

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Charles A. "Al" Dunnam
Vernon, TX
October 17, 2014
Company C, 1st Battalion
126th Infantry Regiment
32nd Infantry Division

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is October 17, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. Charles A. "Al" Dunnam by telephone. His phone number is 940-553-2151. His address is 2610 Highland Park Drive, Vernon, Texas 76384. 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:

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

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I did nothing except what I was supposed to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, that's what you needed to do. That's what was required. Now, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is OK with you. So let me read this to you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Dunnam:

OK. That's fine, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Durmam:

Well, my daughter lives here in Vernon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, what's her name?

Mr. Dunnam:

Sue Robinson.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, It's 552-9437. Area Code is 940.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have an address? I don't really need it too bad, but do you have an address?

Mr. Dunnam:

No. I know where she lives but I don't know what the address is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What town does she live in?

Mr. Dunnam:

Here in Vernon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No problem. What is your zip code there?

Mr. Dunnam:

76384.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. Dunnam:

August 7, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Dunnam:

Whitesboro, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Dunnam:

My mother's name was Faye and my father's name was Charley.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Dunnam:

A whole bunch of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many of each?

Mr. Dunnam:

Let's see. I had six sisters and five brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So there was twelve of you in the family?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your sisters' first names?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, gosh.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Don't remember?

Mr. Dunnam:

Lena...My father's first wife died when the fourth child was born and that's the reason there's so many of us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's fine. I don't really need that. That's OK. How about your brothers? Do you remember their names?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, yeah. Willie, Clifford, J.B. just the initials, Wayne, and Raymond.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, that's fine. Now, you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Dunnam:

We didn't have anything. We lived on a farm. Of course no one else had anything either so we didn't know it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did your father own the farm?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, we did not. At that time we didn't own the farm. My dad in later years did buy a farm but back during the Depression and all the time I was growing up, we just rented.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a garden?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, but it wasn't much because it was a dry land farm down there and tight land farm in Haskell County. Not much rain. Haskell County.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any chickens or anything like that?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, yeah. We kept chickens all the time and cattle, mostly milk cows, you know. Of course we had horses there and later on we were able to buy a tractor. Lots of chickens and hogs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you sell eggs or sell milk or anything like that?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, yes, didn't sell milk but we sold cream but sometimes we would sell eggs, yeah. I don't ever remember being hungry but we didn't have any money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Dunnam:

I went to high school at Weinert, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Dunnam:

In 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, yes. My two brothers that were younger than me were outside playing baseball, you know, just playing hit the ball there with the three of us there. That's when I heard about it and of course I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was or nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you think that would affect you when you heard it?

Mr. Dunnam:

I didn't even give it a thought, you know, because I was so young then. I never thought about the service or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you go into the service?

Mr. Dunnam:

I went into the service on, let's see, I'm looking at my discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It should tell you.

Mr. Dunnam:

I went in on July 10, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. That was the year after you finished high school?

Mr. Dunnam:

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do for that year?

Mr. Dunnam:

Worked on the farm there with my dad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You turned eighteen in 1943, right. So you were nineteen when you got drafted. You were drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Dunnam:

I got drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Dunnam:

Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any choice of the branch?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, no. They just told me where I was going.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Dunnam:

Mineral Wells, Texas, Camp Walters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, it was just the basic training you know, listening to Sergeants scream all the time at us because we was doing stuff wrong.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Lot of marching?

Mr. Dunnam:

Lot of marching and of course we learned how to use the rifle and everything you know, the M-1 rifle and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hand grenades?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, did not, never saw a hand grenade until I got overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had you grown up doing a lot of hunting?

Mr. Dunnam:

Do a lot of hunting?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were familiar with a gun when you got in then?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, yeah, as far as a .22 rifle and shotgun. Just the normal things. You know that's what I've always said, that no one was ever killed with a gun that wasn't loaded.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right. Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, yes, absolutely. I never will forget that old Sergeant Whitey. He was an old Army man so he was rough. He didn't mistreat us, but he was really, really tough. He made us toe the line.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything funny or humorous happen in basic training?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, not anything, nothing particular even though occasionally I'd get a weekend pass and I'd hitchhike home, which was about 150 miles or thereabouts.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you live in there?

Mr. Dunnam:

We had barracks there, two story barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the food?

Mr. Dunnam:

It was all right but it was different from what I had at home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished basic training, then where did you go?

Mr. Dunnam:

We got a ten-day, what they called a ten-day delay enroute and got to come home and then on the tenth day you had to report to Fort Ord, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel out there?

Mr. Dunnam:

By train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, it was all right. It was the first time I'd ever been on the train but it was OK.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had you ever been that far from home before?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, no, no way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back in those days nobody traveled very far.

Mr. Dunnam:

No, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So what did you do when you got to Fort Ord?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, we didn't do anything there except they would give us orientation and stuff, you know. I was only there for seven days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

We boarded a train at San Francisco and boarded a ship there just before daylight that morning to start overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ship was that? Do you recall?

Mr. Dunnam:

General Robert L. Howes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was a ship. Where did you go on it?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, we first went to New Guinea but we only anchored offshore there for two days. Got to go ashore and then from there we went up to Leyte Island and the Philippines. We was on the ship from (it's on my DD214)...well, anyway I was on the ship thirty-one days there going overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you went down there, were you by yourself or were you with other ships?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, we were by ourselves. No, there was no other ships in it, no convoy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it a pretty fast ship?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I wouldn't think so because thirty-one days to go from San Francisco to New Guinea.

Pretty slow I expect.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of stress by submarines or Jap planes on the way down?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you went to Leyte. What happened at Leyte?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I was assigned to the 126th Infantry Regiment of the 32nd Division. I didn't see any combat there. The only thing there was a Jap plane flew over and of course they had a hole dug outside the tent there. We were living in tents, staying in tents. We all jumped in and kept in that hole. It was there on the beach and lots of ships were offshore there. They all opened up and every third round was a tracer and far as I know, that ship made quite a show.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you arrive at Leyte?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, let's see. We departed San Francisco on the 14th day of December, 1944 and we arrived on Leyte on the 18th day of January, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So the fighting was pretty well over there by then?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, on Leyte it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job in the 126th IR?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, of course I was just a rifleman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What company were you in?

Mr. Dunnam:

Company C.

Mr. Misenhimer:

1st Battalion.

Mr. Dunnam:

I think that's right. I'm not sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So how long did you stay on Leyte?

Mr. Dunnam:

Just a very, very few days there. We departed there aboard a ship then. We made the landing on Luzon Island there and I'm sorry I can't tell you exact number of days but we weren't there but four or five days on Leyte then made the landing on Luzon and we ran into no opposition on landing. They had already pulled back you know from the beaches there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They landed on January 9 was when they invaded Luzon.

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, OK.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were a few days after that, then.

Mr. Dunnam:

Like I said they'd already pulled back. The Japanese had already pulled back from the beaches when we landed there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, we immediately went into combat there and I'd guess you'd call it the mountains, you know. They'd pulled back into the mountains there and we went into combat there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that first combat. What all happened there?

Mr. Dunnam:

The only thing I can tell you is that it was pure hell as far as I was concerned because I'd never been into anything like that before in my life. You know, I could tell you and you would probably understand it, but a lot of people doesn't, that hasn't any experience, they couldn't understand what we was talking about. It was very, very unpleasant. I can tell you that. We had no hot food whatsoever now. We was living on K-rations and we went for days and days without. Our division, we was on what they called the Villaverde Trail and they got a monument over there I understand now at the end of the trail there. It's just a foot trail that the Filipinos

used through the mountains there going to what they called Santa Fe. That's what our objective was but I got wounded before we got that far.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date were you wounded?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, shoot...it was on first day of May 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did that happen?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I got shot in the head.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In the head??

Mr. Dunnam:

In my head, yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

With a rifle, or what?

Mr. Dunnam:

Rifle.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where in your head?

Mr. Dunnam:

It's a long story.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Go ahead. I'd like to hear it.

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, of course we just lived in foxholes from day to day, you know. Every time we'd move up a little bit, to another hill, that was what it amounted to, we'd just dig another foxhole with two men to a foxhole. One morning a Sergeant by the name of Marvin C. Hale from Tennessee, the best soldier I ever knew in my life, he came to me and of course I was from Texas and they called me Tex and he came to me at daybreak that day and he said, "Tex, we have orders to contact B Company" which was on another hill over there about three hundred yards away from us and said, "Come go with me" and so we went down to what we called a razorback ridge and went down to that point and we set there for about ten or fifteen minutes. I don't recall either one of us saying a word. In a little bit he said, "Well, Tex, we better go" and we went back and got either six or eight more men. I don't know exactly how many. Then we started down this hill and got down about twenty yards and there was a thicket there that we had seen the Japanese in the day before and I referred to it, kind of a plum thicket. Now it wasn't a plum thicket but it was very, very thick, you know. The Sergeant came to me and he said, "Tex, you and two guys" and he pointed to two guys there behind me. He says, "You all stay right here and I'm going to take the other guys over and drop off over the edge of this ridge and if we don't run into anything, we'll come back and get you." About five minutes after he left, I looked up and saw one there in that thicket and it was only about twenty yards from us and I shot and I don't know whether I hit him or not. I didn't go up there to see but he disappeared and I jumped up and the other two guys was about ten foot behind me and I jumped up and ran back there and I said, "We got to get out of here" and I whirled around and looked and there was another one. Then before I could do

anything, he shot me in the top of the head and it knocked me out of course. I don't know how long I was out but when I came to, the first notion was that I had to get out of there and I was going to get up and get back up to the field but to my surprise I couldn't get up because it had hit a nerve in the top of my head and paralyzed me from my waist down. To this day, there's two men who came down there. I was attempting to try to pull myself back up the hill with my hands and two men came down that hill and drug me back up there and put me in the foxhole.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, the medic came and bandaged it up, you know, wrapped my head up there and they got me back to the aid station. You have to remember we was up in the mountains so there was no roads or nothing there and I don't know what they did. I do not recall. The next thing I remember it was just getting dusky dark and a bright light was shining in my face and it was in a medic tent, a hospital tent, I guess and he told me to start counting backwards from ten. I remember getting to seven and that's the last thing I remember then. When I woke up I was in a little old, two-room frame schoolhouse with twelve other men there in that one room.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I was there for seven days. I could feed myself because I had the full use of my arms and everything from my waist up and I could feed myself and out of the twelve men in that room there was only three of us that could feed ourselves. Every time someone needed assistance you know they would holler for a nurse and a nurse...I never will forget, they only had two nurses

there, American nurses, and they pulled twelve-hour shifts and you could holler nurse and she was immediately say, "Coming, honey" and Lord, she'd be right there. But I stayed there for seven days and they took me on a little Piper Cub with nothing but the pilot there and me on a stretcher and flew me back to the island of Leyte to what they called a hospital and it wasn't a thing in the world except squad tents and just butted end to end, you know, and they had put wooden floors in there. I was there for six weeks. The little doctor he had real thick glasses and he'd come by every morning and he'd say, "Well, show me how you're doing" and I'd say, "I'm doing fine, but I can't walk." If I heard it one time, I heard it ten. I know he'd say "There isn't a damn thing wrong with you but you're feeling sorry for yourself." That would make me so mad and I'd say, "I'll show you, you so and so." We did have a hospital there in those tents and I'd wiggle out of bed and put one arm on my bed and one on the buddy next to me. They was about four foot apart and I'd wiggle up and down between those beds until I got to where I could walk. I went back into combat then after six weeks there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were just trying to challenge you to learn to walk, huh?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, yeah, I didn't have sense enough to know that that's what he was doing. It would make me so mad I was going to kill him if I could. It worked.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went back to combat. Then what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, the division had reached their objective there whenever I got back and then they was thirty-five men. I'm not sure on this but I think there was only thirty-seven of us that was sent up

into the mountains there and we hit very little resistance up there at all. In fact I never did fire my rifle over two or three times all the time I was up there and we was up there when the war was over. We was so far up there, you know, those Filipinos that lived up there, there was no towns or nothing. The men only wore G-strings and women wore an old cloth type skirt. That's about all they had. Of course it was warm up there and we was there when the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you hear about the war getting over?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, they notified us that the war was over and the Japanese had surrendered and of course you recall those poor devils had been cut off from Japan for months there and the ones that was up in there was living off what they could find to eat up there you know in the mountains, and when they notified us that the war was over, they told us to tie a white rag on the...and of course the bamboo grows wild over there in the Philippines and we tied a white rag on a bamboo pole and walked up to where we knew where they were, some of them, and they honored that white flag. They didn't fire on us but there was three guys, three Japanese, came down from the hill up there and we hollered up there and we said, "Japanese surrender. The war is over." and they hollered back, one of the guys hollered back down to us and they said, "Americans surrender". They honored, they didn't fire on us or anything but we were next to a large boulder and we held up a piece of paper and we wrote on there, you know, that the Japanese had surrendered and if they would come in, they would be fed and treated, you know, in all respects and we left and went back up there the next morning and we had left that note, piece of paper, we'd held it up and showed them that we were leaving that note and we placed a little rock on it and left it there on that boulder. We went back up there the next morning and they had told us, they had written on

there that they had sent a runner back to their commanding general and I don't recall the exact days but they was about six or eight days there and they began to come in and they surrendered to us. They'd come in and we took in about two hundred of them and you have to remember there was only about thirty-seven of us but they offered no resistance whatsoever and as they came in, they threw their rifles, hand grenades, pistols, sabers, machine guns, everything, they threw it in a pile there. After all of them was coming in, and there was about two hundred of them, we left that morning at daybreak and we got to a road and we radioed that we was bringing those in and we got to a road just before dark that night. That's how far we was from any type of road or transportation. Basically that is it, I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

Of course after they came in, all we thought was going to come in to us there, so before we started out to those trucks that was going to pick them up, they dropped rations down there to everybody for the Japanese to eat and of course those poor devils hadn't eaten nothing except what they could find up there in the mountains to eat and my goodness alive, ninety percent of them had diarrhea and everything. They were so weak they couldn't hardly walk. But anyway, we went on back, we got down to headquarters I guess and a little later on we boarded ships and went to Japan for occupational duty.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me ask you a couple questions. You say there were only thirty-seven. What happened to the rest of the people? Were they killed or wounded or something?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, no. That's all they thought were necessary to have up there because they knew that we wasn't going to run into a whole lot of resistance up there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of rations did they drop for you?

Mr. Dunnam:

Most of it was what they called ten-in-one rations. You're familiar with that, aren't you?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, yeah. Right.

Mr. Dunnam:

Most of it they dropped by plane was these ten-in-one rations.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Could the Japanese eat those or not?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, they ate them. That's what made them so sick because they were starving, just getting diarrhea and everything because they hadn't had any food, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course that's a different food for them, too. They aren't used to that kind of food.

Mr. Dunnam:

That's absolutely right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What they ate was altogether different from that.

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, yeah. They had rice and fish that had a lot of different taste than the ten-in-one had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you went to headquarters and then you went to Japan?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir. We went to Japan for occupational duty. We was one of the first troops into Japan and we were stationed at a base called Kosashen Stadium there. We were stationed underneath that...our company. I don't know where the divisional headquarters was stationed there or nothing but our company was stationed under the Kosashen Stadium, baseball stadium there about half-way between Kobe and Osaka, Japan. The first night I was there my outfit was sent down to the train depot and of course the only transportation they had there was the bicycles and trains and those people never even offered you know to do anything. They was just as courteous as they could be.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what date did you land in Japan?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, goodness, roughly a month after the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

August 15 was when they surrendered and then September 2 was the ceremony on the Missouri.

So this would have been probably in the middle of September then?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes. I would think that would be pretty close to correct, yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No trouble with the local people?

Mr. Dunnam:

No trouble whatsoever. They never did to me they never showed any sign of resentment or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were there any military aged people around?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, yeah, I guess some of them had been in the military there you know. I don't know whether there was or not, now, as far as that's concerned. I never saw any Japanese there in Japan after we got up there I never saw a Japanese in uniform, any type of military uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Other people I've talked to seem to think most of the people were older people, not necessarily young people.

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, that's true, too. There was mostly older people or just very, very young. Most of them were in the service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some of the things you did in Japan?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, we didn't do anything. After we got up there they started, some of the divisions that came on in to Japan for occupational duty, they was deactivating them and sending them home, the men home and all their vehicles, you know, Jeeps, trucks, everything and anything on wheels they filled a huge, huge fenced-in chain link fenced and they parked all of those in there and that was our job there after a few days up there we started, that was our job to guard those to make sure that, you know, the Japanese didn't go in there and steal a bunch of stuff off of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were these American vehicles?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, these were American vehicles. It was divisions that were being deactivated and sent home, you know. The men would be sent home and the vehicles were parked in one area or another.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you in Japan?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, from the time right after the war was over there until I came home, now this is something on my discharge, you tell me how in the world it could happen. They got here: departed Japan on June 24, 1946 and arrived in United States on June 25, 1946. Now if you've ever been on a ship that goes that fast, you let me know because...It took us only nine days from Japan to Seattle, Washington. But on my discharge and I'm looking at it right here 24 June 1946 transportation to U.S.A. date of arrival 25 June 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You know what that means to me...the 26th of June in Japan was the 25th of June in the U.S. So what I think they're trying to say, you left there on the 26th of June Japanese time and you left on the 25th U.S. time.

Mr. Dunnam:

Well they might have but I have never been on a ship that crossed the Pacific Ocean by golly in nine days' time. That's what it is you know. In one day's time...

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's somebody made a mistake.

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, somebody made a mistake.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got back to the States, what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I was sent to SanAntonio, whatever the name was...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Fort Sam Houston?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, right. I was given my discharge there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So what date did you get the discharge?

Mr. Dunnam:

December 6, 19 There we go again. See, the reason the authority for separation was convenience for the government. One one demobilization AR615365 15 December 1944.

(Editor's note: This is probably the date the order was issued.)

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's when you went in?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went in July 10, OK.

Mr. Dunnam:

But then I got out August 21, 1946. That's right, see, at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, gosh, you know there's a lot of stuff that happened that you know... Well, one time we was trying to take a hill there and we called it a table-top mountain there. We'd go up you know and right at the top, well there, it flattened off for about twenty yards there it's just as flat as the top of a table and we'd get up...we're going up this hill and of course we're just crawling up the thing and the Japanese begin to throw hand grenades down there on us and one of the boys whose name was Bryant, and we called him Frog because he had big, bulgy eyes. He was from West Virginia and one of those Japanese hand grenades went off and he was about five yards to my right and a piece of shrapnel went completely through his arm, right above his wrist, and he grabbed it and he said, "I hope it's broke, I hope it's broke". But it wasn't. He left and was gone for a few days and he was back with us. We were not able to take that hill that day. There was two of us that crawled up and the machine gun had our Lieutenant and two other guys with our platoon pinned down over there and we knocked the machine gun out and it got them loose there but one of the mortar shells that the Japanese were throwing in there on us, landed and killed that Lieutenant in just a few minutes after that. Another boy, William R. Wroten, from Louisiana was over about fifteen or twenty yards to my right and one of those mortar shells went off and a piece of shrapnel went under his kneecap and just locked it down, you know, he couldn't use it and I went over. We had to pull back because we couldn't take it and I went over and at that time I was carrying a B.A.R, Browning Automatic Rifle, and they are a wonderful piece of equipment, as

long as they were clean. Of course we'd been up there so long we couldn't keep the thing clean and it was firing just like an M-1, you know, it was just semi-automatic. I grabbed the trigger housing group out of it and slung it just as far as I could and so I flung that B.A.R down and picked his M-1 rifle up and grabbed him...pulled him back down the hill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, then what happened?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, we went back and we did succeed in taking the hill a day or two after that and gosh, I don't know, there's several different things that happened. I remember going up one hill there and when we got up there we called it "Blowfly Ridge" because either mortars or artillery had killed three or four Japanese there several days before that and the flies were just absolutely horrible there and we only stayed there one day and pulled off of that thing because you know we just couldn't stand it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many people did you lose in your platoon?

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, gosh, I'm sorry. I can't tell you. We lost a lot, a lot of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Quite a few of them?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So it was pretty rough over there?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Dunnam:

Probably the most frightening time was whenever I got wounded there and realized I couldn't get up and get out of the way, you know, and get back to safety. I would assume that was probably that was the most frightening time. You know, for anyone to tell you you wasn't scared, I think they'd be lying because you really didn't think about it that much. You had that job to do and that's what you was trying to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunnam:

I never had a bunch of officers that I had more respect for in my life. They were excellent people.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you lose any officers?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, yes, sir, we lost that one Lieutenant that I was telling you about. So far as I personally know, that's the only one that I know of that we lost.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of the medics?

Mr. Dunnam:

Excellent people. You know they did carry the little, what do you call it, the small rifle I think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The carbine?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, carbine. Heck, they never did use them unless they had to, you know. But they were excellent people. I'll tell you what, I got nothing but respect for every one of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Dunnam:

It was all right. I never heard anybody, you know, discouraged or disgusted with anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Dunnam:

(laughs) No, I did not. I heard about it but I never did hear it because we didn't have radios or cameras or anything like they have now. We didn't have any cameras or radios or anything that we could listen to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you went down south, when you crossed the equator, did you have any kind of ceremony then?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah. What did they call it? I know they swore us in there and you know we crossed the equator one day after Christmas Day. I never will forget. Of course they had those stainless steel trays

that you eat off of. I've often said that's about the only real good meal we had on the way going over there but when they put the cranberry sauce on that on Christmas Day which is one day on the equator, it just turned to just like milk you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You'd been a polliwog and they made you a shellback, is that right?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir, we did hear about it but you know we were, I guess you'd say so severely occupied. I personally didn't give it a whole lot of thought. I knew and was sorry it happened all right but we had more things to think about I guess. Don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir, we heard about that all right but we was wondering why the Japanese wouldn't surrender and they did not surrender of course until those atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. We went through Hiroshima. We wasn't allowed to get off the train there when we went through Japan but you could see the devastation you know to the city of Hiroshima from the train there. We stopped there but we weren't allowed to get off the train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they dropped the first atomic bomb, did you hear about that?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, I don't recall that. No, sir, I do not recall that. Like I said, we was far up in those mountains. They was passing sunlight to us. There was no roads or anything, I'll tell you. The only way you got up there was by foot, period.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When Japan did surrender, did you have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, no, not a celebration because we was thrilled to death about it all right but when they surrendered, we got orders to, like I told you, you know, to tie a white rag on like a fishing pole there. Of course bamboo over was big as three inches in diameter you know, like a fishing pole. That was the only celebration we had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunnam:

Oh, yeah. Well, I got a pistol and I've got a saber. That saber, lord there's no telling how old the thing is. On the scabbard of it, it's got some Japanese writing. Of course I don't know anything about it but I know they told us that those sabers were passed down from one family to another.

Mr. Misenhimer:

One generation to another.

Mr. Dunnam:

There's no telling how old this saber is. But of course those Japanese, many, many of the Japanese carried the Japanese flag, you know, small flags with them there. I've got three or four of them. You know just a bunch of junk I call it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is that?

Mr. Dunnam:

I had two sabers but one of them I lived in Mundy, Texas for a while after I came back and I put this one saber up in the kitchen cabinet over the counter and when we moved I left it in there so somebody's got it. I've got one other one. Just the same old stuff you know, attabrine tablets and little can openers. I've got my original dog tags that was issued me when I went into the Army and I have got my billfold that I carried over there and of course we didn't have plastic at that time but they had paraffin, kind of like envelopes you know of those K-rations. Some of them were wrapped in. I put my billfold in one of those plastic envelope things. I carried it all the time I was over there by golly and I've got it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else?

Mr. Dunnam:

Not that I can think of.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, sir, I did not. I didn't see one. Like I said we was so far up in the mountains there that they didn't come up in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah. One time we was guarding a bridge there that went across the river and we had no resistance. We had nothing, no trouble whatsoever there but we went up there one day to a Red Cross outfit that was about a mile from us there and got some shaving cream because we didn't have, we'd run out of that. That's the only experience I've had with them over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they charge you for the shaving cream?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, no. They didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunnam:

No, sir, I didn't. I just went home. Of course at that time I wasn't married and my mother and dad still lived on a farm and I went back home and lived on the farm, lived with them there, you know, for the next four years. I didn't get married until I was twenty-five and I was farming with my dad there and then after I got married, I farmed for a couple of years for myself. We had a drought that took me out at that time by golly because we didn't make anything, period.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Dunnam:

I bought the first house I bought in Lubbock, Texas. I used the G.I. Bill for that and I only kept it for about a year and a half and I sold it and moved into another house there. That's the only...well I'll take that back. Now when I first came back out of the service, they had a little old G.I. Bill they called and they had ag teachers that you could join that outfit and have ag teachers

that would teach us agriculture, you know, and that for a few weeks there. That's all I ever used it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Dunnam:

I got to be a Staff Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, I got the Bronze Star. I got the Purple Heart of course. I got the Asiatic-Pacific Theater ribbon with two bronze stars, Victory ribbon, Philippine Liberation Campaign ribbon with one bronze star, of course Good Conduct Medal. If you didn't kill your company commander, everybody got the Good Conduct Medal. Three overseas bars of course. They represent every six months, you know, each bar represent six months there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many battle stars did you get?

Mr. Dunnam:

I got one, two, got two. Of course the Asiatic-Pacific Theater and the Philippine Liberation...

Mr. Misenhimer:

But the battle stars, two of those. OK Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Dunnam:

No. Now there's two guys that I was in combat with from Louisiana and one of them is dead now, what I call my foxhole buddy, he and I shared a foxhole you know and the other one is still

living there in Louisiana and I talk to him every three or four weeks and the one that I was telling you about my foxhole buddy, he died two years ago. So honestly the only person that I know that I was in combat with over there is the one man that still lives there in Louisiana now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your civilian career?

Mr. Dunnam:

I worked, after the drought took me out of farming, an old buddy of mine was working for, running wage survey for the Bracero Program, the Mexican Braceros up from Old Mexico, you know. At that time primarily to harvest cotton. He came to me there one day and asked me, he said, "How would you like to go to work for the State?" I said, "Lord, I know nothing about it. I don't..." He said, "I think I can get you on there." So I did. I went to work for the State and all I did for several years there was just to issue authorizations for the Braceros, you know for those Mexicans to come up from Old Mexico to harvest cotton and do farm work and stuff like that. But I worked for the State until I retired in 1986. I worked for 27 years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you recover completely from you wound or do you still have any trouble with it?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, sir. I haven't had any trouble whatsoever. Now the last, here lately, I've had a little problem with my head, kind of woozy and stuff, but it's not from my wound or anything. Although I didn't know until last year I was having a little problem with my head and they sent me to a specialist over at Wichita Falls, Texas to a specialist over there and they had done a cat-scan on my head here and they sent the cat-scan over there to this specialist that they referred me to and it was a lady doctor and she said, "well I would like to do an MRI on your head but we can't do

it.” I said, “I don’t know what an MRI is but...” She said, “It would show us so much more than what the cat-scan would. But I can’t do it.” I said, “Why?” She said, “You’ve got shrapnel still in your scalp” and I said, “God, that was 70 years ago and no one had ever told me that.” She said, “Well, you still got it because I’m looking at it right now on this cat-scan.” But as far as having any problem with my head, no, sir, I haven’t had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you get any kind of disability?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir. I get hundred percent disability because I can’t hear hardly. My left ear is completely deaf and my right ear is in bad shape. I have hearing aids for both ears. I didn’t get that until year before last.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I’ve got hearing problems, too, and I applied for disability and I haven’t got an answer back yet.

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, you know, it’s real funny on mine. I applied for a hearing aid and I went down here to the county service officer and it just so happened that a VA representative was in there from Wichita Falls and of course, I think I told you the only records I have is my DD214 you know because I’m one of those whose records were burned in St. Louis and I had my DD214 with me and he looked it over and said, “You deserve a whole lot more than hearing aids.” I said, “All in the world I want is hearing aids. I want to hear.” And lo and behold in less than six weeks’ time then I got a notice that I’d been approved for a hundred percent disability because of hearing problems.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a pretty good check, isn't it?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, it is. Yes, it is. I lost my wife a little over a year ago, like I tell everybody, we never did just really, really hurt for money. We never did have any hardly but now then I've got more money than I've ever had in my life and she's not here to enjoy it. That's what hurts me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Al, that's all the questions I've got unless you've got anything else.

Mr. Dunnam:

Honestly, I don't know of anything else Richard and it's certainly been a pleasure visiting with you and I can admire you for the work that you're doing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you. Oh, one thing I didn't cover. You went on an Honor Flight, right?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir. I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you do that?

Mr. Dunnam:

April 4, 2014.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about it. How was it?

Mr. Dunnam:

It was wonderful, a wonderful experience. I've never been to Washington, D.C. before in my life

and we honestly didn't see the city of Washington. We did not go to the White House or to the Capitol. We just went to all the monuments, memorials there, you know, the World War II Memorial, Vietnam, Korean, Lincoln Memorial. We did not get to go through the Washington Monument because it was under repair at that time but we could see it, you know. It was one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had on that and I would strongly recommend that anyone that has cared anything about history can go up there to it. I jokingly told someone after I got home that one of the best things about the whole trip was I didn't have to meet the President or any of those darn politicians up there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's one of the dangers of going to Washington.

Mr. Dunnam:

Yeah, but it's a great experience and I highly recommend it for anyone that has an opportunity to go.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, I've interviewed quite a few people that have been. Everybody's speaks highly of it. Did any of your family go with you?

Mr. Dunnam:

My grandson. Of course he's right at fifty years of age now but he just, well, like I was telling people that he kind of thought I was with him for years you know when he was just a baby growing up. I think he thinks, half-way thinks, I hung the moon but he was thrilled to death on that trip. I'll tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How old is he?

Mr. Dunnam:

He has got to be...well, in his mid-fifties now. I can't tell you for sure exactly how old he is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's close enough. Did he have to pay his own ticket or did they provide his ticket?

Mr. Dunnam:

No, I paid for him, \$600 for his ticket. He had the money because he's working for Dell Computer and he's probably drawing more money than I ever drew in my life and I have no idea exactly how much money he's making. I know he's got a good job.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he go to college?

Mr. Dunnam:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let's see, your 32nd Division was part of the Michigan National Guard, is that correct?

Mr. Dunnam:

I think it was the Michigan or Wisconsin. I'm not sure on that but I think that's right. They told us it was the first division that went overseas during World War II. They went to Australia first as you know and then out of Australia they went into New Guinea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Al, thanks again for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Dunnam:

Well, thank you very much and thank you for your service, by golly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

We'll keep in contact.

End of Interview

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