

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Harold Dietz

Date of Interview: October 4, 2012

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Interview with Mr. Harold Dietz

Interviewer: Larry Rabalais

Mr. Rabalais: This is Larry Rabalais, and today is October 4, 2012, and I'm interviewing Mr. Harold Dietz. This interview is taking place in San Antonio, in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. And with that little statement, I'll let you go ahead, Harold. You go ahead and talk about where and when you were born. This is Harold Dietz. Go ahead.

Mr. Dietz: I was born in Palestine, Texas, November 18, 1925. My father ran a grocery and market in Palestine.

Mr. Rabalais: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Dietz: Beg your pardon?

Mr. Rabalais: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Dietz: I had two other brothers and one sister.

Mr. Rabalais: Were they older than you?

Mr. Dietz: My sister was younger than me, and my two brothers were twins and they were younger than me

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, they were.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. One of my brothers was in the Korea War, Eugene. He was in the artillery.

Mr. Rabalais: So, you went to school in Palestine?

Mr. Dietz: I went to Palestine High School, and was drafted out of Palestine--

Mr. Rabalais: Right out of the high school.

Mr. Dietz: --in my 11th grade. I didn't--

Mr. Rabalais: So that would be 1944 or '43.

Mr. Dietz: '43.

Mr. Rabalais: '43.

Mr. Dietz: Uh-huh. And I was told to report to Camp Walters on the 20th of December.

Mr. Rabalais: So that was just regular Army?

Mr. Dietz: Army, which we did. There was another guy from Palestine with me, named Donald McDonald.

Mr. Rabalais: So you took basic training there?

Mr. Dietz: No, we just went to Camp Walters, and the first night, I didn't get up at reveille. I stayed in bed, and I opened my eyes and I looked around. We were in a tent, and it wasn't like my room in Palestine and I just turned over. So a sergeant, master sergeant by the name of Gossett, I never will forget his name. He said, "Get up, Harold!" He said, "We got a special place for you." They took me down and put me on KP.

Mr. Rabalais: Uh-oh.

Mr. Dietz: But it turned out real nice, because in December there was snow and ice on the ground up at Camp Walters.

Mr. Rabalais: Yeah? Now where was Camp Walters at? Near where?

Mr. Dietz: Mineral Wells.

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, up there.

Mr. Dietz: Between Fort Worth and Mineral Wells.

Mr. Rabalais: That's a pretty chilly area.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. The rest of the crew had to go out and chop wood in the ice and snow, and there I was inside the mess hall drinking hot coffee and mopping the floors, so it turned out. Anyway, we left there, they left there and went to Gulfport, Mississippi on a troop train, on December 31st; arrived in Gulfport on the 1st of 1944.

Mr. Rabalais: What was in Gulfport? That was--?

Mr. Dietz: That was basic training.

Mr. Rabalais: Basic training.

Mr. Dietz: We got there, and this captain greeted us by having us all go around to the quartermaster and they issued us rifles. I think it was about one o'clock or two o'clock in the morning, night, and we were supposed to stand at attention while he inspected us. None of us had any basic training or nothing; we didn't know anything.

Mr. Rabalais: Did you have uniforms?

Mr. Dietz: No, we didn't have--yeah, we did, we did. We did have uniforms. But they hadn't given us any kind of instruction at Camp Walters

or anything. Some of these guys didn't even know how to hold a rifle or nothing. I had attended Peacock Military Academy here in San Antone before that, and I knew how to do all this stuff, so it was no problem. That's why I was goldbricking the first time, when I stayed in bed. I knew how to do that. But anyway, I attended Peacock Military Academy here in San Antone. It's gone now. Then after that, we went through basic, and I had applied for pilot training, cadet training, but on the interview they--

Mr. Rabalais: They had too many of them by that time, I think.

Mr. Dietz: They washed me out. They needed gunners, so I was assigned as a gunner and they sent me to Tyndall Air Force Base where I received my gunnery wings.

Mr. Rabalais: Now, where was that at?

Mr. Dietz: Down at Panama City, Florida.

Mr. Rabalais: Okay.

Mr. Dietz: I received my wings there, and after we got our wings, we were shipped up to Westover, Massachusetts.

Mr. Rabalais: Did y'all practice with the .50 caliber mostly?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, .50s and .30s, too (unclear). We trained on a B-17 shooting and an AT-6 with a .30 caliber machine gun, and I enjoyed that because he would get into a dive and I was sitting back there shooting that .30 caliber. I enjoyed that. Anyway, we went all the

way up to Massachusetts, and there we were assigned to our crew.
The pilot, co-pilot and the rest of the crew.

Mr. Rabalais: This would be in wintertime, probably?

Mr. Dietz: This was in, let's see, about March I think. March, yeah, yeah, about March, I think it was. Then after we got the crew, they sent us to Charleston, South Carolina Air Force Base, where we got with the crew and a B-24. We did some submarine patrols out of Charleston, South Carolina, German submarine patrol. The whole crew was with us on that, and we did that, and then--

Mr. Rabalais: Where is your gun station on a B-24 at that time?

Mr. Dietz: At that time, I was a waist gunner, right waist gunner.

Mr. Rabalais: Did y'all have the big open area?

Mr. Dietz: Oh, yeah, open windows and everything, yeah. There was no closed window. We flew out in the Atlantic and turned, looked around, and one time we spotted one and it dove. The pilot called the Navy--or, the radio operator called the Navy--and they came out. That was the only time we saw any action. Then we left Charleston, South Carolina and went to Langley Field, Virginia. At Langley Field, Virginia, why, the navigator got some radar training and the gunners didn't have nothing to do. We could get passes; we'd go to Washington and all around, you know. And after he finished his six weeks training, we got a B-24 and flew up

to Bangor, Maine. During this time, too, while we were at South Carolina, we did a lot of cross-countries.

Mr. Rabalais: (Unclear, both speaking together).

Mr. Dietz: And we flew from Charleston to Mobile, Alabama and then turned south over--I mean Montgomery, Alabama and then down to Mobile, then out across the Gulf to the Florida Keys, turned around and flew all the way up to Charleston, South Carolina.

Mr. Rabalais: All in one mission?

Mr. Dietz: All in one mission. And the pilot said we ran through five fronts coming in that night. Lightning was (unclear) all around us. We had a good B-24. Anyway, after that we left Langley Field, Virginia and flew to Bangor, Maine, where we picked up a brand new B-24, and we had two bomb bays, the B-24 did, and both of them were filled with K-rations. That was the little square things, you know and white with a coat of wax.

Mr. Rabalais: Where were you going with that?

Mr. Dietz: We were heading overseas. We flew from Bangor to Goose Bay, Labrador. And we were socked in there for one or two days; I can't remember. We had to leave Goose Bay at night, because they had a German submarine out there and he was counting all the planes that were leaving. So we left at night, and that way they couldn't tell. They knew it was an airplane; they couldn't tell what kind it was. I went to sleep in the--

Mr. Rabalais: That's a pretty long flight across the--. Where did y'all fly, to Scotland?

Mr. Dietz: No, we--I went to sleep back there in the waist, and the next thing, I had my earphones on, and the next thing I heard, the navigator say, "John, you'd better get some altitude. These mountains at Greenland are higher than we are." That woke me up, and I got up and looked out, and sure enough we were over Greenland. We flew across Greenland and came out on the other side and flew to Iceland, where we landed. A terrible place, Iceland was, a real hell-hole. We were there for about two days, a lot of fog. Finally we took off and flew over North Ireland and down to Wales, East Anglia--no, that's not the name of the place. Blackpool--no, it wasn't Blackpool. Anyway, we flew down to Wales, and there we got on a train and they took us to Stone, and at Stone they assigned us to different groups. We were assigned to the 466th.

Mr. Rabalais: So, you weren't with the same crew?

Mr. Dietz: Yes, I was.

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, you were?

Mr. Dietz: The whole crew, yeah.

Mr. Rabalais: Did the plane have a name at that time?

Mr. Dietz: No, it was just a brand new B-24. We left it and got on this train and rode to Stone, and from Stone they assigned us to the 466th at Attlebridge, which was ten miles west of Norwich, England, and

there's where we started flying our missions. Well, the first mission we flew was a chaff mission. Chaff is just little aluminum strips that you dropped out to mess up the German radar.

Mr. Rabalais: Was it in a canister?

Mr. Dietz: It was in a little packet, about that big, about that big. It had a chute; you'd put it in a chute and it went down, scattered out. We had the bomb bay full of boxes of that stuff. We flew to--about ten o'clock at night, we flew toward the Dutch coast and then we turned south and flew along the coast dropping all this chaff down there. We flew past the Belgian coast and down along the French coast, I don't know how far, but we dropped chaff all the way down.

Mr. Rabalais: That was because there's a bomb group probably coming I behind y'all.

Mr. Dietz: No. What we heard--we weren't on oxygen either; we were below 10,000 feet when we're doing this, and what--467 had a black B-24 and they were the ones that flew over there and dropped arms and things to the resistance and also spies and everything.

Mr. Rabalais: That's interesting.

Mr. Dietz: That's what we thought went over us when we were dropping this chaff. We didn't know for sure, but that's what we figured. They were dropping agents, you know, and things like that. And then the first real bombing mission we flew, toward Hamburg, and we

flew along the Dutch coast and the Friesian Islands down there and at Helgoland, which is an island out north of the estuary going into Hamburg, a big red rock, I never will forget it. It was red, and the sea was blue; it was really pretty that day. We got down to Hamburg and started dropping our bombs, and flak was going all around. There was a P-38 chasing an ME-109, and it dove into the clouds and we didn't see any more after that. So we survived it and went on back to the base, and after that it was just mission after mission.

Mr. Rabalais: Was it pretty much always the same bomb size, maybe 500-pounders, or all kinds of variety?

Mr. Dietz: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. When Patton was chasing the Germans, they were retreating out of France, they held up--the Germans held in Metz, which had a bunch of medieval forts. They were in these big old stone forts, star-shaped, you know. They had said, intelligence had said that some of these walls were about ten feet thick, stone. So what they did, they put four 2,000 pound bombs in our plane.

Mr. Rabalais: Whoa, that's a big load!

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. We had four of them. We took off and went over to Metz and we were up at about 25,000 feet, on oxygen. Anyway, when the bombardier released the bombs, one of them didn't release. The shackles had frozen up; got water in them and wouldn't

release. So Herman Young, was from Mamou, Louisiana. He could speak French. I was an armorer; he was an armorer. So we both went back there and climbed up onto that bomb and held onto the rafter up there, trying to shake it loose by jumping up and down.

Mr. Rabalais: That's a narrow catwalk over there!

Mr. Dietz: No, the bomb bay doors were open. We were holding on like that and jumping up and down on that bomb, trying to break it loose. It wouldn't break loose. So the pilot, when we got through, he lowered down to altitude and we were off our oxygen, and he called Young and said take the fuse out of the bomb, which Young did. I was back at the waist, and all of a sudden I saw the bomb bay door go fluttering like that. We went back and looked up and the bomb had come loose. The ice had, you know, melted, and it released.

Mr. Rabalais: It went through the bomb bay doors?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, it hit the bomb bay door and knocked it off, and it was flying, fluttering off. Somewhere over Belgium it dropped but it didn't explode, you know, because we had already taken the fuse out. Then after that, we flew, let's see, no after that we flew a couple more mission.

Mr. Rabalais: When it knocks the bomb bay door open like that, were y'all able to close it again?

Mr. Dietz: No. That part--it knocked it completely off the plane.

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, it knocked it off, yeah.

Mr. Dietz: When it hit the bomb bay door, it went off. You know, a 2,000-pounder, it broke it loose. Then they stood us down in October, from bombing missions, and we went on gasoline-hauling missions. They put four wing tanks in the bomb bay, and that was when Patton was trying to chase the Germans, and he overextended himself, you know. So we flew gasoline to a little town called St. Nazaire, which was in eastern France. We landed there at a former German fighter base, and there were all sorts of German planes that had been shot up on the tarmac when we landed.

Mr. Rabalais: That's sort of a dangerous mission, you know, flying gasoline like that.

Mr. Dietz: No, it wasn't bad.

Mr. Rabalais: What kind of tanks, was it rubber tanks or something?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, self-sealing wing tanks in a B-24. They put four of them in the bomb bay. As soon as we landed they went out there and started siphoning that gasoline off. We went into town, went into St. Nazaire. Some of us, ahead of us, a guy named Bill Campbell already here, they had gotten a room in the hotel, but we weren't able to get a room in the hotel and we had to stay out at the plane that night, which was bad. We did get a meal there at the hotel.

We hadn't eaten anything since breakfast that morning. Young, who talked French, he was able to secure us kind of an apartment with the navigator and the radio operator and young and myself. There was five of us--oh, and the flight engineer. We all slept in this apartment. There was a bed, a single bed, a couch, and three of us laid across the double bed to sleep at night.

Mr. Rabalais: That's still a pretty good sleeping place.

Mr. Dietz: Well, yeah, better than outside, you know. The next morning, Young and I wanted some coffee, and he talks somebody out there and finally found this place to get some coffee. What it was, was burnt chicory. They didn't have any food because the Germans had taken all the food out of this town. Anyway, we left there and we flew--I flew three gas missions and it got routine after that, you know. It wasn't anything exciting. The first night there, the tank in front was only about 15 miles ahead of us. Tanks were going through St. Nazaire, and half-tracks, and infantry were all marching through there. I was just 18 years old. My brother had sent me a big old Bowie knife, and I had that Bowie knife back here in my belt, and I had a .45 on my hip here, and a Thompson submachine gun over my shoulder.

Mr. Rabalais: Boy, you were ready.

Mr. Dietz: I was ready for them. I was 18, yeah. Anyway, we went on back and flew two more that were just routine.

Mr. Rabalais: Was there any anti-aircraft on those particular milk runs like that?

Mr. Dietz: No, B-24.

Mr. Rabalais: No, no. Anti-aircraft that bothered you any?

Mr. Dietz: Oh not then, no, because we'd already come up--

Mr. Rabalais: The front had gone on (unclear, both speaking together).

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, the front was up there near the Rhine River, up further on.
(Unclear, both speaking together) Metz, you know.

Mr. Rabalais: You didn't bomb deep into Germany?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, later on, later on. After that, why, the pilot made lead pilot. He was transferred to the 784th Squadron, which was all lead people, and they had to get rid of a gunner because they were getting a "Mickey" operator on the plane who could bomb through clouds and navigate through clouds, and we flipped and I lost, and I was put in a spare pool. I flew with one crew, I don't even know who it was; I don't even know who the mission was, and I flew top turret that day. Then the next time, I was asleep; about 5:30 the sergeant of the guard came in and woke me up and said, "They need you to fly." I said, "Hell, I hadn't been notified." He said, "You've got to fly." So I went down and grabbed my duffel bag with my oxygen mask and all my winter clothes and my heated suit, and this plane was out there on the runway getting ready to take off. Somebody got sick or chickened out, one of the two. I climbed up in the plane; as soon as I got in, they took off.

Mr. Rabalais: You didn't know anybody.

Mr. Dietz: I didn't know anybody; I got dressed while we was taking off. I put my heated suit on and everything. That day, I flew the waist that day, which wasn't bad. I don't even know what the mission was or who it was I went with. Then after that, they assigned me to another crew, John Garrity's crew. I flew seven missions with him, and I caught--we flew eight missions. Five of them, we went to Magdeburg, Germany.

Mr. Rabalais: Maddenburg?

Mr. Dietz: Each time, one after another, because we wasn't getting results and they sent us back. We had a lot of flak on that.

Mr. Rabalais: Did y'all fly with B-24s or mixed with -17s?

Mr. Dietz: No, all B-24s.

Mr. Rabalais: All B-24s.

Mr. Dietz: The B-24s were in the Second Air Division. See, there were three divisions. The First Air Division was all B-17s. And the Second Air Division was B-24s.

Mr. Rabalais: But it's still all part of the Eighth Air Force.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. And the Third Division was -17s and B-24s. The insignia for First Division was a triangle, and the insignia for the Second Division was a spot, round spot. The Third Division was a square. Anyway, I flew with them for about seven or eight missions. And that was one of the worst missions I flew. I was flying tail that

time, and we were going to bomb a little town called Peine, which was between Hanover and Berlin. Low level, 5,000-6,000 feet.

Mr. Rabalais: Wow!

Mr. Dietz: We were supposed to follow the railroad tracks into the town. They had a marshalling yard and a little foundry, and as we were going up, there was a siding there and on this siding was four flatcars with two 88 aircraft guns on each car. The Germans opened up on us and they were knocking planes. This (unclear) plane came in way high, about five o'clock and got down even with me. Just as he got down here, a burst of flak hit his wing at number on engine.

Mr. Rabalais: He just folded up?

Mr. Dietz: He went up like that and down like that.

Mr. Rabalais: There was no hope for him to get out; he was too low.

Mr. Dietz: Oh, no. The wing was gone. What I was worried about was that wing coming back and hitting us, that piece coming back and hitting us, but it fluttered off behind us. We were being shot up real bad. I got hit in the back of the neck, and we got a waist gunner, he got his Mae West shot off between his legs, and the co-pilot had a piece come in underneath his seat here, about that big. Anyway, we didn't have--shot out all the--we went in a bombed the town, made it back to England, and we didn't have any hydraulic fluid or nothing like that, no brakes, and we landed at

this emergency field, English emergency field. Young and I and the flight engineer went back and we had to crank down the wheels, which we did.

Mr. Rabalais: Manually.

Mr. Dietz: It was overcast; we couldn't see the field, and they were shooting up flares at us. We had one engine out over here and another fixing to go out on this side. Finally we saw the flares and the pilot let down and we landed, but we rolled to a stop; we couldn't put on brakes or nothing. Anyway, when we got out we started counting holes in the fuselage and the wings. Part of the right stabilizer, part of it had been shot completely off. That's where I was, in the tail, and I think that was the time I got hit in the neck, when it blew up up there.

Mr. Rabalais: You were in the tail turret?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, I was in the tail. The piece that came through the plane was spent, when it came through the side of the plane. It didn't--all it did was sting like hell and break a little bit of skin. Scared the hell out of me; I thought I was dead. I reached back there to see if I could stop the bleeding, and there was just a little bit of blood, so it wasn't nothing after that. But we counted the holes in the plane; it was about 300 holes, we stopped.

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, my goodness!

Mr. Dietz: We were flying this plane here, Pegasus, flying red horse. Anyway, while we were waiting for the English limeys to pick us up, to take us up to get a ride back to our base, we sat down in a circle, just like this, and we started looking at each other and started laughing. We just started hysterical laughing at each other, I mean--

Mr. Rabalais: Sort of a relief or release.

Mr. Dietz: I guess so. Anyway, it was just hysterical laughing all around. We were just laughing like mad.

Mr. Rabalais: That's interesting!

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. Anyway, they picked us up, and they thought we'd gone crazy because we were laughing down there so much, you know. Then after that, I caught, during the Battle of the Bulge where they had all that ice and snow, we flew--in the Battle of the Bulge, we flew two missions a day then. I think it was right around Christmas Eve was when we did that. I caught pneumonia or the flu, and they put me in an oxygen tent in a hospital.

Mr. Rabalais: Now what base did you say y'all were at?

Mr. Dietz: Attlebridge. Attlebridge was ten miles west of Norwich, England. I was in the hospital; I had a friend from Palestine that was in -17s, and he came up to see me. He was at Bury St. Edmunds, which was about 30 miles south of Attlebridge. He was coming up to see me and I didn't know it. I was laying up there about half dead.

Had a little old plexiglass window in this, and I heard this guy say, “Hey Bull, get up! Look, I got a fifth of whiskey.” He was coming across the hospital floor shaking this whiskey. Guy next to me had been shot up, he was moaning. He said, “Get up, get up. We got a dance; there’s a dance at the Red Cross Center. They’ve got girls, get up.” And all this whiskey was spilling out in the hospital; they had to escort him out. But anyway, after that, why, Garrity went ahead and finished his missions and they assigned me to another crew. The crew was Snoper, was his name, pilot. John Lorenz was the co-pilot, and he was big with the 466th. I flew nose with them, and I was on the mission that we bombed Basel, Switzerland by mistake.

Mr. Rabalais: Bombed Basel?

Mr. Dietz: I was flying nose and we were supposed to bomb Freiburg. It was overcast--

Mr. Rabalais: Was it close by?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, it was ahead, it was ahead of Freiburg, 30 miles, 40 miles ahead. We were up at 20,000 feet and we were supposed to bomb Freiburg. I was flying the nose. It was overcast, a lot of contrails going around, couldn’t see the ground hardly at all.

Mr. Rabalais: Were they using the “Mickey” system or something to bomb with?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, your radar. But they didn't do it on this mission here. We were going along there and all of a sudden the -17s came flying through us, from the right over here, and were getting like this.

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, my goodness!

Mr. Dietz: t I was sitting up there in the nose, and I looked up there and there was a -17, right in front. I knew we were going to hit it, but my pilot dove down real quick. A lot of them, John, he's here today, he dove off this way. We were up about 20,000, 25,000 feet. Anyway, we got through that and lead navigator looked up there and saw this town. He said, "That's Freiburg" over the radio. Well my navigator was named Kuhn, and I was flying toggler; I was releasing the bombs. We had a switch up there that you released the bombs, called toggler. We're going on and lead navigator said, "That's Freiburg up ahead," and Kuhn, our navigator said, "No, that's Basel, Switzerland." He said, "Harold, don't you release the bombs." So we got over Basel; a lot of them released the bombs, and it killed seven Swiss people, right around the depot. Later on, we found out it killed seven--

Mr. Rabalais: You didn't release yours?

Mr. Dietz: No, we didn't release; my navigator said don't do it. But when we got out over the Channel, we jettisoned them; I released them then.

Mr. Rabalais: You dumped them there.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. But anyway, they had to pay Switzerland, the U.S. Government had to pay Switzerland some money, but later on we found out there were some box cars there that were full of ammunition and it was going to Germany. The Swiss were selling ammunition to the Germans at that time.

Mr. Rabalais: I did not know that.

Mr. Dietz: We didn't feel bad, then, about bombing Basel, Switzerland.

Mr. Rabalais: When you found that out.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Rabalais: So it was pretty close to the border then.

Mr. Dietz: Well, Basel was right there at the conjunction of Germany and France over here.

Mr. Rabalais: Oh, okay.

Mr. Dietz: Mulhouse was back over here and there was another little town, French town here. Basel was here and a little German down back. And when it cleared and we saw Basel, you could just see all over the country, you know, at 25,000 feet, you know. But anyway, a bunch of them did drop the bombs down there and killed some people. After we found out about that we didn't feel--but anyway, I finished up my missions with the--

Mr. Rabalais: How many missions total?

Mr. Dietz: Twenty-six.

Mr. Rabalais: Twenty-six.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, I only had to fly 26 because I was in the spare pool. Anybody in the spare pool, that's all they had to fly was 26.

Mr. Rabalais: The others had to do 30?

Mr. Dietz: Thirty, thirty-five. When Doolittle took over, he upped it to 30. Everybody else before Doolittle had 25. You got a DFC for flying that many. Well, they stopped giving the DFC December 15th, sometime in December. I had 15 missions in when they'd already stopped giving the DFC. Doolittle upped it to 30, and he said, "Hell, by the time y'all got 25, y'all were just seasoned veterans," so he (unclear) five more. Then they upped it to 35 after that

Mr. Rabalais: So, after your 26th mission, what happened to you then?

Mr. Dietz: Well, after that, the war ended on V-E Day. This was in May when I finished up. April, I think it was; April I finished up. They gave me orders and I left--the thing about it, I was going to get on a troop train and go down to Southampton and catch a boat back to the states. That morning, we got up and--from 1939 on, there was no lights at night in England. You know, it was all blackout. Well, we got up at 5:00 and got in a GI truck going to the railroad station in Norwich, which was east. As we approached that way, there was this glow in the sky. We didn't know what it was. As we got closer to Norwich, it got brighter and brighter. When we crossed this river to the railroad station, the lights had been turned

on all through the railroad station. First time since 1939 that they turned on the lights.

Mr. Rabalais: Wow!

Mr. Dietz: Anyway, I got on a train and started going down all through these towns, people were jumping up and waving to me, you know, V-E Day, you know. The lights were on all over there. I got down to the boat and got on the ship and came back to the states. Took about 10 days.

Mr. Rabalais: A whole bunch of people on your ship?

Mr. Dietz: Oh, yeah, all GIs. There was a bunch of them. A bunch of them had been through Africa and all, you know, D-Day. We landed at Boston Harbor.

Mr. Rabalais: Did you get assigned to another base then or did you get discharged?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah. When I got back to the states, I got a 30-day leave, went home to Palestine. Then we went out to Santa Ana, California. I had been a lifeguard at Palestine, at the swimming pool, and some of the other places. When the Air Force found out that I had been a lifeguard, they said, "We need a lifeguard at Lackland," which is out here, because they had turned it into an R&R base for people coming back, you know. So I was assigned to the Physical Ed Department out there and went in as a lifeguard. I was a lifeguard out there from August of '45 to November, when I got my

discharge, and that's what I did out there; I was a lifeguard. That's about it.

Mr. Rabalais: Were you ready to get out?

Mr. Dietz: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I was ready to get out. I was out there when V-J Day was, when the Japs surrendered. That whole town, you could hear the horns, bells ringing, everything just going like mad down there, you know.

Mr. Rabalais: So you went back and settled in Palestine?

Mr. Dietz: Yeah, I went to college then; went down to Sam Houston State.

Mr. Rabalais: Well, good for you. Well, I really appreciate you sharing all this information with us, Harold, and again, on behalf of the National Museum of the Pacific War, we appreciate all the amount of history that's been put in our records. Let me send you a CD of this interview, hopefully within a couple of weeks.

Mr. Dietz: Okay.

Mr. Rabalais: To the address that you have on here. And again, thank you so much.

Mr. Dietz: Yeah.

OH03662 - Harold Dietz
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