sir.

Mr. Keeffe

Ok, it took me 3 picks on one truck to find out how to pick that sucker up in one piece. Picked it up, the cab, and I got it about 3 feet off the ground and the cab ripped up, I threw it out and I got a hold of the bed, same thing and that pulled off. I finally had them bring them straight into me where I could get that clam all the way over and drop one jaw on top of the hood, on the front of the hood and swing the other one down under the front bumper and then I had that front cross member and I could pick the whole sucker up in one piece. Almost five weeks I sat on that reef throwing out, and I'm telling you there were stuff that was unbelievable and I don't think you will find that in any Navy records. I don't think you will find the government admitting that all this crap was thrown out that way.

Mr. Misenhimer

How deep was the water that you were putting it into?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, like I said it was over reefs and after 5 weeks I never did see any of it under the surface of that water so it was a deep one. And not only that, what the hell was it, one day they brought four or five 6 by 6's down with a great big box in them and they were very, very solid boxes, they weren't just slapped together chicken coops and they had cleaned out all the numbers and all the identification on all these boxes and as I was throwing them out, when I got a hold of the last one, just out of curiosity I didn't know what the hell was in the boxes and I was going to find out. And I picked that sucker up 60 feet up to the tip of that boom and dropped it on the coral rather than on the water and when the box broke I reached in with that clam and took out that piece of machinery that

was in there and it was covered with Cosmoline, you couldn't see what the hell it was. Well the chief told me 2 days later that those were replacement PT boat motors. There were built by Packard I think he said that they were an in-line twelve and just fantastic machinery. I threw out a dozen of them, brand stinken new.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was a lot of that happened after that war.

Mr. Keeffe

Well, the guys started playing games, that were bringing the stuff over to me, if something would start like a jeep or a weapons carrier or 6 by 6 or anything, if it would start they would get down on their hands and knees and shoot a couple holes in the oil pan and see how long that son of a bitch would run before it blew up and make bets on it. Or take a bar and poke a hole in the radiator and drain the water out and fire up, lay something on the throttle and see how long it would take for it to blow up.

The big stiff leg crane that I used to pick up those pontoon barges and set up on the side of LST's, they pulled it out, oh what the hell is the name of that island, Santa Isabel or something like that, they sounded to see how deep the water was and then walk around on that deck and shooting holes in the pontoons until it sank. That is how they got rid of it.

Well, we used to use it too for putting PT boats up on the decks. I have heard, I didn't know it at the time, but of course I didn't know who the hell he was and nobody else did either but I guess JFK was on that island for quite awhile.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yep, there was a PT base on that island.

Mr. Keeffe

Yeah, and we used to, how the hell, oh they were wooden boats and when they would get beyond their service life or get damaged to the point where it was more bother to fix it then they would get another one. They use to run them ashore and we would drag them up and hook them on to a D-8 and drag them up above high tide and dump gas and diesel oil on them and set them on fire. And then whatever was left over a couple days later we would just dig a hole and bury it.

Mr. Misenhimer

All over the pacific there were just a lot of places that they did stuff like that.

Mr. Keeffe

Well, I have no doubt, Richard, that in today's world, if they knew what we did back then, just like all that crap that I was throwing out that had diesel in it, it had gas in it, it had transmission oil, rear end grease, it had everything in it and it all went onto the ocean. Oh my God, if you did that today you would get shot!

Mr. Misenhimer

Well all the ships that were sunk, they were filled with oil and everything else.

Mr. Keeffe

You got that right!

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that you did over there on the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, I got malaria. Oh crap, there was something else....

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the malaria? Pretty bad?

Mr. Keeffe

Ehhh, it's not comfortable, oh hell I think the wife changed the bedding 3 times in one night. You just go from where you are either burning up or your freezing to death, one or the other.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did you have it after the war?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, I was still on atabrine, I was still sucking on those things 6 or 8 years after the war and eventually it rotted all my teeth and I had to get them all yanked.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about quinine? Did they give you quinine for it?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, that was pretty prevalent all down through the south pacific.

Mr. Keeffe

And the only problem is that they lost my damn records and it is not on my record.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any kind of disability then?

Mr. Keeffe

No, no they had a fire or some damn thing and they lost an awful lot of records.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, out at St. Louis in the storage there, a lot of WWII and Korean war records were burnt up.

Mr. Keeffe

Uh-huh.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your worst day when you were over there?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, that is a good question. I can't remember. Oh, I do remember that, what the hell was it, in the mess hall for the first 3 or 4 months that we were there, yeah the first months they were making bread and all that kind of stuff and you had to hold the bread up to the light to pick the bugs out of it. I do remember that. You either did that or eat it and get the first meat with it. And spam, they had a 100 ways of hiding that stuff. I can't stand it to this day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs from WWII?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh boy, that is a bad subject. I had 2 sea bags when we landed at Treasure Island, one of them was full of the damnest group of souvenirs and the other one was full of dirty laundry and, oh, what the hell was it, oh, when we came under the Golden Gate bridge I betcha that there was a 1,000, at least a 1,000 worn out decks of pinochle cards that went

over the side. Uh, when we got ashore at Treasure Island we were herded into a huge area and it came over the loud speaker that "Anybody that lives in the Pacific Northwest there is a train leaving in 1 ½ hours and if you want to leave on that train go to room such and such. We have some papers for you to sign. You will be legally discharged and you will be on that train." And I had, like I said 2 sea bags and I grabbed the wrong one. Somebody got a hell of a bag of nice souvenirs.

But anyway these papers that we signed, I would have signed anything after being away from home for little better than 3 years. I wasn't home more than 3 or 4 months when came this notice that I was to report to; in other words one of the papers that I signed was a 10 year reserve commitment. Of course they don't tell you that and well I got sucked into that and that is how I wound up in the Marine Corps for the Korean War.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some souvenirs that you had in your bag?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh god, I had a couple of metal flags, I had handguns, I had a sniper rifle. As a matter of fact I had a couple complete uniforms that had been striped off of someone and it was a pretty neat bagful of stuff but somebody else wanted it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Back on December 7th, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor; do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh yeah. We were getting ready to go to church when that came over the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you feel that would affect you?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, I knew that I wanted to get involved but of course I was too young at the time. I had already made up my mind that there was no way I was going to go in that Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was just a matter of time before you would go in.

Mr. Keeffe

Yep, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit there on the Russell's?

Mr. Keeffe

The morale was ok until the war was over and there we sat throwing all that crap in the ocean and all we wanted to do was get the hell out of there and go home. That was when MacArthur was in Japan on that battleship singing all those surrender crap.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now April 12th of 1945, President Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, absolutely. I happened to be walking that crane from the gravel pit and I was going someplace when the chief came by and said "FDR just died." and I go "Ohhh crap!"

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the reaction people had to that?

Mr. Keeffe

It wasn't good because at the time FDR was our Commander in Chief and as far as we concerned he was doing a hell of a good job.

Mr. Misenhimer

In fact he was probably the only president most people knew or remembered.

Mr. Keeffe

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

The on May the 8th of 1945, Germany surrendered, do you all hear about that?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh-huh, yep.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any kind of celebration?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, we felt a lot better because we thought we were going to get a hell lot of support from that side of the world.

Mr. Misenhimer

On August the 6th when they dropped the first Atomic Bomb, did you hear about that?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh-oh-oh, yeah. And we couldn't believe it! The devastation that that sucker created.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then August 15th when Japan did surrender, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Keeffe

Yep, the war was over!

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of celebration did you have?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh, we started making use of the coconut juice that some of the natives had taught us how to make. And you could never tell what strength, what can I say, uh, what percent was going to come out of those coconuts after we put that stuff in them. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a beer allowance or anything over there?

Mr. Keeffe

We got, I think it was 2 cans a week of warm beer. But being operators that handled the booze as they came off the ship, we had ways of getting other stuff until the officers got pissed and got all their booze welded up in a pontoon and delivered that way. Until, one day they just lifted up one over the side of the ship and the cable broke and when it hit the ground you could hear the clattering and the banging in that thing (laughing) and they never did put it in a pontoon again but from then on I never did find out how they got their booze. The only trouble is they had no, or at least for the enlisted people, didn't have any refrigeration process for that damn beer and it was like drinking warm water.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Keffe

When I first got malaria they; no wait that wasn't the Red Cross that was the Mob-10 hospital.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in the hospital with that there?

Mr. Keffe

I wasn't in, I was given this atabrine.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been taking that before you got the malaria?

Mr. Keffe

No, I don't think so.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was one of the things they gave to people trying to prevent malaria was attabrine.

Mr. Keffe

That could be, but like I said I don't recall.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you were in the hospital with your malaria?

Mr. Keffe

Oh, not in the hospital. I had gone to the hospital and they gave me this stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that there on the Russell's?

Mr. Keffe

Uh, I think it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were over there, did you get you mail with any regularity?

Mr. Keeffe

It was spotty. What the hell was that we use to send out, oh V-mail.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh Yeah!

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of her?

Mr. Keeffe

(spelling) B-I-T-C-H- (laughing) and she was.

Mr. Misenhimer

I heard she played some good music though.

Mr. Keeffe

Well, that was the only reason to listen to her. Yeah they had the big bands, there was no question about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know what date you were discharged?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh Lord, Nope I don't recall. I got all that stuff down in the bank in a safe deposit box.

Mr. Misenhimer

Would it have been the fall of 1945 or the Spring of 1946 or when?

Mr. Keeffe

I can not answer that, I don't recall. I do know, what the hell was it, three weeks after I got home another semester was starting and I took a college entrance exam and passed it and went to college.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to college?

Mr. Keeffe

Seattle College.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said you went two years?

Mr. Keeffe

Yeah, but it was kind of a useless situation. I had a lot of living to make up. (laughing)
understand?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah. Did you use your G.I. Bill for that?

Mr. Keeffe

No, but I did use the G.I. Bill for a, what the hell was it; oh I went to diving school. Deep sea diving.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you end up being a deep sea diver then?

Mr. Keeffe

No, not after I popped an ear drum.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Keefe

Not really.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said that you had a bunch of catching up to do though?

Mr. Keefe

You betcha! (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you join the 52-20 club?

Mr. Keefe

No

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know what that was?

Mr. Keefe

I recall that expression but I don't believe I knew what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was unemployment; you could get \$20 a week for 52 weeks.

Mr. Keefe

Oh, yeah, no, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Keeffe

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you kept in contact with anybody that you were in the CB's with?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, no, but I just have recently in the last 6 or 7 months I looked up my old outfit on the computer one day and the only person that had anything to do with the old outfit, there was only 3 people that left an online address and I contacted all 3 of those guys hoping but it was not the people that I was in service with, it was their descendants. And one of them, his dad was the head surgeon at the Mob-10 hospital on that island. His name was Krock, and it was his dad that came to that island as a surgeon and wound up being the head surgeon before he quit. And I corresponded with him for a couple months and we didn't have much in common but another fellow, we have been communicating for over 6 or 7 months. And I tell you, he is real interested in things that I have been explaining to him that his dad went through. And of course like I said, he was a little, probably 8-10 years older than I was, his dad was, and of course he is no longer with us.

Mr. Misenhimer

What outfit were you in over there?

Mr. Keeffe

CBMU 573

Mr. Misenhimer

What does CBMU stand for?

Mr. Keeffe

Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit. I assumed that when we left the states that we were the 18th super battalion, but apparently that all changed on the way overseas. I don't know what ever happened there.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were considered to be a maintenance unit then?

Mr. Keeffe

Yep. As a matter of fact there is a book that was produced about 2 years after the war, maybe 3 years, called Bitter Bellies that is about CBMU 572 and 573. I have had one of those books for over 5 decades.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all does it say in there?

Mr. Keeffe

It just explains from boot camp, going overseas and everything about overseas and what we did and coming back.

Mr. Misenhimer

Are you pleased with the decision you made to go into the CB's?

Mr. Keeffe

Yes, very much so, because I have been an operator all my life. I learned a lot in that outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer

So in your civilian career you did sort of the same thing then?

Mr. Keeffe

Uh-huh. Yep, a crane operator and eventually I bought a couple of trucks and went to Alaska. I was up there for 11 years and when they found out that I could run everything that they had, they didn't have to send operators with me. And I was driving a low boy most of time hauling that big heavy stuff around.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you recall from your time in WWII?

Mr. Keeffe

No. Of course I'm glad the way it turned out the way it did. I would been up a creek without it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about getting called into the Marines?

Mr. Keeffe

Well when I got that greetings after I got home, uh, I can't remember how long it was 4-5-6 months or so and here comes this notice that I was to show up for, I think it was monthly meetings. And they didn't have, at that time; they didn't have a Navy reserve located in that area but they did have a Marine Reserve. So I went down to talk to them and they said "you've had it Buddy" and back in there I went. I got sent down to San Diego where I was one of those hated drill instructors. I was a DI down there for a year, a little over a year.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you on full time duty then?

Mr. Keeffe

Oh yeah. I, unbelievably, I can remember every number that I was ever issued. In fact in the CB's I was 8905566, that was my serial number. In the Marine Corps it was, well I got it downstairs. I can still recall the serial number on the rifle that I was issued and on the .45 that I was issued.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you carry a rifle with you on the Russell's or the .45?

Mr. Keeffe

Not while I was on there. I did carry a .45 occasionally when I was sent off to these smaller, pip-squeak islands to do a job or something. I always carried a .45 with me for that.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were called up to the Marines you were called to full duty, not just to weekend meetings?

Mr. Keeffe

No, no, it was full duty. I went down to San Diego and Marine Corps boot camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

What division was that?

Mr. Keeffe

That is a good question, I have no idea.

Mr. Misenhimer

When the Korean War broke out in June of 1950, what happened then?

Mr. Keeffe

Well, that is when I was in there, from late 1949 to early 1951.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got to Korea, right?

Mr. Keeffe

No, no. No, when they found out that I had a malaria problem they would not send me back overseas. That is when I became a drill instructor down there.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Keeffe

Uh, nope, not really.

Mr. Misenhimer

From WWII, what medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Keeffe

Just the locational medals, I don't remember what they were. I didn't have a chest full of fruit salad. As a matter of fact, it was 6 or 8 months ago, do you know who Oliver North is?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Keeffe

Alright, tell me if rules and regulations have changed but he was making a talk somewhere on TV quite awhile back and he had on a tuxedo and he had a full chest full of fruit salad, now when the hell did they start putting fruit salad on a civilian suit?

Mr. Misenhimer

That's a good question, I can't answer that.

Mr. Keeffe

Believe me, I have asked quite a few people that that can't answer that. I thought that it was against the law to wear it on a civilian suit.

Mr. Misenhimer

I have no idea, I remember seeing that but I didn't give it any thought.

Mr. Keeffe

Well, to me that was Mr. Oliver North blowing his whistles and I didn't like it frankly.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, Bob, is there anything else that you can think of?

Mr. Keeffe

Not that I can think of Richard.

Mr. Misenhimer

Alright, well thank you for you time today and for your service to our country.

Mr. Keeffe

Nice talking to you.

Transcribed by

Mary Conner

Winamac, IN

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Oral History by

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, TX 78333

361-664-4071

Cell 361-701-5848