

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Lawrence F. Huet
College Station, Texas
August 11, 2015
USS Bunker Hill CV-17

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is August 11, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. Lawrence F. Huet by telephone. His phone number is 979-690-6774. His address is 1623 Deer Park Drive, College Station, Texas, 77845. 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.

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

Mr. Huet:

Okay.

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. Huet:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I need to do is to 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. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact if we needed to, to find you?

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, uh-huh.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a son or a daughter or someone so we can find you?

Mr. Huet:

I have a son.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's his name?

Mr. Huet:

Robert.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Huet:

979-690-1812.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Does he live there in College Station?

Mr. Huet:

Yes, uh-huh. In fact we all live out here on ten acres.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hopefully we'll never need that, but you never know. Now what is your birthdate?

Mr. Huet:

10/03/24.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Huet:

In McCook, Nebraska. M-c-C-o-o-k.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, I had two sisters and one brother that are all passed away.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was your brother in World War II?

Mr. Huet:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Huet:

Otto, O-t-t-o, Otto. And her name was Bessie, B-e-s-s-i-e.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Very good, thank you. Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Huet:

You mean back

Mr. Misenhimer:

In '29, '30, along in there, the late '20s, '29, '30s, the depression.

Mr. Huet:

Oh, it was something else. Yeah it was something else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you live on a farm or in town?

Mr. Huet:

We lived in town. One time my mother taught me how to cut cardboard and put it down in my shoes so I wouldn't get stickers. So it was something else back in those days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a garden or anything?

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah we had a garden. We had, both my parents had six or eight brothers and sisters. And then they got married and we aunts and uncles all over the place and a lot of them were out in the country and the farms. And they would bring us in vegetables and once in a while a chicken to

eat and what-not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's business or job? What did he do?

Mr. Huet:

Well, he worked for the railroad as a brakeman for awhile. And then he, to stay in town he took a job with a gasoline station, he delivered fuel oil around to the farmers and what-not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he able to keep working during the depression?

Mr. Huet:

Oh he worked all the time, yeah. He made \$50 a month, tried to raise four kids.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you got by somewhat then?

Mr. Huet:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go to high school?

Mr. Huet:

McCook, Nebraska.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when did you graduate from there?

Mr. Huet:

Linda just reminded me that I had a cousin that lived out in the country and he was a little older than I was, he was wanting to come to town to go to school. And they couldn't afford to send him in to town. So my folks and his folks decided they'd just trade kids. So I went out to the country and went to a little country school, lived with them. While he come to town, lived with my folks and went to school. How about that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

You did what you had to do.

Mr. Huet:

So I stayed out there through the eighth grade and then after the eighth grade I was able to come back to town, to school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So what year did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Huet:

I didn't really graduate. Me and my buddy, after Pearl Harbor, we dropped out of school and went down and joined the Navy. And then I later, after I got out, I got a GED.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now speaking of Pearl Harbor, December 7, '41 how did you hear about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Huet:

Oh I don't remember, I don't know. I guess it was the radio and what-not, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You would have been seventeen years old.

Mr. Huet:

Yep, I was seventeen when I went in. I've got this out, so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Huet:

Do you want me to give me my name and what-not?

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, you don't have to.

Mr. Huet: (Reading)

I was born in McCook, Nebraska on October the 3rd, 1924. I went to the McCook High School and after Pearl Harbor, a good friend of mine, Harold Day and I went down to the Navy

Recruiting Office and signed up. I was seventeen so I had to have my mother sign for me. I went in the service actually on December the 31st of 1942. I spent nine weeks at the Great Lakes, Illinois boot camp in Chicago. From there I was sent to Boston and assigned to the USS Bunker Hill, an aircraft carrier. My friend was sent to a destroyer. I reported aboard the new carrier on 5/24 of 1943. And I served until 6/6, June the 6th of 1944 on the Bunker Hill. My job was to be aircraft handler on the flight deck to help launch and receive aircraft. One of my jobs was to pull the chocks or the blocks from the wheels prior to takeoff. We went out into the Atlantic to practice a few days and then we went through the Panama Canal and out to the Pacific and meet up with the Japanese. Our first action in the Pacific was a strike against a place called Rabaul, apparently that was a hot spot of the Japanese. We carried right at one-hundred planes, we had Corsairs, fighter planes; SB2Cs were dive bombers; and TBF were torpedo planes. We would start launching planes about one hour before daylight. We tried to launch one plane every three minutes. We sent the planes to bomb Rabaul and the ship stayed back far enough that the planes had enough gas to get over there and come back to the ship. But when our planes came back the Japanese planes followed them to our ship. So they told our planes to stay up out of gun range as we were doing a zig-zag to keep from getting hit. The Japanese dove on us, they had wave after wave, they dove on us for an hour and three minutes. As our planes would run out of gas they would have to dive down and find a destroyer and light in the water. Then the destroyer would pick them up, of course the planes would sink immediately. We lost about one-half of our planes that day. But about two days later they flew new planes out to us. Then after this run at Rabaul I said a little prayer and I told God that if I lived through this war I would try my best to make a better living than we had during that depression. I never forgot that promise and I made it through the war with nine major battle stars. We got the Presidential Unit Citation and I got a personal recognition for something. So at night the Japanese would send a scout plane out looking for us. Then the next morning here they would come. So we had two fighter planes with radar. So we would put one of them up on the catapult and as soon as the ship's radar would pick it up we would send that fighter up to hopefully knock it down before it

could send in its location. The next morning we would know if it worked or not. After we would send the fighter up at night, then we would have to move all of the planes from the back of the flight deck to the front so that the fighter could land. Then as soon as he landed then we would have to move all of those planes back to the back and get them lined up to take off the next morning. Never a dull moment, I mean they kept us busy. They actually paid me a few extra dollars, they called it some kind of, hazardous duty pay, they called it hazardous duty pay, a few extra dollars. I saw two men..., we had a lot of action on the ship of course, so I'll just relay a few of them. I saw two men get blown into the props of a plane. Which was wasn't very nice. And then we had several accidents of planes, of course, over that period of time. One time we had a plane landed and he landed okay and the tail hook caught the cable and stopped him, but when he stopped the plane pulled apart right behind the cockpit. So all we had left was the tail section of the plane, rest of it turned around and went off over the side. So that was just one of the little accidents. And then we had of course a lot of minor mishaps with planes landing. We never had much problem with them taking off, sure had a lot with landings. Then I got a lot of information, I have a copy of my service records from all the time I was in the service. So during this time, of course on November the 11th of '43 is when we had that problem with Rabaul. And then on November the 18th we were involved in the capture and the occupation of the Gilbert Islands, Tarawa, Makin. December the 8th we had strikes against Mauru Island. On December the 25th through January the 4th we had regular strikes against Kavieng, K-a-v-i-e-n-g. On January the 29th of '44 through February the 8th we were involved in the capture and the occupation of the Marshall Islands, where eventually I wound up for a few weeks on the Marshall Islands, I'll get into that a little later. On February the 16th to the 17th we had strikes against the Truk, Caroline Islands. February the 22nd we had strikes against Tinian, Saipan, and Marcus Islands. March the 30th through the 31st we had strikes against Palau and Yap. Now mind you in all these actions we also had Japanese out there diving on us periodically. On April the 1st we attacked Woleai, Caroline Islands. A lot of these are kind of hard to pronounce. On April the 21st till the 27th we had a strike against Hollandia and Wake,

New Guinea, strikes against Truk and the Caroline Islands. Then after all of this I left the Bunker Hill on 6/6 of '44, June the 6th of '44, to go home on a thirty day leave. The ship promised to give us a petty officer rating if we would stay and not take our leave, but six of us elected to go ahead and take our leave, we thought we'd be crowding our luck if we didn't go. So they put us off on the Marshall Islands, they had just recently taken them over and the Army was occupying the Marshall Islands. So they put us off there and our orders read that our leave did not start until we got to the U.S. It was up to us to get back as best we could. Well it took us about two or three weeks to get a supply ship to agree to take us back. They didn't want to take passengers unless they were ordered to do so. So anyway, we finally eventually got a big old supply ship to agree to take us back. We got back to San Francisco and the six of us of course went to the train depot and got us tickets to go home for thirty days. At home I met this girl, Geneva Huet, Geneva Huntwork, and we dated for those thirty days quite a bit. And then the six of us met back in San Francisco. How are we to get back to the Bunker Hill? So we went over to the Navy base for help. And they said, "Well we don't even know where the Bunker Hill is." So they said, "I guess we could fly you out there someplace." And we said, "Oh no, oh no we'd been stuck on them islands before," we didn't want to do that. So they said that we could stay there and be reassigned. So we said okay we'd do that, we didn't have much choice anyway. So about two weeks we were assigned to a new light cruiser, the USS Flint, that's F-l-i-n-t, Flint. The Commander had an office there on the base so that he could pick his crew and get set. So the six of us went to see him. Now this is going to be kind of a funny story, I mean it's true but it's kind of funny too. But anyway, he looked up at us, the six of us were standing there and he looked up at us and he said, "Well I see they have assigned six of you airdales to me. I don't know what I'm going to do with six airdales on my ship." He says, "I bet you can't even tie a square knot." And I spoke up and I said, "Oh no, oh no we couldn't do that." He looked at me with a real dirty look you know. About that time the other guys kind of wisecracked off or something. And the Commander said, "You boys don't seem to have a very good attitude." He said, "We have about two weeks before we have to report aboard ship." He said, "I just think I'm going to

send you over to the Marine base and let them kind of straighten you boys out a little bit.” Yeah, oh my. So they took us off and went over to the Marines and the Marine he decided to really fix..., well we decided to screw up good. We got over there to the Marines, we thought we’d mess up good and that Commander won’t want us. So the Marine he had us shine our shoes and he had us all slicked up you know and then he took us out on to the parade field and lined us up there. And he stood back there and he hollered, “Attention!” And we just stood there, he said, “My God.” He said, “They must be deaf also.” He hollered, “Attention!” again and we still just stood there. So he come over there and chewed us out real good and lined us up. So he says, “Well let’s see if you can march.” So he hollers, “Left face!” Part of us turn left and the other part turned right. And he really came unglued you know. So he turned us around and he got us lined up. “See if you can march.” He took us out there and he started hollering, “Left, right, left, right.” We just kind of walked along. He says, “Alright let’s see if you can run, double time.” We still just walked. Well that Marine he messed with us. The second day he decided he couldn’t do much with us, so he made a note, sent us back to the commander with a note that said he was sorry he couldn’t do anything with us. And the Commander, he looked down there and read that note and looked up at us, he broke into a big smile. He said, “Well I know what you boys’ game is and it ain’t gonna work, you will report aboard my ship.” So needless to say we reported aboard his ship and really had pretty good service after that, I mean. But anyway that was quite an experience. So then aboard the Flint we participated in a number of carrier task forces in the different locations and I’ll just run through a few of them. On January the 3rd and January the 9th of ’45 we were at Formosa and Luzon. On January the 10th to the 12th we were at Saigon and bear in mind all the time we were at these places we usually had Japanese planes diving on us too. We were in CamRanh Bay, French Indo-China January the 13th through 16th of ’45. We were at the South China coast at Hong Kong, January the 16th Hong Kong, Hainan, Swatow-Amoy. Formosa was 17th through 21st of January. January the 25th we successfully repelled air attack off of us at Formosa. We shot down several airplanes, I don’t really have a count of them, but we had several. And then of course later on as you know we had a lot of

suicide planes out diving at us. On February the 16th and the 17th we participated in a number of carrier task forces and attacks on Tokyo. On February the 19th through March 9th we were the carriers' supports and the Marine operations on Iwo Jima. On February the 21st we repelled enemy aircraft off of Iwo Jima. So we kept busy, huh? March the 17th and March the 29th we participated in ground support for troops on Okinawa and other locations. A lot of times they would send us to all of these different locations prior to the Marines and the Army landings. We would go in and lay there for about three days and bombard that island in an attempt to drive the Japanese up into the hills prior to the Marines and Army landing, we did a lot of that kind of stuff. Then at one time, one of the suicide planes had hit a destroyer that was close by us, so we went over to stay alongside it with our fire hoses and we stayed with that destroyer all day long, helping it out. And we put our life boats out into the water to help pick up a lot of the men that had either been blown off or they abandoned ship. Anyway we had to help pick them up to get back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Huet:

When the war was over they sent the Flint into Tokyo Bay to clean out all of the floating mines. The Japanese were getting ready for the United States to land troops in Tokyo. So they put a lot of floating mines all over Tokyo Bay. And we spent three days going back and forth marking the mines with smoke bombs and then a destroyer followed along behind us and would blow up all those floating mines. This went on for three days after the war was over. I was discharged on January the 23rd of 1946. As soon as I got home, me and the gal that I met on leave went to the preacher's house and we got married. Of course we didn't have anything, so we packed a suitcase and we went down and got on a train. And we went to Denver, Colorado to look for jobs. And we got jobs alright and we lived in Denver for five years. Then I took a job with T.G. & Y. Stores in Oklahoma, managing stores. They would move me around about every two years until I became thirty-five years old. They sent me to Houston as supervisor of store

operations. We were in Houston little over twenty years. While we were in Houston my wife opened her own real estate office during the 1960's and 1970's. We were married for 64 years before she passed away. She passed away because of..., she lost her kidneys and had to go on dialysis. And I met Linda Parker and she had lost her husband from the same problem with kidney disease and he was on dialysis. And so the two of us got together and we have been together ever since. I have enjoyed a good life, I will turn 91 this year. And also, on October the 4th of 2014, which was last year, I got to make an honor flight to Washington, D.C. for two days. Boy, what a birthday that was. That was one great trip. Well this is just about going to have to wind up my story I think. So I'll sign off for now. Good luck to everybody. Thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, alright that's very good. Now I've got quite a few questions for you here. Let's go back to your boot camp, how was boot camp, were they pretty rough on you, how was that?

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, yeah, they give us a lot of training on how to stand watch. And one time when they had me..., they were training us to stand watch, guard duty on different posts you know. So one time they had me watching the latrine. And I had a little chair outside the door and I was sitting there guarding the latrine. And I went to sleep and they came by and caught me asleep. And oh my God you could never do anything any worse than go to sleep on watch. So they took me out on the parade field with a training rifle and I had to hold it up over my head and run around the race track several times. So they taught me not to ever go to sleep you know. But I mean it was just normal regular training in how to get along in the Navy you know. It was just basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what was the number of the Bunker Hill?

Mr. Huet:

CV-17.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And the Flint?

Mr. Huet:

Oh....

Mr. Misenhimer:

CL something.

Mr. Huet:

I'll have to look it up, I don't have it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay that's no problem, never mind. Now when you were on the Flint, no before that when you were on the Bunker Hill, what task force were you in?

Mr. Huet:

Golly you got me there, I don't know either. I'm sure it had a number, but I don't know what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Who was the Commander, was it Halsey or who? Halsey or Spruance or who was the Commander, do you know?

Mr. Huet:

I don't know, I don't know. Too long ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were some other carriers with you at that point?

Mr. Huet:

That was the only carrier that we had in our bunch.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Bunker Hill?

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, with the Bunker Hill. We had several destroyers around us and cruisers and a battleship.

You know we had several ships around us, but we didn't have any other carrier with us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were on the Flint, were you with carriers then also?

Mr. Huet:

Part of the time, yeah we with a carrier and I don't know which one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever come across the Bunker Hill when you were on the Flint?

Mr. Huet:

No, I really didn't. I really didn't. One thing, after we left, the six of us, left the Bunker Hill the very next time, POW! —they had a bomb exploded on the flight deck and I've got all that documented in my war book. And they had a bomb exploded on the flight deck and it killed two and seriously injured eighty. And then of course later the Bunker Hill was hit with two suicide planes, seriously damaged it and they had to take it in for repairs and they got it repaired and sent it back out. And these ships, after the war they had different reunions and I joined the reunions; I didn't because I was working and doing other things I wasn't able to actually make the reunions but I received all of their information and everything. And that's where I got a lot of information and we got pictures, I have pictures of the Bunker Hill getting hit and burning. I put together a war book, I call it my "war book." Got all my service records in it and its got pictures and stories and stories of what I did when I got out of the service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by Japanese kamikaze planes?

Mr. Huet:

Well, not directly on the Flint. But they, well I guess we did too. And they got shot down before they hit us. They never did hit us, like in my story there they hit one of the destroyers, a kamikaze did. And set it on fire and we had to go over and help it, I put all that in my story. But that was quite a problem when they came out with those things.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you at Okinawa?

Mr. Huet:

Probably three or four days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

This is before the invasion?

Mr. Huet:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were doing bombarding on the shore?

Mr. Huet:

Right, uh-huh. Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So the kamikazes weren't active there at that point?

Mr. Huet:

Well we didn't, no they were just diving on us, dropping bombs all around us. And we would kick that, they'd take that ship and get it to zig-zag and we had bombs hitting in the water on both sides of us. Luckily we didn't get hit. It was pretty wild out there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got that leave and you couldn't get back to the Bunker Hill, were you considered to be AWOL or anything like that?

Mr. Huet:

Oh no, no. We got back in time after our leave and then you know, no they didn't bother us and it ended up we went ahead and stayed there to get reassigned.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, you reported back and that was the main thing.

Mr. Huet:

Right, we reported back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then the fact that they couldn't do anything with you, that was their problem.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, well I don't think we were really expected to get back to the Bunker Hill. When they put us off on the Marshall Islands and sent us home on leave, I don't think they ever expected us to get back to it, it was difficult.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Huet:

Well most frightening time was that place on Rabaul when they dove on us so long and I was right up on the flight deck all during that bombing run that we had. That was pretty bad. And I failed to mention in the story too, one time we had, the Japanese sent a torpedo plane in toward the carrier and they came in real low so that the radar wouldn't pick it up. And the radar didn't pick it up till we could see the plane coming at us out there. And then they had a crew of about four or five on this torpedo plane and they came in real low and they dropped a torpedo at us. And that thing was headed, you could see the wake of it coming right us. Now that was pretty scary. And they turned the carrier right quick to the right and that torpedo went right past the back of it, just missed us. Then this Jap plane turned and went out towards to the front of the ship, thinking that, of course we had guns on the sides of the ship, well we also had a 40 millimeter gun mounted underneath the flight deck up at the front, _____ in the bow. And when that Jap plane got out up there in the front of us that 40 millimeter cut loose on him and knocked him down in the water. So then the crew piled out of that plane and got in rubber life raft. And then of course the Bunker Hill was moving toward it, just as a normal course. And those Japanese were in this life raft with their little pistols out there, and as we went by they were shooting up there at that aircraft carrier, you know. And of course their bullets were just bouncing off, but anyway they passed the word over the ship, "All hands, all hands, hold your fire, hold your fire, do not fire, hold your fire." And as we got past it the gunner with a 20 millimeter gun back on the back of the ship, he said he didn't get the word. So he cut loose on them and just wiped them out, you know. But you know they never did anything except told him

he shouldn't have done that. And now days they'd have a big to-do over it, you know. But anyway that was something else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale on the Bunker Hill?

Mr. Huet:

Oh it was good, it was good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the Flint?

Mr. Huet:

It was good too, there's no problem. They liked to work us to death on that Bunker Hill on the flight deck. Because we were constantly moving planes, frontwards or backwards, or launching planes, receiving planes and even during the night in the dark we had to move planes around. But, I had a brother-in-law that was on another aircraft carrier and he was down in the engine room working and he said, "Hell, he never did know what was going on down there." They weren't ever allowed to go topside cause they'd be in the way. So they never knew what was going on down there, they just done their thing down there and that was it you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a battle station?

Mr. Huet:

Nothing but the flight deck. When they sounded general quarters we all run to the flight deck. We had to be ready to do whatever up there on the flight deck. I never had a gun station.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you wear a certain color shirt or something on the flight deck?

Mr. Huet:

No, that came along in later years, we just wore dungarees. I had a little aviator cap that I wore and it buckled under my chin and then I had goggles, clear goggles because I had to wear goggles underneath those airplanes because the prop wash was..., hell you couldn't open your

eyelids. You know that wind was so strong we had to wear goggles there. And the flight deck had several tie-downs, it was metal strips going across the flight deck about every four feet. And as I was crawling around under them planes when they was warming up I'd stick my fingers down in those tie-downs to work back and forth to keep the prop wash from rolling you down the rows. But it was, it was interesting and I have felt privileged to have been able to work the flight deck. Because I was up there and was able to see all of what was going on, you know. As I say they worked us to death and the carrier would keep the kitchen down below and they served you food you know, but they kept that open, oh all day long for us. And we never could go down morning or noon and night to eat, but they'd let a few of us at a time run down there and get something to eat to hold us. And my bunk was right under the catapult up on the front of the flight deck. And so when we had to send that night fighter up why I was right there to hop right up on the flight deck. But it was something else, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you work on a certain type of airplane or just work on all of them?

Mr. Huet:

Well we handled all of the airplanes, all three kinds. The way we'd line them up on the flight deck would be the torpedo planes, the big TBFs they were at the back, the very end. And then we had the dive bombers all rowed up there, of course their wings all folded. And then at the front we had the fighters, was all up at the front so when we started launching. I worked the right hand side of the ship and another guy worked the other side, as far as pulling those blocks. And then when they started launching, why we launched all the fighters first and then the dive bombers and then the torpedo planes after that. And we'd launch them all, you know get them up. But that's the way they worked it you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now your fighters were the Corsairs, is that right?

Mr. Huet:

Corsairs, uh-huh.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they Naval pilots or Marine pilots?

Mr. Huet:

No, they're all Navy pilots.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I know a lot of the Corsairs they were Marine.

Mr. Huet:

Them Corsairs were a hot little airplane. Boy they were something else, when they'd take off they could go right straight up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, it was a very powerful engine.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah. And what they had on those dive bombers we had, they had, what'd they call them, Pratt-Whitney engines in them. And they had big exhaust pipes sticking out on the right hand side of the engine up there. And in order to crank those engines apparently the pilot would pump gasoline in over the cylinder walls to start them. And invariably one out of about every four would catch fire. Fire would come shooting out of them exhaust pipes. So we had to have a guy stand with a fire bottle right there by each one of them dive bombers when they fired them up and if they start spitting gas out they'd shoot that up there and put it out. And then the next time why it would fire up and crank up and it was ready to go, you know. And that's when this one kid was there with a fire bottle, and I don't know he just got disorientated. And he just had a, I guess a mental problem anyway, but they should have taken him out of there, but he was out there with a fire bottle and after the flame got started he just flat walked right in to the prop of the plane.

(End of side 1 of tape)

(Begin side 2 of tape)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay so what did they do after the planes took off?

Mr. Huet:

Oh they'd come up with the buckets just to pick up body parts. I mean they'd hit that prop, it just splattered them you know. They might pick up an arm or a leg or something. Then I saw two guys go in to props like that. The other one was a plane Captain and I was sitting right under that plane to pull the wheels, pull the chocks out, and the plane Captain was up on the wing talking to the pilot, I guess checking out the instruments or something. And when he got done he turned around and he jumped down off of the wing. And when he did he lost his balance and he went stumbling and of course the prop wash caused it too. And he went right back into the prop of the next plane. But you know that was just part of the war I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A lot of ways to get hurt.

Mr. Huet:

Yep.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any casualties on the Bunker Hill from enemy action?

Mr. Huet:

Not while I was there, uh-uh, no. They did you know, as I say right after I left....

Mr. Misenhimer:

No I mean while you were there, yeah.

Mr. Huet:

But while I was there we didn't have any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the Flint?

Mr. Huet:

No we didn't either, we were fortunate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I understand on the aircraft carrier the pilots, the air people don't mingle too much with the rest of the crew, is that right?

Mr. Huet:

Uh, no. A lot of times the pilots would come up there, if we were just oh going from one location to another where there's no danger anything going on, you know. Why sometimes the pilot would come up and sit on the flight deck with us and sit there and visit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well I guess I'm thinking about the other crew, not necessarily the air crew but the other crew. You know people like in the engine room and all that sort of stuff.

Mr. Huet:

Oh no, they was never allowed on the top side. No they were kept down below, I mean they were never allowed top side unless we were in port, they could come up there to leave the ship you know. But they never come top side.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Huet:

Oh we had a Warrant Officer that was over the flight deck crew and his name was Pappy Bidwell and he was something else. He treated us all like his father, like he was our father you know I mean. He was just super good and he looked after us and trained us and taught us. He was real good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What'd you think of her?

Mr. Huet:

Oh that was something else you know. That was way back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I hear she played good music.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Huet:

Oh, let me tell you. *(Laughter)* Let me tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that.

Mr. Huet:

On the Bunker Hill, when we crossed the equator they took a towing sleeve and if you know what a towing sleeve is, it's a big canvas thing that they tow behind the planes to have target practice. So they took one of those towing sleeves and they put it out there on the flight deck. And then they got a fire hose and put it up at the front end and of course the wind opened that thing up so it was blown up you know. And they put this fire hose up in front shooting water at you there and they made all of us that had never been across the equator get down there, even pilots had to get down and crawl through this towing sleeve. And while we were going through the towing sleeve these old salts had bean bags and they would beat the tar out of us as we went through this towing sleeve. And in fact they broke a pilot's arm. But then after we got out of that towing sleeve we had to go meet the, oh what they'd call him?

Mr. Misenhimer:

King Neptune?

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, King Neptune. We had to go meet him. And then he would serve a sentence to us. Oh they had me go getting a..., they had a big watering tank up there and then they sent me to the

barber. I always liked my hair, cause I comb my hair you know. So they sent me to the barber and he took and cut it, a strip right out through the middle of my head all the way to the back. And then took red paint and painted my head. And we did all that of course across the equator when we first went out. And they had a big hullabaloo over all that stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah I understand they have a big deal on that.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, yeah. That was quite a deal. They had all kinds of stuff that they did to people. Had to play some.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any close calls yourself?

Mr. Huet:

I don't think so. I don't think so. No. I was able to meet my buddy that joined the Navy with me. We never seen each other until way later on and both ships went into Pearl Harbor at the same time one time. And we was in there for repairs and supplies. And so we got together and we was able to go into Honolulu for several days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that the Bunker Hill?

Mr. Huet:

Yes, uh-huh. I was on the Bunker Hill and he was on a destroyer. So we kind of enjoyed that a little bit, getting together again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How were things in Honolulu?

Mr. Huet:

Well the beaches they had an awful lot of protection all around the beaches. But the two of us we did go out and rent a great big surfboard, we'd never surfed of course in our life and we rented surfboards and we went out. Paddled our way out there and was going to ride the waves

back in, but the waves would just go under us and come right on in. We had to wind up paddling our way back in, we never had our timing down right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April the 12th of '45 President Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, yeah that was something else when that happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you then?

Mr. Huet:

Oh heavens I don't know. I don't recall where I was, out there somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you were still out at sea?

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Huet:

Oh man we thought the world was going to end. You know I think everybody was upset over that death.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Huet:

Oh not really, not really.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, yeah, yep.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think of that?

Mr. Huet:

Well, it ended the war but that was a bad deal too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well it actually saved a lot of lives on both sides.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, I guess so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If we would have had to invade Japan, I mean whew, it'd been terrible.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, it sure would have, that would have been something else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then August the 14th when Japan surrendered, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah, oh yeah, you better believe. Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you then, do you know?

Mr. Huet:

No, I was on that cruiser.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, the Flint okay.

Mr. Huet:

On the Flint, yeah. Like the story said, after the war was over why we went into Tokyo Bay to clean out all those mines that they had sitting out there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever get ashore in Japan?

Mr. Huet:

No, uh-uh. No we just cleaned up the Tokyo Bay and then we headed back out of there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were on those ships could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Huet:

No regularity, no. Just once in a long while.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Huet:

Not a bit, not one bit. Like I said in that thing, I went home and got married and we moved, me and this gal we went to Denver, Colorado and looked for jobs. I pretty well put it out of my mind and proceeded to make a life for us you know. And we went to work and I really never had any problem. My son has a security company here in town and he was hiring oh, a lot of people, he had about fifty-five, sixty employees. He hired one kid that had just come back from Vietnam or somewhere and that kid was all shook up. And he was thinking about getting divorced and oh he was so nervous and everything you know. So I told my son, I said, "Well why don't you let me go talk to that boy, you know." And he said, "Well just have at it, you know." So I went out there and I had a long talk with him and I told him I had been there, I've been through all that. And I told him how he needed to just straighten out his life and look ahead instead of looking back. Anyway I had a long talk with him. Hopefully done him some good you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Huet:

I did, when I went to work managing those stores in Oklahoma I was on the G.I. Bill training course to manage stores. So the government paid my wages for, I guess it was just a year until they gave me a store to manage. I was an assistant for a year and I started managing stores after that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Who was that you were working for?

Mr. Huet:

It was T.G. & Y. stores. They were variety stores.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I remember them, right.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Huet:

With who? Well they, I never was able to make any of the reunions. I joined all of the reunions and I received information and mail from them of what was going on and they sent pictures and everything. But I had my wife in a nursing home for about five years and I had to stick around and see that she was taken care of. So I never felt like I could leave to go to any of the reunions. I still get calls, I got a call here awhile back from the lady in the Flint. She was the wife of one of the guys and she called and talked to me for quite awhile. So we still hear from them, but to actually make one of the reunions, I never was able to make one. I wished I could have, but I just, I just didn't feel like I could, so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Huet:

I was Seaman First Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now tell me again what medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Huet:

Okay, I got nine major battle stars. On the Bunker Hill we got the Presidential Unit Citation and then I got a personal recommendation or whatever you want to call it for doing something or other.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You probably got the AP, Asiatic-Pacific Medal, ribbon.

Mr. Huet:

Oh yeah I got that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you got World War II Victory.

Mr. Huet:

Yep. Got Good Conduct Medal. I got all them listed here in my war book, so I'll look.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you've thought of from your time in the service?

Mr. Huet:

No. Oh I wanted to tell you about my trip out there to Fredericksburg, I didn't tell you about that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yeah, tell me about that.

Mr. Huet:

Well I wanted Linda to see that. I had gone out there about thirty years ago and toured it. And I didn't know that they had rebuilt it and everything you know that they did. And I wanted Linda to see it, so we arranged to go out there for a week, just recently of course. So we got out there and I wore my Navy World War II cap. My goodness you'd thought I was some kind of a celebrity out there, you know. People were wanting to take their picture with me. And there was

one couple from the Philippines, a man and his wife. And the wife wanted to see if she could get a picture of me and her husband. So Linda had a flag scarf around her neck, so that guy reached over and got that flag off. So we stood there side by side with that flag in front of us, Linda and that other woman took pictures of us, you know. And then we got to talking, everybody was wanting to listen if I had anything to say, you know. And there was two school teachers, two ladies there, and we got to talking and visiting with them. So then they went into the main museum where they had that little store in there and they bought a big World War II book. And later Linda and I were across the way over there fixing to get in the car, here come them two ladies hollering at me, you know. They'd bought this book and they wanted me to autograph that book. So I autographed the inside of the book for them. And another lady as we were going through the museum, she heard me explaining things to Linda as we were going through. She come over there and wanted to know if she could just go along with us because she was wanting to hear all that I had to say. So we said yes, you just go right along. So she just joined us you know, all the way going through the museum. And then I found the big plaque out there in the open area, they had a big plaque of Bunker Hill and a plaque of the Flint. So I got a picture of me by both of those plaques, Linda took the pictures. And then there was one of the ladies, an employee, a little blond headed gal, she came out there when I was there by the Bunker Hill plaque and she got to talking to me. And she said, "Well would it be alright if we could fix a brick with your name and whatnot on it." I said, "Well I guess so." She said, "Well come on inside, you can have three lines on this brick." And I said, "Oh, okay." So I went in there and we picked out three lines for the brick. I said, "Well now what are you going to do with it?" I said, "Put it over here close to the Bunker Hill anyway." So she said she would. Anyway they did that. And then of course then they wanted me to sign this paper to do this verbal thing. So anyway it was quite a deal. Everybody was wanting to talk to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah that's a good museum.

Mr. Huet:

It really is, I mean.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you been to other museums?

Mr. Huet:

Not really. Honor flight to Washington, D.C., that was quite, that was really something.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a good organization.

Mr. Huet:

Yeah, it sure is. We flew out of Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Another couple of questions. Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Huet:

No. Not really.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Nothing at all?

Mr. Huet:

Nothing. I had my Navy knife, we always wore a knife in the scabbard. I still got it. But you know that's about all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Huet:

Not that I can recall.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Huet:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Never got a donut or a cup of coffee from them or anything?

Mr. Huet:

I don't think so, not that I knew of. Most all of the time we were out there at sea somewhere you know, or to an island or something. Never was ashore. In here in town.

Mr. Misenhimer:

American Legion, okay.

Mr. Huet:

That's a real good organization.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, it is, right. Well Larry that's all the questions I have unless you've thought of something else.

Mr. Huet:

Well that's great.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Huet:

Well yeah and you too. And I really enjoyed talking to you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, I've enjoyed it very much.

(End of interview)

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