

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Howard E. Boyd
Snyder, Texas
January 20, 2016
96th Bomb Group
339th Bomb Squadron
8th Air Force
Ball Turret Gunner B-17

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is January 20, 2016. I am interviewing Mr. Howard E. Boyd by telephone. His phone number is 325-573-0567. His address is 2748 Gary Brewer, Snyder, Texas 79549. 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:

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

Mr. Boyd:

Thank 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 OK with you. So let me read this to you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, it sure is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir. I've got a son here in Snyder.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, what's his name?

Mr. Boyd:

Gary Boyd.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Boyd:

Would you rather have his cell phone or the other one?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Why don't you give me both of them.

Mr. Boyd:

His cell phone would be 325-207-8253. His regular phone is 325-573-3370

Mr. Misenhimer:

He lives in Snyder. Do you have an address for him?

Mr. Boyd:

His address is 2395 Tuscola, Snyder, Texas 79549.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, what is your birthdate?

Mr. Boyd:

Birthday is December 29, 1923.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Boyd:

I was born in Mesquite Community and that is in Hill County about 30 miles southeast of Hillboro.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

My father's first name was Henry. My mother's name was Birty.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, I had two sisters. They were older than me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they involved in any kind of war work?

Mr. Boyd:

My younger sister which was actually older than me was in the Nurse Corps. She went through nurses' training under the Nurse Corps thing. Just as she graduated, the war was over so she didn't actually serve but she did study to be a nurse for the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, it was rough. My mother died just before I was three years old so we went to live with my grandmother on her farm. Of course farming was not good. The Depression, people didn't have any money to spend so we were just talking about that a little bit earlier, you'd buy a loaf of bread for five cents and buy a gallon of gas for 15 cents.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Boyd:

Well before my mother died he farmed and then helped out on his mother's farm until he went to work for the Batesville State Training School for Boys.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he able to keep employed during the Depression?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, he would get to come home on weekends but he was employed until he died in 1939.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Boyd:

I went to high school at Crawford, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you finish high school?

Mr. Boyd:

1941. For seven years I went to a little community school called Corielle Church School and then as a freshman I transferred to Crawford High School. After that was before it became the governor's home and eventually President's home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you and how did you hear?

Mr. Boyd:

We had just...well I guess we were just coming home from church and listened to it on the radio. My cousin was home from San Antonio. He was in the Air Force and they had everybody to report back to the base immediately. Of course we had the paper and everything on Monday after that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard that, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Boyd:

I had just graduated from school in May. We thought well, wonder what we was going to do. Of course I had to register for the Selective Service or Draft Board the first of December so just being an 18-year-old I really didn't know what might happen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were only drafting at 21 years then.

Mr. Boyd:

Yeah, but you still had to register when you...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, you registered when you were 18 but they were not drafting until they were 21.

Mr. Boyd:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They soon changed that.

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir, because in December 1942 I was selected.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Boyd:

I was sworn in the 23rd of December 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Just before your birthday?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Boyd:

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Boyd:

The Army Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any choice of that?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir, at that time they gave us a choice of Army, Navy... Mainly they were recruiting for paratroopers at that time but I didn't think I wanted to jump.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Air Corps then?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, I just always kind of had a vision of me flying in an airplane, especially when I was driving a tractor out on the farm. When one would fly over I'd think what a great thing that would be.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Boyd:

Went to Wichita Falls for basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there?

Mr. Boyd:

Just learned to stay in step, mainly be acquainted with other people in it. Lots of boys that you had never thought about being with. Of course we did have a few inspections and drills and such but mostly it was just foot training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have the obstacle course?

Mr. Boyd:

No, I don't really remember. We had to do a lot of exercise but I don't remember doing any obstacle course at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have to crawl under the machine gun shooting over you?

Mr. Boyd:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't do that, OK. Lot of marching, though, right?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you live in there?

Mr. Boyd:

In basic training that way we were in a two-story barracks. They were asbestos shingled coated.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the food there?

Mr. Boyd:

It was pretty good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything in particular stand out from your basic training?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, mostly when we did have to march out to fire a handgun at a range and then had to march back in. We were out there for three days. When we marched back in we were awful sweaty from marching 12 miles. A sand storm hit and we come out awful dusty. Some of the guys just went right on to the mess hall to eat but I had to stop by and wash up some.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished basic, then where did you go?

Mr. Boyd:

Went to Harlingen to the Army Air Force Gunnery School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that, what all happened there?

Mr. Boyd:

We had to shoot...to start out we was just shooting 12-gauge shotguns, you know from the shoulder. I thought my, this Air Force out flying 12-gauge shotguns. Of course they'd teach you about how to lead on targets, on moving targets, and then got started shooting 30 and 50 caliber machine guns mounted on a platform. Then a little later we started flying. Then we flew in an AT-6 that had a machine gun mounted in the back seat and then we flew in AT-18 that had a turret on it. Of course on the AT-6 which you just had, you were there. The pilot, of course, but you were there as a gunner by yourself. The AT-18 we had an instructor to tell us about how to aim with the rangø and bead sight.

Mr. Misenhimer:

With the shotgun, did you ride around in the back of a pickup and shoot at clay pigeons?

Mr. Boyd:

Not at that time but I did later.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened there?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, we didn't do very much other than study about ballistics and gunnery school and then we were taught the different shapes or outlines of the German and Japanese aircraft so we could identify them if we were chosen to be a flight crew. In the AT-6 and then in the AT-18, which was more like a passenger plane, it had a turret in it. The instructor could fly with us. In the AT-6 you just had to guess what you were doing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

That was the first time we actually got to be around airplanes. At Harlingen, being raised on a farm in central Texas, seeing all the palm trees and everything was really different. The day that we graduated or finished school, I don't know what you call it, but anyway the day we did that was what really brought us into knowing about the Air Force, one of the training planes came in, caught fire on landing. Of course all of us wanted to go out and help those boys that was in that training plane but we couldn't do anything. They all died.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go?

Mr. Boyd:

From there we went to Amarillo to Airplane Mechanic School. When we left Harlingen, I don't know, there was maybe five men from the north states in the group of men that I was with, we got on that train and it was similar to a box car that was converted by having bunks hinged to the side of the boxcar and we used the bottom bunk to sit on and the next bunk behind let down so we had a back of a seat. But anyway, we were on the train on a siding from time to time but we were on it for five days going from Harlingen to Amarillo which is from the south end of Texas to the north end of Texas. The men from the East couldn't understand time that we'd be on a train for five days and still be in the same state.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

We were there for I guess maybe like three months. I don't remember just exactly how long. Of course we studied all about...luckily enough we were spending most of our time in B-17s. But anyway we studied about the mechanics and how the planes operated. While we were there we did have, I don't know if this was part of, we did go out on a couple of field trips where we went out and camped out away from the barracks. There at Amarillo the barracks were tarpapered barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

After we went there we went to Salt Lake City for reassignment. We didn't know whether we were mechanics or just what. But at reassignment I was assigned to go to Pyote, Texas. Assigned to a B-17 bomber crew. Pyote Air Force Base eventually became known as Rattlesnake Field.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Why was it called that?

Mr. Boyd:

There was lots of rattlesnakes around. Even there on the base they killed rattlesnakes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

Being assigned to a crew we had and all the other boys had of course B-17s which at that time was the biggest airplane going. We had the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, top turret, radio man, waist gunner, tail gunner, ball turret gunner. Me being the last one assigned to this crew, I got the ball turret because I was the smallest man, too. Kind of helped out a little bit on

that part of it. But it was kind of hard to me, being assigned to this other crew and you think about flying in the airplane in the ball turret, hanging down underneath the plane, so I wasn't really in the airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Boyd:

Mostly bombardier training there in Pyote because then we went to Dumas Air Base in north Texas for more gunnery training there with flying over the mountains there in New Mexico and shooting at targets being towed by another airplane. They didn't have any target practice like that at Pyote.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, we went to Langley Field, Virginia for other training of the crew and there we were training for what they called, I can't think of the name right now but anyway it was for radar training. The ball turret was removed and a radar dome installed in the airplane where the ball turret was. So at Langley Field I was just assigned as an airplane mechanic and we worked on B-24s and other things there but after our crew trained for radar training, we were all joined back together to be sent overseas. We were there for part of November and December in 1943. Went to a base in New Jersey and then we were only there a couple of weeks and then we got on the Queen Mary and went for seven days to cross the Atlantic by ourselves on the Queen Mary. We landed at Clyde, Scotland.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip going over?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, most of the crew, a lot on the ship got awful seasick. We went through a pretty big storm. Queen Mary went across by herself instead of being in a convoy and we zig-zagged across the Atlantic which took seven days to go which normally only took five.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anybody get seasick on the way over?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, the enlisted men on our plane were on the ship and none of us got sick but there were lots of others that sure did. One of the mornings I was a messenger for this one officer, one morning I went down there and he said, "Boyd, you know what I'm doing?" I said, "I have no idea." He said, "I'm writing my wife to get the car and the dogs and come over here because I'm not crossing this thing again." He was so sick.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What rank did you have at that point?

Mr. Boyd:

Just Sergeant. After we were assigned to the flight crew, they promoted us for the most part.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

After we got to England we did a lot of training around about what might happen and things like that and then we were assigned to the 339th Squadron of the 96th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

After being stationed there we were supposed to be assigned to a squadron. I don't really know exactly the locations and things in England we were at. Of course we had to come down from Scotland down to England by train as we landed up there off the Queen Mary. We were assigned to a squadron and on our first mission, one of our crew, we was with a different crew, to find out what combat flying really was. But after our first mission with the other crew we were assigned to our own airplane and flew as a crew. We flew 30 missions and then were about to go home on a rest and return leave.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date was your first mission?

Mr. Boyd:

I don't remember what date it was but it was the last part of March.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Late March.

Mr. Boyd:

In 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that mission to?

Mr. Boyd:

First mission we went on was to I think it was Calais, France and we bombed the launching pads where the buzz bombs were fired at London mostly but they went all over England.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on the first few missions, did your pilot fly with somebody else or did you all have a different pilot with you?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir. Each member of our crew flew with a different crew for our first missions and then from then on we flew as a crew.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your worst mission?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, the worst one we had was down in May I think it was. I believe the 18th of May was the date. We were scheduled to go to Brust, Czechoslovakia to bomb, just south of Frankfort, Germany. We encountered more fighters than we had ever seen before. They knocked out two engines on our airplane on the left side. When they hit the first engine, the pilot told the bombardier to drop the bombs so we could stay up with the group. He started to drop the bombs and about that time they shot out the second engine on the left wing. He told them to jettison the bombs. He jettisoned and all of them fell but the bomb bay doors weren't completely open so it hit the bomb bay doors, the weight of the actuators and they were just swinging underneath. That was our worst mission. We couldn't keep with the bomber formation so we left formation, came down to treetop level and went back. We didn't know whether we'd make it or not. But as we came down, I don't know how much it was but anyway after that we dropped from 23,000 feet down to I'd say three or four thousand, with the pilot flying at tree-top level. After I got out of the turret, and rested and everything, I looked back down to see what was in the turret. There was a limb setting there in the plexi-glass window on that turret from a tree top. On the way back to

England we came in low and everything we really needed to lighten the weight of the plane including guns. I asked if he'd like me to drop the ball turret which I did. I knew that we could. Just might as well at treetop level. At one place that we had to fly under the high lines because we didn't have the power with two engines to get any higher. Coming back across the English Channel we could feel the spray from the prop spray, it was coming up through the hole in the ball turret right through the open bomb bay. We ended up at an auxiliary field which was one of the main air bases, an R.A.F. base. That was one of the worst missions. Another one was when we got attacked by fighters with flak. The ground crew said they counted 150 holes and quit counting after that. It wasn't anything uncommon to have one engine knocked out by flak or fighters but when both engines on the same wing were knocked out, it created a lot of problems for the pilot and co-pilot.

Mr. Misenhimer:

To fly that plane with two engines on one side is not too easy.

Mr. Boyd:

No, they were really bushed when we finally got back to England. It really surprised everybody that we got back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what knocked them out, flak or enemy fighter planes?

Mr. Boyd:

Enemy fighters on that mission. This was our first mission in the new airplane they had sent over. It wasn't camouflaged. It was just a silver plane. Flying with one silver plane with 27 camouflaged planes, the Germans sure thought we had something different so they wanted to get that plane. That's the reason we were the center of firepower.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever shoot down any German planes?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir, I got three, counting one and possibly two. One for sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of plane was it?

Mr. Boyd:

It was Focke-wulf 190. On that particular mission our crew got credit for downing nine planes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your crew got credit for nine?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, good. Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, that was the first non-painted airplane that was assigned to the European Theater. All the planes that we flew had names on them. The crews put different names like "Lucky Lady" and "Memphis Belle". Personal things on the nose of the airplane, the nose part. Since ours was a silver airplane we were going to name it "Silver Slipper" but we had to get approval of what to put on it and they said that had already been used. So we decided we'd just put a G.I. boot on the nose of the plane and call it "Silver Slipper". We never did get the painter to paint it. After that particular mission that airplane was out of service for quite a while. I said quite a while, a week or two. Another crew got the "Silver Slipper" and they had to bail out and they crashed in

Germany some place. It was assigned to another group. I don't remember all the different planes, the names of the planes that we flew in but the first one, I guess you could say the first and last of the combat crew planes that I remembered, the first one was Winnie C#2 which was named for Winston Churchill. Winnie C#1 was shot down.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, of course each time we flew it was a different mission to a different place, which I think I had a little list I made. Then after I got discharged I think had 20 different locations that we'd gone to but some of them we went back to two or three times. WE went three different times to bomb a ball bearing factory. We went back to that place that had the buzz bombs deal. They had already started launching rockets instead of the buzz bombs they had rockets that they'd shoot over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On how many different missions, did you lose a motor?

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, my. That one mission was the only time we lost two but I'd say out of the 30 missions I flew I'd say that we lost an engine about 20 out of that 30 missions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On 20 missions you lost an engine?

Mr. Boyd:

I think I'd be safe in saying that often.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's quite a few.

Mr. Boyd:

But with three engines you'd do pretty good staying up. Most everybody else was in the same condition you were. But losing the two, especially on one side was rough.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have the same pilot on all your missions?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir, same pilot. That one time about half-way through our tail gunner got wounded by shrapnel, by flak, and that was the only wound we had in our crew in 30 missions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good.

Mr. Boyd:

We was fortunate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On D-Day did you do any bombing for D-Day, June 6, 1944?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir. We flew D-Day. I didn't fly that particular day. General Olds wanted to fly with our crew that day and he insisted that the co-pilot fly as ball turret gunner so he could fly as co-pilot. But I kind of doubted that co-pilot could ever get in that ball turret. That's just a personal opinion.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened next?

Mr. Boyd:

The reason that we just flew 30 missions was when we first started flying, if you completed 25 missions, we got to come back to the States. About the time we got to 17-18 missions they upped the 25 to 30. We got up to about 25, they upped it to 35 because the fighters and all that, we had done enough damage to the enemy we were not losing as many planes. But they came up with a deal that if you had 30 missions or 27 missions, you could come home for 30 days furlough, plus being off flying combat for 90 days. So I finally checked the rest of the crew and we all decided that was a good deal so after our 30th mission that was granted and we came home on the 13th day of August, 1944. So my time overseas was seven months which I thought that was long enough. After we came home we were on furlough for 30 days to be at home. When we reported back, General Patton had made such a progress across France after D-Day that they didn't need us to go back. They had all the air crews they wanted so we were retrained to be an instructor. That didn't bother us a bit, not having to go back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Boyd:

I don't know just exactly how I was assigned but anyway went to Del Rio to gunnery instructors school. After finishing that up, I was transferred to Ardmore, Oklahoma, taught gunnery there from January of 1945 until October 1945. Trained on another gun, mostly just on the maintenance of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Boyd:

After that they decided to close the base. After the war they closed the base at Ardmore and sent me to Florida, hoping for a quick discharge but that didn't happen. About a month there we were just waiting for discharge so we didn't do much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when were you discharged?

Mr. Boyd:

In October of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me go back and ask you some questions about when you were overseas. Did the whole crew stay together the whole time or did you have some replacements?

Mr. Boyd:

Just had the replacement of the tail gunner that got wounded.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's the only one, OK. When you were over there did you have any interaction with the local English people?

Mr. Boyd:

We were stationed close to Peterborough and we went to London a couple of times.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were the people friendly?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, sir, most of them were. Of course in England the trains weren't as large as they are in the United States and they were always crowded. This one time on our way back from London one of the older women that was having to stand up on the train was bad-mouthing the American

soldiers. She said “The main trouble with them was that they were over here and over-sexed and over-paid.” With us we told them we’re over here mainly to keep Germany from being anywhere else but to protect them. Kinda made it a little odd that any of them would have any objection to us being over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get to go to the pubs?

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, yeah, we made a pub or two. They didn’t have any cold beer like they do in the United States at that time. In fact one or two of the women I went out with telling us about home life in the United States was something about the size of an ice cube. They didn’t know what the size of an ice cube was because they didn’t have any refrigerators and freezers at that time. I’m sure they do now but at that time they didn’t.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time overseas?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, other than I guess his Majesty’s English was a wee bit odd because they had more of a different brogue in different parts of England than we do here in the United States. Of course we think maybe different states might have a little bit difference but over there it was really noticeable.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by the buzz bombs?

Mr. Boyd:

We were in London when they were hit but none of them ever landed real close to us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But on your air base, they never attacked you there?

Mr. Boyd:

No, not on our air base.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In London, how about the V-2s. Did you ever see any of those?

Mr. Boyd:

Just heard them. Never did see them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Where were you when you heard about that?

Mr. Boyd:

Ardmore, Oklahoma, stateside.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, the people I think they described the feeling that it was like you lost a friend.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on May 8, 1945 when Germany surrendered. Have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Boyd:

Well there was quite a bit. People that drank absorbed lots of liquor. I didn't drink at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you then?

Mr. Boyd:

I was still there at Ardmore.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when they dropped the first atomic bomb on August 6, did you hear about that?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the reaction to that?

Mr. Boyd:

We wondered why that hadn't happened sooner. Of course we knew that it was bad for all those people were wounded and burned and all that kind of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when Japan surrendered, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, yeah, but just a little more than what happened when Germany surrendered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were still in Ardmore then?

Mr. Boyd:

Still there at Ardmore.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Still there at Ardmore, OK. Did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Boyd:

The only thing that I have as a souvenir is my A2 bomber jacket. It was a leather jacket. On the

back of it I have The Silver Slipper that looked like pilot's wings and G.I. boots in the middle of it. Of course 30 bomb missions. On my jacket I had an emblem of the F-W190 and 30 bombs for the 30 missions. Got two little planes on the jacket. I just went ahead and accepted that I shot down two.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were overseas how was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Boyd:

It was pretty good most of the time. Of course when you lost close friends on a bombing mission or anything, why it was a letdown but it was pretty good most of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any planes around you get shot down?

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, yes. On every mission that we were on we lost at least one airplane. Some missions, two or three.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many planes in a squadron?

Mr. Boyd:

27

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, yes, going over, as we were going over we'd have the radio on, on the ship, and she said that the Queen Mary got sunk. I guess that was on our third day out and told how many people, how

many troops were killed. Of course we, kidding, talked about how our war was over but we knew we were still alive and she didn't have any message. They'd try to make you feel awful low and sad and think about what was going on back home but after you hear the first one, you realize it's all the propaganda.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

They had one or two U.S.O. shows there at home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any big names?

Mr. Boyd:

No, no big names. They were just more or less...the few other than local people.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Boyd:

No much. They had like a canteen that we could go to but down where we were they weren't very active.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Boyd:

Well, the only thing that I really got was the, gosh I can't even think of it. Anyway, we got it after six missions. Then we got three oak leaf clusters on that which represented five more missions each. The Air Medal, that's what it was called.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think it was the Air Medal and then you got three oak leaf clusters on that.

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You probably got the EAME, Europe, Africa and Middle East.

Mr. Boyd:

Well, according to my discharge papers I guess I got it but we didn't ever get it. Just this Air Medal was the only medal I ever got. But I think all that you just mentioned was authorized but just wasn't ever given. The medals that I was authorized or the ribbons that I was authorized to wear was the Good Conduct, the Air Medal and the OLC. What's the OLC?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oak Leaf Cluster.

Mr. Boyd:

European Combat and American Defense. I don't know what any of those are because we never did get those.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

Well, you kind of missed all your friends and since I hadn't been on a flight crew for almost a year, over a year, it wasn't too hard to adjust. After I was out a little while I went back to the farm for a little while and I decided I needed to go back in. We was friends in flying and I went back in and stayed until September of 1954.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In the Reserves?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, I went into the Reserves but then I re-enlisted in the Air Force this time. I was in the Army Air Corps before. I was in the Air Force when I went back in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back on active duty?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long was that?

Mr. Boyd:

Eight years. Headquarters Squadron, 8th Air Force at Fort Worth, Texas then. All we did from then on was administrative flying.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But this was active duty?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you got out again then.

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

Not much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you use it for?

Mr. Boyd:

I messed up and didn't use it like I should have.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to when you were back in the Air Force?

Mr. Boyd:

Master Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't retire though.

Mr. Boyd:

I thought I'd stay in but I got married and started a family and I just couldn't see moving my family around, always being separated from them at different times when I was overseas. The last part I was in the Air Refueling Squadron. They were deployed at different times for 90 days overseas. So I decided if I was going to raise a family I needed to stay at home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get married? What date did you get married?

Mr. Boyd:

October 27, 1949.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Boyd:

No, we've never had one. We've been to lots of museums but we've never had any reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you keep up with anybody you were in the service with?

Mr. Boyd:

Did for quite a while but they have all passed away and I'm not in contact with any of them any more.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you ever been on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, yes, we was on administrative flying we went to D.C. and made a trip in 1947 and carried General Ordway to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to a U.N. meeting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I'm talking about the Honor Flight which they have now where they take veterans...

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, yeah, I misunderstood you about the Honor Flight. A group out of Council Bluff had an Honor Flight, my brother-in-law and I go up there. The only thing was the Honor Flight that we went on it was just a one-day trip. Some of the other people I know of made a three-day trip.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Most of them are one day. When was that?

Mr. Boyd:

It was about 2011 or 2012.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Three or four years ago.

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, at different times you think of all kinds of different things. It's hard to put them all together. I don't know whether you want just combat. I was stationed there at Fort Worth when the Korean War broke out. We went out to the base, they called us out and my wife said it was the wee hours of the night. I don't remember just what time it was, and told us that we had got involved in this so-called "police action" of Korea and that our squadron was to send three men to Korea for active duty over there. They said if any of your wives are pregnant, you were excused and you can go back home now. My wife was pregnant with our daughter and I got to go home. Just to add a little to that: one of my friends said, "Just give me 15 minutes and mine will be." So the three men that were selected to go or however you'd say it, they had to go the next day after that meeting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, in World War II when you were in England, could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Boyd:

Pretty much so. Only time there was kind of a delay was there was a delay between the time we

got to England until we were permanently assigned to the 96th Bomb Group. But most of the time it was pretty regular. Something that a lot of people don't realize now is that they had the v-mail, you know, they took pictures of our letters and filmed them and sent them instead of sending whole packages of mail.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I remember that v-mail. We used to get it quite a bit from people overseas.

Mr. Boyd:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Boyd:

I don't know. Talking about our reunions and everything, we have been to the 8th Air Force Museum in Poller, Georgia, the Strategic Air Museum in Omaha, Nebraska and the Confederate Air Force Museum in Midland, Texas, World War II Museum in Louisiana, New Orleans. We kind of stayed up with what went on by going to museums.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, right, because you went to the museum in Fredericksburg here recently.

Mr. Boyd:

Oh, yeah. We've been there about three times. Sure has grown and this last time we were amazed at how much it had changed since the last time we'd been down there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right, really has. OK, well, again I want to thank you for your time today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II and after.

Mr. Boyd:

The last time we were down there, I just thought of this. The last time we were down there, as we were going through (I don't remember what part of the museum it was classified as) but it was over in the other building, not the main building, but anyway there was a man there that had on a bomber jacket like mine. There was a man there with that and I said, "I've got to talk to this man" and introduced myself to him and everything and he and I were in the same Bomb Group and in the same squadron overseas. Except he got to come home after 25 missions because he was there before I was. It was real odd running into somebody that was in the same outfit. Of course we didn't...he was already to come home by the time we went over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were there in England, where were you stationed?

Mr. Boyd:

It was close to a little town named Peterborough. They classified it as _____.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Howard, you were in the 96th Bomb Group, is that right?

Mr. Boyd:

Yes, 96th Bomb Group.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Says here it was at Snetterton Heath.

Mr. Boyd:

You have something there that says that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes. Well, Howard, that's all I have. So I'll send these things to you and keep in touch.

Mr. Boyd:

OK.

End of Interview

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