

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Edward P. Ferretti
St. Louis, MO
November 13, 2015
U.S.S. Cortland APA-75

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is November 13, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. Edward P. Ferretti by telephone. His phone number is 314-645-6466. His address is 2367 Baxton Way, St. Louis, MO 63017. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

First I want to thank him for taking time to do this interview today and I'd like to thank him for his service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

You're welcome.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your name is Mike Ferretti and you're his son. I do need an alternative contact but I've got that now as that address is yours.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The alternative contact is Mike Ferretti. The address is 2367 Baxton Way, St. Louis, MO 63017.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the next thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is OK with you all. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Yes, it is. I'll speak on behalf of my father.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, Mr. Ferretti, you can probably answer this, Mike. What's your birth date?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Dad's birth date is August 28, 1919.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was he born?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He was born in St. Louis, Missouri.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He had two brothers and one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were either of his brothers in World War II?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Two of the other brothers were in World War II. His brother, Lou, was a Marine in the South Pacific and his brother, Raymond, was in the Coast Guard and assigned to Coast Guard duty in Alaska.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Are either of them still living?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If they were, I'd like to interview them. Now, he grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect him and his family?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Well, let me ask him. His family was affected. He said his father was out of a job and he remembers his mother having to go get bread at a place where they were giving away bread.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were his brothers older or younger than he?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He was the oldest. He had two younger brothers and then the sister was the youngest.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did he go to high school?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He went to high school in St. Louis at Solvan High School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did he graduate?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He graduated in 1938.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did he do when he finished high school?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He was a machinist all of his life. He studied the trade in high school and he also went to a technical college to further his education as a machinist. He worked in machine shops, except for the war, he worked in machine shops all his life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did he go into the service?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He went into the service in 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Does he have a month or a date?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He doesn't have a specific date.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He went into the Navy, is that correct?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Yes, he studied as a VR man. He was aboard ship in the South Pacific as a radar operator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he drafted or did he volunteer?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did he go for his boot camp?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He went to Camp Farragut, Idaho. It was a naval training base in those days. Idaho, specifically Lake Pend Oreille. That was one of the many naval training bases.

Mr. Ferretti:

First thing that I remember was that Camp Farragut, Idaho, has got a lake there that nobody can find out how deep it is. One of the things we had to do was take a big boat, take about six or eight of us and haul it down to the lake and we were instructed what to do and how to do it. If you had to go over the ship to a life boat. Then of course they had a smoking pit. If you smoked you had to go outside in this area, all enclosed, an outside area. We had calisthenics every day. Line up, get in line to eat three times a day. Farragut was a beautiful place to be too. Mountains all around. Of course we'd take calisthenics every day. It was cold at night and each one of us had to take a job. They had coal furnaces and we had to – what do you call it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had to stoke the furnace.

Mr. Ferretti:

Yeah, we built the fire.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any weapons training while you were in boot camp?

Mr. Ferretti:

Rifle and .45.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Probably M-1 maybe? He had rifle training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there anything comical or funny that happened in boot camp?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He doesn't remember anything funny. It was pretty serious stuff. The war was on and they knew they had a job to do and they got down to business.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When he finished boot camp, then what did he do? Where did he go?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

After boot camp did you go to San Diego or...? He reported to San Diego and that's where he boarded ship headed for the South Pacific. He went to San Diego. He went to a technical school in San Diego to study radar to be a radar operator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that school? Pretty hard or how was it?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Point Loma, San Diego. Was that hard, Dad? Was it hard to learn? Yeah, they made it pretty easy for him. Radar was in its infancy back then and the sets were not sophisticated but they were capable and so it was easy to learn the operation. There were two modes; one was a sea mode, and a surface mode. One mode was for airplanes. You could see both surface ships and airplanes, two different types of sets.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he do any repair on the radar?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No, they just operated the sets, Richard. They had a tech on board who did any repairs that were necessary.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was that school?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

It was about six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Then did you go on leave or did you report right... Right after that he reported directly to the U.S.S. Cortland.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was a transport, wasn't it?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

It transported the Marines to different islands in the South Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think that was the APA-75, is that correct?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Would be APA-75, that's correct. Have you ever talked to any of the other shipmates on the APA-75? Used to have a ship reunion every year. Mom and dad would go and of course when it stopped they were down to three fellas that they could find. But at one time in the '80s, there were hundreds of shipmates that came to the reunion.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did they go the first time?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

The first stop for the Cortland I think was it Hawaii, dad? He went to San Pedro from San Diego and then they took the ship to Seattle and then from there he left Seattle the 1st of March 1945 and they arrived at Honolulu on the 8th of March. So on the 22nd of February 1945 they left San Pedro for Seattle, they left Seattle on the 26th as they were only in the Seattle port for four days and left Seattle to Honolulu. They picked up the Marine company, 800 Marines, in Seattle and left Seattle on the 1st of March and arrived at Honolulu on the 8th of March.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

You remember much about that trip, dad? Was it pretty calm or... You're still in friendly waters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there much seasickness?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Yes, and him too. He was raised in the Midwest so no ocean experience.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did they do in Hawaii?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

They had one day of leave. He was only there one day. The ship was only in port one day. He said they had a one-day leave, drank some beer and had to report back to the ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there still much damage he could see there?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Actually he went to Honolulu. Did you arrive in Pearl Harbor? He said that was off limits. They must have put in somewhere else besides Pearl.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Could be. Now, when they left Hawaii, where did they go?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

They went to Midway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened there?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

8th of April 1945 they arrived at Midway. What happened at Midway? Picked up more supplies or troops or what? Midway was a stop and they were shuttling Marines to different islands. They arrived at Midway on the 8th of April and they left Midway on the 10th. So he did although he didn't remember it, he did write down that he was at Pearl Harbor. So they went from Midway they went back to Hawaii and they put in at Pearl Harbor. He doesn't remember much about Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

They were kind of providing a shuttle service for Marines coming back from the front. They went to Maui, went to Hilo, and back to Honolulu so they were shuttling Marines from the front. I guess from Midway back to Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Remember anything else that happened on that voyage when you were shuttling Marines? Dad said there was a mine floating around that area and they had a five-inch gun on deck and they had to destroy the mine that was floating just below the surface. They destroyed a mine when they were making their shuttle run.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were some other islands they went to?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Well, that was it. Then they went back to San Francisco. They arrived in San Francisco on the 4th of June and they left on the 6th of June. Why did you go to San Francisco? To pick up more Marines? Went back to San Francisco and picked up more Marines and then left two days later and on the 6th of June went back to Seattle and got there on the 8th of June and then they headed for Eniwetok. They arrived at Eniwetok carrying more Marines. By then they were preparing for the invasion of Japan or the proposed invasion of Japan. The transports were moving thousands of Marines to their jumping off place. The 14th of July they left Eniwetok and on the 18th they arrived at Ulithi.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did they do there?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Same thing, Pop? Discharged the Marines. On the 18th of July they arrived at Ulithi and they took them to Okinawa. Disembarked at Okinawa. Left Ulithi on the 8th of August and they arrived at Okinawa on the 12th of August. I guess Okinawa was supposed to be the big jumping off place for the invasion. They were shuttling Marines. That was the 12th of August and of

course the atomic bomb had already, both bombs had already been dropped by then and the Japanese were considering surrender but I guess surrender wasn't signed until I think the 2nd of September. So then on the 5th of September the ship left Okinawa and headed for Korea. Went to Tenson, Korea. They were hauling troops to different places and they left Tenson, Korea on the 11th of September heading back to Okinawa and on the 14th of September they arrived in Okinawa and on the 26th of September they headed for China. So the ship changed its mission. The mission then became to help the Nationalist Chinese to fight the Communists. Dad said they picked up 800 Chinese troops, Nationalist Chinese troops and took them... He was down at Tientsin, China and that was up north where the Communist Chinese were starting their revolution. So he arrived at Tientsin on the 30th of September. Then he got done with that mission and he left for Manila in the Philippines and arrived in Manila on the 13th of October. Then they went to Hong Kong and got shore leave at night. Then they left Hong Kong to another location in China and then back to Hong Kong and finally on the 28th of November they docked at Sasebo, Japan and left Sasebo on the 7th of December and they arrived... So they were at sea a year, nearly a year. They were at sea for ten months. They came back to the States in late December 1945. They sent him home to St. Louis and that's where he got his formal discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date was his discharge?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He said I was a year and half by then. I was born in August 1944 so this was his homecoming. He said Mom met him at the train station in St. Louis and I was a baby and it was the first time he'd seen me since I'd been born while he was gone. So he was discharged in St. Louis but can't remember the exact date. He says I was walking. They had four hours on duty staring at the radar

screen and then eight hours off so it was four on, eight off, four on, eight off but it had to be manned 24 hours a day. They slept right by the radar shack and did I tell you about the typhoon that took place?

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, tell me about that.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

The typhoon was an experience for Dad. He said they were in the Philippines when the typhoon struck and they sent all the ships out to sea and just rode it out. He said the ship pitched and rolled and creaked and he said he thought it was going to break up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But he made it ok, huh?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Oh, yeah, but that was a terrible typhoon. I think I read that it set the record for the lowest barometric pressure ever recorded on earth.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Could be. How many radar screens did they have on his ship?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

One for surface and one for air.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he ever see any Japanese ships or planes?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He said he picked up about a hundred miles away an airplane or airplanes, can't tell the difference on the screen. He said he couldn't identify it but it wasn't his job to identify it. His job

was just to say it was there. They had IFF back then to identify friend or foe but it wasn't coming their way so it was up to other ships to determine who it was. They went up and down from one part of China to the north, were all Chinese soldiers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I know they did evacuate quite a few Chinese Nationalist soldiers to Taiwan or somewhere. There was a lot of that done. They moved them all over the mainland, too. When he was in Sasebo, did he get to go ashore there with the Japanese?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

From and to Japan and from and to the mainland of China were just shuttle trips.

Mr. Misenhimer:

While he was in Sasebo, Japan did he get to go ashore there?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No, they stayed aboard ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Stayed aboard ship, OK.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

They did get to go ashore in China.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

I know he brought home some carvings from China that he bought in China. They only gave him leave for one day in China.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Yeah. That's a good question. Dad, do you remember news about President Roosevelt? He doesn't remember that. Of course he remembers where he was when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, tell me about that.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He lived across the street from a firehouse. It was a Sunday and it was his only day off. He was working. He went to the firehouse just to hang around and the news about Pearl came across the radio. He was listening, he was in the firehouse talking with the guys, visiting and they heard it on the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did he think that would affect him?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He said he wasn't sure what that meant. Like most Americans, they were surprised and he wasn't sure what that would mean to the United States.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No, he came home with a moldy uniform. That's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale on his ship?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

It was a close-knit ship. Morale was good but the Captain was a stickler for discipline. He was a Naval Academy grad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did he think of the various officers he had over him?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

His name was Captain Jordan. He said the other officers were very good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He said they were probably forbidden.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he ever cross the equator?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they crossed the dateline did they have any kind of ceremony or anything there?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

A souvenir that they gave to all the shipmates, a memento of crossing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would he consider his most frightening time?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

It was the typhoon. You know they had the transport and they were only close to the battle.

These transports carried the landing craft the Marines would use to go ashore but by that time of the war, most of the fighting had been done. The typhoon was the scariest moment. He said he thought the ship was going to break up. It was that violent.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on August 14, 1945 when Japan surrendered. Did they have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No celebration. Obviously everybody was glad but they didn't have a formal planned celebration. Went about their jobs and everybody was happy that the invasion that was planned never took place. Shortly after August 9, the second bomb, the formal surrender was September 2nd, 1945. We were up on the Missouri. My wife and I went to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he ever see any U.S.O. shows anywhere?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

The only entertainment aboard ship was movies shown on deck.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did he get?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

The Freedom Medal. It would have been the theater ribbon, theater medal, A/P, WWII Victory, other regular ribbons and medals.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He got a job as a machinist, running a lathe. I guess the women who manned the machinery went back to being housewives and mothers. He got a job. He did take advantage of the G.I. Bill and studied at Washington University and took tool design, mechanical drawing, blueprints, maps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank he got to?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Radarman 1st Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He's had reunions, is that correct?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

They had a reunion every year starting in St. Louis and every year after it was organized for different places across the U.S. The last one I think was just a couple of years ago. It was in Missouri. Dad went on the Honor Flight if you're familiar with the Honor Flight. In 2013 the St. Louis chapter of the Honor Flight organization took a planeload of World War II vets to Washington, D.C. for a day and we went to the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial, and of course the World War II Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial and the Korean Memorial, Air Force Memorial and in the afternoon we flew home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a great organization. They really do good stuff for those people.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

It is a great organization and now with the diminished number of World War II vets they're inviting Korean War vets to take the trip. It's great what you're doing for these guys.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you, thank you. I've really enjoyed doing it. I've met a lot of nice people over the phone.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

I bet you do and a lot of stories that would otherwise be lost to time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

A couple of days ago he wore his U.S.S. Cortland cap and I had my Air Force ball cap on and several people stopped to make sure that we were appreciated.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, a couple of days ago on Veterans Day.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is there anything else he's thought of about his experiences in World War II?

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

He would say that you know they were called to do a job. They did their job, they came home and they put the war behind them and rebuilt their lives, made their families and became good citizens.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, like Tom Brokaw said, the greatest generation.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

The greatest generation is a good description.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

We haven't and we thank you for the volunteer work that you're doing and capturing what otherwise would be lost in time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Again I want to thank him for his service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Michael Ferretti:

OK, I'll pass that on to him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And for his time today to do this interview.

End of Interview

Transcribed by:

Janice Conner

Winamac, IN 46996

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Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848