

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Albert L. Stone
Emory, Texas
August 1, 2017
U.S. Navy
Radio and Electronics Repair
"Operation Crossword"
Atom Bomb Test at Bikini Island

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is August 1, 2017. I am interviewing Mr. Albert L. Stone by telephone. His telephone number is 903-598-2332. His address is 4491 RCR 1495, Emory, TX 75440. 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:

Albert, 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. Stone:

Thank you. You're welcome.

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. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Stone:

That is fine. Thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

Yes, we do. I have a son, his name is Jerry A. Stone.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Stone:

It's Louisiana. His cell phone number is 318-452-1214. His address is P.O. Box 165, Alexandria, LA 71309.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, fine. Hopefully we'll never need that but you never know.

Mr. Stone:

Yeah, right. Appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, what is your birth date?

Mr. Stone:

September 12, 1927.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Stone:

In Cranberry, North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Stone:

I had one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was she younger or older than you?

Mr. Stone:

She was younger than me and she's passed on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Since she's younger than you, she didn't do anything in World War II then?

Mr. Stone:

That's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

My mother's name was Ruby and my father's name was Herman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

Well, I don't know. We were in Oregon. We lived in Oregon at the time. I moved from North Carolina to Oregon when I was a year old and we were in Oregon at the time and my dad was in the real estate business and it was hard but it was doable.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you all have a garden or anything like that?

Mr. Stone:

We had no garden.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No chickens or anything.

Mr. Stone:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you were able to get by OK, then?

Mr. Stone:

Yes, we did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

Absolutely. That was the day before we left Oregon to go to Florida. I heard it on the radio at my grandad's home in Oregon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

We were in a state of move. We had sold our house. He had sold his business. We had a travel trailer and we didn't know whether we should go or not. We finally decided, "Well, I guess we better go ahead and leave because we'd sold everything we had." So we did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Stone:

I went to high school in Woodburn, Oregon, Lakeland, Florida and Vale, North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Stone:

1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you graduate in Florida or where?

Mr. Stone:

In North Carolina. I graduated from an old country high school in North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished high school, what did you do then?

Mr. Stone:

Actually I started to Duke University when I was 16 years old and the reason I did, I had a scholarship to Duke. I only had three years of high school but they let me go ahead and go to Duke and they gave me a scholarship for a year.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you go to Duke?

Mr. Stone:

1944. I started in July of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Stone:

I went into the service in April of 1945 I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Stone:

No, I volunteered. I actually, let me tell you a story about that. I was very fortunate to go to Duke University and I wanted to become an electrical engineer. So I started Duke on my scholarship and I found out I was only one civilian in many classes out of 35 ROTC Naval guys. So I was the young kid in the class for about a year. Then I decided, well, I wanted to go get in the Navy and I decided to take the EDDY test to see if I was qualified to get on the EDDY program and the electronics program in the Navy. I passed the test and I joined the Navy when I finished my first year of college which was in April of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Stone:

Always wanted to be in the Navy, I guess. But they had the EDDY program and it suited me fine and I passed the EDDY test and I wanted to continue my education in electrical engineering.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what kind of program is that?

Mr. Stone:

Well EDDY test was a test that they gave to people to see if they could go get qualified to go to electronics school in the Navy. So I passed that test and that gave me a leg up going into the Navy so that's what I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you went in, did you have boot camp?

Mr. Stone:

Yes, I did, at Great Lakes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that boot camp?

Mr. Stone:

Fantastic. Loved every minute.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there?

Mr. Stone:

Well, we did all the regular stuff. We marched, we hiked, we did everything that you normally do in boot camp but I was in a group that was going to continue on with their education.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Stone:

No, they were good guys. We had no problems at all in our boot camp. It was a real fine group.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was your boot camp?

Mr. Stone:

Boy, I don't know. Two or three months I think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably 12 weeks or something like that.

Mr. Stone:

Could have been, could have been.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After boot camp, then what happened?

Mr. Stone:

Well, we went to Hugh Manley High School in Chicago and spent one month learning how to use a slide rule.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Stone:

Then they sent us down to Gulfport, Mississippi and we spent three months down there in basic electronic training. The best training I ever had in my life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you study in that basic electronics?

Mr. Stone:

Oh, we built a radio and we learned Morse code and we learned all electrical tube circuits and just how electricity works and electronics work.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after that class, then what happened?

Mr. Stone:

Then they shipped us in September of 1945 they shipped me down to Corpus Christi, Texas to learn some naval aviation electronics. It was a seven-month course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that course?

Mr. Stone:

Fantastic. The best training I ever had. My Navy was great.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you learn in that course?

Mr. Stone:

Well, I learned everything, how to repair everything they had in the aviation, naval aviation corps, everything that was on a plane, your navigation equipment, your radio equipment, actually we even learned a lot about radar.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you repair equipment then?

Mr. Stone:

Yes, I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was in Corpus Christi.

Mr. Stone:

Yes, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Stone:

Well, in June of 1946 I was assigned to Operation Crosswords, Able and Baker bomb test, at Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific. At that time I had a rank of AETM-3C, Aviation Electronics Technician Mate 3C. I was assigned to the U.S.S. Avery Island. Before I got on the ship I was farmed out to a destroyer escort and what we did is, we fixed the equipment and we fixed and tested all of the drones that they had. That was radio-controlled boats that we used to pick up the radioactive water in Bikini after the bomb test.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you stationed on the Avery Island or on the DE?

Mr. Stone:

I was actually, physically on the DE but I was assigned to U.S.S. Avery Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were actually on the DE. What was the name of that DE? Do you know?

Mr. Stone:

I do not know and I've never been able to find out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Or the number of it? You don't know that either then.

Mr. Stone:

No, I do not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Stone:

Then they discharged me. They brought me back over to the United States and I hitchhiked across the United States from San Diego, California to Winter Haven, Florida. Then I got my discharge on October 25, 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you were at Bikini, was that part of the atom bomb tests, or what was that?

Mr. Stone:

It was, yes. We were there just specifically at the atomic bomb tests and we were specifically assigned to radio-controlled boats which we would test out and check out and what happened is

once the bomb went off, we sent these radio-controlled boats around and picked up water samples to see how radioactive they were.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you test the radioactivity or not?

Mr. Stone:

Did I test radioactivity?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes.

Mr. Stone:

No, I did not. I was very close but my job was just getting the boat there and taking the sample remotely and bringing it back to the ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When bomb went off, were you close enough to hear or see or anything like that?

Mr. Stone:

Absolutely. We were right across the lagoon from it and we got to see it. It looked like the whole sky lit up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's quite an experience then.

Mr. Stone:

Yes, it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened there?

Mr. Stone:

Nothing else happened except that test and our getting ready for it. The morning of the test I was sitting on the radio-controlled boat that was anchored out and nobody was around. I couldn't see anybody and I wondered if they were going to come back and pick me up. I had a big can of peaches and I ate the peaches and I wondered if they were ever going to pick me up. Hopefully they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel out to the islands?

Mr. Stone:

Went out on the hospital ship. Went through Pearl Harbor and got to Bikini that way. Then I came back on a troop carrier.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you went out, did you stop in Hawaii for any length of time?

Mr. Stone:

Yes, we did, for several days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get to go ashore?

Mr. Stone:

Sure did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there still much damage at Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Stone:

Oh, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Arizona and some of the other ships were still there?

Mr. Stone:

Yes. That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you see much damage to the buildings and that sort of thing?

Mr. Stone:

I did not. I cannot recall any damage that I saw to any buildings. We did go by the ships that were in the water but I didn't pay any particular attention other than just to see them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How were the people in Hawaii? Were they friendly?

Mr. Stone:

Very friendly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

There were still a lot of Navy people there then.

Mr. Stone:

Yes, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You would have been there some time in May or June of 1946. Is that correct?

Mr. Stone:

Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time on Hawaii?

Mr. Stone:

No. I enjoyed the time there but there was nothing particular that struck me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get to go to Waikiki Beach?

Mr. Stone:

Oh, I think I did. I went to several beaches while I was there and went up on the mountains on the path up above the naval station there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you left there, what did you travel on?

Mr. Stone:

That was on the DE from there on over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever on the Avery Island at any time?

Mr. Stone:

Not that I'm aware of. I was assigned to them because it was the electronics ship in that particular crossroad operation but I don't recall ever being on the U.S.S. Avery Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now it was AG-76. Is that correct?

Mr. Stone:

Yeah, right, that is correct. It was the AG...

Mr. Misenhimer:

76 I have.

Mr. Stone:

OK, I'm not positive that's it. Oh, yes, AG-76, that's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What does AG stand for?

Mr. Stone:

That I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of ship was it?

Mr. Stone:

It was just a...looked almost like a cruiser with electronic equipment from one end to the other.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you did see it then, even though you weren't on it.

Mr. Stone:

Oh, yes. Yes I did. Matter of fact there were 200 ships out there that were in the test and they had some Japanese ships and other warships and they even had one of our carriers out there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right. Did they do more than one A-bomb there or just the one?

Mr. Stone:

Actually I was there for two. Both Able and Baker bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any difference in the two that you saw?

Mr. Stone:

Oh, yes. The Able test was the one that was up above the ship and the Baker test was the one that

was underwater and matter of fact I gave a talk on these tests years later at Charlotte, North Carolina. I wrote an article for Duke Engineering Magazine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were some of the things you covered in your talk?

Mr. Stone:

Well, basically I wanted to bring...there was a big group of engineers that hold a meeting every week or every month I guess it is, I'm not sure and they call and ask various people to give a talk on interesting things and I wanted to talk about the bomb tests and they were very interested in hearing it and I tried to relate it to the city of Charlotte so they could figure out how high the water plume from the second test and how much damage there was and how big the area was, that sort of thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long were you there at this Operation Crossroads?

Mr. Stone:

I went out in June and came back in August.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were there about three months.

Mr. Stone:

Right, no longer than that. That's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were on the DE the whole time you were there?

Mr. Stone:

Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some other things you recall from that operation?

Mr. Stone:

Well, I really, I can remember as though it was yesterday and it was just a fantastic operation.

There were so many people, so many ships in operation and so many things going on at one time that we really had our heads right on the equipment and I wanted to make sure the equipment tested out right, etc. I remember we did get to go on leave every once in a while over to Bikini Island itself and the Navy Chief over there wouldn't let me drink any water. He said I had to drink beer. That was kind of an awkward situation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

These were remote-controlled boats you were working on?

Mr. Stone:

Right. That was an LCVP. It was about 30-40 feet long I guess and it was big enough to carry 30 people or so but it was remodeled and it had a cover over the top of it and it had paint marks on it so that with the yellow and black paint marks and so that the airplanes that came over could see which boat was which and then they would tell us to release the anchor on a certain boat and then would tell us whether to steer it right or steer it left and would tell us how to maneuver it in and around the boats that were there, the big ships that were there, and then the airplane that was assigned to that particular remote-controlled boat would get it back to our boat, our ship, and we would take water sample. Each water sample is about ten gallons.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened there?

Mr. Stone:

That was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If you were there for three months, did you get a chance to leave there and go anywhere else during that time?

Mr. Stone:

No, no. We were just getting prepared, did the test and then we left.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How much between the two tests, the A and B?

Mr. Stone:

Seemed to me like it was a month. I believe that it was but that's not a definite.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Somewhere in that range, right.

Mr. Stone:

Correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were out there, did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Stone:

You know it seems like I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me look at my map here a second. No, you probably didn't cross the equator.

Mr. Stone:

Seems to me like we did because they had all sorts of stuff going on the ship when that happened but I can't be sure. I wasn't big into navigation. I was just riding the ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. Now what unit were you in there? What unit were you assigned to?

Mr. Stone:

Well I was just assigned to, let me see here, Operation Crossroads, the Joint Task Force One, and really I was just in the electronic organization.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It didn't have a number or certain thing...

Mr. Stone:

No, it didn't. They just called it the electronics program of Operation Crossroads. Got a letter from a Captain in the Navy and he just signed it, Electronic Coordinating Officer from Joint Task Force One.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you came back from there, then what happened?

Mr. Stone:

That's when life began. I came back and crossed the United States back to Florida. I was too late to get back into school so I spent a year with my dad in the real estate business. Got a real estate license and a radio-telephone license to operate a radio station and got my pilot's license with the G.I. Bill of Rights. Then after I was there a year I started back to school. I went to Duke University and I finished up there in 1950 with an electrical engineering degree.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your career in civilian life?

Mr. Stone:

Well, it was...I worked at the Savannah River Plant for DuPont Construction. We constructed the five nuclear reactor plants in Savannah River Plant and then when they started operating it, making nuclear fissionable material I spent about a year in the operations of that. I was really the electrical supervisor and maintenance man for the reactors building.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had reunions of your outfit or anything?

Mr. Stone:

No. No reunions. I've been pretty busy. I say my life started right there. I got involved in maintaining the charge and discharge machines on the reactors. I got asked to go to California and helped start up a chemical plant, tetra-ethyl lead plant, in Antioch, California. I did that. Then I joined Boeing Company in Seattle, Washington and I worked on the Boemark Missile System. I worked on that in Seattle, Florida, Michigan, Ontario, Canada, Quebec, Canada and then I went to work on the Apollo program, the moon shots.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That would have been interesting.

Mr. Stone:

That was fascinating. Actually, I was the qualification test manager on the Saturn V program, the S-1C first stage and then when the guys got up to the moon they decided they needed a way to get around so I became the qualifications test manager on the lunar roving vehicle. I've had a great career.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Very interesting.

Mr. Stone:

Sure has been.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is there anyone you were in the service with that you've kept up with since the war?

Mr. Stone:

No, not a person. I have been so busy doing what I'm doing and raising four children that I really have never gone to any reunions at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit over there?

Mr. Stone:

Great.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Stone:

No. Well, yeah, no that's right I did not have any souvenirs from World War II. I do not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any U.S.O. shows when you were in the service?

Mr. Stone:

No, I never did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Stone:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Everything went well.

Mr. Stone:

Everything went well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were in the service on May 8, 1945 when Germany surrendered. You all have any kind of celebration or anything then?

Mr. Stone:

You know I don't have any recollection. What year was that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

May 8, 1945. You were probably in boot camp or something.

Mr. Stone:

In May, that's right, I was in boot camp. Absolutely.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Stone:

That was a very sad day for everyone. We were very distraught.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on August 6, 1945 when they dropped the first atomic bomb. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Stone:

Well, I guess that we probably did although I don't remember. I don't remember. What date did you say that was? August?

Mr. Misenhimer:

August 6, 1945.

Mr. Stone:

OK, I was at Gulfport, Mississippi when that went on and I don't know what the reaction was at that point. I just don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when Japan surrendered August 15, 1945. Any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Stone:

Well, I don't remember it. Again, I was actually transferring from Gulfport, Mississippi and going to Corpus Christi but I don't remember anything about the Japanese, our reaction to that at all. I just have any recollection.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

Not a bit. No, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in any typhoons when you were there in the Pacific?

Mr. Stone:

No. We were not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get, if any?

Mr. Stone:

None whatsoever. I probably did get a South Pacific. I'm not sure what they gave me but I've never pursued what it was or anything else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any time while you were in the service that you felt frightened or anything like that?

Mr. Stone:

No. It was just at that age I was just excited to be in the Navy and I was excited to do the job we were doing and Richard, my whole career started with a great opportunity in the Navy and everything just kept getting better and I've had the most wonderful life in the world. I've been very fortunate, almost to the point where I feel guilty when anybody says thank you for your service because I got a lot more out of it than took away from my life. It took nothing away and gave me everything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you say you got your pilot's license on the G.I. Bill. What did you use that for?

Mr. Stone:

Well, actually I just got a pilot's license so I could fly a plane.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever own an airplane?

Mr. Stone:

No, I never owned an airplane although I've done some soaring and that's pretty good stuff, too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Stone:

Well, just one thing. Let me continue on from the early days. I went into business with my wife on a nursery in Louisiana and about 12 years ago we came to Texas and I've now got a bunch of Arabian horses and a ranch and I'm really enjoying life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, good. Well, Albert, that's all I have unless you have anything.

Mr. Stone:

Richard, I think that's fine. I appreciate it very much. I thank you for taking the time to do this and I hope they pay you well for it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Albert, we'll talk to you later and thanks again for your time today and for your service to our country.

Mr. Stone:

Thank you very much and thank you for yours.

End of Interview

Transcribed by:

Oral History by:

Janice Conner

Richard Misenhimer

Winamac, IN 46996

P.O. Box 3453

August 23, 2017

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848