

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

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

An Interview With

**Henry P. Jennings
Lubbock, TX
April 12, 2016
2515th AAF Base Unit
Aerial Engineer
B-26**

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is April 12, 2016. I am interviewing Mr. Henry P. Jennings, Jr. by telephone. His phone number is 806-798-8110. His address is 6903 Fulton Avenue, Lubbock, Texas, 79423. 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.

Henry, 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. Jennings:

Well 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 okay with you.

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Jennings:

Yes it 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 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. Jennings:

Yeah, I've got a daughter. Well I've got a daughter and two sons in reality, one son's in Denver and the other one is in the Dallas area and my daughter she's in Floresville. And Floresville is just south and east side of San Antonio.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, anyone of them. Why don't you give me your daughter's name and phone number?

Mr. Jennings:

Alright, my daughter is Pam and let's use her initial L., Jackson.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Jennings:

Her phone number is 580-799-0105. Now she's still using her Oklahoma cell phone. So that's why it's a 580, you'll have to dial a 1-580 to get her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have an address for her or not?

Mr. Jennings:

224 Abrego Lake Drive. I don't know where the lake is supposed to be, but that's the name of the street.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that Floresville?

Mr. Jennings:

That's Floresville, F-l-o-r-e-s-v-i-l-l-e, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have her zip code?

Mr. Jennings:

78114.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay good, hopefully we'll never need that but you never know.

Mr. Jennings:

Well true.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birthdate?

Mr. Jennings:

January 20, 1923.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Jennings:

Denison, at home. Denison is one "n", D-e-n-i-s-o-n.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jennings:

Well of course my dad's is Henry, cause I'm Henry, Jr. And my mother is Jessie Leila Smith Jennings. She went by Leila.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Jennings:

Well I had a brother, I think his name was Ray and he died when he was two years old. And my other brother, then he was born the next morning. And his name was Frank, Frank Roy. And I had a sister Grace and a sister Mildred. And they all were married.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is your brother still living?

Mr. Jennings:

No, no. None of them are living. I'm the baby of the family and the only child in the family that is still alive. They have grandchildren, but not children.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You're 93 years old, right?

Mr. Jennings:

93. My older sister Grace, she lived to be 102.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh wow, okay.

Mr. Jennings:

And my sister Mildred, she lived I think it was 91, I can't swear to that. Now my brother Frank, according to the doctor he burnt the candle at both ends and he passed away when he was 59. And he would go to bed at midnight, as an example, and get up at 4:00 in the morning and go to the store and get everything ready for the furniture trucks to be rolling by 8:00. And so the doctor said he just flat burned himself out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Too bad. Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Jennings:

Well I'll put it like this, we did not suffer, we had to live very close. And they were in the furniture business and mother had draperies and slipcovers, now she was quite busy. And because of making draperies and slipcovering for upholstery, this type, she was very busy. As far as like, we had a pickup truck and another little truck that we could drive. As far as cars and things like that we didn't have and we just had the trucks. We worked long hours and I'd get home from school, for example, then they'd have me, when I wasn't old enough to deliver furniture, they'd have me like dusting furniture, changing lightbulbs, and things of that nature. Now they said I got ten dollars a week, but I never got any money. They said when I needed to get a haircut or buy a pair of shoes they took it out of what they had paid me. So that was the way I came up. I just never had any money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did y'all have a garden?

Mr. Jennings:

Yes, mother had a flower garden and my dad had vegetable garden. He always grew vegetables, all of my life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have chickens or anything like that?

Mr. Jennings:

No, we didn't. We lived in town and I don't think you were allowed to have chickens.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you did have a vegetable garden?

Mr. Jennings:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you had some food there. Then where did you go to high school?

Mr. Jennings:

Denison, Denison High. When I started out, as I mentioned yesterday, I graduated in 1940 and that was in the eleventh grade. They did not double promote us, they did the following year in '41.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well Texas had an eleven grade system and they changed to a twelve grade system then.

Mr. Jennings:

Yes, okay thank you. We went through the eleventh grade and that didn't bother any of us that I know of. They just didn't double promote us. But starting '41 everybody had been double promoted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

See I went from the sixth grade to the eighth grade. I passed the seventh grade when they changed to a twelve grade system.

Mr. Jennings:

Well that's the way my wife was. But anyway, I didn't have any problem with it until I was getting my discharge. Well I might have had a problem beforehand. When I got into the service and they started getting us all of our tests and IQ, there was a Colonel lived next door to mother and dad, whom I did not know. And he called me up and he says, "Do you realize that every

question that you answered on the IQ test you answered correctly?" I said, "No sir, I had no idea." And so he says, "But what I want to know is why didn't you answer enough?" I says, "What do you mean?" He said, "That was a speed test, you're supposed to do in how ever many minutes." And I said, "Well I was petrified." And I said, "To answer what I did I think, you know." He says, "Well I want you to take the test over tomorrow." So I took the test over tomorrow and he called me up and says, "Wonderful." Now I'm in the Army Air Corps at this time, and he says, "Wonderful." He says, "Now I want you to apply for OCS because you made 116 and 110 was all that was required to go to OCS." I didn't know that until he told me. And so I said, "Will I be with airplanes?" He said, "I can't answer that, it's wherever they need you." And I said, "Then I do not want to take the test." Which I did not. So it looks to me like they would have caught if there was wrong in my, you know grades or something. Until I got my discharge at Camp Beale and this would have been in February of 1946. This is the Sergeant that was filling out my papers and he said, "You did not graduate from high school and you said you did." I said, "I did." He said, "No, you didn't; says you only went to school for eleven years." I said, "That's right, eleven was all we had, the next year's when they went to twelve." And he says, "Well as far as Uncle is concerned you did not graduate." And so I thought well it doesn't bother me because I'd be going back home working for mother and dad anyway. So I never did pursue it. So I don't know how many will have stories similar to that for you, but that's what happened to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, that's the first time I've heard that and I've interviewed a lot of people and no one else ever had that problem.

Mr. Jennings:

So that's the way he had it on the back of my discharge. So I framed it, my high school discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

High school diploma?

Mr. Jennings:

Yes, I'm sorry, I framed my diploma. After I got my discharge I just went and did that, I thought man..., I did graduate. But anyway, I had received a letter, I had gone to Aurora Aircraft in Chula Vista, California and I was working in sheet metal and I was making the nose rings on the B-24. When I got a letter from a friend of mine on the draft board and he says, "Henry, the draft board is going to draft you in the month of October for the infantry. If you want to do something you need to get it done now." So I started looking, I thought well I sure wanted to go Air Corps wise. I did ask the Navy in San Diego and he looked at me and he says, "Well we don't want you." And he just turned around and he had a Chief Petty Officer sign. And so I kept standing there and he looked at me, he said, "Son, I told you we didn't want you." I said, "But I'm good help and everything." He says, "Fellow how tall are you?" I said, "Almost six five." He said, "They didn't make ships big enough for you." He said, "You'll beat your head on the bulkhead, we don't want you." And so I'll have to say that I was rather disappointed, but I thought, "Okay." So I went back home and signed up to go into the service at Perrin Air Force Base. And it's between Denison and Sherman, which used to they were like ten miles apart and understand the city limits are touching each other now. But anyway, Perrin had B-13 training airplanes. So I took my basic training there at Perrin. Went out on the flight line for maybe a month or two. And then they sent us to Dodge City, Kansas and I think there was 90 some odd of us that went to Dodge. And so we had no airplanes, we slept on folding cots, all heat was by coal, and in your latrine your water was warmed also by coal heat. And then they sent me to Sheppard Air Force Base at Wichita Falls to B-25, B-26 school. And the B-25 people that came in were from Carlsbad, New Mexico and we were B-26 people. Now until I got to school and saw what the airplane looked like I didn't have a clue. And of course they had airplanes for us to work on when we were going to school, both B-25's and B-26's. I will say this, the B-25 is for little people, it was not for me. The B-26, I had all kinds of room. And I probably screwed up some of your questions, didn't I, I'm sorry.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, that's alright, no problem. What date did you actually go into the service?

Mr. Jennings:

Well actually I went to Dallas, I went to camp and then after they swore me in, I signed up at Perrin Air Force Base. Then they sent us to Dallas and then Dallas after they swore us in they sent us to Camp Wolters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what date were you swore in, that's my question?

Mr. Jennings:

September the 9th, and I guess you'd have to say I was sworn in at Camp Wolters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year was that?

Mr. Jennings:

'42, September the 30th. The 9th in '46 and that's when I got my discharge at Beale.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you went in then on September the what, 30th?

Mr. Jennings:

September 30th, I'm sure that's right. I can go back and look at it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No that's fine, that's close enough. Where did you say you went for your first training?

Mr. Jennings:

They just sent us to Dodge City, Kansas and we had nothing. And then we went to school at Sheppard Air Force Base and this is where our training started, the B-26 at Sheppard Air Force Base at Wichita Falls, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do in that training there?

Mr. Jennings:

We went to school, I think it was a hundred and nineteen days. And if I remember right, I would

have been in class 4-23-C. And your first week you went to, for seven days, you went on B-25's. Then you went across the hall and then the next seven days you went on B-26's. And that's the way the whole line went, you'd go one and then the other.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what all did you do in these classes?

Mr. Jennings:

We learned how to weave cables together. You learned some basic maintenance and what you had to do. Basic aircraft in general. And then they would go on down the line, they'd give you hydraulics. And a funny part about in hydraulics the Tech Sergeant that was in charge, he and I had graduated from high school together. And he left as soon as he graduated and he went into the Army Air Corps then. And so years later he came through Dodge City, Kansas and I saw him and I told him, I said, "Bob, I'm an aero-engineer would you like to go?" I said, "I have to get permission from the pilot." I said, "If it's an instructor pilot I'll ask him, if they're students," I said, "I won't ask for you to go." As it turned out it was an instructor pilot, I asked him, he said sure. So we got a parachute for him and he went with us and I did all my little things that you do while you're flying. And I checked to make sure the gears were up and I would transfer fuel. I'm looking at this, as much as I didn't always set them down cause I didn't have to. But I'd look at the instruments and make sure everything was working right, if something wasn't then I would try to tell the instructor pilot and we'd go from there. And I still remember how to transfer fuel and go from the right auxiliary, as an example, to the left main and the left auxiliary to the right main and transfer fuel. *(Laughter)* And so after all these years. When we took off 52 inches of manifold pressure was what we were supposed to use but Major Pulfree found out we were at 3000 feet and since we were training command and would not have all the weight, he reduced the manifold pressure for takeoff to 47 inches. So I guess you still remember things that you did all these many years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right. Then what happened?

Mr. Jennings:

Then you got to go on cross-country's and sometimes you'd take a student with you cause it's easier when two people working than it is just the one. And we had a radio operator only on cross-country's, local flying we did not have radio operators. And if you saw the B-26 in Harlingen in 1984, they flew it in. It was not like the B-26 that we had cause they had sold it and they were using it for private use. We had four bladed Curtis electric props. They also made a door to get in and get out was in the radio operator's compartment from the outside. We went up through the nose wheel. And we'd have a putt-putt in the back, which would be near the top turrets and would be on the right side of the airplane. The putt-putt, the reason for it is you started it was to save your batteries. You'd get both engines started and after you got your engine started then you'd turn around and shut the putt-putt off. After you had flown and you came in and made a landing, we did not make touch and go landings. If we were going to switch students, sometimes they did switch in the air, but if you're gonna switch after you're on the ground they would come to a complete stop and then they would switch. And then they'd go through and they'd take off and do their thing and come in and land.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Jennings:

When they would take off you did your checkup, you'd open the nose wheel door and make sure the nose wheel came up. You'd check the landing gears, the radio operator could check for you if he was there, but if it was just you then you had to check out his window and then the navigator you'd check out his windows. Sometimes, but this would be when you had an instructor pilot, sometimes they'd have you go up into the bombardier's compartment, which oft times was called the greenhouse. And you went through the copilot, he would fold his rudder pedals back and the copilot did not have any brakes at all, period. And the pilot's the only one that had brakes. Now we had air brakes for emergencies, but when you locked it down that was a thousand pound pressure. And you locked them down most of the time you got a pilot into the

point they froze and you could not move the airplane. But that only happened one time to me in the two years that I flew. The rest of the time we were able to use our brakes without using the air bottle. Because you do that then you have to jack it up and get the, which I wasn't the one who did that, they had other people that would do that, and do something to the brakes so that you could either tow it or taxi it in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Keep on, what else?

Mr. Jennings:

I understand in combat they carried a six people crew. They'd have an engineer, you had a navigator, a bombardier, a pilot and a co-pilot, and then you had to have a waist window person and then you had your tail gunner. I don't know if I named them quite right or not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Jennings:

Well the students they would have to learn to pull a single engine, in other words they'd have to go up and the instructor pilot he would feather one or the other engine. Then they'd have to trim it out and make sure the engine was stopped they'd have to trim it out then. And he'd have them fly, now you didn't bank into the dead engine, you banked into the good engine. And then they would have to bring the engine back on line and fly. And that was the scary part was they had not been trained properly and if for example they feathered, the instructor feathered an engine then you had to go, the one thing they wanted to make sure don't bank into the dead engine. This is where you get in trouble. So they stress that real hard. We flew formations, most of the time it would be like just three ships that you'd be practicing, working with. Then sometimes they would get more and you'd fly in different positions. And then sometimes you'd go to an auxiliary field and the auxiliary field we had at Dodge, at least that we used, was Jetmore, Kansas. And they had no radio equipment so they'd have an airplane up there that they used as a radio. And of course I wasn't involved with radio, so I couldn't go much further than

that. And we'd take back off and fly around and go back to our home base. And sometimes we'd go back to Jetmore and they'd switch pilots. Also each class got a low-level cross-country. Now when I speak of low-level I think the minimum that we were supposed to be was 1,000 feet. But I can't promise that was always true, because for example if you chase a farmer off of his tractor I think you're lower than 1,000 feet. And that happened for a few times, but actually it did not happen at Dodge but actually a farmer was hit by the props of an airplane and boy you talk about the whole training command, I mean they were sitting there, uh-uh. They had to put minimum, you don't fly over any houses or barns out in the country either. You make sure it's open fields. Have you ever heard of Palo Duro Canyons?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir, I have, uh-huh.

Mr. Jennings:

Well you get six airplanes flying and then you go in the echelon position and then all six of you go down just below the edge of the canyon. Now probably the wings were still above the canyon, but the fuselage would be just a little bit below. Now that's not legal, okay. But at least it really gave, we the flight engineers and the other people, you had a sensation of movement. Cause if you'd flown any you know you get upstairs and you can't tell you're moving. So a few things like that was done. And I'm going to have to say I enjoyed them. Even though that's not legal (*laughter*).

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's the highest you can fly a B-26?

Mr. Jennings:

How high?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir, what's the maximum height you can..., what's the maximum altitude?

Mr. Jennings:

Well considering that we carried no oxygen aboard, now I can't answer about overseas cause I

was in the training command. Considering that we were not supposed to fly above 10,000 feet. The highest that I ever flew for any length of time was around 15 or 16,000 feet on a cross-country. So I cannot tell you what the highest, cause 15,000 is the highest that I ever went up. I was told that around 21, in combat I was told this by the ones that flew out of Africa. They said in combat they put their oxygen on after 10,000 feet and said normally with your bomb load there's very seldom that they'd ever get over about 20 or 21,000 feet. They said if they didn't have a big heavy bomb load, he had gone as high as 25,000. Now that is here say, that never happened with me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I understand the B-26 had a couple of nicknames, what were those nicknames they called the B-26?

Mr. Jennings:

A "widow maker."

Mr. Misenhimer:

"Widow maker", okay. And what else? Did they have another nickname?

Mr. Jennings:

Well the "flying prostitute" and the "widow maker" are the only two that I can recall on the B-26. But they were called both, "flying prostitute" and the "widow maker."

Mr. Misenhimer:

Why did they call it the "flying prostitute"?

Mr. Jennings:

(Laughter) Because it killed you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's the "widow maker," right.

Mr. Jennings:

If you didn't fly it the way you were supposed to. Something like this, while we were in school about the first six weeks when they got the airplanes, they had an accident once a week and all

people aboard were killed. And so they had lost by the time we finished school, 119 days, and then came back to Dodge. And I was asking about going up and he said, "You're crazy, you don't want to go up in this." I said, "Yes I do." And so they sent me to get my parachute and I went up and I never did regret from that point on cause I guess I had good reliable pilots. Now I'm going to say this-- the Free French, I'm sorry I did not like, the reason I did not like is because like on takeoff for example, when the French students would be sitting in the radio place and he would let the training antenna out. You don't do that on takeoff because they can wrap around the fuselage, the training antenna can wrap around your elevator and you know you would be in deep trouble. And so I came down and the Sergeant Joe Crady, I was turning them in, and he said, "Jennings," he said, "there's not a thing we can do about it." Says, "I can tell the Free French people, but," he said, "it's a lend-lease program and we cannot do anything, we cannot punish them." So he said it was the lend-lease program, so I don't know how you can legally could put that in, because you'd have some Free Frenchmen that did a great job and you have others they were killed also. So I'm not sure that's fair, but that's something that really happened to us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've heard that in Florida, near Tampa, they had B-26s there and they had a saying, "a plane a day in Tampa Bay." Have you ever heard that?

Mr. Jennings:

Yes, I sure have. Because they had a group of 26s down in Tampa. But I was, other than landing one time and all I did was refuel. I can't say I was ever in Tampa or anything, I never left the airplane. But yes that was a common thing, I've heard. I also heard this about Del Rio. Del Rio engineers, both of us had landed at Glendale, California. And I just noticed the numbers on his plane were so different so, as I got through servicing my airplane I went over and asked him where he was from and he was from Del Rio. And we were talking about the planes and he said well he was an engineer and I said well I was an engineer also. And his comment was he never knew what airplane he was going to fly on cause they had an engineer pool. And so the

pool is the one who assigned him to the airplane. Now at Dodge it was not that way, so I don't know was I told the truth, I can't answer that. At Dodge they finally wound up with two-man crews and we were on eight hours, we had three eight hours, so we were on twenty-four hours. And I've forgotten now if you worked a month or six-weeks on this setting and then you know on the other one, etc. But I would, personally I would not have liked never knowing the airplane I was going to fly on because the maintenance. If we flew on our own airplane, you know we were going to do our maintenance the best we could. Now that was a local maintenance that you'd be doing out on the flight line. Cause down at the south end of the field they had a hangar, it had doors at both ends, and they oh boy, they called it a PLM, planned line maintenance hangar. And so for major inspections your airplane went through that hangar. You did minor inspections, you didn't do major. Yes we changed plugs, but as far as anything major we really didn't. The major inspections were all done in the PLM hangar. And that was down the south end of the field.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in this write up in the newspaper you mention the women pilots, the WASPs. What about that?

Mr. Jennings:

Oh the WASPs that we had that I got to fly with I was never scared, upset. I never had a problem with them, they all did a great job. And one instructor pilot and there was, I never had a woman instructor pilot. All the instructor pilots that I flew with had been men instructor pilots and they had been assigned to the women. I never heard a complaint against the women pilots. And most that I heard about, after they graduated from Dodge, they had gone to Harlingen area and they were flying as a tow-target airplane over the Gulf. I heard of other women pilots, in fact I even saw two women pilots come into Dayton right after we had come in. And one was flying a P-47 and the other one was flying a P-51. Of course I didn't talk to them or anything you know. They got out of the airplane and turned their parachutes and went inside. So I don't know if they delivered it or what. But the ones I flew with that went to Dodge I never heard of

one that failed, I'm not saying now everybody passed, I don't know that. But I sure never had any trouble with WASPs flying with the B-26. And they had to go through doing single engines and everything just like the men pilot.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They did a great job, they were really good.

Mr. Jennings:

Yes they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've interviewed several WASPs.

Mr. Jennings:

Quite a few, ten or twenty maybe, I don't know. They paired them up. There was always two that came to the airplane at a time when they flew solo.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think they flew every airplane we had. They even flew the B-29s.

Mr. Jennings:

I heard that. I was never around the 29 personally, but I heard that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever fly in a B-17 or B-24?

Mr. Jennings:

No, I never did. BT-13 at Perrin Air Force Base I did fly on. And the B-26 I flew on, I flew only as a passenger on a C-47. But I had nothing to do with the airplane. At Stockton, California Russel Moss and I had been sent there and we wound up doing maintenance on the C-47. But that was when the war with Japan had ended and they had asked me and I'm sure they asked Russel, he got out about a week before I did. But they asked me would I volunteer to go to Japan. I said, "Volunteer?" I said, "I'm in the Army Air Corps, but you can send me." He said, "We cannot send you because of your contract." I said, "Contract?" He said, "Yes, you signed a contract when you went in." I was still blank. And he said, "You signed a contract for

the duration of the war plus six months.”

(Ending of side 1 of tape.)

(Beginning side 2 of tape.)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay now, tell me again about the contract, they couldn't send you because of the contract you signed for the duration and six months?

Mr. Jennings:

Well the contract I had signed was the duration of the war plus six months. I said, "Yes, I did sign the contract like that, that's right." And he said, "Because of where you're at right now," he said, "if we sent you over you would need to turn right around and come back, because that's how close you are to getting out." I said, "Okay." And I said, "Under those circumstances, no sir, I will not volunteer to go to Japan because that was going to be for two years." So I thanked him kindly, he thanked me, we went our merry way and then I went on, they sent us up to Beale and that is where we got our discharge at. It was called Camp Beale and today it's Beale Air Force Base. If I remember correctly it's close to Marysville, California, I think I'm telling you right. And that's where the U-2s and SR-71s were. I don't know what they have there now or if....

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in your time when you're doing flying and everything, was there ever a time when you felt frightened?

Mr. Jennings:

I can't say I did except for weather while we were flying. I had never heard of St. Elmo's fire, that's static electricity that goes around your prop blade. I was scared that time. It looked like the engine, looked like the prop was on fire. I was pretty upset. And the instructor pilot up there was flying and he said, "Oh that's only St. Elmo's fire, static electricity around the props."

And that's the only information he gave me and I kept looking and looking to see if the engine itself was going to catch on fire, or what. It also knocked out part of the instruments, I want to say it knocked out a converter, but I can't, I don't remember, I'm going too far there. It did

knock out an instrument. And that's about the only time I was really frightened. I got upset another time with the Free French. He bounced his wings on the other airplane's wings, which this is a no-no. Because you can send an airplane down real quick. And I was pretty upset over that and scared.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit were you in?

Mr. Jennings:

Originally the 64th, but that was changed and I know if I tell you 2015 or not, but I think I can look at something real quick, I think I can and I'll get right back. 2515 Army Air Force Base Unit, 2515.

Mr. Misenhimer:

2515, okay.

Mr. Jennings:

Uh-huh. I don't know when I made Corporal, but that's what I've got.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was your highest rank, was Corporal?

Mr. Jennings:

That was my highest rank. See they had us, I'd like to know if that was true with Del Rio, but our commanding officer, he said pre-World War II, said they were only allowed to fly four hours a month. And we'd fly four hours in one day. But they said because they were killing, they were shooting all the bombers and everything down overseas that there would be no promotions. And there was no promotions. The war with Germany was over before they started promoting us and here we had like, oh I don't know what the minimum would have been, say 600 hours maybe. And like I had 800 hours and I can't prove I had any. That's what was so upsetting. Of course I had hoped that instead of me going back into the furniture, which was still alright because I had my design license, etc. But anyway, I was..., he said that when you got 150 hours you would be a Staff Sergeant in peace times. And he said the way you all will go in probably

four to five months because it was, you know it was quite easy, the most I ever got in one month was 60 some hours. It was easy to get 40 hours in a month. But until the war with Germany was over and they sent us down to Stockton, California, pardon me, they sent us from Dodge City, Kansas to Oklahoma, yeah. Frederick, Oklahoma I believe it was. And this would have been probably July or August of '45. Then they sent us out to California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Jennings:

Being in with so many people that were sent all over, I don't know the a..., everybody was new, at least unless they were from Dodge, there was a few of us sent down from Dodge City there. I can't say was there 40 or 50 of us sent from Dodge City down to Frederick. I don't, I know there was one person, it was his airplane, he was on a B-26 G or H model, a little different than one I'd been on. And he'd comment and asked me would I take his cross-country. And we flew up to Pampa. And so I took his cross-country. And come to find out he had never been on a cross-country and he didn't know what he was supposed to do. And I think well, you should have gone with me then and I'd have shown you. But I don't really know of the morale being very bad. I mean we were on a cross-country when the war was over with Japan. And we'd just cleared Denver, we were going to go like to, oh gosh, someplace in California. And they called us and made us come back to base. And we landed and they wouldn't even tell the instructor pilot as to why. And after we landed and we taxied up and they said, "Well the war is over." And I said, "What?" "The war is over" said, "that's why you've been..., they've called all the airplanes back in." And it didn't take very long after that then they sent us to California. And I thought you know, afterwards I thought this, why in the world did they send us to California and we spend four or five months out there and then send us home. Didn't really make a whole lot of sense, but that's what happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when Germany surrendered on May the 8th of '45 did y'all have any kind of a celebration

then?

Mr. Jennings:

We did not really have a celebration per say at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jennings:

Yes and you know that was when the war with Japan was over but see we were on our cross-country and coming back we didn't hear about it until we got on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, August the 6th is when they dropped the bomb, it was August the 14th when Japan surrendered.

Mr. Jennings:

We were on our cross-country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was on the 14th, right. But how about on August....

Mr. Jennings:

We were on our cross-country and we had just cleared Denver and they made us come back to Frederick. And after we landed, this is when they told us that the war was, they had dropped an atomic bomb. Of course we didn't know an atomic bomb from a golf ball. Well their cross-country was shut down and they stopped all flying. I'm going to say they stopped all flying for maybe a week. And they had these Free Frenchmen and even at Frederick and they still had to fly on their lend-lease program and get it over with.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then when they actually dropped the bomb you all didn't hear about it then until two weeks later?

Mr. Jennings:

We heard about it when we got back to Frederick.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that about the bomb or about the surrender?

Mr. Jennings:

Well about the bomb, that was the reason they had surrendered was because of the bomb, at least that's the way I remember it, I may be wrong.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was about a ten days difference, from the time they dropped the bomb till they surrendered was about ten days.

Mr. Jennings:

I don't remember that, I'm sorry. I know this is whenever we landed they said the war was over was what they told us on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get out of the service with any souvenirs?

Mr. Jennings:

Well I had three medals, I had my wings. On my discharge they don't have anything about my wings, which I was disappointed in. I got the American Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. And they have 23 October of '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

As what?

Mr. Jennings:

Well they had given me the Good Conduct Medal when I went to school at Sheppard. And I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Jennings:

Yes, Dodge City had some. And then at Stockton, California they had some wonderful shows. Now what we had at Dodge City was not much punch at all. But Dodge City they brought

some in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Jennings:

Personally I did not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jennings:

When President Roosevelt died I pulled KP and we were out on the line serving food and they came in and told us from the kitchen that President Roosevelt had died. And I would say that most everybody was, you know pretty upset and sorry that he had passed away. Cause we knew his health was not the best but I think it was still a shock.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And nobody knew who Truman was.

Mr. Jennings:

No. I sure didn't. Later learned Truman would go to his hometown in Missouri, he would catch the train and come to Denison and he would call Doctor T.J. Long up and have him carry him to Bonham and the Speaker of the House and this is I'm going blank on his name,

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, I can't think of it either, I know who you mean, right.

Mr. Jennings:

The Speaker of the House and so he'd get Dr. Long to drive him to Bonham and he normally only stayed long enough for his visit and then come back to Denison and catch the Katy to go back to his hometown in Missouri. And that's, I know I don't know, I think all that happened though after.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was after he was president, yeah.

Mr. Jennings:

I just know he would come to Denison and call Dr. Long, it didn't matter if he had patients or not, they always went in and got him. He'd go down to the train station and pick him up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jennings:

Not really. I guess because I knew what I had to go in and start doing, because unfortunately I could lay floor covering and cabinet tops and they were so far behind when I got out, you might as well say the next morning here I started to work in the furniture business again. That was under different circumstances than probably many people.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jennings:

I did use the G.I. Bill, I set my foot down and told them that I was going to learn to fly. And so they could do whatever they wanted to about scheduling me with putting cabinet tops on and all because I said I was going to learn to fly, which I did. And I did fly quite a few, small aircrafts, J-3 Cubs, Aeronicas, Luscombes. The largest one I flew was a PT-19 and a PT-26. And the PT-26 was made for the Canadian Air Force and it had a canopy on it. But I did learn to fly and I don't have a lot of hours, a hundred and some odd hours is all. Again I enjoyed it and so that's, I just worked that in between so I could go ahead and get my license. I flew for a couple of years afterwards. But I had no radio, the little base we had in Denison had no radio. And back then you could get by without it, today bases you can't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Jennings:

I went to one reunion, '77 maybe. I went to one reunion at Dodge City and I think it was '77. And there was just way too much drinking for me and so I didn't go back. They had another

reunion a year or two later and I didn't go back. I met a few friends that I had flown with. I met two instructor pilots that I had flown with that I knew quite well. And there was quite a few instructor pilots there, I didn't know all of them at all. But there's two of them I knew quite well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now let me go back and ask you a question, on December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Jennings:

Well I do, the reason for it, they were building the Denison dam. And the commanding officer, we had a sandlot football team and I was playing on the sandlot football team and the commanding officer, he wound up as a four-star general and I've gone blank on his name. He was in charge of building the dam at Lake Texoma. And he came on the field and he waved his hands up and stopped the football game. And so we had two or three officers that played on the football team with us. And he told them they no longer could be wearing civilian clothes and they had to go home immediately and put on their dress uniform and report to duty. And this is the way that we were informed about it. And you know it's like, "they?", "where?", "where was this?" And so they left and of course that broke up the game and we all went home. And we're asking what in the world's going on. And that was how we heard about it. For some reason I want to say the Colonel's name was, I don't know if Clay is right or not. But anyway he was commanding officer of the ones what part of building the dam on Lake Texoma, I don't know. But they were the engineers on it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what kind of football game was this?

Mr. Jennings:

Sandlot. It's just a group of people playing football.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you heard about Pearl Harbor how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Jennings:

I had no idea when I heard about it. I didn't have a clue. Really and truly I did not have a clue.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jennings:

Yes I did. That was on October in '13, October the 16th, the 19th in 2013. And we had 143 people. And my son, who basically I guess you'd say took me and he's the one that's superintendent of parks or whatever, I don't know what all his jobs are in the southern Denver area. And he came down, we were the better dressed groups as we ran into some. What I was so shocked about, we had three days, we had the 16th and 17th and came home the 18th. The ones that came from the Denver area they had one day. The ones that came from the Arizona area that we saw, they had one day. And there's no way you could see what we saw in three days in one day. They also, we were the only ones that we had khaki pants or black pants. The only thing that we had to wear alike was our shirts. We had three shirts, we had a red, a white, and a blue. The blue shirt is the shirt we wore on the day that we went, the red shirt was our next day there and when we got to go to the capitol and saw our senator. And then our last day was white shirts and all of them had Honor Flight on it. The ones from Arizona, they had shorts, they had no matching anything and we just, our caps also were matching. Now some of them, especially Vietnam and Korea, they wore hats or caps that had their ribbons, etc. on it from that war which we did not have. Now I did have a cap that had Army Air Corps on it, which I wish I had worn, but I didn't. I wore the one that had Honor Flight on it. Since I guess you'd say when you would have seen the other you'd realize that we were in from World War II and not just, whatever.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well Henry, that's all the questions I have. Have you thought of anything else from your time in World War II?

Mr. Jennings:

No I enjoyed cross-country's. We went more to the West Coast than we did to the East Coast, but I did get to go to Dayton, Ohio one time. And well I guess you can say at Tampa I can say I landed, I serviced the airplane, and we took off, did I get to see anything, no. But I heard the expression, one a day in Tampa Bay. But I wasn't actually away from the airplane there. So I can't, I didn't feel like I, you know really had. I do know that a few times I did get to do this which I haven't mentioned. We flew to Des Moines, Iowa and we picked up a B-26. I pre-flighted it and said okay. So just the pilot and I and we flew it down to, I think there's three of them, and we flew it down to San Antonio and they were converting them into tow target airplanes. And I did that one time. But the cross-country's gave us a break. You know it let us have two or three days on our own. And so I enjoyed cross-country's.

Mr. Misenhimer;

Well Henry, I want to thank you again for your time today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Jennings:

Well thank you. I wished George McCoy from Corpus and I just have a feeling cause I don't know at all, but I have a feeling that he was three or four years older than I am and I would have a feeling that you know he could probably pass away, but I think his story would have been nice for you. And I wish I felt like I could tell you call up Bob but I don't, I'm not comfortable with doing that unless I talk to Bob and he would tell you because he was a Corporal. And he applied for and did get to go to B-29 flight engineer school. He made it and wound up with a commission and I can't tell you was he a 1st Lieutenant by then or Captain or what. But they were going to break all the commissioned officers to Master Sergeants and he said, "Man, I like being an officer." And so they opened up the cadet program, he applied for it and he made, he got his wings as a jet pilot. He flew in Korea and Vietnam and wound up with 11,000 hours and a full bird Colonel. I think he would have something, but he is a very private person and he would answer the phone if I call him, if I gave you his number he would not answer the phone. And so I hate to, unless I talk to him and ask him would he be interested, I have a feeling he'd

just tell me no. But I wish he wouldn't because he's got more to tell you than I would.

(End of interview.)

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