

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With  
Samuel H. Cole, Jr.  
Buda, Texas  
February 19, 2018  
Army Air Corps  
501<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group  
315<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing  
41<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron  
20<sup>th</sup> Air Force  
B-29

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is February 19, 2018. I am interviewing Mr. Samuel Hardy Cole, Jr. by telephone. His telephone number is 318-564-7895. His address is 503 Stonewood Lane, Buda, TX 78610. 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:

Hardy, 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. Cole:

Well, I respect you for recognizing that.

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. Cole:

That is OK with me, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I need to do is to get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road 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. Cole:

Well, yeah, let's see.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Whichever is easier for you, whichever one.

Mr. Cole:

Well, he is Thomas Hardy Cole. Just a minute and let me see which is more likely you could get hold of him is 225-931-7010.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have an address for him?

Mr. Cole:

Yes, that is 12461 Grand Villa Court, Baton Rouge, LA 70817.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hopefully we'll never need that but you never know.

Mr. Cole:

Yeah, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

First off, what is your birth date?

Mr. Cole:

November 30, 1924.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Cole:

Norfolk, Virginia.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Cole:

I had one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did she do anything in World War II?

Mr. Cole:

No. She married a fellow in the service at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is she still living?

Mr. Cole:

No, neither one of them are.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:

My mother's first name was Nellie and my father, I'm a junior, so he has my name. Or I have his.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:

Well, being at a young age, I didn't realize that it was a Depression. We moved around quite a bit because my father was in real estate and he would build a house and sell it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He could sell the homes during the Depression?

Mr. Cole:

Well, you know, my actual knowledge of his business at that time of course is very minimal because being a child, I just didn't follow those things.

He passed the bar exam and went into his father's office and like he says, in the courtroom when he stood up, his brain sat down. He gave up his legal practice and went into real estate and insurance.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Cole:

My high school was in Oceana, Virginia.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you graduate?

Mr. Cole:

1942. The high school is no longer in existence. Oceana Naval Air Station took over the property there and the high school didn't last past the 50's.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:

Yes. At that time I was...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably just turned 17.

Mr. Cole:

I was thinking at that time that I was selling newspapers at Virginia Beach when the news came.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:

I really didn't think about it affecting me at all. I was thinking more about the world situation. At 17, it didn't bother me that much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you enter the service?

Mr. Cole:

I entered the service actually in January 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you know the date in January?

Mr. Cole:

I kind of think it was January 10, I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's close enough. Had you finished high school when you went in?

Mr. Cole:

I graduated in 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Cole:

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What branch did you go into?

Mr. Cole:

I went into, well it was the Army at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Just the straight Army or the Army Air Corps?

Mr. Cole:

It was the straight Army. We were sent to Miami Beach for our classification and basic training.

There I selected the Air Force, the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about your basic training. How was that?

Mr. Cole:

Well, we lived in the hotels down there and there were no parade grounds so we marched in the streets, you know. It wasn't bad and it was a learning experience for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How were your drill instructors? Were they pretty tough on you?

Mr. Cole:

They were strict but they weren't tough.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of weapons training did you have?

Mr. Cole:

I don't think we had any weapons training at that time. We were just in basic training and we hadn't been sent to...since I was in the Air Force, the Army Air Corps, they hadn't assigned us any weaponry training at all at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you didn't go through the infantry training then?

Mr. Cole:

No, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then how did you get into the Air Corps?

Mr. Cole:

That was the selection that I made when I was down in Miami Beach. Wait a minute, it may have been...we were initially sent to Camp Perry in Virginia and may have been there that I selected the Army Air Corps. That's why they sent us to Miami Beach. It wasn't the Army Air Corps basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Air Corps? What reason, why did you choose the Air Corps?

Mr. Cole:

Well, I was always interested in flying and it seems strange now because the Norfolk area was all Navy. I was more interested in the Air Corps just because of flying. I'd been associated with flying with the Navy bunch.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then the basic training you had for the Air Corps, what all did you do in that?

Mr. Cole:

It was drilling and just I guess preparing us for further duties in schooling, getting us ready to fly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was your basic training?



Mr. Cole:

It was...may have been three months.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you didn't have any type of weapons training during that time?

Mr. Cole:

No, did not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you train on during that three months?

Mr. Cole:

Well, it was just learning military code and I guess learning drill practice and all. That's what I remember anyway. I don't recall any...well there may have been some schooling that they gave us down there but I don't recall. Long time ago, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any type of flight training at all there?

Mr. Cole:

Oh, no, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after that was over, where did you go?

Mr. Cole:

I selected the radio school and went to Scott Field in Illinois. Went to radio school there and while I was there, we were joined by a bunch of washed-out aviation cadets and they talked me into applying for cadet, which I did and I was accepted. They sent me back to Miami Beach for further basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of training?

Mr. Cole:

Basic training again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened? Go ahead.

Mr. Cole:

Then from there they sent me to St. Johns College in Collegeville , Minnesota. I guess the nearest town was St. Cloud, but I spent about ten weeks at St. Johns College. It was very pleasant. We had Jesuit instructors and it was a self-sustaining establishment there. They had a farm and they had a bunch of nuns from Austria and they came over to get away from the war, you know. They were residents at the college there. So we enjoyed very good meals from them. Once we had some not only, just gave us a little bit of college training and advanced our education to some extent and we had a lot of physical activity going on there and there I did get some flight training. They started me at St. Cloud airfield. Actually I got ten hours of training in a Piper, a JC-3 Cub. That was to prepare us in case we were to select pilot training. From there they sent us to Santa Ana, California. We were given the option of selecting which profession we wanted to follow. Although I wanted to go through the pilot training, the pipe line for pilots was just closed up. They had more than they could handle for that training so the option for me was to select bombardier, navigator or gunner. I didn't want to go for gunner training so I selected navigation. After a time at Santa Ana they sent me and those who selected navigator down to Hondo, Texas. There we went through navigation training and I think in, let's see, I guess it was

in August of 1944 that I was commissioned and they sent me to Boca Raton, Florida to attend radar training.

In the latter part of 1943 I was in Minnesota at St. John's College and then they sent us to Santa Ana for classification and from there I went to Hondo, Texas for navigation training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was that training?

Mr. Cole:

That was about maybe three months. Maybe a little longer...

Mr. Misenhimer:

So in August of 1944 then you were commissioned.

Mr. Cole:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

Mr. Cole:

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. Then what happened?

Mr. Cole:

I went to Boca Raton to radar training. Stayed there for a while and I had to do some instructing in radar and before they would assign me to a crew. They did send me from there, I went up to Harvard, Nebraska to join a crew. There they were all new crews and of course we were new in

the B-29s and so that it was during the winter months and it was very cold. We stayed there and I forget exactly how long but we did make one flight to Jamaica for training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of plane were you flying in there?

Mr. Cole:

A B-29 that had no gun turrets except for the tail gunner with two 50-caliber machine guns.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in the 29, OK. Now, on the radar training was this as an operator for radar or was it for repairs?

Mr. Cole:

Operator. It was on the top secret sets that we had to have clearance and all to look at the thing. It was a precursor to the ones they have today that have very high definition on the scope and so you're able to do more accurate bombing with it. There was one flight to Jamaica for gunnery training. We had several training flights in the United States. We'd just practice in making bomb runs and navigating.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Cole:

Well, finally in Harvard, Nebraska we had crews formed and then they sent us to March Field in California and from there we went to Hawaii and then on into Guam. We were stationed at what they called North West Field.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What field is that? I'm sorry.

Mr. Cole:

Northwest Field. While we were stationed there were practicing flying at night and there would be no fighters up there that joined us because you could hardly see other planes at all up there. So we didn't think we'd need the armament other than in the tail and of course we were supposed to be going faster than the fighters were going anyway. Though we were able to fly very high, the experience of the day bomber was they couldn't do any very accurate bombing and so they made them come down to lower altitude and by the time we got there, we were bombing at twelve thousand or lower. That was in range of the Japanese anti-aircraft but we had maneuvers that we were able to avoid that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you went to Guam, did you fly your plane over there or how did you go?

Mr. Cole:

Yes. We flew the plane that we used during the bombing. We flew that plane and we named it the "Laden Maiden".

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that name again?

Mr. Cole:

The "Laden Maiden".

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Cole:

Well, actually the whole wing flew 15 missions. Matter of fact, they came out with a book titled "15 Missions Oil". We were assigned oil refineries as our targets. So we actually flew 10

missions. We had one that we had to abort but we flew 10 missions in 1945 and flew those up until the war ended.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date was your first mission?

Mr. Cole:

Let's see. I've got that all down. It may have been in July of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that first mission to? What did you do on it?

Mr. Cole:

The oil refinery at Shimatsu. That was July 6, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Cole:

Well, then number two was the Yokkaichi refinery. That was on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July. The third was on July 15 at Kodamatsu.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on these flights were you attacked by the Japanese planes and things?

Mr. Cole:

No, I think it was on our second mission that, no it was on the third mission I believe in the Osaka area. They didn't have any anti-aircraft on the first two missions. The intelligence had informed us that the other bombers had been going in daylight and they would leave the target after dropping the bombs, they would make a sharp turn to the left and nose-down to pick up speed to get out of the area and the Japanese had figured that out and prepared to put the anti-

aircraft in place so they advised us to make the turn and climb. We did that and we saw the puffs down there where we would have been if we had gone down. That was the only time, really, that I saw any anti-aircraft activity.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your worst mission?

Mr. Cole:

Well, as far as we were concerned, they were just trips. There was only one that was dropped in, that was the...it was up there near Tokyo. Let's see. Nagasaki but there in the Tokyo area they had radar-controlled searchlights and we, being aware of what the situation was, were prepared to drop chaff which was we had packages of three rolls of aluminum foil with a flat cardboard tail to it that would cut the airstream and let the roll roll out and we had the radio operator who was on radio silence the whole time but he had a chute by his position there that would open it up and start dropping packages of chaff down through there and I remember that one mission, all of a sudden he got the searchlight right in his face as he was looking down the tube and he started frantically chucking the stuff out. Of course he got enough out that it created a radar target and the searchlight held on that and left us. So we escaped that part of it. The radio operator did his part with that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Cole:

Well, you asked about my worst mission. That happened to be...I don't know particularly which one it was but we took off at two o'clock in the afternoon and it was about 15 hours flying, seven and a half up and seven and a half back. Of course we were missing supper so we packed these

trays with dinner in a thermos chest so it would be warm when we opened them up. We would eat before we got into the target area. One time mine evidently had spoiled, maybe it was an old one, I don't know, but I went on over the target and I had to hold it. After we got out I had to go back to the rear compartment and use the facilities back there. Of course I had to clean it up after we got back to Guam. I would say that was my worst mission.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Cole:

Well, not too much. Except there was one mission we did have to abort. It happened to be my fault. I didn't pre-flight the radar before we took off and of course it was supposed to have been pre-flighted by the ground technicians but they evidently didn't do it either. So we got up there and I just could not get it to work properly in spite of everything I did, I did all I knew about it. You rely on the radar to take you into the area and it was just pointless trying to go up there blind, particularly since there were other planes. We didn't go up in formation but in single sorties, just take off and after proper speed we would exercise cruise control. Each one would stay in position, one minute ahead of the other and by the time we got up there, there would be some differences because of wind and everything else. They would be a little closer together but actually we were able to keep separate so the single sortie for each crew wasn't that threatening so we were all right then. As far as we were concerned, there was not anything bad happening or anything dramatic. The only thing is I had some friends that...the B-29 at that time was brand new and the engines were not that reliable although we never had that much problem with them but a friend of mine went down on the way to Japan because I think they had engine problems and they had to ditch in an area there that didn't have the submarines there for rescue. They had



them in other areas, closer to Japan but they didn't have them closer to Guam because that is where they anticipated problems but I had a close friend that did go down. That was I guess the hardest part. There would be a thing too that might be of interest. When we arrived there, I guess the buildings that they built were airmen's quarters first and all the officer crew members were in tents. We were in tents and we spent the war living in those tents. After the war we helped build our barracks and we lived there. So it was much better after the war. It was kind of overall not a bad experience. One thing, I hate to call myself a veteran because I didn't associate with any instances of a great danger of injuries compared to what the soldiers and Marines faced on the ground. So I just don't feel I deserve any great credit from that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You took your chances because you could have gotten in all kinds of problems.

Mr. Cole:

Well, I could have, flying those long distances there. If you had a mechanical problem, you were in deep trouble. We had good crews, good ground crews and good flight crews that took care of us well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand there were quite a few B-29s lost from various mechanical problems.

Mr. Cole:

Yes, there were. As I said the engines weren't that reliable and of course you had to nurse them pretty good. That was how our ground crew and flight crew were able to maintain ours adequately so that we didn't have any real problems.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand that they pretty well over-loaded them too. They were pretty heavy.

Mr. Cole:

Well, that's the reason that we couldn't have gun turrets because we were carrying twice as much as other aircraft would carry. We were carrying forty 500 lb bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

20,000 pounds. I understand that some of them, in taking off, could not get airborne.

Mr. Cole:

Well, it's possible. That's when I said the engines were a problem. We would take off the airfield that was kind of low in the middle and high on both ends so we would make a run down that little slope and get a little momentum, then up the end of it, it would kind of raise us up. We would always be pretty low over the palm trees. Fortunately we were on a five-hundred foot plateau and once we cleared the land area, we'd drop the nose and be on our way. Some of them weren't able to do that. They just didn't have the power.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get to many other fields at Saipan or Tinian, any of those?

Mr. Cole:

We did get up to Saipan. Let's see...at one time we did do a practice run away from where all the troops were and everything. We'd dropped a hundred pound bomb over there just for practice but we did land once and I think it was Saipan. I don't think it was Tinian but we landed over there. Of course that was north of Guam. Tinian and Saipan were closer together. We did land on there one time and we got normal operations there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand that Iwo Jima was kind of a place they could land in case of problems.

Mr. Cole:

Yes, we landed there one time, too. I think we had more problems so we landed there and saw a bunch of B-29s with flak damage to them. Some of them were pretty serious but they were there on the ramps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Cole:

Well, when we arrived there they wanted us to perform a training mission first to a target on the island, Truk. It was to be a practice bombing run. On the radar screen I could pick up targets within 60 degrees forward and I picked up the island as we headed south and calculated a time to turn towards the island. When we turned to the north we either turned too short or overshot the turn and could not find the island. Fortunately it was a practice run.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when was your last flight?

Mr. Cole:

Let's see. I think about August 9<sup>th</sup> I believe was the last bombing mission. We flew to Tokyo Bay September 2, 1945 for the show of force at the surrender ceremonies.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Cole:

Well, we had to hit that oil refinery but...

Mr. Misenhimer:

On August 15, 1945 is the day that they announced the surrender. Of course the ceremony was September 2.

Mr. Cole:

Yeah, well, of course when we got back from that we found out that they had sued for surrender.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right.

Mr. Cole:

So we were pretty excited over that but we weren't the last mission at all. There was another one I think that may have been over to Okinawa but it wasn't our unit. Our unit the last one was on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they dropped the first atomic bomb on August 6<sup>th</sup>, did you hear about that?

Mr. Cole:

Yes, that came through and we didn't know anything about the atomic bomb but it was announced. By that time the radio was pretty free I believe. We heard about it there, about the big bomb. We wondered why we were going out there after that but they hadn't surrendered then. We knew it would be a very long war if they didn't surrender so what we were doing, we were attacking the oil refineries and removed that resource from them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when war got over, what did you do then?

Mr. Cole:

Well, I had to stay...a lot of them had enough points that they could fly back. A couple of members and I on the crew did not have enough points so we had to stay there. I was put in charge of a group of Jap prisoners they had there. They were making boxes to pack up stuff to send back to the States. We had to on the other side of the field so I had me a six by six truck, you know, to drive the prisoners over to the warehouse over there where they started building on these boxes for us. It was quite funny. We'd give them a break and they would start doing a game of trying to knock each other off balance by standing in front of them and hit their hands. Those Japs would hit as hard as they could but with a low center of gravity and they couldn't knock each other off balance. That was one of the things. Then I was assigned to the I guess it was the engineering, no communications, that's what it was. I was put there in that section and set up the crews that handled the communications. I spent about I guess couple months there and finally got my turn to go back. They put us on an ocean liner, an Italian ocean liner that was converted to troop carrier, and in ten days we got back to San Francisco. From there I went to Ft. Bragg. North Carolina where I was separated.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you leave Guam?

Mr. Cole:

That had to be February of 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you left over there in February 1946 and came back to the States, right?

Mr. Cole:

Yeah. Let's see, I've got my paper. It was 31 March 1953. This is after the Korean Conflict.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, I see. You stayed in.

Mr. Cole:

No, I got out and I joined the Reserves in 1946 and I got recalled. Let's see...I had accumulated leave which was from 1945 to May 1946 but I departed Guam the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened that date?

Mr. Cole:

That was the date of departing from Guam I believe and arrived on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April at Camp Knight in California I guess it was in San Francisco area. We arrived in the States on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1946. We left Guam the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. It was a long boat ride.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April 6 of 1946, OK, arrived in California. Then you were released from active duty? May of 1946 then?

Mr. Cole:

Well, actually it was Ft. Bragg, NC in April because my date of release with accrued leave time was the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what did you do when you got out?

Mr. Cole:

Well, I went back home and I started looking for a job. I worked at a bank, bank teller, and I didn't find any satisfaction. Anyway, then I worked for a construction company building a triple-decker overpass, a highway overpass, and they finished the job and left town and wanted me to

come with them but I didn't want to leave the area. Then I went to work for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Transportation Headquarters in Baltimore. Its headquarters in Maryland I believe. I was loading cargo ships. I guess there was grain and coal and all sorts of product there. I was authorized to sign them out, get the Captain to sign the manifest and all. Then while I was working there I got a call back for the Korean Conflict. Went back in 1951 I believe it was, no, 1950. Again that was January entrance, again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It would have been sometime in late 1950?

Mr. Cole:

Actually I was recalled earlier but I had to report to Langley at Langley Air Force Base in January of 1951, I guess it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

January of 1951. That makes sense. When you got out from World War II did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Cole:

No, because contrary to what it is nowadays, that being over there was an entirely different world than what I was experiencing to what they do now. We got recalled home and we sat around and talked to our people at home and everything. There at that time if you got a letter once a month you were in good communication with home. But nowadays you don't leave your civilian life that way so it was two different worlds and I didn't have any problem getting back into my civilian world. Like I say it was entirely different.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on Guam what outfit were you in over there?

Mr. Cole:

I was in the 41<sup>st</sup> Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But what – bombing group or what?

Mr. Cole:

Yeah, it was the 41<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron Heavy. Very Heavy I believe they called it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, VH.

Mr. Cole:

It was the 501<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group and 315<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing and 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer:

501<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Cole:

There was some guys went to China at that time and came back with some stuff. But no, I never got to where the Japanese caves were and things like that so I didn't have any souvenirs to take back other than my flight jacket. I did secure a survival flashlight that was a hand-generated thing that had no batteries. You just squeezed it and the generator in there would produce electricity and it would give you light. I guess you might say that was a souvenir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:



Oh, yes. We had movies and U.S.O. Shows and everything over there. They built a stage and we had a theater, outdoor theater, and we had movies. Most of that was after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Cole:

Yeah. We did. At one time somebody had a party on the beach at Tumon Bay. Our mess officer had a friend in the Navy and got us some chicken and we cooked it there on the barbecue at Tumon Bay. Of course we went swimming and all. After the war they built the Officers' Club, too and some locals there, some girls would come up and we had dances and things like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Cole:

I may have at one time. I didn't really pay a whole lot of attention at all but I may have heard her at some time. I don't recall specifically. I knew of her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your organization?

Mr. Cole:

Seemed to be pretty good. Of course never been perfect. Some of the food wasn't all that good but then again you'd make friends with the Navy and they'd get some good food.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Cole:

First Lieutenant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Were you still in the States then?

Mr. Cole:

Yes. Matter of fact at that particular time, I was at a field near San Bernardino and we were doing some practice radar runs and we were listening to the radio and we actually flew down into Mexico. We didn't intend to but everybody was just listening intently to what the radio had said. We went across the border. Not too far but we did cross into Mexico and Baja, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. Did you have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Cole:

I don't think that was as big as it would be in the States but there was some cheering going on.

We were glad to hear it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:

I did. I took some flight lessons to get my private pilot's license.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go to college when you got out?

Mr. Cole:

No, I did not, not at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were in the Pacific over there, were you in any typhoons?

Mr. Cole:

No. I don't think so. Yeah, there was one after we left. When we were on the boat coming back I think they told us there was a typhoon that hit Guam. The only weather we saw was when we come in to land one time and on the west-southwest part of the island out in the water, we saw a water spout. Of course we didn't get close to it at all but we could see it and it was such an unusual sight for us. That's the only weather we ever saw.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Cole:

No. The 315<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing did have several reunions and just now it's mostly the second generation. Not many of the veterans made it. There's several but I think lately they joined up with another, I forget what they...it was a wing but it was a different one. We joined them up because the 315<sup>th</sup> Bombing Bombers Association hosted the reunions but I never have attended any and they have just about given up on it I believe. They do have some memorabilia in some of the museums they talk about it and I think maybe one up in maybe Kansas City or somewhere. But no, and actually I'm the lone survivor of my crew. The last one was, I think it was last year or a couple years ago, the last one. He was the co-pilot on the plane but all the rest of them have...did some tracking when I was trying to report to the 315<sup>th</sup> Bomber Association that tracked them all down and all of them had passed pretty ...to me they were pretty young.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your pilots' name?

Mr. Cole:

That was Bryce A. Frey, Aircraft Commander.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about your co-pilot?

Mr. Cole:

That was Wendel S. Shorter. He was from Columbia, South Carolina. His father I think was Chief of Detectives down there. He was last to die, so far.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about your bombardier? What was his name?

Mr. Cole:

That was Ronald C. Feavel.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your position?

Mr. Cole:

Radar, Navigator, Bombardier.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the other flight members? What were their names?

Mr. Cole:

Latimer D. Johns was the navigator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The gunners?

Mr. Cole:

Joseph W. McCreary, Flight Engineer; Edward C. Meiti, Radio Operator; Lawrence Weigel, Scanner; Irwin McCurdy, Scanner; Charles J. Dusch, Tail Gunner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Cole:

No, I have not. A friend of mine here was on it before we moved here and he said it was a very moving thing. He enjoyed it. I have not been on it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long have you been living here in Texas?

Mr. Cole:

We actually bought a house here in December last year. I mean December of 2016. We had been visiting back here. My wife's grandchildren brought us here and we came down six years ago. Liam was her first grandchild.

I remember when we had survival training. They took us on an LST about 12 miles off Guam and dumped us overboard with a life raft. One of them pulled on the gas release to inflate our raft and it broke off and we had to do a hand pump. I had to tread water with the radio operator. He couldn't swim. We had some hard times on that. We tied the two rafts together and with the swells in the Pacific Ocean of course we'd get on top of the swell and one of them would be on one side and the other raft on the other and after the swell passed we'd all bump together and go back up on the next swell. So it was an experience anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, that's interesting. Right. Well, Hardy, that's all the questions I have unless you've thought of anything else.

Mr. Cole:

Well, I think I've told you more than I've told anybody. But anyway I appreciate you calling, Richard. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Cole:

Thank you for your service, too.

*End of Interview*

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July 7, 2018

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