

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

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

An Interview with

David S. Belvin

Bellvue, Washington

April 23, 2015

US Navy

Machinest Mate First Class

USS Dobbin, AD-3

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is April 23, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. David S. Belvin by telephone. His phone number is 425-698-1967. His address is 919 109th Avenue Northeast, Apt. 1106, Belvue, Washington, 98004. This interview is for the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Dave 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. Belvin:

Thank you and by the way are you the one that I spoke to when I went to the museum?

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, I was not. Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum, to make sure this is okay with you.

Mr. Belvin:

Alright.

Mr. Misenhimer:

"Agreement Read"

Mr. Belvin:

That sounds agreeable to me.

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, try to get back in contact with a veteran he's moved or something. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we can contact if we needed to find you?

Mr. Belvin:

My daughter is Ilene Garland.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Belvin:

Yes, I will give you her cell phone because that's the one she keeps close. I'll just give you both numbers just in case. Her cell number is 425-444-7073. And the house phone, in case you don't get her on the cell phone, her house phone is 425-885-5666. 885-5666.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where does she live?

Mr. Belvin:

She lives in Redmond, Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Redmond, Washington okay. Hopefully we'll never need that, but you never know. What is your birthdate?

Mr. Belvin:

My birthdate is August 1, 1923.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Belvin:

In Brownwood, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Belvin:

Margaret Elizabeth Belvin is my mother and my dad is James Stuart Belvin.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Belvin:

I had one brother, his name was James Jarvis Belvin, he was aboard the West Virginia at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he older or younger than you?

Mr. Belvin:

He's five years older than me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Belvin:

No, he swam ashore off the West Virginia and then he was transferred over to the ..., he was transferred over to the Worden, a destroyer (DD-352). And that was sunk up in Alaska during, off of

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Aleutian Islands?

Mr. Belvin:

Yes off the Aleutian Islands. Dutch Harbor, Dutch Harbor. And that was when the Japanese were active up there. And he was picked up fortunately by a troop ship and that troop ship ran aground, so he had to get off of that one to another troop ship. And then that brought him all back into the States again. And he shipped out on the new construction, which is the Hoel and the Hoel was lost in the second battle of Philippines, courtesy of Bull Halsey who deserted his post to chase the Japanese fleet. So he got off the ship alright but then he drifted around too long off the island of Samar and tried to swim ashore and never made it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So he drowned over there then?

Mr. Belvin:

So he drowned. Well Halsey never bothered with sending out a search party at all. That's a matter of record if you like to look into it. I can give you lots of data.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Belvin:

I went to high school in Brownwood, we only had one high school. It's a small town.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Brownwood, Texas right. What year did you graduate there?

Mr. Belvin:

In 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer:

December 7th '41 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Belvin:

I was in the Navy by then, because I joined the Navy in June of '41. Took my boot camp at San Diego. I'd been rejected, I tried, I'd been trying to get

into the Navy for quite awhile. First started off at the officer's school but my eyes would not let me pass muster. So I finally made it into the enlisted side. So I was looking for education.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Belvin:

Well the Navy has actually been in my family background, even one of my distant ancestors founded the, had some straits that, Jarvis inlet up in Canada named after him. So that's in my ancestry. My uncle Jarvis was the last one served in the Navy and then he retired out of Navy and went into the Coast Guard. So that's again a pressure to go into the Navy. Well anyway that's enough of that – that's history. But I always wanted to be in the Navy and was going to make that my career. But unfortunately I had to go into the enlisted side first. So when I finished boot camp at San Diego they had an opportunity for me to go to Henry Ford Trade School to learn a trade, to become a machinist. So I did. And I was, just finished up my school at Henry Ford Trade School and was assigned to the Dobbin. And was en route to the Dobbin when the war broke out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now again to my question, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor how did you hear about that?

Mr. Belvin:

When they attacked Pearl Harbor? Well that was on the radio. As I say I was en route so I was not there yet, my ship was. My ship was there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when you heard that, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Belvin:

Well, I knew that I was already in the Navy. So I knew that I was going to be affected. We'd already discussed the issue, the problems with Roosevelt making efforts to get a war going between us and Japan and Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now back to your boot camp, what are some things that happened in boot camp?

Mr. Belvin:

Well that was just straight forward boot camping, it took a, I forget how many weeks I was at boot camp. But it was just straight training which is building physical ed, physical portion of it and training to follow instructions and so forth. A little rifle training and so forth. It was not really structured for warfare, but I was busy there and as I say education was primary on my mind. But when I had the opportunity to go to this Henry Ford Trade School I did. Otherwise I would have been in Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And your brother was at Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Belvin:

My brother was at Pearl Harbor, he was on the West Virginia. He swam ashore off of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now after boot camp what did you do then?

Mr. Belvin:

After boot camp I went to Henry Ford Trade School where I learned to be a machinist trade for all the various types of machines that Ford had and also the foundry and metallurgy and so

forth. Just an education period there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you went to machinist school then?

Mr. Belvin:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything particular happen there?

Mr. Belvin:

Nothing that was note-worthy except that it was terribly cold.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that at?

Mr. Belvin:

That was at Dearborn.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, Dearborn, Michigan okay.

Mr. Belvin:

That was very cold in the wintertime.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what months were you there?

Mr. Belvin:

I was just leaving there in December.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In December, huh.

Mr. Belvin:

Up there in November and into December, at the start of the war. But I was through with my training and was en route to Pearl Harbor at that time. But the speed picked up at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go after that school?

Mr. Belvin:

Straight to the ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that first ship?

Mr. Belvin:

That was the USS Dobbin AD-3, which is a destroyer repair ship. Although once you got aboard it was repairing everything, from submarines all the way up to air craft carriers. We did everything. When I went aboard that I was a, went aboard as a fireman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you join the Dobbin at, what place?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh that was at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

At Pearl Harbor, okay. And this was how long after the attack, about close to a year?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh no, no, it was the next month.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Course there was still an awful lot of damage there then wasn't there?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh yes, lots. One of the ships that one of my friends was scheduled for was the Downes and the Downes was in the dry dock. My ship was still afloat.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was the Dobbin at Pearl Harbor when the attack came?

Mr. Belvin:

Yes. Yeah we had five ships along side of us at Pearl Harbor. That's the thing that saved the Dobbin.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, I see. Then what happened?

Mr. Belvin:

Well we went over and had our hull scraped down and painted and loaded up with ammunition to a point that we were overloaded with ammunition. In fact the ship was actually physically overloaded as a result of it. So we worked our way down to Pago Pago, in American Samoa, for a stop. And then we stayed there for a ..., about a

Mr. Misenhimer:

For about how long?

Mr. Belvin:

We were in Pago Pago from March to, oh two months. Then we went over on onto Tongatapu and that was towards the Corral Sea Battle. And then we went down to Suva, Fijis, Nouméa and going from it to New Caledonia, which we were going to Sydney by the way of the barrier reef, but we got hit by a torpedo. That was hit right on our magazine too, by the way. It failed to explode. First there was a lot of bad torpedoes on both sides of the war at that time. One of the first jobs that I'd get was to make a thousand new firing guns for our, for the American torpedoes for the submarines and ships while they were waiting for the newest thing to be manufactured and shipped out to sea, to us. That was one of the first things that I did that I felt proud of.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Belvin:

We did not know that we got hit by the torpedo until actually we went into dry dock in Sydney. It had bent three frames, didn't hit us directly, it would have holed us. But it bent three frames.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you there?

Mr. Belvin:

In Sydney?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir.

Mr. Belvin:

Well we went into Sydney in May of '42 and just the fact that the Japanese midget subs came, followed us, came in the next day looking for us, the USS Chicago, and HMAS Canberra which was in Sydney Harbor at that time. And they sent two midget submarines in at the..., each submarine got to fire a torpedo. One of them passed close to the Chicago, between the Chicago and the USS Perkins. The other one passed between our bow and the anchor chain. That close. When the Perkins' had sunk the submarines with depth charges and when they raised the submarines they had bow section of one and the rear section of the other, put them together and if we had welded them up they'd had a submarine. But they found out that each one of them had four torpedoes, they had two torpedoes forward, two torpedoes aft and a charge that they could use for ramming. In going through the nets at Sydney, the submarines, the torpedo tubes themselves were fouled, they were only able to get one torpedo off per sub and then they were sunk before they could do any damage.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Belvin:

Well we left Sydney in June of '43. We were there almost a year. And when we left there – Brisbane, Mackay, Townsville, and then on up to Milne Bay which was a very interesting place, that was New Guinea. At Milne Bay I noticed eleven water spouts, like cyclonic tornado type events. Any one of them could have grown into a typhoon, it was breeding grounds for the typhoons. And seeing eleven water spouts at one time and they were about a mile away from me, so that was rather interesting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you were at those places on the Dobbin, is that right?

Mr. Belvin:

Yes I was still on the Dobbin, we were moving around.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in Sydney did you get chance to go into town very much?

Mr. Belvin:

I'd go into, yeah about every fourth day I could go ashore for an afternoon, for a day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How were the people down there?

Mr. Belvin:

Seemed extremely friendly, very, very, very friendly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Belvin:

Well we actually went back to Sydney and on the way back this time we ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef. We ran about three hundred yards aground. The officer made us turn too late. When we stopped we were about ten feet off their port beam there was a big huge rock, we just missed it. Fortunately that was at low tide and they had big tides there. So we were able to winch ourselves off at high tide. Had the crew going back and forth rocking the ship so that—get rid of the friction between the hull and the sand so that we could winch ourselves out. And then from Sydney, we were there just briefly, there for a couple of weeks, and then back up to Brisbane, back up to Milne Bay. And then we'd go between Milne Bay, Buna, Oro Bay since Rabaul was the main Air Force base for Japanese, it was right there by New Guinea. So the activity, the fighting on New Guinea and also air support from Rabaul—it was went back and forth we'd go up to Oro Bay and Buna Bay and then back down to Oro Bay and Morobe Bay and just kept moving back and forth that thing on the activity of the Japanese. And then on, well one of the key points I liked in the islands that on June the 22nd I saw my brother his ship pulled into Seeadler Harbor, it's on the Manus Islands. So I saw him, went aboard his ship about eight

o'clock at night and left about three o'clock in the morning and they left that same morning, left. And they were en route to the Philippines which is the battle of Leyte Gulf, but they went to participate in it. That was when he was lost. And then my mother had a nervous breakdown over that cause she was extremely close to my brother. So I was trying to get help to move ashore, to come back to the States to see her. I went through this, over three years since I'd left home, hadn't been home yet. And so finally I got the leave through the help of the different agencies that were working at that time and so it was three years and six months that I saw home again. That's from the time I left it. And then at that time I went back out on a new ship, went to San Diego and worked in the base at San Diego while I waiting for the Avery Island. The Avery Island was an AR-77 which had a machine shop type of a ship, repair ship. So they came by and picked me up and we went on over to Shanghai and then on up to Japan, at that time Japan had surrendered. I was off boarded onto another repair ship which was the Numitor. And there I was offered a Chief, a Machinist Mate's position on both on the Numitor and also on the Indian Island if I would ship over. I went to the education specialist and she had an offer, so I turned that down. Mother was very upset with me for turning it down, that's the smartest move I ever made. Actually was my wife, that was the smartest move. So I noticed a peculiarity that disturbed me quite a bit when I was in Japan it was in Sasebo, Japan and you'd go ashore and the people would turn their back to you as you walked along. And to me I'd do that as an element of disrespect. And it was only after I retired of the jobs and so forth and moved into a retirement home, this is where I am right now, a fellow here his wife is Japanese and much younger, so she's about thirty years younger than me. And I asked her about this and she said well that was really a symbol, mark of respect cause the Japanese at that time was chauvinistic in their concepts and so forth, and they felt that they were not worthy to face us so they give you their back out of respect. I just could not get around that one at all. But that's what she said and also that was pretty well borne true because my daughter had an exchange student from Japan stay with them. And I got a chance to speak to her mother and she also verified that was the modus operandi at that time. So I was glad to hear that it was not disrespect.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Belvin:

I left the Navy and I say this, this is a bit of trivia. When we were coming back from Japan, that was in December of '45 and ran short of fuel at that time. Went to Seattle and went to see what Seattle looked like. Looked pretty sharp and was impressive. So I had to save face, and one of the guys that left the ship, the service going home to be discharged, I guess they viewed me as a senior member or something of this nature, not that there was any real differences with age, they viewed that I was a father image or something, anyway they insisted that I go to the ship's dance. I don't think about all that, but turned out that they forced me to go into it and I went to the dance. First dance was a Paul Jones where it goes from one direction and then it goes the other direction and the music stops and you're supposed to dance with the person in front of you and I did that. But the trouble is that the girl in front of me could not dance with me and I could not dance with her, so we sat down. And then we married. Thirty months later we married, so I met my wife there. Then went home for the second time and had to finish out my tenure in the Navy since I was in the regular Navy. So I went back again on the El Dorado. Went over to Pearl Harbor and back to the States. Then on July 31, 1946 I was discharged from the service and they told me that I had my choice of joining the reserves or I would be in the reserves whether I liked it or not. So I said okay I'll join. And I went to the University of Texas to get my engineering degree. Soon as I got my engineering degree along came a commission, they had now made me an Ensign. Had to take correspondence courses and all like that but I would not give them my vacation time because I figured that was for my family, I'd served enough. So I never participated in the weekend warring, I just was serving. But they raised my grade to Lieutenant and then they were going to go on up to Lieutenant Commander and found out that I was over age in grade, so they said okay it's time to get out. So I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back in what?

Mr. Belvin:

That's what I'm trying to think of, when that was, that was, I couldn't think, but anyway it was 1960 by the time I got out of the service, this last time. As a commissioned officer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh, another piece of trivia. If I'd stayed aboard the Dobbin instead of leaving it I would have been a member of the crew that had left the States and spent the most time in the seas of any ship in the Navy. But I don't qualify for that. Then another thing is that the, that the ship itself was dismantled in Oregon, Portland, Oregon. Sold for \$75,138 to the Zidell Company and they made razor blades for Gillette Razor. A lot of razor blades.

Mr. Misenhimer:

According to the notes I have you were on a couple of other ships, Indian Island and the Numitor, is that right?

Mr. Belvin:

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When were you on those?

Mr. Belvin:

Actually I was aboard starting off with the Dobbin. And then the Avery Island, which was reassigned from the Avery Island to the Indian Island, AR-77. And then from there to the Numitor which is ARL-17 and then to The Eldorado which was a communication ship, AGC-11.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you ever get into combat when you were in the Navy?

Mr. Belvin:

I was not in any combat ship, my ships were support ships. Other than that thing, the target of

the Japanese subs in Sydney Harbor and also while en route to Sydney. That was about it. The ship itself was damaged, also had four people killed in Pearl Harbor. That was right before I came aboard.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in Sydney Harbor, I've been down there and there is a..., a some kind of a, kind of a bulk ship or something, an Australian ship that was sunk in the harbor, did you see that?

Mr. Belvin:

Are you talking about the submarines, the two midget submarines? They hoisted the submarines up and they took the front half of one and the aft half of the other submarine, side to side and made a monument out of them later on. I never saw the monument, besides I did not go back to Sydney. I know what you're talking about, but it really was not a ship, that was an old ferry.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah.

Mr. Belvin:

Yeah cause the torpedo that I told you about that was fired at the Chicago, that's close by the Chicago between Chicago and the destroyer Perkins. Went under a barge and under the ship, under the ferry and hit the docks and exploded. And that was because the explosion was under the ship itself, under the ferry itself it pulled the ferry, totally destroyed the ferry. It was not a direct hit to the ferry, but it was a..., because the explosion you know like when you're trying hit a submarine those depth charges gotta be below the submarine or you're not gonna hit him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But it sank the ship.

Mr. Belvin:

Yeah, it sure did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were attacked by a submarine once when you were torpedoed, but were you attacked any other times by Japanese planes or submarines?

Mr. Belvin:

By submarines, as I told you one torpedo that was fired passed between the bow of the ship and the anchor chain. That's pretty close.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Belvin:

I don't know if I had enough to tell, to know that. Other than perhaps the ..., well we went through a typhoon, a sister ship waited the typhoon out, broke her keel and we had two destroyers escorting us. They lost their fires and their boilers because of the rolling over so far. Put out the fires and had to re-fire their boilers again in order to get underway. So it was something. It was very interesting. Actually I've had three hose pipes, we had anchors at two of them but not the third one. And the third hose pipe was covered with the uh, what you call--gunk, a three-quarter inch plate steel, steel plate, that took a 3-inch angle iron and then it was fastened down with eight bolts in the deck. And every time we would bury her bow in the wave it would work loose and those bolts and it destroyed the plate itself. It broke loose and washed back to the fantail. But it calmed the water at the diameter of the hose pipes and would go and every time we buried the bow in the wave it would put up a column of water which is the diameter of the hose pipe, like about two feet, thirty inches or something like that. And it would go over the mast and down to my station. My station was eighty-four feet out of water in still water. And it would come dump on top of me up on forward fire control station. Get us all wet up there and knock you around a bit. That was very interesting. The ship would roll over so far that part of the time you'd walk on the side of the hallway. Then back to the deck and then the other side of the hallway back to the deck again. It was rolling quite heavily and got huge stanchions, six inch stanchions between decks and you could see those stanchions bending back and forth they had that much motion to them. They were bending that motion thing, in the machine shop. It was an analytical find. It was very interesting to see and I did not have enough sense to know that I was in danger, until later.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Belvin:

I think that's basically about all that really happened there. When we were in Shanghai we were floating up and down the Yangtze river.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale on the Dobbin?

Mr. Belvin:

I'd say it was very good. A lot of people there wanted to get off the Dobbin and get onto an action ship. Some of them were supposedly getting their transfer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about your other ships?

Mr. Belvin:

Well the other ships, I didn't work on them long enough to really to talk to people, a rapport with people. Oh that's not true. The Eldorado was..., although I was out of.... But they had me in charge of the engine room because of being a repair person. My training -- I was always prepared.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you on the Dobbin?

Mr. Belvin:

I left the Dobbin, oh when was it? Dobbin in January 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About roughly how long do you think you were on it?

Mr. Belvin:

I'm trying to....., we left, I left Hollandia in January of '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you joined the Dobbins in what, January of '42?

Mr. Belvin:

Uh yes!

Mr. Misenhimer:

About three years.

Mr. Belvin:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay.

Mr. Belvin:

It was three and a half years from the time I left home and then got back. So six months with the training and also Henry Ford Trade School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On April the 12th of '45 President Roosevelt died, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh yes. I voted for Roosevelt. The second time around I didn't vote for him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now where were you when you heard about that?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh, I can't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was April of '45.

Mr. Belvin:

April of '45. That would be while I was in San Diego. At the repair base from March '45 to September '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then May the 8th of '45 Germany surrendered, did you hear about that?

Mr. Belvin:

That was nice, that was nice, I was in ...,

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where would you have been then?

Mr. Belvin:

I was in San Diego at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Still in San Diego, okay. Any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Belvin:

Well, I think the whole town was going crazy. Yeah the whole town would be celebrating that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

August the 6th of '45 they dropped the first atomic bomb, did you hear about that?

Mr. Belvin:

I sure did, that was, I was so much in favor of that and still am. And that's the days that there's a lot of people said that was wrong. I would not be here today if that bomb had not been dropped.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right, an awful lot of people wouldn't be here today without that. Americans and Japanese both.

Mr. Belvin:

That's right. You know I went, I did go to, my wife and I took a cruise, cruises. Went to Japan over to China, that area. And we stopped off at a..., where was the second bomb dropped?

Mr. Misenhimer:

The second one was on Nagasaki, August the 9th.

Mr. Belvin:

Nagasaki yeah. That's where we went ashore to see that and going to the museum and they had pictures of how the energy from the bomb blast went through curtains -- would burn into flesh.

The pattern of the curtain and all kinds of bad things about America.

(End of side 1 of tape)

(Begin side 2 of tape)

Mr. Belvin:

Yes, we were touring through, visiting the museum and they showed me the messages that were dropped and took you over to a corner, a very dark corner of the museum, not have much light, and there was some messages that they had dropped telling people of Japan to leave the city that it was going to be destroyed. And they did not do that. I was amazed at how little total damage it was to the city, the city itself was kind of hilly and the air blast, it was air blast of course, but the air blast affected the sides of the hills that were facing the blast and the other side of the hills there was no problems. Houses were not damaged. This is real interesting to me to see a pattern from that, from that blast. Ground zero.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On August 15th when Japan surrendered where were you then and did you have celebration?

Mr. Belvin:

I was..., where was I August the 15th?

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were probably in the States somewhere.

Mr. Belvin:

Which am I...? I left on the, from the Indian Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Belvin:

Yeah, I guess yes there was a celebration also on the ship and so forth. A lot of drinking. But that was great, that was great news and I did start making all my plans about getting out of the Navy and going to college. I was wondering whether I could really make it into college because there's no way I could go to college when I was a kid. My family was not that well-heeled, my mother had a lot of illness going. My dad was pretty well strapped. And also the depression that we had, was not really in the distance, not lifted until the war started really. So anyway,

there was no hope for me going to college except I had the Navy to do it for me. But that's the main reason why I went into the Navy and when I got out I had the opportunity to go to college. But I was really wondering whether or not I had the capability of recovering six years of non-schooling and start studying at the college level. So I did nothing, going to shows or anything like that, I worked every problem I could find in the book to work. So I knew what was going on. They had two courses that were designed to see who was ready for college, one was English and the other one was chemistry. And each time you start that class, said okay, 50% of you probably won't be here at the end of the semester. That was a way that they weeded us out. But I survived. Then I came to marry my wife in Seattle and started working for Boeing, engineer. The trade that I was looking for was to be heating, ventilating, air conditioning. Because I knew that was going to be very prosperous in Texas. And a depression in 1950, which was when I graduated, a recession I should say. So I sent out my resumes to see what I could find. I got offers from G.E., Westinghouse, and Boeing. G.E. being the biggest, Westinghouse being the least, but my wife lived in Seattle so hey -- picked Boeing. That was also a good move.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh yes, oh yes without that I would not have been able to do it. The G.I. Bill was my salvation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That made a big difference in our country later on because a lot of people in the service were able to get a college education.

Mr. Belvin:

Yes, and the thing is with Boeing right now is that I have a granddaughter who joined the Navy to get that education. And they promised it to her and so forth like that. But six months after she was on active duty they re-nigged. They withdrew the offer. So she's going serve out her time and not get a chance to get the formal education she was looking for. That was kind of nasty.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Belvin:

I did, one of them in Sasebo. Sasebo was pretty much just destroyed with a hundred pound bombs. And the gun factory was -- occupied a huge city block. And it was destroyed with the..., they had guns there so I brought back a rifle that was made by the Japanese. I gave that to my grandson and said, "Boy that's my favorite treasures." He loves it. He likes to shoot guns anyhow. Although it's not safe to shoot that one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any other souvenirs?

Mr. Belvin:

Uh no. That was about the only souvenir I really brought back. I wanted to bring back, an outrigger canoe but, a small wood carved outrigger canoe that one of the natives made back on Tongatapu. I bought it from him. And when I left the ship there was no way I could bring it back. So I left it on the ship thinking I would cross trails with the ship again. I never did cross that trail.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Belvin:

Pardon? No, I saw a, that's not right. I saw a, one with a....

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bob Hope?

Mr. Belvin:

Bob Hope, yeah. And we were in Manus for that one. And that was very interesting. Because he did a good job. He did a good job and everybody liked it; it was a tremendous number of people there to see it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Belvin:

Not for the pleasantries. The Red Cross they'd come in and okay they would have a cup of coffee for you, but they'd want you pay for the cup of coffee. One time I was appointed to go around and encourage people to give donations to the, to a combined charity of funding included bulk of it going to the Red Cross, and I was rather amazed that people who were veterans at Boeing says, "No thank you, remove Red Cross and I'll donate." And that's the way I felt.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Belvin:

I did as far as when I was on the Dobbin. But when I left the Dobbin the regularity disappeared. It was sporadic.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear of Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh yeah. Oh yes. That was kind of laughable matter with Tokyo Rose. But there was no problem being able to listen to it, go by the radio shack and usually had it tuned in. If you're in there you could listen to it for a while.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I hear she played good music.

Mr. Belvin:

Ah, yes it was good music but it was really pathetic anyway. It was all geared to negative of course, things like that. I don't see how she could win anybody over with the dialogue that she had, I don't know of anybody that thought positive about anything she said.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you crossed the equator did you have any kind of ceremony then?

Mr. Belvin:

Oh yes, yeah, yeah. We crossed the equator back when we left Hawaii and went down to Samoa. I got my Shellback card there. Then of course future ships we didn't have a chance to, we did not cross the equator again, so I did not get a chance to initiate others.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now we're talking about when you crossed the equator, your ceremony you had there.

Mr. Belvin:

We had a ceremony when we crossed the equator, when you finished you were a shellback. They had made a pool of water on the deck out of canvas. When you went through that and came out you had to go through a line of belts when they were spanking you. That was the physical portion of it. Which was rather interesting. Remember we said that they would do some of the people like one of the Ensigns was a new guy so they had him dressed up in a diver suit up on the bow with a pair of water nozzles, those water nozzles. So his job was to keep an eye open for King Neptune and his bride. There was a lot of interesting things going on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Belvin:

Not at all. Not at all. It was a..., it was going to school first which was very demanding for me. And that took care of all that. So then when I went to work at Boeing, the workaholic portion of me..., I was a workaholic because of the history of my schooling. And still doing some other studying even while I was at Boeing, courtesy of Boeing. Because..., okay I guess there's not much I can say, just not remembering very much right there that I can point to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of anybody from World War II?

Mr. Belvin:

Well yes, I found, I found reunions for my old ship which was the Dobbin and besides the destroyers that were along side, they have reunions every year. And they were huge when I first discovered it. Those back in the seventies. It was like you were looking for some place to ...,

that would hold up like a couple of hundred rooms. Two to three hundred rooms because you had like five or six hundred people. And so everybody was anxious to get the opportunity to have you there for your reunion. It was nice. Then gradually it fell off and I hosted the reunion a number of times in Seattle. And last time I did that there was only a dozen people from the ships that I, my ship had about nine hundred people on it. And each of the destroyers had about three hundred and fifty, there were five destroyers. So there was a huge number of people that were eligible to come, plus the people that the ships that were not sunk during the war. Because there was, they were still having new people coming aboard. But it dropped down to only eleven people and the last time I went to a reunion there was only five from my ship. There was family yes, but only five sailors there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many people in the crew on the Dobbin?

Mr. Belvin:

We had about, let's say about nine hundred crew.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Nine hundred, okay. Good size crew then.

Mr. Belvin:

Yes it was a big crew because we had everything in it, we had foundry, we had everything on there. So like I say one of the first jobs I had was making firing pins for the torpedoes.

That was when the submarines would shoot at you, torpedo they would hit the ship and not explode. Use another torpedo at the wake of the ship and it would explode and everybody knew that they were there. Not very profitable for submarines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to during World War II?

Mr. Belvin:

During World War II my highest rank was Machinist Mate First Class.

That what it was, I left the Navy as an enlisted person. I turned down Chief twice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In total, what was the highest rank you got to at any time?

Mr. Belvin:

That would be a Lieutenant, full Lieutenant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Belvin:

A/P, World War II Victory, American Defense, G.C., American Campaign and a few more.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went to Japan, when did you get to Japan?

Mr. Belvin:

That was, we went to Sasebo, that's where the ship..., I picked up an inventory at Sasebo. That was November of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you there?

Mr. Belvin:

I was there for about a little over a month.

Mr. Misenhimer:

One month, okay. What else do you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Belvin:

Well when we were in Shanghai, had these rickshaws that would bring you from place to place as a taxi. And we had one of the guys that's on the ships was a golden gloves kind of a person. It was always nice to have him with you when you go on some of these trips, especially when you're going down dark alleys, no lights. You don't know whether you're going to get bushwhacked or to your destination. We always managed to get there, we got there with no trouble but it was rather interesting, some occasions. Cause you figured you weren't going make it. And that you were for sure going to get bushwhacked, but that never really happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see that sign, "Kilroy was here?"

Mr. Belvin:

Ah yes as a matter of fact. One of my jobs with Boeing was to run a test on the KC-135 which is the early version of the 707. And it was decreed that it was to be underwater because of the energy that was contained in the pressurized vessel in case it would fail. So we did it underwater and I used buoyancy tanks, pumping water out of the tanks to carry the upload to the floors on the inside of the airplane. And it just, other floating systems they had planned for it. And one of the workers who was also a veteran drew the little logo, "Kilroy was here" on one of the buoyancy tanks. And that was rather interesting. I got pictures of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from World War II?

Mr. Belvin:

Well nothing of real note worthiness that was military in nature I can speak of yet. Last fall I took my family, and sons and daughters and their spouses to San Diego for the reunion of my brother's ship, which was the Hoel. And along with escorts, Hoel, and the other ships that sank, boats and so forth like that. That were involved in the second battle of the Philippines when Halsey deserted his post and left it exposed for the Japanese to come in and defeat MacArthur's landing. And I'm sure you know all about that. If not, I'll be happy to bend your ear a little bit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, that left them exposed down there at Leyte.

Mr. Belvin:

Yes. Anyway this is a reunion of first time ever of having all the carriers, the carriers there were represented and the ships were represented. And that was like about six hundred people. And we had a reunion on the Midway itself and as well as the hotel. And talking to some of those people, getting their stories, very, very, very interesting. Five people left at that time that were on the ship that my brother was on. They had suffered the most casualties of all the ships. And

three of those have passed, now there's only two left. You know people my age are falling pretty fast. Well I guess then I'm done.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well thanks again for your time today and for your service to our country.

Mr. Belvin:

Well thank you for taking the interview and also for the 861 interviews before, that's remarkable.

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