

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

NIMITZ EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER

FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS

AN INTERVIEW WITH

MR. DOYLE V. EBEL

MONTGOMERY, TEXAS 77316

JULY 30, 2013

26TH BOMB SQUADRON 11TH BOMB GROUP

Mr. Misenhimer:

My Name is Richard Misenhimer, today is July 30, 2013. I am interviewing Mr. Doyle V. Ebel by telephone. His phone number is 936-588-2337 . His address is 13899 Parrish, Montgomery, Texas 77316. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Ebel:

I will try to do my best.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure it's okay with you.

"Agreement Read."

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Ebel:

That is fine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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 touch with a veteran he's moved or something. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact, if we needed to reach you?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Who would that be?

Mr. Ebel:

Judy Booth.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Ebel

936-588-2188.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about an address if you don't then don't worry?

Mr. Ebel:

She lives in Montgomery too, she only lives a couple of blocks from me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birthdate?

Mr. Ebel:

March 17, 1924.

Where were you born?

I was born in Houston, Texas.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Ebel:

No I am an only child.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Ebel:

Well, I was like all the people brought-up in the early 30's, well late 30's and 40's. We lived and did a lot of things on our own. I know my folks, we had a big garden and everything. We had a cow, we had pigs, we would put the meat up and we had milk. My father had a job, he was fortunate that he had the job, but we did not have a lot of money and I have always said, we were all poor but we just did not know it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did your father do?

Mr. Ebel:

My father was a cabinet maker and he worked as a maintenance man for the First National Bank in Houston, Texas at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he able to keep employed most of the depression.

Mr. Ebel:

He had a job all the way up through the depression and my senior year until he cut his thumb off and then they retired him. Then he went into business for himself as a home builder.

When the war started he couldn't get materials or anything. He went to work in the shipyard as a pattern maker and he stayed there until after the war and then returned to his homebuilding again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, did you live in town or in the country?

Mr. Ebel:

We were just about oh....6 to 8 miles outside of Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you on a farm or what?

Mr. Ebel:

We were in a neighborhood, but it was a rural neighborhood.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You mentioned you had a garden and animals and things, so I assumed you were.

Mr. Ebel:

We weren't on a farm we just had about 3 acres.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, you made it through the depression okay then?

Mr. Ebel:

Oh, yea, we survived. My uncle had a dairy farm and so we got milk from them and also sometime when his cows would go dry, they would no longer produce, or would no longer breed. We would butcher them and our father would can them on the halves with them and we had meat.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Ebel:

I went to Jeff Davis High School in Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you graduate there?

Mr. Ebel:

In the fall of '42. I actually did not go to school the last semester of my high school. I only needed 2 credits to graduate. I had taken a mechanic's course and I was working full time for a Ford dealer during the summer. When school was fixing to start, the service manager asked me if I was going back to the school. I said, "yes, I am going back and getting my diploma." He said, "if you like I would like to keep you here on full time and you can go to night school and get your diploma." That is what I did, so I worked full time as a Ford mechanic and then I went to night school, got my 2 courses and got my diploma and graduated in '42.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, my future wife, we were going together, we were teenagers. I was only 16, and she and her mother, who was a cafeteria manager at the YMCA in Houston, they were having a Christmas program that day, and we were on our way out that afternoon going to this Christmas play when we heard it on the car radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard that how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Ebel:

Well you know, like I say I was just a young teenager but, I knew sooner or later it was going to get me and I just had to prepare myself for it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

As I recall, they had the draft back then, but you had to be 21 to be drafted?

Mr. Ebel:

It was what you call a peace time draft you know in 1940. I was still young like I say I was only 16 and I had not registered yet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right, well I guess you were 17 if you were born in '24.

Mr. Ebel:

Yea, well I did not register until I was 18.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right. When did you go into the service?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, I went in on March 18, 1943. I turned 19 on the 17th and on the 18th of March I was inducted into the United States Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer?

Mr. Ebel:

No sir, I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Drafted to Army? Did you have any choice of the branch?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, no I didn't I was drafted and they put me in the Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go in at?

Mr. Ebel:

I went in at Fort Sam Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your basic?

Mr. Ebel:

I went down to Miami Beach for my basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel out there?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, we went down on a troop train, and in fact, we did not know we were in the Air Force.

We were all told we were in the Infantry when we left Fort Sam Houston, we thought we were, at least after was the rumor. We went through Louisiana and we figured well that is where we are going to go have basic training and nobody told us anything.

We went through Louisiana and we got into Mississippi. We still thought, and finally, we stopped in Alabama and this guy we asked him, " where are we going?" He says, "don't you know, you are in the Air Force." So, after we found out we were in the Air Force, we were going to Miami.

Mr. Misenhimer:

This was a train trip was it?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, it was a troop train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, it was my first one, you know, it was quite an experience you know, you don't know what the hell is going on and nobody is telling you anything. They just tell you when to eat and when to get up to the front and eat and when to come back you know. Do what your are told and that is all you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long did that trip take?

Mr. Ebel:

It took 3 days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a place to sleep?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, we were on a Pullman, it was 3 men to a berth, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you wind up in Florida?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, I was on Miami Beach, they took over the Hotels down there and we stayed in a Hotel, there was 6 of us to a room and we did all our training down on the golf course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did your training consist of?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, mostly close order drills and stuff like that and military discipline, the same thing you get in any basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of weapons training?

Mr. Ebel:

Only rifle training on basic, that's all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of rifle did you have?

Mr. Ebel:

Enfield.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was bolt action. No machine gun or anything like that?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, no we had that and we had pistol training that is about all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any bayonet training?

Mr. Ebel:

No, none.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was your basic?

Mr. Ebel:

I think it was supposed to be 10 weeks but I came down with measles and I had to go to the hospital for a week and they put back in another group, so I got a little more than just 10 weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you start over from scratch again or not?

Mr. Ebel:

I was about 2 or 3 weeks brought back down.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, you got the back part of it, so then when you finished basic where did you go?

Mr. Ebel:

I went to Scott Field in Belleville Illinois right out of St. Louis the Radio School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that?

Mr. Ebel:

I was in Radio School, I did not want to go to radio school, I would have preferred aircraft mechanic because I was an automobile mechanic, thinking that my aptitude was much better as a mechanic and of course, you know they give you all these aptitude tests and I did not want to go to radio school. So, when they gave me all these different tests with different sounds and everything I was just putting anything down. I was through before they even finished the test. I had all mine marked. I didn't care and I didn't know anything about it, but I guess the wisdom of the Army, they decided I was going to be a radio operator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, what all did you do during that school?

Mr. Ebel:

It was basically code, half-a-day code and half-a-day theory, it was quite a deal that goes into electronics you know, electricity and stuff like that. I already knew that as an automobile mechanic. I knew all about the battery operated stuff. It was nothing new to me. I did quite well in the theory part, where we made the radios and things, but I came down with pneumonia while I was there, so I was in the hospital for 42 days. We did not think I was going to make it. I was a pretty sick boy. When I got out of there, they gave me a 14-day convalescent leave and I came home. That is when my wife and I got married and so, when I went back, I went back to radio school and I was there until Christmas of '43. The wife came out there to see me and she stayed for Christmas out there with me and she had rented a room with a couple, and he was a permanent party there, and he was at headquarters. He came home one night and he told her that I was going to be transferred and she told me.

Mr. Ebel:

I said, "I can't be transferred yet, I haven't finished the school," the next day I was on shipping orders and I was supposed to go to Denver to Fire Control School. So, well we went to the shipping and receiving and there was 200 of us. They took the top men out of the theory classes and sent us to the Central Fire Control. Well, we got over there and the next day, they sent out the first 100 and the other 100 set around there for another week and finally they said, "you all going to go to gunnery school and the rest of that shipment has been cancelled." I said, "well then lets go back to radio school." They said, "no you can't go back to radio school because you have been washed out.".... chuckles... top of the class washed us out. So anyway, I ended up in Gunnery School down in Harlingen, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Chuckles..... Now, when you said you were learning code, was that the Morse Code ?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you still remember any of that?

Mr. Ebel:

I do, a few characters yet that is about all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, then you went to Gunnery School in Harligen, what happened there?

Mr. Ebel:

Oh, well now that was quite a deal down there. I mean it was from dawn to dark we were busy constantly and first, oh the first couple of...well the first 3 weeks, all we did was tear down machine guns put them back together and one thing or another. You had to know every part of it and we ended up taking it apart and putting it back together blind-folded. We had all those different things. Then they took us out on the range. Well, we had a lot of skeet shooting too, which I enjoyed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you did skeet shooting, were you riding in the back of a pickup or anything like that?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, the last part of it, we did and that was quite an experience too, because I had always been a hunter. My father took me hunting and I am familiar with a shotgun, and then bird hunting and duck hunting, so I didn't have any problem with the skeet shooting, I was breaking anywhere between 23,24 out of 25 and I thought I was pretty good, but when they put us in the back of this pickup around this range, the first time around I got 3.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Chuckles.....yep....chuckles..

Mr. Ebel:

We were shooting from a moving vehicle at a moving target, it is quite different.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some other things that happened there at Gunnery School?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, that is about all we did there until we went air-to-air gunnery and things like that and when we finished up there, they gave us a 10-day leave and they sent me up to Fresno, to Hammer Field and that is where they made up bomber crews.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, back to the air-to-air gunnery, tell me about that?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, it was all...,well they had tow-targets they would pull behind the plane and they would make passes out there, we were on the B-24's out there too. I was in a tail position, I don't know why? I ended up in a tail turret on the B-24, so, it was what I was using, when they put the tow-target and they came you know and things like that. Well, it was quite new to me because I had not gotten used to flying in an airplane, my first trip up there was on an AT-6 you know, I had a 30 caliber machine gun and air-to-air firing and that was my first airplane ride. I had never been up in an airplane before, that was quite an experience for me too the first flight and there I was up there as an aerial gunner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else happen in Gunnery School?

Mr. Ebel:

No that I know of, nothing that is real spectacular you know. It was just routine stuff until you got it down, that is all. You had to repeat stuff until you got it down and by the time you got through and when you thought you were ready.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was that school?

Mr. Ebel:

I think it was 10 weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you went to Fresno California.

Mr. Ebel:

Well, I went to Fresno at Hammer Field there, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Another train trip?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, I was on a civilian train going there because I was on leave, went up there on a civilian train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yea, you had to report up there, so tell me about your experiences there?

Mr. Ebel:

We were there, oh, the people there were from all the different tech schools you know, and there was all kinds of people there, in fact the enlisted ranks. Well we stayed around there, we did a lot of running and things and PT and then in oh, about a week, they took us up and they had a camp up in the mountain called Mount Owens to a tent city. They took us up there and we had to hike up the mountains, we would bivovac up on top of the mountain and one thing or another and you had a regular routine of the lectures and things.

The military lectures, the VD shows and what have you, you know. We were up there about 10 days and they marched us back down to the air base and the next morning they told us at 8 o'clock to be all gathered at the headquarters. So, that is where we were. They had a platform there with speakers on it. I guess that there was over a thousand men gathered around this place, officers, enlisted men and all and out on the quadrangle, they had a bunch of white coats. Each one had a number on it. This officer got up on the platform on the PA system and said, " when your number is called and your name is called go to the post designated." Well, he called out all those names and then when he got to post 18, he called my number and well I went to post 18 and by the time, he got through, there was a crew around every post. That is how the air crew was formed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, after that, the next day we entrained on a troop train and went down to March Air Force Base and that is where we started our transition training on B-24's.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you went around that post with that number, was your pilot and everyone there, the entire crew?

Mr. Ebel:

Everyone was there except Dale Henderson, which was my radio operator, the radio operator I had I don't remember what happened, but the one that got assigned us had something happen and he was taken off.

When we got to March, we did not have a radio operator. Dale Henderson, until he was casualed, up at March and he joined our crew.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, you went to, where did you say you went to from there?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, we went through all our transition training there and everything we could do, we had navigation flying, we had practice bombing, we had camera gunnery, air-to-air gunnery, and all that kinds of stuff. We went through every phase of the bomber crew training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you recall all the names of all your crew?

Mr. Ebel:

All my crew, yes we were still together, let me see name 1; Frank Jeter; pilot, Herb Harter; co-pilot, Don Weller; navigator, Greg Bavigain; bombardier, Robert Larson; engineer, Dale Henderson; radio operator, Sam Tillery; ball turret gunner, Ray Fritter; waist gunner, I was a tail gunner; and Victor Crowell; was the nose gunner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, the crew was together there then?

Mr. Ebel:

We were all together and we stayed together the rest of the war.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, that's right, good. What were some other things that happened there?

Mr. Ebel:

Well we would fly, and we had 3 days of ground school.

Then we would have 3 days of flying, we would fly out on an early mission and say in the morning early and you would have one that took off at around noon and flew til around 5 and then at 6 o'clock we would have night flying. We had 3 flights, we would rotate out and it would be in the morning, in the middle and then at night and then we would go back and have a day off and then they would start with the ground crew the last 3 days, so 3 days a week we flew and 3 days a week we had ground school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long did that last?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, let see, we got there in March and left there the last of June.

Mr. Misenhimer:

March of what year?

Mr. Ebel:

That was in '44

Mr. Misenhimer:

Alright until June of '44. Then what happened?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, after we finished training there in June, we went to Hamilton Field in San Francisco. We were supposed to pick up a plane and that is where we got assigned whether we were to go to Europe or whether we were to go to the Pacific. There were 10 crews out of that that finished up in June we were supposed to go to the Pacific and the rest were going to Europe.

That is where you turned in all your clothes and you got all your flight gear, your parachute, your parachute harness, your flying clothes and everything. You get a whole new issue of clothes everything new for overseas duty. Well, we stood around there for about a week and they decided that the airplanes we were supposed to get to fly over to Hawaii they were not going to arrive, so they put us on a troop train and sent us up to Seattle, Washington, to Fort Lawton where there was an embarkation port up there. So, on July the 4th, 1944, we sailed for Hawaii from Seattle, Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On a ship?

Mr. Ebel:

On a ship, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of ship was that?

Mr. Ebel:

It was a troop transport and it's name was the Shawnee, the SS Shawnee, converted banana boat that they made into a troop ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over there?

Mr. Ebel:

Well.... chuckles.. the first 4 or 5 days were pretty rough as soon as we got out of the Puget South and went into the North Pacific up there we hit some really some rough weather and that thing bounced like a cork.... chuckles... and everybody was quite sick and everything.

Well, when we got onboard the Red Cross gave everybody a little sack it had some apples and oranges and candy bars and a paper bag and some other little things in it. Well, I stayed in my bunk for 3 days and I ate on that...chuckles... I did not get out of it until it was bad... I run to the latrine that was up in the bow in the boat and you would run and get back in your bed because it was bad....I will tell you this, it is not very nice but I am going to tell it anyway... about the 5th day I said, " well, I got to have something to eat," I was feeling better and wasn't getting too bad, so I went down in the mess hall and it was down in the hold and it was hot down in there and we had to stand up at the tables and had the mess kit, well I was up against the bulk head and I would take a bite and go back against the bulk head and when I came back to the other side the table again you are standing up, so when you are back to the table again you grab something else to eat while you are up against the bulk head and everything was doing fine until a guy across from me heaved in his mess kit, and when that happened I could not hold it, I took out for the top, I didn't know if I was going to make it or not.... chuckles.... and so after that it was pretty fair again.....

Mr. Misenhimer:

Chuckles.....now, were you by yourself or were you with other ships?

Mr. Ebel:

All my crew was on there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, I mean the ship....

Mr. Ebel

We were by ourselves, we had an escort for a while when we were right on the West Coast.

They had a destroyer out there escorting us because they did have Japanese submarines off the West Coast. It was so rough, I thought it was bad, but that destroyer out there he would disappear for a long time. We knew he was out there, the first thing we knew he would pop up on top of a wave and well he was still out there and we would see him over a while again, I don't see how they made it on that thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, about how long did it take you to go over there?

Mr. Ebel:

Five days...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Five days...to Pearl Harbor or where?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, we went into the terminal right there at the Aloha Tower, we got off on the dock there at the Aloha Tower. They put us on trucks, we thought we were going to Hickam, because that is the only place we knew about in Hawaii. They took us up to a place way in the Northern end called Kahuku it was way out there on the far north end of Oahu it was just a little strip along the beach. We lived in tents up there and we were training up there. We flew sea searches up there, over-water navigation missions, and one thing or another out of there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you are flying these sea searches was this on a B-24?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was the plane assigned to you or did you get different ones when you flew?

Mr. Ebel:

When we were up there we just flew anything that was there. They had planes on there, they were all war weary airplanes anyway. They were just sitting there and we would take up a different one everyday, we never knew what we were going to fly. They just assigned you a number and you went to that airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long would that trip be when you went out on a search?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, we would go out about 6 to 8 hours and sometimes, when we made the over-water navigation missions, we would fly out maybe out to Johnson and back and we would go to Palmyra and places like that and then back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any Japanese ships or subs?

Mr. Ebel:

No, we thought we saw one, one day but it turned out to be a whale.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were in Pearl Harbor was there still much junk and stuff there much damage?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, when we got to Hickam, the barracks we stayed in was the one that was hit with the Japanese bombs.

They still had the bullet holes on the side, of course they are still there, they never filled them up, they just painted over them, they are never going to fill those bullet holes on the walls there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about some of the wrecked ships, were they still there?

Mr. Ebel:

I didn't see any, of course the Arizona was there, but that was the only one left when we got there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some other things that happened? Oh, did you get any liberty going to Honolulu?

Mr. Ebel:

Are you familiar with Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir, I am...

Mr. Ebel:

You are, well you know it just a fence in between there then?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right...

Mr. Ebel:

Still at the back fence of Hickam you go into and Pearl Harbor and the harbor goes right by the entrance of harbor comes by the Officer's Club of Hickam there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right. Did you get any liberty in Honolulu?

Mr. Ebel:

We would go to Honolulu, of course we had the curfew, you know we had to get off at 6 o'clock, everybody had to be back on base by 6 o'clock in the evening.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably a pretty long journey from Honolulu up to your camp up there?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, we had a good time in Honolulu on the beach you know and things i that, but it was pretty busy when we were at Hickam, we were going through another transition training there gunnery schools and things like that, all kinds of programs they had from the 7th Bomber Command. We were there for about oh...six weeks and then we were sent down over to the combat area.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you left there where did you go?

Mr. Ebel:

When we left there we picked up an aircraft at Hickam, and went there, we were going to Saipan, we were assigned this time to the 30th group out on Saipan. So, we flew the first night, evening we stopped at Johnson and the next morning we took off from Johnson we flew to Kwajalein and then stayed the night there and then the following day we flew into Saipan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that flight down there?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, it was quite, you know over water for 8 hours over water you don't see nothing, you really rely on your navigator and you are lucky to have one that knew what he was doing. I gave him a bad time and I used to show-up in the nose, he was trying to teach me a little navigation and he was trying to tell me all about the stars at night, they all look alike to me. I can't tell one from the other, but I can do pretty good on the ground navigation. When we got over water, he had to start celestial navigation again and there was no landmarks, so I went up there and I would sit with him and I had a drift meter and learned how to shoot drifts and things so he could correct his heading and then I would check on the drift meter and I would check on the drifts, so we got pretty good at it. I gave him a bad time. We were 8 hours flying out of Kwajalein and the weather was kind of bad, I was hoping to hit Saipan and he was worried, he was checking his figures and everything you know, I told him, I said, "you are lost." He said, "no, I am not lost, I know where I am at," and he said, " you look out that window and in about 5 minutes you are going to see an island come up." Well, I sat down and watching my watch, and 5 minutes come, and I said, "you are lost, there ain't no island out there." He said, " well, lets just wait a little bit." First thing you know, he said, "there it is!" Here it comes, that looks like an island popping out of the water you know. I looked at him and I said, "yea, but you are 3 minutes off on your ETA." He has never let me live that down, he tells everybody about it and every navigator he sees.. chuckles. He says, "there I was sweating blood had my search patterns laid out and everything and he tells me I am 3 minutes off on my ETA."... chuckles...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Chuckles.....got to have a little humor once in a while.

Mr. Ebel:

Oh, yea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, about when did you arrive at Saipan?

Mr. Ebel:

Let me see, we got there in October of '44.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yea, they took the island that summer.

Mr. Ebel:

Apparently was in June there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do there?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, we were assigned to the 392nd Squadron the 30th Bomb Group and we flew missions out of Saipan. We flew to Chi-Chi, to Marcos, Iwo jima, Truk the and we flew out of there until after the Iwo jima campaign and then they transferred us down to the 11th Bomb Group, but we had some hairy experiences up there when we were flying out that way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about those?

Mr. Ebel:

I guess...ha.... my most hairy one was our 21st mission out of Saipan on March 12, 1945. The Iwo Jima campaign was on and the Marines had a little over half the island.

We were going up to ChiChi-Jima, which was 130 miles north of Iwo. We bombed that strip up there every hour all night long to keep the Japanese to keep from coming down on the fleet around Iwo. We had picked up a radar man Dick David, right after in November after we got there, he joined our crew in November, we had 8 missions and he joined us as a radar man, so we became a radar crew. That way we were flying some night snooper missions. One plane harrassed my missions. So, we got up over at ChiChi at night and it was about 2:00 o'clock in the morning. They caught us in the search lights and they shot us up pretty good. We lost one engine over the target and we were losing power on another one and we left and we started throwing things out. We threw everything out that was loose and we dealt with the power they had to pull on the other engines, we were not going to have enough gas to get back to Guam where we were going to land. They had a conference up in the flight deck and I was not involved in it, because I was in the back, but they decided, maybe, they knew that the Marines had one air strip working on Iwo that they flew medi-vacs there. They thought well maybe they can get into Iwo. They tried all kinds of ways to communicate with Iwo. We were told to stay at least 50 miles away. It was forbidden to go into that area. We were kind of desperate that night. So, we kind of violated and we got in there and we all listened on the command set and it come on there that, "chick-so and- so, there is a boggie in your area." Well, we were that boggie and this chick is a night fighter. We are looking out and I am looking out there and I don't see anything, first thing you know, I see him. We had our lights on IFF on emergency. He turned his lights on when he recognized us but he still wanted the code of the day, which they sent him. He contacted the pilot then. He told them how to contact the command ship. Well he did and he got a hold of a command ship down there.

They told him, "no you can't go down, the runway is too short. Besides, we shut everything down at night, there is no light, it is dark. He said, "well in that case, we know we are going down, no use of us going out in the middle of the Pacific. So we said, "we will just come down and ditch out there amongst until you send someone out there to pick us up." He said, "well if you are committed, well alright." So, they let us land. Now, they had to stop the war because the artillery was lined up there at Suribachi shooting right down the runway north. Naval gunfire was going off, so they had to stop everything. They put a starshell up over the runway, we come in to land and there is a little rock off about 200 yards, I guess off of Iwo there. Some Japanese had swam up there to set up a mortar. They land in there dropping these mortar shells on the runway behind us. Well, we get down and get to the end of the runway and there is a pile of debris there. They finally got it stopped. They don't know where we are at. We turn around and go back the other way and come back to the other end of the runway and there was a Catalina sitting there and said, "hey, that is one of ours" and so we just pulled up and stopped beside it. We started to get out of the airplane and some marine said, "don't get out, anything moves at night gets shot." So, I looked at my waist gunner, and I said, "Ray, this hasn't been a good night has it?" I said, "first the Japanese shoot us up, then they vectored the night fighters on us, and Japanese mortars and now the Marines gonna shoot us!" So, anyway we stayed in there until the next morning and bailed out. Frank Jeter, he says that he is going up to the headquarters and radio the base and tell them where we were at and everything. I was known as a scrounger of the crew. So, he told me, "you get some food for us." Well I did. I rounded up some stuff and when he came back, he said, "we are going to pull that engine out ourselves and change it."

There was a P-51 service out there just started to move their equipment in and it was going to come in and start escorting the 29's to Japan. So, he told my engineer and assistant and you borrow the tools and stuff from and an A-frame, prop dollies, whatever we need to pull that engine. So, they did, they came back over there and we went to work and pulled that engine out. We had it hanging on an A-frame. The next day, when the engine came down on a medivac plane a mechanic and a prop man came down with it. I was standing there by the prop dolly and this prop man came up and he said, "who pulled that off?" I said, "we did." He said, "don't you know that only a prop specialist supposed to do that?" I said, "we did not have one." He said, "well I hope it works when you put it back. I said, "I do too, because we only have but 2 choices is that we stay here or fly this thing out and I don't want to stay here." Anyway, we went to work, it wasn't unusual for us to do that because we worked with the ground crews over there because they were short-handed and the Pacific was a lot different war than in Europe. We did a lot of things on our own that they didn't do over there shorthanded. Well, when the ground crew needed help, they come by the tent and say we are going to change an engine or got inspections and we would go out and help. We worked on the airplane and fortunately our engineer had worked at consolidated before he had gotten in the Army. He knew B-24's in and out. So, we had no problems took it out and we put the new one in. Now, you talk under primitive conditions that was it, because we were setting out there on the side of this runway and it was a dust bowl, I mean everytime the wind was blowing old ash would fly and it was dusty and dirty and we didn't have any rags or anything to clean anything with, so we used our own shirts.

Well got a 50 caliber ammunition can and we filled it with gasoline and after we'd take parts off the old engine to put on the new one we would have to wash them in this gasoline. It was my job to wash these parts and when it was up on the Scaffo/d there and when you wanted to put on a new part there, he would take it out of the gasoline and he would wrap it up in a shirt and then put it on before the dust would get it all dirty again. It was quite a deal, that was real primitive.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, you had to pass them up in your shirt..then what happened?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, after we put the engine together, they fired it off, it run and they let it run there a little while. So, it looked like everything was fine, so that was the morning of the 16th. We went out there on the runway and they run it up again. We took off from Iwo. We had to fly over the Japanese lines, and as soon as the wheels come up, we had to make a sharp turn to the right. Otherwise, he is going to fly right over the Japanese and we took a few rifle shots but that didn't do any damage. Got over the water and we flew that thing back to Guam. Three days later, were back in the air going back to Truk.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, you all went back to Truk?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, you know that Truk is a big Japanese base there and the Navy has always said that they knocked things out, but I can assure them that they did not knock that place out. They didn't use it as a harbor no more. It was in our range now.

When we moved to Saipan. Well we became in range of Truk and we kept bombing it. So, they didn't use these, you would see some ships in the harbor, but they weren't using it as a big naval base as they did once before. They still had the aircraft and everything else on there. They would put up quite a resistance. So, after that, we stayed around there, and we moved to Guam and stayed there until it was the last part of June of '45. We made the move to Okinawa, but we were flying off Yontan strip in Okinawa and now we were going to Japan. Man, we were flying such long missions before were 8 to 13 hour mission all over water, now we were only 400 miles from Japan like in the backyard. So, we flew to Japan and got there and we actually saw both atomic bombs. Northeast of Hiroshima the day they had dropped that one, we did not know anything about it and we looked and we didn't see the flash or anything we just saw the column going up you know. We did not know what it was. We thought it was a fire raid, because when we burned those cities they would set fires and smoke would come up like that. When we got back they told us it was an atomic bomb. We said, "what in the hell is an atomic bomb?" We have never heard anything about that. Nobody knew anything about it. So, then 4 days later when they dropped the one on Nagasaki, they told us they were going to do that so we were supposed to stay at least 60 miles away. So, we were still up there in that area and we saw the column when it came up you know. We had quite some hairy times out of Okinawa. I guess, the roughest mission I ever flew over the war was over Kure Naval Base and there was stuff that would haunt you there. They had the battleship Horuna in and that was the last remaining battleship of the Japanese Navy before they moved it. The way they had it was up against a mountain and the Navy tried to get it, but they could do it because they couldn't fly over it.

They had to fly at it and then turn sideways, they took quite a while trying to get it and then the British tried it and they had the same luck so, it was decided to be high level bombing would be the way to get it. We were actually Nimitz's heavy bombing crew because we were under the Navy and Nimitz was in charge of the Pacific. So, we went in there and we had a maximum strength, we had 108 Liberators on that day and hit Kure Naval Base. When we actually got 5 hits on the Horuna and 3 near misses and the near misses were better than the direct hits because it was like a torpedo hitting them. Of course, we got to using 2000 pounds ammunition and hitting on the deck and things it did a lot of superficial damage but it did not do much sinking, but it was so bad they could not move it. It was towed out to the Bikini test later on and that is where it was sunk.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh.....

Mr. Ebel:

That was the deal, I mean they had that over 600 hundred guns protecting it, anti-aircraft guns and they put up quite a barrage. That was the first time I had ever seen anything like that. They used... it was all purple colored flak, purple, orange, green, yellow all different colors that was different batteries and ships were shooting all different and they could see where they were shooting. They were shooting like crazy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you lose any aircrafts?

Yes, we lost 8 aircrafts.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Lost 8 huh.... probably lost the crews too huh?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, well that was one of the things we thought if we got shot down over Japan, we knew we were not going to survive because they wanted to behead an airman the did not take an airman prisoner. I don't know why, they did the same thing and we just took their airman but they did not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, that is right. Different people all together....

Mr. Ebel:

Then after the atomic bombs hit, we were on and we had flew 37 missions, we wound up on the 38th that was on the 12th of August, because the official surrender was on the 14th of August. We were lined up on the taxi strip because I was flying my 38th mission. We were ready to go when they came out and told us, the chief said, "put them up, the war is over!" So, we turned around and put back on the hard stand and went to celebrate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, chuckles... we hung around..actually, the surrender took us by surprise, we had no idea that the war was even close to being over. We were expecting to do all the way, and anyway all of the sudden it ended and we were there and the next day or two days later, they decided to see if they really wanted to surrender and we flew another mission that's what we were told.

They said, "if they shoot at you, we are going to drop the bombs, and if they don't shoot at you bring the bombs back." So, we flew over and they did not shoot, but we did not bring the bombs back we just dumped them in the ocean, we did not want to land with any live bombs in the plane before we brought them in. That way we figured well they really want to give up so, we sat around there until they surrendered you know and even after that, when it was over with we were still sitting there and we wondered what was going to happen next. Well, they had the point system too you know for discharge and the point system was 85 to get out. Well, we counted it up and we all had I had 124 everybody on my crew had over 100. So, we thought well we can get out on points. We went down to the orderly room and the 1st Sergeant said, "what do you all want?" We said, "we got the points we want to get out." He said, "you all are not going anywhere we have been classified essential and we are going to Japan as occupations, you are not going anywhere until your replacements get here and we don't know when they are going to get here." I said, "ah man, I want to go home and now I got to go to occupation duty?" Well we hung around there until the latter part of September. They came one day, and they classified the 4 oldest crews in each squadron. We only 3 more missions and we would have flew our part and we would have gotten rotated out. So, if the war had of lasted another week I would had been out 2 months before I did. But, anyway, they classified the 4 crews combat fatigue, well once you get a combat fatigue rating you hang on to that until you are discharged....ha.. so the Squadron flew us all down to the Phillipines to Manilla there to the replacement depot. Well we hung around there for oh about a week and they gave us a number when you go in and if you ship out when that number comes up well they had this classification system, some coming out on age, some on points and some on combat fatigue.

Well, we sat up there, we checked on the bulletin board there and the next day we were on the shipping orders. We went down there, they put us on trucks and they took us down to the docks. They were putting people on anything that would float and headed back to the states had somebody on it. They had taken the armed guards off the Merchant Marines and now they putting soldiers back on there about 25 on there to take place of the armed guard and to take their quarter and come back on the Merchant ships. Well, we were supposed to go on the Merchant ship, we got up on there and a guy that was in charge he went up there and he come back down and he said, "the captain said he is not going to sail for 4 days, because he don't want you all aboard before he gets ready to sail." So, they took us back to the replacement depto, we stayed around there 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, nothing happened...7 days, and on the 8th day we went down the orderly room, and they said, "we will let you know when it is time," and that is all they would tell you. Well, when 8 days done passed we had strict orders not to go down to the Battalion headquarters. Well, after 8 days, we only were supposed to be there 4 days, I told my waist gunner Ray, and I said, "Ray, I am going down to Battalion headquarters," and he said, "I will go with you." We went down there and we walked in and the first thing we run into was this company clerk and he is a Corporal. He began to tell me, " that I can't go in there," of course now I am a Staff Sergeant, and I am in no mood to take no crap off of a company clerk Corporal see. So, him and I get pretty loud and I am telling him what he can do and what he is supposed to do and we get kind of loud and the Colonel comes out of his office and he says, "Sergeant have you got a problem?" I said, "yes sir I have and I would like to talk to you about it." He said, "well come on back here." I went back there and told him the story and he said, "you come back here at 4'clock and I will have an answer for you."

At 4'oclock I was back there and he was waiting on me. He says, " Sergeant we don't know where that ship is that you were assigned to it is gone, we don't know where it is." He says, "but you will be on the next ship out of here." I told him, "there was people going out of here with bigger numbers than we had." Anyway, that night we were put on shipping orders and the next day we went down and they boarded a transport so we left out of Manilla that night. Everything went fine for about 6 days, calm seas, everything was fine, sweating out all these crap games and poker games, and all this, read everything you can find kind of bored. Then we run into a tail end of a typhoon and it got rough. I am telling you that thing bounced like a cork and for 3 days it was bad, but, you know everybody was sick I am telling you they were bad. All of us guys that were flying nobody got sick we were just like if nothing had ever happened. We could walk around there and had no feeling at all. We were fine. Man, we had 600 British POW's on there that had been in the Japanese prison camps those guys were up in Singapore and places like that. So, it came over the PA system that all First 3 Graders report to the mess hall. Well, we went down there and this Colonel commander, he says, "gentleman I can't put any of you all on any kind of detail, but I need help. He said, " you know the condition of this ship and I need somebody to help me." He said, " I got 600 British POW's and I can't do nothing with them." He named off what he needed and some people to wash decks, some to dump garbage and this and that. Then he said, " I need 6 to 8 KP's, well there was 3 on my crew there and 3 on the other guys. We were all put together and I said, "hey, let us take that KP job." He said, "we do KP?" and I said,"yes believe me that is what we want." So, I got up and I said, " Colonel us 6 here will take that KP job." He said, "fine report to the mess Sergeant."

Well, we go back there and I asked one of the cooks where the Mess Sergeant was and I go over there and I talked to him. I said, "Sergeant, we are on KP and what do you want us to do?" He looked at us and now there is 3 staff Sergeants and 3 techs and he is a staff Sergeant and looked at us and said, "you all on KP?" and I said, "yea," He said, "well you all can do any damn thing you want to." I said, "well how about us running a china clipper?" He said, "it's yours if you want it. So, we ran the China clipper, that was the easiest job there and I can tell you one thing we did not have any KP pushers bothering us. For the method in our madness see because we ate with the cooks and they didn't have the same menu that the troops had. The troops were eating chicken ala king and we were having roast chicken and stuff like that. They had stew, we were eating roast beef. We had a lot more benefits you know. The bakers would come in at night and bake bread. We would go in there and get this hot bread and butter and they baked cakes and pies and stuff. We shared with that. We had it pretty good there. We did not want any big job. We wanted something to do. We were getting board anyway, so we stayed on that until we got into Seattle, Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Ebel:

We had these British POW's on there and we went to Vancouver and they got out at Vancouver Canada that is why we were way up there and most everybody else was coming in to San Francisco and San Diego down that way. So they took us into Seattle. We ended up in Fort Lawton the same place we had left from on July '44 and that was November of '45, we came back to Seattle, Washington at Fort Lawton.

We were the first one's to come back there. They never had any debarkation there they had embarkation but they didn't really know what to do with us first. When we got up there, and got off the boat early that morning and it was cold and sleeting. All these guys had been in the tropics for years and we didn't have any winter clothes. These guys were running around with blankets wrapped around them and I was lucky I still had my flying jacket, so I had a coat. We got on the truck and they took us to Fort Lawton and they took us to breakfast because we did not get breakfast on the boat. Well now, we got in there and they got the German POW's working in the mess hall as KP's and things. They are frying these eggs right on the grill in front of you know.. and we did not have any eggs in years a fresh egg that was out of the question. We had been living on powdered eggs and they turned greenyou ever heard of green eggs?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes right.

Mr. Ebel:

One of these guys wanted more than one or two you know... these Germans they did not know what to do and we were the first one's to come back and we were kind of roudy bunch anyway. He says, the mess Sergeant says, "just give them anything they want." One guy took 4 or 5 eggs and I took 2. Man, we had all this fine food you know, and baked ham and what have you. Most of them went wild over the fresh milk. They could get all the fresh milk they wanted, we never had none before. Well, I was never was a milk drinker so it did not mean anything to me. We finished breakfast and they took us out there and they told so many of us to certain barracks you know.

I was with these guys, like I say when you get classified combat fatigue you stayed with these guys. Some of these guys were real weirdos, I telling you they had been in the jungle too long. I was kind of worried about some of them myself. Any how, we lined up in front of these barracks and it was all 1st three graders there was nothing lower than a Staff Sergeant in the bunch. This Lieutenant he looked over and he said, "well I came to pick a highest ranking noncom and put him in charge, which one of you Master Sergeant's has the most time?" There is this guy standing by me says, "I got 20 years Lieutenant," he said, "that is good enough for me you are in charge, get 3 more to work with you." Well I am standing beside him and he said me and he took out 2 more. Well we went into the barracks and him and I bunked out in the squad room there. Him and I and the other 2 were on the other side. All the rest of them were in the barracks there. Well, we got in there on a Thursday. On Friday morning, here comes this PFC through there picking beds, and raising cane saying, "hey you get out!" dumping people out of beds and one thing or another. He tapped this old Tech Sergeant on there and he kicked on his bed and he was hollering, " hey you," and he said, "Private you talking to me?" and he says, "yea I am talking to you get up!" He said, "Private you better get the hell out of here because if I get up from here I am going to throw you out!" Well one word after another, this guy was a PFC and he was a PFC drill instructor that was used to running with these recruits that he sent overseas. He was a big dog, he done get somebody he couldn't handle now.... anyway. The Tech Sergeant came over there and he was friends with the Master Sergeant that I was bunking with, he said, he called him by his first name and said, "we got to go see the Captain." He said, "what do we have to go see the Captain about."

Well, we got a PFC down here that needs to be put back here where he belongs. So he said, "well if you insist," and he says, "alright." He told me, "you got to go along." Well we go over there to see the Captain and he hears the story and everything and he calls the PFC in and he tells him, "now private these men are returning veterans they are all noncommissioned officers they will be shown all the courtesy of a noncommissioned officers and if I have another complaint about you, you will be on the next boat out of here." We never saw that dude anymore, he never did come back....chuckles.... So, they sent the German POW's in there and they cleaned up the barracks. They made our bed. We did not do anything. We were guests. That was then and Monday morning and they started processing us out. Tuesday they put us on a troop train and it headed for where ever you were supposed to go and I was on with 5 cars and I was going to Fort Sam Houston and where you were going to be discharged well that is the train car you got in and they told us. They said, you better stay in that car because if you don't you will go some place else and you won't be discharged." Nobody, wanted to miss that train I will tell you that. So, we started out and we went on and we got into Denver. They put us in a side track and they told us we were going to be there for 5 hours and they were breaking up the train and there were cars going in different directions, they were going to split up the train. Well, I got off and some of them went down to the USO and things like that and I went on to send a telegram to my wife and told her where I was at and that I was on my way. Of course, everybody went by the liquor store and got them a bottle and we had the booze on the train and they put us on behind another train and now, I have come to Texas a lot of ways from Denver, but I never came the way I came. You know, I think they just put us on something, if the train was moving they put you on behind it.

We went across Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and I ended up in Palestine, Texas. We stopped there at Palestine and they were going to put us on behind another train. The conductor, I asked him how long we staying, he said, "we will be there for 20 minutes." We just 5 tracks from the depot, so when he stopped there we were out of booze, so well all the guys gave me money and I was the one designated to go get it. So, as soon as the train stopped, I jumped off and I ran through the station and there was a taxi senting up in front and I jumped in it and I said, " take me to the nearest liquor store." Well, he just went around the corner there and I just said, "wait for me." I went in and got several bottles and I come out and I had about 4 or 5 dollars of change left and I just gave it all to him. In those days, that was a hell of a tip you know. So, I got back on the train and we stashed all our booze. By the time I got on there and everything, here comes about 10 MP's commanded by a major and they lined up all along that track and the rest of the guys coming back over there they were taking their booze away from them and breaking the bottles over the track. Now, all these guys are hanging out of the car you know and they are congratulating these MP's on their behavior you know, that is the kind of congratulations they are giving them and it was getting kind of roudy. So we had this full Colonel he was a Chicken Colonel, he was in charge of the troops of course the officers had 2 or 3 cars back behind us. He come on the platform and he says, "Major I would like you to remove your men along that track." He says, "Colonel I can't do that." He says, "Major I am asking you to remove your men along that track." He kept saying, "Colonel I can't do that." He said, "Major I have got 5 car loads of returning veterans here if you don't remove your men I am going to turn them loose and they are going to whip your ass, because these guys are getting roudy and they are ready to go." He said, "well alright Colonel but you are in charge."

He said, "I have been in charge and nothing has happened so just let them alone." Of course, the guys got off and got their booze and got back on and nothing happened. I was in the first car that was going to be hooked on behind this civilian train and we were in the first bunk there. Well, this MP gets on and he is standing in the vestibule there and we hadn't broke out no booze or anything and I said, "what are you going to do?" He says, " I am not going to do nothing but you all are not going to get up on the first part of this train." I said, "we have been behind one of those trains for 3 days, nobody wants to go up there we aren't going to cause any problems up there, nobody wants to go up there." He says, "well I here to see you all behave yourselves back here." I said, "let me tell you something fellow, there are some guys on here they all suffer from combat fatigue and I said, there are some weirdos back there, you go back there and throwing your weight around they are going to throw your ass of this train." He got on that other side of that door on the civilian train and shut the door and locked it. We never saw him anymore..... chuckles.. we had a trip on into Fort Sam Houston. The next day we got in there and we got processed out by the 14th of November I was discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were in the 11th bomb group, what bomb squadron were you in?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, the 11th bomb group was at Hickam Field on December 7th, the whole outfit. They were there fine, and they were B-17 at that time. Right after in March of '42, they went down to New Hebrides and were part of the Solomon campaign and they ended up on the Guadalcanal on Henderson Field there working in the Solomon's. Then they came back in March of '43 and they changed over to B-24's. So, the 24's had a longer range and could carry more bombs.

We down to Central Pacific as the long overwater missions. So, that is the way the 11th come out and there will always be an 11th, it is at Andrews Air Force Base now, it is a service unit by an Act of Congress it will always be the 11th.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, I see....

Mr. Ebel:

Yea, it is at Andrews Air Force Base now, it is part of that base. I was in the 26th Squadron 11th Bomb Group. The 26th goes back to World War I, it was 26th Aero Squadron, it was formed at Boland Field in Washington, DC, which is part of Andrews now and Colonel Boland was in command of it. He started it out as a New York National Guard outfit it was the 26th Aero Squadron. They went on to be and after the war it was a 29 Squadron, it was a B-36 Squadron and it was a B-52 Squadron and now it was a 26th Aggressor Squadron they are based in Denver, Colorado there, it is not a flying outfit anymore, what they do is monitor satellites. They are spooked out there....chuckles...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Chuckles.... now, when you were there in the South Pacific, you told me about a couple of rough missions, what were those other missions that you had some problems on?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, I don't know, all of that was routine bombing missions and that is all. We were hitting the Japanese bases that is what we did. We were keeping them neutralized so the Japanese could not use them, they were just hanging back there and they were dead on the island that is all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were some places you bombed, you bombed Truk and what were some other places you bombed?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, we went to Marcus, Iwo Jima, ChiChi, Haha, and Pagan Islands like that. Well, when my group started out, they came out of Hickam they went to Makin and Tarawa and then they went to Kwajalein in the Marshalls and that was in the first one then the Gilberts and then the Marshalls and then they moved to the Marianas and now in 1995 Dick David my radar man and I went back to Iwo Jima to the 50th Anniversary with the Marines and we went to Saipan there and after went and flew to Saipan and they had a big ceremony there, there was the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas now. We talked about it and the governor was there and he gave us a plaque and I have a medallion that he presented to us there. They flew us up to Iwo Jima and we landed there and we were there for a day on Iwo. We came back and while I was there, some guy asked me I was there and I told him my story you know. Why I was back there and when I got back home about a week later, I got a telephone call. This guy had said he had some pictures he had taken and said that he had another guy there and a guy had a 30 on his cap and I said, "yep, he was in the 30th group." That is what I was in when I was there. So, he said, "you told me that story, would you write it up and I would like to publish that story in the Leatherneck Magazine. After that I got a hold of my radio operator him and I we got together and we wrote up the story and I mailed it to him and he did publish it in the Leatherneck magazine.

So, about a year later my navigator ran into some guy and he saw him and he knew something about it and they got together and he was a news reporter and he said he did television and documentaries is what he did and he was involved in them. This story ought to be told and they got together and they went around about way over a year or so of negotiations they got this gal Grace Popizano, she was a Professor at San Jose State University in Journalism and Television so she got into it and she decided she was going to make it. She got PBS to make a documentary on it. PBS made a documentary on Jitterbug crew mission to Iwo Jima and that is what it is called. Later I met this gal out there in Santa Fe, Virginia, she wrote a book and it just came out about 2 months ago. She wrote Jitterbug crew a whole book on us on all of our deals in the Pacific and how each man story and is called the "Brother's at Day Break." Put out by Amazon and Amazon handled it and Barnes and Nobles. So, it just came out about a month ago. It was brand new and I took some copies out there to our reunion. She was at our reunion. I just came back from our reunion out there that was Neal talk to you about. She was there and she told us about the book and I got her to autograph my copy. So I got autograph copies of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit over there?

Mr. Ebel:

We were young, we were kind of carefree you know... we had good morale, there was no problem there. We were all young in our 20's and so we took it in stride.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Ebel:

I guess that was the two night I guess we didn't know if we were going to go down in the water or not and things. Your chances are in the middle of the Pacific you were not going to be found again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Ebel:

Souvenirs, I lost all mine on the way home, I had two bags and one of them just disappeared and that was very common in those days off of trains that guys were losing their souvenirs, and I think those railroad workers would take those bags, because lots of guys lost their souvenirs on the train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, I heard of that. Did you see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Ebel:

Yes, I did, I went to several over the Bob Hope shows over there and several of those other shows that were available because I did not see any on Saipan or anything like that, most of them were back in Honolulu.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Ebel:

Oh, yes we listened to her all the time. She played the best music. We paid no attention to her talk.

We didn't care, we just made fun of that because we knew that was all part of the propaganda. She played the best music, we listened to her all the time. The thing of it is the censors wouldn't let you say where you were or anything ,but she knew who we were. We would make a mission and she would name the Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, April 12, 1945, president Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Ebel:

Everybody was shocked and everybody was worried about that and they did not know just what the outcome was going to be on that. They did not know what Truman was going to do. He turned out to be a fine guy, he was one of ours.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Ebel:

That was quite a deal too you know, we were living on a shoestring. We were 9000 miles at the end of a supply line and by the time it got to us it done got whittled down pretty good, we were not getting anything. We were patching up our planes and they were flying those old junks, I mean War wiery stuff and we were having a lot of trouble, planes crashing because they were just wore out. As soon as the war in Europe was over all of the sudden we got new aircraft we were given some better food and we got more gasoline and a lot of times we could not fly and we had to wait until the tanker came in....if we had gas we would fly otherwise we did not fly we could not do anything. So war really changed out there in the Pacific when the war in Europe was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Ebel:

Oh, no, I don't understand all them people that do, I was just glad to get out and I went back to my Ford job and I worked there for about a year, I got kind of bored with that and it was changing dealerships and one of those things you know where the old heads, they would not fire you but they made it so you did not want to stay. I put applications in for the Houston Fire Department and I stayed in the Houston Fire Department for 40 years. Retired in 1988 with the rank of District Chief.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out did you use your GI Bill for anything.

Mr. Ebel:

No, I never used a thing of my GI Bill. I was married when I got out and my wife and I settled down, we started our family and then after that I did not go to school and I did not go to college until I was 46 years old. I went to school and when I graduated from college and my great grandson was at my graduation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were overseas did you get your mail without any regularity.

Mr. Ebel:

It would come in bunches you know, you would get 5 or 6 letters at a time and you would sort them out by date and then you would restart back the first that would come in.

That is the way it was some days you would go a week without getting anything and then you would get a bunch.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Ebel:

Well, I got the DFC, Air Medal with 6 clusters. The Asiatic Pacific with 4 battle stars of course a Good Conduct Medal and I got the American Defense Ribbon and the Victory medal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II.

Mr. Ebel:

There is a little award there and a little bag that I am real proud of , it was given to me by the Marines when were in Iwo Jima when we flew over there for the 50th Anniversary. On my cap it says, "I am an Iwo Jima survivor."

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