

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

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

An Interview with

**John J. "Jack" Steele, Jr.
Peachtree City, Georgia**

June 11, 2015

**Medical Training
X-Ray Technician**

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is June 11, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. John J. Steele, Jr. by telephone. His phone number is 770-631-0870. His address is 54 Dover Trail, Peachtree City, Georgia, 30269. 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.

His alternate contact is his daughter, Cyndi High, who lives in Austin, Texas. Her phone number is 512-627-4616.

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

Mr. Steele:

Well it was easy time for me, I'll tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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.

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah. I just wondered why you seemed to concentrate on Pacific and the war went through a lot further than that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well the museum itself is dedicated to the Pacific War, but our oral history program here we do Europe, we do Pacific, we do home front, we do anything related to World War II.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So the museum itself, yeah the museum itself is Pacific but the oral history where I am is everything. Now what is your birthdate?

Mr. Steele:

11-28-22.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Steele:

I was born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Steele:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay you're an only child?

Mr. Steele:

Uh-huh.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your mother's first name and your dad's first name?

Mr. Steele:

Well my mother's first name was Olive, O-l-i-v-e. And my father was a John. I was a Junior.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay you're a Junior. Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Steele:

We didn't have too much trouble. My father worked with the Railway Express Company and he had a job all the way through it. He started working for them somewhere in, I would say right after World War I. Yeah World War I. And they tried to put him in the Army near the end of it

and they found out his feet were too flat. So he got rejected.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Steele:

It was a technical school, called Mechanic Arts High School in Boston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In Boston, okay. And what year did you graduate there?

Mr. Steele:

1939.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you do when you graduated?

Mr. Steele:

Well I was only, I graduated at the age of sixteen. So I was kind of young and there wasn't any jobs around especially because in 1939 the country was just coming out of a depression. And my aunt had a couple of sons that were probably ten years older than I and they ran a trucking company. She was the owner because her husband had died in '36. And she and her daughter, who'd just divorced, and a relative of my aunt, on her husband's side, decided that they wanted to drive across country to go to see some relatives that were in San Diego and L.A. And they needed a driver and I was seventeen and I got my license a couple of months before they wanted to go. And I was their chauffeur. Spent three months going over on that trip and it started at, just after New Year's and we got back late in March.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And that was in 1940?

Mr. Steele:

Ah, 1940.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of car were you driving?

Mr. Steele:

'38 Dodge, four-door sedan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did it make it okay?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, no trouble at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, good.

Mr. Steele:

I can't tell you how many miles we put on it, but it had about seven or eight thousand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you stay at night?

Mr. Steele:

Now the daughter, that had just got divorced and we're taking on this trip, was working for a, let's see what do you call it, a real estate person. And they had some reason to have a contact with hotels so that the, I think there was a travel bureau in with this real estate and they sent her on a trip with us. And they found out the route she was taking and they had hotels for us all the way over and after we were there. We did pretty good, she got reduced rates or the company took care of the motel bill. That worked good for us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I don't think there were any motels back in those days.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah there was a few, I can remember staying at some of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah but most of them came along after that, right.

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah well we..., when it got to be five o'clock on the run we kept an eye out for a place to

stay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what did you do when you got back from that?

Mr. Steele:

Well after that I was, like I say I had turned seventeen and was eighteen and I had an uncle that lived in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. And he had helped me interview at an industrial plant called Tast Pierce. And he knew somebody in there and it took a little while but I got the job in September of '40. And they took me in there, my high school had trained me to be a machinist. So I got the job and then actually they put me in the grinding department, precision grinding. And I did that and it was what, it was during war, tooling at that time. Well I worked for them until, oh the September of '42. When I put in a request for a job at the Watertown, Allston, which was a town outside of Boston. And I went to work for them in September of '42. I worked for them for five months and again I was still doing grinding. And they got a girl come in and do my job and they drafted me. So I went in the service on February 10th of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on that first job you had what was your income, what was your salary?

Mr. Steele:

About between fifteen and twenty dollars, well I was getting more than that because I was working twelve hour days, six days a week. So I would say my income was thirty-five, something like that a week.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Something like fifty cents an hour?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, I started out at something like thirty-eight, forty cents an hour. By the time I was up to fifty, fifty-five cents an hour.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you went in the service, were you drafted?

Mr. Steele:

Yes. Well they took me away from the, I was doing war work, but they got a girl to replace me and that ended that, then they turned my number in and I got drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What branch did you go into?

Mr. Steele:

What do you mean by that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well the Air Corps, or the Army, Navy?

Mr. Steele:

Oh, when I went in I didn't have any idea where they were gonna put me. I went in to Fort Devens as a staging place, spent about a week there. They supplied me with all the shots and they gave me uniforms and all that. And my first day I was up there it was thirty degrees below zero. Yeah, happy days. So I stayed there about a week and then they put us on a troop train. Didn't tell us where we were going or anything else. And four days later I was in St. Petersburg for basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip down there?

Mr. Steele:

It was interesting. They had those coaches that you could fold down the seats, or the back I mean. And you could stretch out a little bit and that's how you slept. And they had a mess car on there and you went through it like you was, well it was a cafeteria. And you got your meals on the train. We had no idea, all we knew was we were heading south. And just like I say we ended up in St. Petersburg and spent three months in St. Petersburg, basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that basic training, what all did you do in basic training?

Mr. Steele:

Mainly, mainly they got us up at six and seven o'clock mess and then from there we marched down to one of the parks where they had taken over the field. And we had schooling and then they had..., they more or less did a lot of physical training, we were running obstacle courses. And then we had the classes – was things that we could expect in the Army. Even though they told us we were a medical unit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, medical.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were some of the classes you had, what did you study?

Mr. Steele:

Oh, they did the whole Army bit. I mean the use of fire arms and what the whole idea of the Army was to do. When I went through the medical training, no it was examination, when I first was inducted there was probably sixty or seventy of us being examined at the same time. And we did all the things we had to have – a little blood taken and we had all kinds of exams and some kind of a medical history and things like that. I got to the place where you had to have your eyes examined and I was wearing glasses, had been since the age of twelve. I sat down in the chair and they said, "Take your glasses off and read the chart." Well I told them I could see the top letter and I can probably make out the second thing down, and then it was a big whoop and hollering and laughter and all that stuff. And they yelling, "Hey we got another one!" They got a guy that was, you know educated in people's eyes and what glasses were good. He looks through my glasses and said, "Hey that guy not's lying." And that shut everybody up. We had a psychiatrist, I remember, and I think it took me all four hours to go through the thing. And they said they would be in touch with me, sent me home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And this is during basic?

Mr. Steele:

No this happened, I got a letter saying, "Greetings." And that you are to report to this armory in Boston for a physical, at something like eight o'clock in the morning. And so I did that. That's where I did it. And when I got through with that they just told me to go home and you'll be notified. And I was notified about a week later where I had to go and the funny part of that is I get down there where the rest of the guys are going to be sent to Devens and I was stuck with all the papers. I was acting Corporal. Oh, I was going to say that we got a train to Fort Devens and it took probably a couple of hours to get there. And like I say it was pretty..., they put us in barracks and we had to wrap up our civilian clothes after they – of course after they gave us our uniforms. Of course they give you shoes to hat, the whole thing. And they gave us winter underwear, thank God cause we, the temperature was a little bit cold there. I think they interrogated us there again and we were in the medical unit. That was when they decided that we were going to do our basic down in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So this eye exam was before you went to St. Pete?

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah that was the first thing they did. The initial exam.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On February the 10th of '43 is when you actually went in to go down to St.

Mr. Steele:

That was the day I was sworn in. That happened right after the medical exam that I took initially.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah they called you back in.

Mr. Steele:

They just had to do the paperwork and get things straightened out before they, you know go with them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now down in basic you said you had some kind of weapons' training. What weapons did you train on?

Mr. Steele:

They took us to the fire range where we had these Springfield rifle and they actually let us fire a Thompson machine gun. And that was the only time I had a gun in my hand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you grew up had you done any hunting or used a gun at all?

Mr. Steele:

No, never.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So this was your first experience?

Mr. Steele:

No, no you know you go to a place where they have roller coasters and all that stuff. My dad and I, I fired a gun at a shooting gallery. And that was it. I didn't do nothing, I still don't do hunting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything particular happen in the boot camp, I mean basic training there?

Mr. Steele:

Just the fact that we knew that some of the baseball teams were doing their spring training same time we were. We never got a chance to see them. That's about all, temperature was, oh it was, I'm glad there wasn't any hotter because it was pretty warm, I'll just put it that way. St.

Petersburg can get pretty warm in the summer. But I was lucky enough so that I was there last part of..., well I would say probably the last week of February. I was down there and I had my training about the last, near the end of May I got through that. It seems the thing that they did, they took us up and put us -- having another oral exam. Wanted to know our background of what we had done in our lives so they could know where to put us because they had four or five

different classifications. And come to find out I'd, with my father, we had started a darkroom and done photography because when I was in high school I learned about twenty trades and mainly machine shop. And so he and I kind of liked the idea because you could improve them in the darkroom everything we did photography, you might call. And that was my basic, so they said, "Oh," he says, "You qualify to be an x-ray technician." When we got through they bound us all up and they shipped us out. And I had to go to Atlanta to Lawson General Hospital and I was trained there for three months as an x-ray technician. That's how I learned to do that. So that brought me up into, beginning of September, somewhere in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

September, the fall of '43, right.

Mr. Steele:

What I did there, when they asked me, well he says you were pretty well, pretty near the top of your class, he says we kind go by the guys that do the best, that I give them a chance to pick where they were to go. Of course I never knew at the time that I was restricted to non-combat duty because of my eyes. I guess they were afraid I'd shoot my own people, if I lost my glasses. So anyway, I got the x-ray thing and I would do it. I said I'd like to go to Westover, Mass. because that would be kind of near family's location. I'd get shipped otherwise, I could visit them for a little bit or something like that if I had some time off. And he says, "I'm sorry," he says, "that's a shipping place for people going overseas, cause that's aircraft." And we were considered the, when we come up for some reason they had put us in the Army Air Corps, Air Corps, and I don't know why we got the Army Air Corps. But anyway they said the best thing for you to do because of how you're record and something, he says to go, we've got an opening in Miami Beach and that's the training place for the cadets for, they're doing their basic before they go out to learn how to fly. So we shipped down there and I worked in x-ray. I was there until September of ..., let's see, stop and think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

September '44?

Mr. Steele:

September of '44 I think it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About a year?

Mr. Steele:

A little over a year, no it couldn't have been, it's got to be longer than that. I got there in '43....

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well in '43 you were drafted in February.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah and then I was, it was September. I got married in September of '44 and I was still there.

No, August 3rd was when I got married. Because I met a WAC who was taking the WAC recruits over to be x-rayed. And circumstances, we liked each other and a year later I married her. And let's see I think it was

Mr. Misenhimer:

You got married in August of '44?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah and I. ...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got married where were you stationed, were you at Miami Beach then?

Mr. Steele:

We were married at the hotel right on Miami Beach. And she shipped out because she wanted to do a little more, because she was always recruiting, was doing her bit so she shipped out to Charleston, South Carolina to start being a clerk typist. Anyway she was in Charleston, South Carolina. Gee let's see that's '44, the end of '44 they decided to downsize the x-ray department so I get shipped to Homestead base and that was what – thirty-five miles south of Miami. And I stayed there awhile and let's see, these dates are kind of getting to me. Yeah '45, it was '45 when I shipped out of there and went down to Homestead, September of '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After the war?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, it had just about ended that time. We got in to, I think I was down there and VJ Day happened while I was there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

VJ Day was August 15 of '45.

Mr. Steele:

Well I was already there. So back me up a little bit. And so anyway, in September of '45 I got out of there. Alright let's say VJ Day, I was shipped out of Miami sometime in August, probably the early part down to Homestead. I got to Homestead – they didn't have any x-ray thing, service personnel. And it was a kind of a small base and they just had a clinic. Did have an x-ray machine, so I did that for, oh I would say I got there near the end of August somewhere in there. I think I probably got shipped to Homestead in the last part of September. I stayed there just long enough, then they started to downsize there and I was supposed to be, I was sent up to Greensboro as a, and they, well they had a pool. I got shipped up to there and then I was in that pool and within a week I was on a train to California. They shipped me all the way to Mather in Sacramento. I was in a pool there, because of when I first went to Homestead they thought of shipping me down to the Caribbean, said they had bases down there, but they were shutting down. So they decided they didn't need me, so that's when I went to Greensboro to get in the pool. And then I get to California because I was supposed to go to the CBI and that broke down because of the downsizing and they shipped me up to Michigan to Detroit. Stayed there a couple of weeks and that one went down, they were downsizing. So they sent me to Greiner Field in Manchester, New Hampshire. And that was another pool, I was supposed to go to Iceland. So they shut that down and they shipped me to Washington, D.C. at National Airport. I stayed there until the last part of January and then I went back to Greensboro and they said I got discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In January of '46?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have a date?

Mr. Steele:

Actually it was, yeah it was February 2nd I think, 1st or 2nd, somewhere in there. My wife was already out of the service, so I come out on a train, went to meet her at her home in New Orleans.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now let me back up, you got me a little confused there.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, I got confused myself.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, there from Homestead you went to where first?

Mr. Steele:

Homestead.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go to California?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then from California went to where?

Mr. Steele:

Detroit, Michigan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you in California?

Mr. Steele:

Oh, a couple of weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Two weeks is all, uh?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah. And Detroit was probably two or three weeks. And then Manchester, that was probably two or three weeks. And I got down to Washington, D.C. and I stayed there probably five or six weeks. By that time I was ..., they said I had enough points to get out, so they sent me up to Greensboro and from there it took about four or five days to discharge me out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now let me go back and ask you a couple of questions. In basic training were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Steele:

That was funny. When we got to..., they had privates doing the training that was in charge of it, but they had officers doing the actual schooling, because we just sat in a semicircle on the – where they had the diamond laid out on the field. And he would, he had kind of a portable blackboard that he would write things that he was trying to teach us, as a matter of fact, I don't remember too much of what they taught us, it was basic things about being in the service. And I don't know, they might have had some medical training in there because we were going to be a medical outfit and we didn't know who was going to do what. So I imagine it was just more general stuff just so you know they give us some thoughts about etiquette, like we had to salute an officer and all this stuff and how to personal, taking care of our looks and respect for other people and all this stuff. They were thorough, they went through the whole thing. That help any?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, sure, that's good.

Mr. Steele:

You know everyday at five o'clock we had to run the obstacle course was in the, they had built it

on the section of the beach. And of course we had been, we had to march back and forth from the hotel down to this field everyday. And back again for lunch mess, I guess you'd call it. Then we went back and we did some more training of this and that. They ran us and they kept us moving, in other words they were trying to build up our physical skills. Well some of the guys had a pretty tough time of going through it because it was rigorous. And then we did this, we were down at the beach and the sand dunes that they had and they had built an obstacle course in there and it was probably a, oh one mile, a mile; it was shaped like a big "u" and you had to jump over things and they had walls that we had to climb over, you know, you had to run fast enough to jump up high enough and get the rope and get yourself over the top. And they had somebody watch you so you couldn't go around. And then after that we went down to the, went back to the hotel because we ate our meals there and then we were free after that. But that's the only time, the only place I ever had that I had four different kinds of beans at the same meal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on your obstacle course, did you have that place where you crawled under the machine guns shooting across you?

Mr. Steele:

No, no we didn't do that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't do that.

Mr. Steele:

They figured medics didn't need that. As a matter of fact we did do a little crawling but there was no machine guns or anything. We never saw any other guns except sometime, the one morning they took us over the firing range they had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April the 12th, 1945 President Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah. Yeah we heard about that. That was..., I can remember hearing, because we had

radios, like that. We generally heard the news. We could so much keep track of what was going on and we sure felt sorry for some of the guys that were doing things that they had to do to, all I had was a job from eight to five and the rest of my time was mine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Steele:

Oh, everybody had..., he was, he was greatly liked I'll tell you. Probably should say loved.

The guys didn't cry but I saw, I saw a lot of, a lot of newsreels and stuff like that and people were crying.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Actually he was the only president most people had known.

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah, yeah. Because he was, he went from '32 until '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right.

Mr. Steele:

That's a long time for a president, no one has done that much time since.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right, right.

Mr. Steele:

They only give you eight years now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, we were up on all the news daily. We never had any problems at all with that. In fact, when I was in Homestead being the only x-ray technician, I was on call seven days, twenty-four hours a day. I'd go to the movies and they'd call me out of there, because I had to go and take

somebody's picture.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you heard about Germany's surrender, have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Steele:

Not really, it was, not a really kind of a regular day. I was probably C. Q. that night, I got stuck with that at the Homestead hospital quite a bit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Steele:

That was, we heard it over the news. It was a surprise, it wasn't, everybody was kind of happy about that. Of course we didn't realize how bad it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then August the 15th of '45 when Japan surrendered, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Steele:

No it was just like the other one, we were stuck working on the base, you doing your job all the time, everybody talked about it and was happy and things like that. Whoopee and that stuff, but I can't say that we did any big celebrating. But there was a hell of a lot of talk, I know that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the work you did on people, were any of these wounded coming back from overseas?

Mr. Steele:

No, I more or less took care of the civilian part of it. I took their x-rays getting into, when they got into the service and then what they needed if they happen to come to the hospital. Now my wife did, she was at that hospital in Charleston and she was getting all the wounded coming back from overseas. She remarked that it was, it was pretty drastic in some cases.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your daughter told me that you could tell me about some of your wife's experiences. And incidentally I'm sorry to hear she passed away a couple of years ago.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah she, September 25, 2013. She was ninety-one. Well I had her for almost seventy years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that your wife did during the service, do you know?

Mr. Steele:

Like I say, she was at the Miami Post Office a good two years, yeah maybe just over two years I would say. But she got in the service, ah let's see, her birthday is in May. In May of '43 she turned twenty-one that date. And she went down and, because you had to be twenty-one to get in and she turned twenty-one and she went down to the recruiter and signed up. She did her basic at Oglethorpe that's up by Chattanooga. And she spent, well she went to Atlanta and she did some, she was taught what they required of her being a recruiter. She was kind of a pretty girl, I guess they picked the pretty ones to make a good showing. And she got through with that, her basic and stuff. And she went to the post office in Miami and she stayed there until..., let's see we got married in August, I think she left, I think it was June '44 that she, yeah I think it was in June of '44 that she got transferred up to Charleston, South Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And was she a nurse in the hospital or what did she do in the hospital?

Mr. Steele:

She was a clerk typist, she did all the..., took care of all the orders and things like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So she didn't actually work on.....

Mr. Steele:

Shipping them to different hospitals and things and keeping their records straight for when they came in off the boats.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So she didn't actually work on the patients then?

Mr. Steele:

Oh she spent a lot of time in the wards and her spare time up in the wards.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Talking with them.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, talking with them. She collected, she collected you know the lapel buttons that we had, they were your insignia. And she'd go up there and she'd talk to them and she bummed their insignia off them. Cause she really collected them. Then when she got home she took them all and she put them all along with chevrons and shoulder patches on an army blanket, sewed them all on. And it made quite a blanket.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was her name, what was your wife's name?

Mr. Steele:

Her name, her first name was Marie, with a nickname of Tootsie, T-o-o-t-s-i-e. And her maiden name was Loisel, L-o-i-s-e-l. And a course she became a Steele.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that maiden name?

Mr. Steele:

L-o-i-s-e-l. French, the French pronunciation was Loizel. She went by the American. All of our daughters' middle names is either Marie or Louise. Cause that's my wife's middle name, she was Marie Louise Loisel and all six daughters have either the Marie or the Louise in their middle name.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in your outfit how was the morale?

Mr. Steele:

We were all stateside and it was just like it was as if you were working in a regular job. People crabbed you know and some don't. They try to keep up on what was going on in the war and stuff like that. They discussed that a little bit and you know you don't, you got a job to do, eight

to five, and then you have your family or whatever. And we got off at five, ate our dinner and we were free to do what we want and we didn't have to ask for a pass. We could go where we wanted to. Just like you were at home, do anything you want.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you were on call a lot of times for twenty-four hours though, uh?

Mr. Steele:

Well that's the only place I got stuck for that was down in Homestead, because I was the only one that knew how to run the x-ray machine. And I got called for, hell I take care of civilians that were family of the guys that were married.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get out of the service with any souvenirs?

Mr. Steele:

No. No souvenirs. Just me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well you got a wife.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah I got a wife, yeah. That was a pretty good souvenir. Yeah I kept her around for almost seventy years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Steele:

We did in Miami. The wife and I, because we used to, you know we used to do, we had Saturdays and Sundays off because that's, there was nothing we could do on those days so we'd go to jai alai games, we'd go to the dog races, we'd go to the horse races, we spent a hell of a lot of time on Miami Beach. I'd go swimming in the surf down there, oh weather was great and you could almost go swimming almost year round, except a few cold days. And of course all these other things we could do and we used to go to the horse races, dog races and the

jai alai games. You could bet on all the same ways, you had win, place, and show. And we really get, you know pretty happy and have two dollar bets. Sixty-six dollars a month doesn't go very far.

(End of side 1 of tape)

(Begin side 2 of tape)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Steele:

No, the only thing we did with the Red Cross was every time that I was doing these trips that I had to go on around the country, when they transferred me around. When they do that you're..., I was on overseas orders specifically. And when you got overseas orders you get a delay en route for ten days sometimes, up to two weeks. And all I had to do was get in touch with the Red Cross and they would verify the fact that I was on oversea orders. And my wife would get the same time off and whatever money we collected, well she spent on traveling. We'd go to her place or down in New Orleans or we'd go up to my place in the Boston area. So I guess I worked that deal for about three or four times. That was the only dealing I had with the Red Cross.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was your wife from?

Mr. Steele:

New Orleans.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got out did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Steele:

No. My Army was like civilian life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah, I bought our first house.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't use it to go to school or anything?

Mr. Steele:

No, my wife was pregnant with a kid and I had to go out and earn some money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what outfit were you in, what unit or what outfit?

Mr. Steele:

There was no name, just US Army Air Force. Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

USAAC.

Mr. Steele:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And as far as being a certain hospital unit or anything like that?

Mr. Steele:

It was a regional hospital in Coral Gables was our headquarters. I don't know what, when I was at Homestead that was a training, a training on B-24 bombers that was what the, that was what the unit was called, because they were teaching them. You know them things they'd take off and fly right over our barracks -- me trying to sleep. That didn't work out too well. But I didn't have any special unit other than the US Army Air Corps Medical Units. I guess we were just one big pool of medical people. Unless you were overseas I don't think you were attached or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Steele:

No. There were no reunions. There was something like ten guys in the x-ray department and

that's all I knew.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you keep up with anybody after you got out?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, cause my roommate when I was in Miami became my best friend. And his wife worked with my wife in the Post Office. He met her because we both, we used to go over to see them and they got married, they were an older couple.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Steele:

Good Conduct and the American Service and nothing else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Steele:

They gave me a Corporal rank when I came out of basic training. And well that bouncing around, I never was on the units long enough for them to give me any more stripes. And I wasn't interested in getting anymore because I was going to get out when the time came.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your worst day or your worst time when you were in the service?

Mr. Steele:

I don't think I had any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Didn't have any, uh?

Mr. Steele:

No. Like I say it was like I had a civilian job.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Steele:

Mostly, mostly good because they're, all the guys that I had over me were doctors. And they were only there to do their service and they were, they're pretty easy, they just got along, well the rank didn't count too much because we were medics at that and you can't be doing something doing everything all your own, you just gotta be people. Pretty much to it. I said I told you there wasn't gonna be too much of my service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, no sir you had an interesting time.

Mr. Steele:

If I didn't do it, somebody else would have to do it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right, everybody's job was important.

Mr. Steele:

Doesn't seem like..., kind of sounds kind of overstated, but I guess it's pretty much the truth.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah it takes like ten people for every one overseas in combat, something like that.

Mr. Steele:

True, because they need you or you're doing something for them. I never cooked a meal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No KP, uh?

Mr. Steele:

Oh yeah I had KP. But that was the reason they gave us, the Corporals, two stripes was so we could avoid it because they generally didn't ask non-coms to do any KP.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do in civilian life?

Mr. Steele:

I went to work for Northeast Airlines. They were acquired by Delta Airlines. I had thirty-one

years with them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you retired from Delta at thirty-one years?

Mr. Steele:

Yeah, see I had the first fifteen with Northeast Airlines but when Delta took over they all like counted as part of my retirement.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was your job with Delta?

Mr. Steele:

I started out, mainly I was setting up the grinding department and the machine shop. I was a machinist mechanic, I ended up as a crew chief.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't make use of your medical training in the Army then?

Mr. Steele:

No, no. X-ray technicians when I got out of the service -- it was not enough salary to raise a family on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well that's all the questions I have for you, unless you've thought of something else.

Mr. Steele:

Like I say I married her in '44 and she left me in '13. Well I had her for a good long time and we enjoyed our kids and all my kids get along good. In fact the matter is they still get a reduction in cost to fly. But my youngest, well I'll start with the oldest. My oldest went to college and she became a medical technician who has a Bachelor's degree in it. My second one was a school teacher and she got her bachelor's degree and she spent most of her life teaching. The third one got an associate's degree and then some night school after that, and she ended up as a vice-president of Comcast. And see the fourth one she went to school and also she became a Doctor of Education, so she did well. And let's see, the fifth one owns an accounting business

and she has something like ten or twelve employees, she's doing pretty good. And the last one has a degree in aviation business and also a degree in nursing, she's an R.N. All my kids did very well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah they did, sounds good. Well Jack thank you again for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Steele:

Back at you.

(End of interview)

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