

Eugene Hannemann oral history interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler and today is the 23rd of June, 2014. I am doing a telephone interview with Mr. Gene Hannemann. This interview is taking place -- I am located in Fredericksburg, Texas, and he is located at his home in Thousand Oaks, California. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center for the National Museum for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. OK, so Gene thanks for spending the time on the phone with me this morning. And let's get it started by having you introduce yourself, so give us your full name, date of birth, place of birth, and then we'll take it from there.

EUGENE HANNEMANN: I am Eugene Hannemann, or (inaudible) pronounced Hannemann. I was born in Fredericksburg, Texas on November the 22nd, 1923.

EM: OK and let's see. So were you born at home or in a hospital or what?

EH: I was born at home. Actually, in Cave Creek, Texas which is actually -- I think my birth certificate says Fredericksburg, Texas. I was born at home, yes.

EM: Let's see, what did your father -- go ahead.

EH: But I think Dr. Keidel later filled out my birth certificate.

EM: And you had brothers and sisters I know. How many?

EH: Well, there were a total of 10 children in our family. There were eight boys and two girls.

EM: Now that's a big family isn't it?

EH: Yeah.

EM: Now were you the youngest or middle or what?

EH: I was about number seven I think. If I get the pecking order right.

EM: (laughter) Yeah. And what did your dad do for a living in Fredericksburg?

EH: Well, one time he owned a farm in Cave Creek and then he moved to Fredericksburg and he had a peat store, which was actually located in the building which is now Keidel Hospital.

EM: Yeah, that's right down there on Main Street.

EH: Yeah right. But unfortunately my dad died at an early age. He had I think a heart attack and died at an early age of 38. So my mother was left with all the children and in those days it was always a habit that the children would probably be taken over by different family members but my mother said, "No way." Fortunately we had some land that we were -- and we had some cows. For a while we had a

little dairy, I think we milked six cows each day and we delivered milk. And so later on my mother worked as a cook in the hospital and as we all grew up we all had to -- all the boys we delivered newspapers and then later my mother had a restaurant and so the thing is the family stayed together.

EM: Did you go to public schools here in Fredericksburg?

EH: Yes. We just lived about two blocks from the school so we always walked to school and we even -- when we had time we would dash home for lunch. So yeah we attended Fredericksburg Public School, that's where I --

EM: So if you were the typical student you were probably about 18 when you graduated. So you must have graduated high school pretty close to the start of the war.

EH: Right, yes well you know I was registered for the draft after I graduated from high school. That was right at 18. I actually enlisted in the Navy and since you know half of Nimitz was from Fredericksburg, I think a lot of the Fredericksburg boys joined the Navy. In June of 1943 joined the Navy.

EM: When you graduated from high school did you go right into the military or did you work for a while or what?

EH: No I went right in the service because I was 18 and I was eligible for the draft. But I was able to graduate from

high school and went directly into the service after high school.

EM: Where did you go for your basic training?

EH: I enlisted in San Antonio, was the enlisting place. And from there I was shipped to San Diego and I did my boot camp as they called it in San Diego and from there I was shipped to the South Pacific. I went to -- was shipped overseas and assigned -- there was about 208 what they called replacements. We were shipped over to Brisbane, Australia, which was assigned to the Navy Seventh Fleet. When we arrived in Brisbane, well actually we were assigned out of the replacement 208 to -- some of them were shipped out to PT boats to ships, replacements. But they were looking for someone that could type because they wanted store keepers and yeomen. Yeomen were the office clerks and out of those 208 there were seven of us that could type. I'm thankful I took typing in Fredericksburg High School so as one of the typists I was assigned to the Seventh Fleet admiral's office and the Allies had taken over a nine story building where all the Navy, Army, and Allied Forces, the Dutch and so on had places in that nine story building. And actually the Seventh Floor and MacArthur was on the ninth floor. And how we came under MacArthur actually as I was told, President Roosevelt

assigned Admiral Nimitz as a Pacific Ocean area commander and MacArthur was assigned the Southwest Pacific area which later included the Philippines because MacArthur, his goal was -- as he always said, "I shall return." To the Philippines.

EM: Now the Seventh Fleet, that was called MacArthur's Navy.

EH: Yes, yes, we came under MacArthur's command but also at that time, you know, you had the Army Air Force. So the Air Force actually came under MacArthur's command. Well we were, like I say, the Seventh Fleet was assigned to the Southwest Pacific area. So we came under MacArthur and MacArthur then was under Nimitz because Nimitz was actually the commander of the total Pacific area and the one time I met Admiral Nimitz only once and it was during the time I was stationed in Brisbane. I know that Nimitz came to our fleet headquarters and conferenced with Nimitz with MacArthur. I remember I just had a brief encounter with Admiral Nimitz while he was there for a meeting with MacArthur. I didn't have the opportunity or it didn't dawn on me to say, "Oh Admiral, I'm from Fredericksburg." I didn't but maybe if I had mentioned I was from Fredericksburg, I remember that another enlisted man in Pearl Harbor mentioned to Admiral Nimitz that he was from Fredericksburg and Nimitz called a photographer and took

pictures of him. So that was my only encounter with Admiral Nimitz.

EM: I'll tell you what, let's back up a little now. You went from basic training straight down to Australia, is that correct?

EH: Yes.

EM: Now what did you do, did you go down on a troop ship? Or how did you get down there?

EH: We went over on a troop ship, right. And we were taken on a regular troop ship and taken to Brisbane, Australia and that's where we got off the ship and went ashore and as I mentioned and we were made our assignments --

EM: Boy, that's a long boat trip, isn't it?

EH: Oh yeah. I don't remember how many days it was. It was one of those slow boats, I think it traveled about six knots.

EM: (laughter) On a good day. Now did you get sea sick at all when you went to sea?

EH: Did I what?

EM: Get seasick when you first went to sea.

EH: No, I don't remember. I know that while we were on the troop ship during the daytime we were assigned -- in fact, we had typical Navy hammocks that we slept in. In the

daytime we were out on deck. That's how we moved from the States to Brisbane, Australia.

EM: Now what was your impression of Brisbane when you first arrived? How did it strike you?

EH: Well we were -- just another town.

EM: Is that right? Did it seem a lot like America or a lot different or what?

EH: Well no, they spoke -- the Canadians, I mean the Brisbane Australians they also spoke, more or less had the British accent to their voices and so on.

EM: They didn't talk like Texans? (laughter)

EH: (laughter) That's right, that's right. But also after we were assigned to the admiral's office, there were five of us and we were staying in the regular Navy barracks but we were given permission to what we called shore base pay and we then, we were allowed to -- I lived in an apartment while I was stationed in Brisbane, Australia.

EM: An apartment. Now were you sharing that with several other guys or what?

EH: Yes there were three of us that found a person that had three bedrooms and we agreed on renting from that person and so, then we had -- it was about 30 minutes from the office and I remember we had to walk back and forth every day.

EM: You had to walk to and from the office building?

EH: From the apartment to the office. One interesting thing about different -- since we came under MacArthur we had to send correspondence to MacArthur's office. We had to hand carry from the seventh floor to the ninth floor we had to carry the message to MacArthur. I remember that it was my often responsibility to take it to MacArthur's office. I remember that I always gave it to MacArthur's aide, who was a colonel. I remember one time MacArthur's aide wasn't in his office. I walked into the office and his exec's office. But MacArthur's door was open and he was walking down, back and forth, looking at the maps. He looked up and saw me and said, "Well, what do we have today, son?" You know I was a sailor and I handed him the message. Another incident with MacArthur was the entrance to that building was right as you came into the entrance the elevators were right there. They always had an Army sentry at the entrance of the building. I had worked late and I came down the elevator and I just got out and the guard called, "Hold that elevator." I reached back and held the elevator and MacArthur walked in and I turned around and punched number nine and MacArthur then turned to me, "You're going where?" I said, "seven" and he reached over and punched number seven and it stopped at the seventh



floor. I got off and he went on and I caught the elevator back down. One of those incidents.

EM: So you're one of the few guys that I have ever talked to that has spoken personally to both MacArthur and Nimitz.

EH: Oh yes.

EM: Not that you've had a long conversation with them, but still! You've come face to face with both of them.

EH: Right. Well Nimitz and MacArthur met in the Navy conference room and I was almost in the same situation where I could almost say that MacArthur and Nimitz met in the conference room [*sic*] and I was, well I wasn't privileged to be in the conference room but I was aware of being in a conference with MacArthur and Nimitz.

EM: What kind of relationship do you think MacArthur and Nimitz had? Based on what you heard and what you could see.

EH: Well my understanding -- it was very officer to officer cordial relationship. Although MacArthur actually I understand, outranked Nimitz. President Roosevelt was the one who assigned Nimitz commander of the Pacific Ocean area. MacArthur, I'm sure, always thought that he should have been the supreme commander. But meeting together, it was strictly professional officer to officer relationship. I assumed that's the relationship they had.

EM: Now when you were in Brisbane, what was your rating? You mentioned you were a yeoman, but what grade were you?

EH: Well when I arrived there the ward officer in the office said you guys are all new to Navy and so on and if you're willing to come on duty at seven in the morning we'll have class from seven to eight. I will instruct you in all the regulations of the Navy and so on. And so I was a seaman when I arrived but I was promoted then to petty officer and fortunately I went from yeoman third class to yeoman first class by the time I retired. I was fortunate in war time to advance in rank like that would take a little longer but at the admiral's office sometimes there was an advantage to promotions, I guess.

EM: When you were working there at the office on the seventh floor what were your duties? What typically did you do?

EH: Well I was assigned to the operations office and that office received all the reports from the different ships from the Seventh Fleet and those reports always went to the captain in charge of the operations office. My job was then after the officer had read the report, it was then forwarded on up the line in the Navy. My job was a typist. I would put the endorsement on. It was a pretty simple letter, it was the ship's report. Then I would put a

forwarding letter on to forward. And then that was part of my typing responsibilities in the office.

EM: Now was this a large office? Was there a lot of other people, typists and what have you in the office?

EH: I think there were five typists. We were called yeomen, but. It was called the flag office. The admiral's office was called Seventh Fleet flag. Flag was the name for the headquarters for the fleet so they used the term Seventh Fleet flag, which meant that it was the admiral's office. So actually I could say the admiral's office, he had -- well there was another yeoman assigned directly to the admiral to do any of his typing and so on. So I was in the operations office and the main flag office, there were three typists in there and we had to keep all -- we filed all the other correspondence. So in those days we worked a lot with what we called the hard copies. We had to do a lot of filing and keeping records.

EM: Now let's see. When you arrived in Australia, was it already 1944? Or was this still '43 when you got there? I hate to ask about dates but I'm just trying to get a feel for what the time frame was when you were actually in Australia.

EH: Well it was, it was the end of 1943 and then the way -- I don't remember exactly the dates.

EM: Yeah, I don't expect you to remember the dates. But it was tail end of '43 and 1944 when you were in Brisbane.

EH: But then as the war advanced, MacArthur was interested in returning back to the Philippines. We worked our way so after, from Brisbane, Australia MacArthur and the Seventh Fleet, we moved from Australia to New Guinea.

EM: What location in New Guinea were you there?

EH: Say again?

EM: What town was it in New Guinea?

EH: Well it was called Hollandia, New Guinea. And I remember that for the Navy, the CB, we lived in Quonset huts ashore while we were in New Guinea. Also during that time, my brother Wally, [Walter?] was in the Army engineers for the Army. And I did run across my brother briefly in New Guinea.

EM: Now that's a coincidence! You ran across your brother in New Guinea, isn't that something?

EH: Yeah right. Wally was just older than I was. He was in the Army.

EM: Now I tell you what Gene, I want to go back to Australia for a moment and ask you a couple more questions. How did the Aussies treat you Yanks?

EH: Well it was a very good relationship. You were always greeted and I remember they had, you know they also had

rationing. I remember that the beer was on rationing and some of what they called pubs, they were generally only open about an hour a day when they served beer because it was rationed you know. I ate out in restaurants and was treated very, very well.

EM: Did you get to know any of the Australians personally?

EH: Well just in a casual way. Didn't have too much contact. It was mainly the military personnel that we dealt with. Really didn't have too much contact except going back and forth from our apartment to work. We would --

EM: So what was the food like there?

EH: Well it was very simple. Again, they lived very simply because they had the rationing and so on. I guess, as you mentioned I was not a connoisseur of food.

EM: Well I've heard that they eat a lot of mutton down there.

EH: Well, yes and oftentimes although they sometimes wanted to -- they knew that the Americans didn't like mutton much. They would offer beef as much as possible.

EM: (laughter) So did you eat much mutton?

EH: Well I don't know, I guess. But I generally would eat pretty simply. I guess they served probably a small --

EM: I'm sorry I can't hear you.

EH: One thing that I might, if you had to go back, there's a little longer story about Australia. You know when we

first landed in Australia they weren't ready for us so we would ship back up north to Australia where we actually got off the ship. And then we were put on a train to go back to Brisbane and that was the incident you were talking about mutton and beef. While the train on the way back down the Aussies were going north. They were going towards New Guinea and we were going south to Brisbane and the train stopped, they had what you call the field kitchen. So again, the Aussies thought they would, they loved their mutton stew and we had mutton stew and the Aussies ended up with the beef stew. So we were griping about the mutton stew and the Aussies were griping about the beef stew. We walked across the railroad tracks and we ate in the Aussie kitchen. We got their beef stew and they came over and had our mutton stew.

EM: Well you guys worked it out! (laughter) That's a great story.

EH: Before I actually ended up in Brisbane. A side trip.

EM: I like those little side stories, that's very interesting.

Now when you were there in Australia did you get to be buddies with some of the other guys in the office or other guys assigned to the flag office?

EH: Well also Brisbane had -- there was a couple of guys -- since my religious background was Lutheran, they had, we

followed a Lutheran church and a couple of other boys in the office were also Lutheran. We went to church together, we attended a Brisbane Lutheran church whenever we could. Couple of the guys in the office also had a Lutheran background, so.

EM: So that was a local Lutheran church there?

EH: Yeah, right in Brisbane. It was also a Lutheran church, it was located in Australia.

EM: Was it different than what you were used to with regard to the church?

EH: Well, they still had the regular Lutheran liturgy, it was familiar from that point of view. But we were often cordial, at the church they also had coffee and cake and we were always invited to that. Maybe that was one reason we went to church. (laughter)

EM: It could be! (laughter) But hopefully not the only reason.

EH: Yeah. It was exposure to the public and so on, so we did meet some of the parishioners. That was our other experience.

EM: Right. Were you in Brisbane for six months, or nine months before you ended up going to New Guinea? Or how long was it roughly?

EH: Well we were there between six or eight months. We were only in New Guinea I think about three to four months,

actually. Because from New Guinea actually is when the invasion or landing was made in the Philippines and our navy took MacArthur back. You know there was always this picture set in the Philippines, it was called [Away All Boats?]. Made the landing and I guess all of the newspapers made a big deal about MacArthur prancing ashore. "I shall return," you know?

EM: And he did several times as I remember, so everybody could get the photographs. (laughter)

EH: General Eisenhower, you know, he was an aide to MacArthur at one time.

EM: Who was?

EH: Eisenhower said MacArthur was quite flamboyant. He was always staging all of his activities.

EM: Yeah he was a bit of a showman. Or at least he had that reputation.

EH: Eisenhower said that training under the best showman in the military when he worked as an aide to MacArthur. That was one thing about MacArthur, he was very flamboyant.

EM: Now your trip to New Guinea up through the Philippines, now did you come along after MacArthur landed, did his famous landing?

EH: Unfortunately that's part of our office. When the boys shipped, they actually were taking MacArthur to the



Philippines. I stayed in the back. We shut down the Philippines operation. I actually moved from New Guinea to the Philippines by naval air actually, so I didn't spend too much time aboard ship. I moved to the Philippines and again, there we were shore based and we actually, in New Guinea the Seabees had built Quonset huts. In the Philippines we actually lived in tents. I was only there, I guess -- well I was probably in the Philippines maybe a couple of months. And then I went back to the States.

EM: Now when you went back to the States, was the war over yet?

EH: European war had come to end. In fact they were shipping troops from Europe down to the Canal and they were being shipped out to the Pacific. In fact, there was preparations being made to invade Japan but fortunate -- in fact, that's when the atomic, when the bomb was dropped in Japan. A lot of people are critical of that fact but I think that really brought that war to an end. Japanese, Japan recognized after the first bomb was dropped that they were facing an enemy that was going to overwhelm them. So we never made a physical invasion into Japan. I'm a great believer that even though the first dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan was very devastating, that it brought the war to an end and we never made a physical invasion and it probably saved a lot of American lives.

EM: I think you're right. It probably saved a lot of Japanese lives too.

EH: That's when MacArthur moved over and because the supreme commander in Japan.

EM: Yeah he headed up the post war government in Japan.

EH: Then from the Pacific actually I was reassigned to a navy base in Florida and from there in 1946, although being a yeoman -- you know during that time you got discharged you had time in service. You got discharged time in service and I was extended for six months because they had to have yeomen to type up the orders that were being discharged. So I had to spend six months more in the Navy even after I was eligible to get discharged.

EM: So where was the base in Florida? Where were you located in Florida?

EH: That was in Miami. It was in Miami, Florida. It was a Navy receiving station. In other words it was a base, we received a lot of the troops from the Atlantic fleet and so on, they came through our Navy base. And from there they were shipped to the separation centers. A lot of them got discharged from the Navy there.

EM: This is interesting Gene. You being able to type had a huge impact on your military service, didn't it?

EH: Oh yes. It was also, I was thankful that I was, well I made yeoman first class which was (inaudible) in the military as master sergeant. So I was fortunate that --

EM: Just think, if you hadn't taken that typing course at Fredericksburg High School, you might have ended up getting shot at in a foxhole.

EH: Or I would have ended up on a PT boat.

EM: Right! (laughter) So you don't --

EH: I was fortunate that I avoided real serious combat. I guess that's the blessing I had for taking the right course in high school.

EM: That's very, very interesting. Now, I'd like to spend a few minutes and talk some more about what you briefly mentioned earlier in this interview and that was your encounter with Admiral Chester Nimitz. So if I remember correctly, he came to Brisbane one time or more than one time when you were there at the flag office?

EH: I only remember that one time when he met with MacArthur. And actually, I think the discussion at that time, they were talking about the bomb that was dropped on Japan was actually brought over on a Navy ship. But I think that meeting with MacArthur and Nimitz they probably discussed, I think one of the things I sort of understand, were the names for the bomb. They called it the Thing, the Thing.

EM: The what?

EH: The Thing, T-H-I-N-G. One of the code names, I guess, for -- at least that's my understanding.

EM: So let's come back to that day when the admiral came to where you worked. Now, describe that for me again.

EH: Well I remember that the phone rang and our office was informed that Nimitz -- they used the term "Nimitz landed from Pearl, get the conference room ready." And that's when Nimitz came to our office and MacArthur had to come down and they met in the Navy Seventh Fleet conference room. I understand during that conference already, MacArthur was pushing for, "I want to get back to the Philippines." You know, so he was pushing in that direction. But I think also they must have discussed, because the Air Corps came under MacArthur. So in the Air Force, or Army Air Corps really, was the one who carried the bomb to Japan. So it came somewhat under the direction of MacArthur. So briefly, that's my brief encounter with Nimitz. Well actually I talked to him actually, right outside the briefing room. And it was just a cordial exchange of the day. I still say I should have had -- but you know he was a young Navy enlisted man talking to the admiral so, you were always tongue tied I guess.

EM: So this is when you got tongue tied and forgot to tell him that you were from Fredericksburg too.

EH: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. In retrospect now I wish I had taken the opportunity then to say, "Sir, I'm also from Fredericksburg." But it didn't happen. I reminisce now, I wish it would have happened.

EM: I think there was someone else you heard about that mentioned that to him and so he called in a photographer and got a photograph and everything.

EH: I understand that that guy from Fredericksburg, that was over in Pearl Harbor. And that -- I forget, I think it was in the Fredericksburg paper how I got that information back. If I got it correct and I understand. A Fredericksburg boy in Pearl Harbor had mentioned -- he had an opportunity to mention to Nimitz that he was from Fredericksburg and Nimitz, you know he was considered also an enlisted man's admiral. He was very outgoing. So when -- I forget who it was from Fredericksburg, he mentioned he was from Fredericksburg and Nimitz said, "Just a minute, get me a photographer here." And the young man had his picture taken. Nimitz sat at his desk and he invited the young man to sit in the chair next to him at the desk and had his picture taken with Nimitz.

EM: Doggone it Gene, you should have thought of that!

(laughter)

EH: In retrospect, that's the term now to say I really blew it!

(laughter)

EM: Yeah, you blew it. That's a great story, it really is. Now you typed up an awful lot of documents when you were there in the Pacific. I'm wondering if any of those messages you either received or typed up and sent, if any of those messages stick in your mind. Anything related to the war and what was going on.

EH: Well, mainly like I say the reports that I typed and forwarded were the ships under our command, they would send reports back to the admiral's office and actually oftentimes the reports just showed what kind of encounter that particular ship had and so it was mainly reports from -- and you know we had the landing crafts, Seventh Fleet we didn't have any of the landing crafts type ships. Like for instance when the Army went ashore in the Philippines, those were Seventh Fleet landing ships, you know. So they were small ships. But we also had the PT boats under our command. So mainly that was, I guess I don't know if you say, routine reports to the admiral's office. I guess that's the kind of paperwork the military keeps. That's mainly what I handled.

EM: Well I guess the stuff that came in and out it was all coded, put into code.

EH: All confidential or secret, yeah. In fact one thing about being there, I had to have a secret clearance to work in that office. So I did have to pass -- and I remember that, well that when my clearance was being processed and so on, I remember that I understand that my pastor, Pastor [Bronner?] was interviewed by the FBI as to my character and I was getting clearance for the secret, you know?

EM: They've got to check you out before you go into the admiral's office.

EH: Yeah right, so that was one thing that I had to have, the confidential secret clearance.

EM: Now during your time overseas, did you correspond with your mother and family back home? Or did they write to you more often than you wrote? How did that work?

EH: You know, we had to -- during World War Two we had the v-mails you were allowed to write a one page letter and then it was photographed and sent to the States and then so your parents got what's called the emails.

EM: Yeah I know they had a special system for staying in contact. But did you write from time to time?

EH: Yeah I had pretty regular -- I got mail once a week. We always looked forward to mail call. But all my mail

actually came, it was addressed to the Seventh Fleet flag office, you know. My personal letters were sent, so we had mail call right at our office, sent to our office. So we got mail about once a week and actually we all looked forward to see if we got a letter.

EM: So who did you report to? Who was your officer on duty there?

EH: I was just trying to think again of it and now I've got a senior moment.

EM: (laughter) Did I finally get you? So what was he, was he a commander? He was a commander, yeah.

EH: He was in charge of the office, the flag office. He was a commander and then he had ward officer that -- you know, ward officers are generally enlisted men and they received a halfway commission, I guess. But so yeah, the office was actually under Commander -- I thought of his name just recently and right now it's a senior moment.

EM: That's fine. The reason I asked the question was not because I had to have his name so much as to just ask you what you thought of your officers. Were these people you respected or were they people that you wondered how in the world they got to be an officer or what?

EH: We were -- all the yeomen had to respect all the officers because we sort of covered for them in the office. In fact



one of the commanders in the operations office where I work invited me to his quarters but I didn't accept his offer. There was still sort of a line between the officers and enlisted men. But I --

EM: So you just didn't feel comfortable going there or what?

EH: Well I went with him -- he invited me to his office, I mean his quarters but there were other officers in there and as I walked into the quarters I thanked the commander for inviting but I excused himself. He invited me over -- you talk about the relationship, he invited me to his quarters to have a drink with him but there were other -- so his roommates, officers in the quarters so I felt a little uncomfortable as an enlisted man.

EM: Right, you'd be a fish out of water. I understand that.

EH: There was a good relationship between the officers and enlisted men. The officers always treated us with respect and we respected them, so it was a good relationship.

EM: After the war was over, did you stay in contact with any of the people that you knew in the Pacific?

EH: Well just briefly but I lost -- you know how things go and you're always not as faithfully corresponding so gradually you lost contact with all the guys you knew overseas.

EM: Yeah, that's understandable. So when you came back to the States you spent an extra six months helping the Navy catch

up with all their paperwork for all the guys that they were putting back into civilian life. After your six months were up they told you you could go home or what?

EH: Well I was eligible for my discharge, got discharged from the Navy and I went back to Fredericksburg. But then one of my roommates who was in the Navy down in Florida, he wasn't a yeoman -- you know again in Florida, we had what was called separate rations and we lived in apartments while I was in the Navy in Florida and one of my roommates there, his dad was dean of Western North Carolina College, which was in Cullowhee, North Carolina. Western North Carolina College. The long and short of it was that after I got out of the service I wanted to go to school in Texas Lutheran in Seguin but all the, there was no way to get me in. In fact one of my brothers who was also going to school, he did get a place up in an attic at Texas Lutheran. But anyways, a friend of mine, as I visited their home his dad was dean of the college and he lived on campus, had a big four bedroom house and he had two sisters but they had already graduated and were teaching, so my friend's dad said, "Well, you know we have all this room here. And you can't seem to get enrolled in the Texas college. If you want to stay with us, you could just pay Mrs. -- Byrd was their name -- you could just pay Mrs. Byrd

the tuition, the amount you would pay for a room at the college you could just pay Mrs. Byrd.

The long and short, I lived with my friend in their home for two years. I attended Western North Carolina College for two years and that's then when I transferred back to Texas Lutheran to do my last two years. And I got my, finished my undergraduate work at Texas Lutheran. After graduating from that, while I was in North Carolina that's where I met my future wife. After college we got married and I lived in Fredericksburg for two years. I worked and my wife taught school and that's what I mentioned to you it was General -- Hagee was his name? The retired Marine general?

EM: Yeah, Hagee. Michael Hagee.

EH: Hagee. My wife was his second grade teacher. Later I always wished when I was on duty as a chaplain that I would meet that General Hagee and have my wife meet him as his second grade teacher.

EM: That would be interesting to do that! I think you're going to have to come back to Fredericksburg to do that.

EH: Yeah, interesting. But the thing is that during that time, then -- see I have three uncles that are Lutheran pastors and my grandfather Hannemann, he was a Lutheran pastor but

he was also a medical doctor. But also I was named after him, my middle name is [Abel?]. Him being Abel Hannemann. They always said I would be a pastor someday. My reaction was that wasn't in my plans but I did end up finally going from Fredericksburg then to Dubuque, Iowa, Wartburg Seminary. After I graduated from there, that was in 1956 and Truman was the president and we expanded the Air Force and the Lutheran Church had seven vacancies for pastors. And I was asked if I would serve, so that's how I ended up in the Air Force as a chaplain and I served in the Air Force then for 20 years.

EM: So what year did you get out of the Air Force?

EH: I got out of the Air Force in '76.

EM: Seventy six. OK, all right. Very interesting. Well what else can we talk about with regard to your World War Two service? Any other stories that you would like to take this opportunity to tell me, Gene?

EH: Well.

EM: I mean if you're like me, you'll think of all these stories after we hang up. (laughter) That's the way it is.

EH: This is what we call a senior moment.

EM: That's right. But I did that before I became a senior so I think it's just kind of human nature. As I told you before I find it very interesting that you had face to face

interaction with the two supreme commanders of the whole Pacific activity. I've never talked to anybody that had done that. So even though you blew it on the interaction with the admiral, I still think that's really something --

EH: Definitely an experience.

EM: I mean it's got to be, I mean you got to meet people who were -- these were historic individuals. I mean they show up in the history books and you talked to them. I find that very interesting. Well I tell you what, I think at this point since we pretty well covered World War Two until you come up with some more stories. You even have my phone number, so if for any reason you come up with some juicy ones that you'd like to talk some more about, then you call me and we'll do another interview, OK?

EH: All right Ed.

EM: All right so I'm going to finish up this interview. Hang on the line. Just let me thank you once again for your service to our country during World War Two. We still don't thank you guys enough and I just want to go on record one more time thanking you for what you did for our country, OK?

END OF AUDIO FILE