

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Jerold L. Cox

Marissa, Illinois

August 28, 2019

U.S. Marine Corps

1st Marine Division

Guadalcanal

2nd Marine Division

Bougainville

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is August 28, 2019. I am interviewing Mr. Jerold L. Cox by telephone. His phone number is 618-978-2102. His address is 724 N. Main, Marissa, Illinois, 62257. 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.

His alternative contact is his son Kevin Cox, his phone number is 618-444-8075.

Well Jerry 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. Jerry Cox:

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. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay now what is your birthdate?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

January 15, 1924.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Sorento, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I had one brother and he was killed in France.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he older or younger than you?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Two and a half years older than me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened, how did he get killed in France?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

We're not sure, but we think it was friendly fire.

Mr. Kevin Cox (son):

If you really want to know, it was at the prelude of Operation Cobra I think it was. And the 8th Airforce bombed them by accident. The next day they did it again and killed General Lesley McNair.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, there was a large number of people killed and wounded in that accident.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, I've heard a lot about that, right. Now what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

My mother's name was Gladys, my father's name was Merle.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Kevin Cox:

If we can backtrack a second, the last name was Beann, B-e-a-n-n.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'm sorry what was that?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

The last name of his parents was Beann.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did that happen?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Oh it's a longer story than you want to know.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Yeah. Dad was raised by a family named Cox, to narrow it down. And that's how he wound up with that surname.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh okay, I understand then.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

So you can word it anyway you want.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's fine, no problem. I guess we'll just use Cox because that's what he uses, right?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right, we'll use Cox, you use the same name, right. Now I asked about the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I guess I was young enough it didn't bother me much. But they were poor like everybody else. That was the Cox family now we're talking about.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was Mr. Cox's occupation, what did he do?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well, not a whole lot I think. I'm not really sure about a lot of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He wasn't a farmer though was he?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No he was not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now where did you go to high school?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

East St. Louis.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you finish high school?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I quit school in '40 or '41. Went to CC Camp for a little while and then went into the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you join the Marine Corps?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

January 12th of '42.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you had just turned eighteen is that correct?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I didn't understand that.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

When did you turn eighteen, in boot camp wasn't it?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

He turned eighteen in boot camp.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Marines?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I saw a poster on Main Street, East St. Louis and decided that I would do that. That's the only reason I had for doing it, I just saw the picture and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you joined in January of '42?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

January 12th. I got on a train to St. Louis to go to California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's where you went for your basic training, was at California?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir, San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that, how was your basic training? Was it pretty tough?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Everything, we had regular boot camp training, rifle range, the whole bit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have a lot of marching?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Lot of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A lot of physical exercise too, right?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Every day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they combat veterans?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes, as far as I know. Some were the old China Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything you recall in particular from your boot camp?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No, only that it was rough. It wasn't too bad, but it was different than anything I had had before.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened after boot camp, where did you go then, what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

From boot camp I was sent to Pearl Harbor to the Marine barracks. And I think I was there about a month or six weeks maybe and was put on a transport headed for the Canal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'm sorry what was that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I was sent to Pearl Harbor after boot camp to the Marine barracks, I was at the Marine barracks

at Pearl. And then after a few, I don't know three weeks or so, maybe a month, as I remember, we were put on a transport headed for the Canal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

To Guadalcanal?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The landing in Guadalcanal was August the 7th of '42.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you land on the first day?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that, what was it like?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

It really wasn't too bad. There's a lot of Navy action, the ships shelling the beach.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you were in the 1st Marine Division?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well our whole battalion was attached to the 1st Division.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Tell him what battalion it was.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

That was the Defense, the 3rd Defense Battalion was attached to the 1st Marine Division.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you land on the first day?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there much opposition when you landed?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Not a whole lot and not a particular landing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well it just got worse every day after that. Had no desire to go back.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Did you tell me you landed with a different bunch because that officer sent you over the side?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I told you that, yeah but that

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I was talking to my son, but I'll tell you what we were talking about. I was on the ship the *Betelgeuse*, that was the name, standing at the rail in the dark and an officer came and said I was supposed to get going with everybody else. They were going over the side on the cargo nets to landing boats below. So I went like I was told to do, like in boot camp you know and do what they told you to do. And that was the last I saw of my outfit for three or four days. I went down and got in with a bunch of Raiders in their boat with their dogs. And all I heard in there, because everybody was jammed together, is don't touch the dogs. And I didn't and they didn't. So I didn't know then that I was in the boat with a bunch of Raiders.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well then I went in with them. It was about three days later when I finally got back to the 3rd Defense.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what all did you do with the Raiders?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Just went in and they did their thing and I was left standing somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what were they doing?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

They were going further inland and that they knew exactly where they were going but I didn't know where they were going.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well not a whole lot for me for a few days, I was pretty well by myself.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you got back with your outfit then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Then it was just the usual thing, carrying ammunition, unloading the ships, and we did it for several days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you involved in any combat?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well only that I was there from day one because we had to hold the place down.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by the Japanese?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Like about every ten to fifteen days when they shelled us and bombed us. In direct combat, I guess no. Other than that that they bombed us and there was no place to go but stay there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand the fighting was pretty rough there on Guadalcanal.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah, it got worse as time went on when we moved further back off the beach.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about some of the things that happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well you've got me there because I have forgotten a lot of it. There's been a lot of years go by.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

How about the cigar escapade with Geiger?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well my son just reminded me, General Geiger came on day one that evening. And I was in a fox hole and this guy came up, wanted to know if we had room for one more. And I did because I was the only one in it. And he got in it and it turned out to be General Geiger, who I didn't know that at the time. I had a cigar of his that I carried around for a week, cut the fire off you know and save it for the next day. As that happened that he didn't know me and I didn't know who he was until later. And he, as I remember, there was a pagoda, a Japanese pagoda on the hill right above us. And I think the following day Geiger must have sent a dozer up and they got rid of that pagoda and I don't think the Japanese ever hit directly on the airfield much after that. Their bombs went over the island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's interesting. What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I think that I was put in a CP overlooking the so called airfield at the time. And somewhere along the line the Japanese came up with a battleship I believe, if I remember this story right, with a 17-inch shell. Now they had replaced their new battleship with 17-inch guns as opposed to our 16s. And we had one of their shells land on the roof of our CP just a little below where the Japanese pagoda was standing before. And it didn't go off, apparently it landed flat. Well they had to get some equipment up there, get that shell off of the CP roof. We had logs over us, sandbags and logs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But that shell didn't go off then?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

It did not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If it had of you wouldn't be here?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well then things went on a day-to-day operation, carrying ammunition and unloading ships. I don't remember exactly how long the Navy was there but they had to pull out and I think they went back to New Hebrides and left us for about six weeks. Either four or six weeks, I'm not really sure but we ran out of food.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah they pretty well abandoned people there on Guadalcanal.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

They did, yes they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

The other things that happened, some of the other things, I think the crew of the *Atlanta*, the cruiser *Atlanta* maybe got sunk during one of the night shellings, bombings that we had and the shellings. The Navy had brought some of the men ashore and came around to a land outfit to hunt for clothes for the Navy, for the boys that were on the ship that got sunk.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah they call that thing the Iron Bottom Sound because of all the ships that were sunk in it.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well the *Astoria* was there I think at the time. And that was the one that, supposedly I was supposed to go on as a trade for somebody that wanted to get on the I'm not really sure how this goes, I don't remember exactly any more but somewhere along the line I was supposed to trade with some fellow that wanted to go off or on the ship and I was gonna go on the *Astoria* in his place. And he was gonna take my place. I did not trade, he did not trade and it turned out that I never did find who he was or really what his name was. But we didn't trade and I didn't trade so I stayed on the Canal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well then things just went on from then on. As the battle progressed why we were in this CP overlooking, I worked with a gunnery officer, I was in the CP as a radio operator with the gunnery officer and a Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

And I think, I'm trying to think about this, I think his last name might have been Cherveas and I don't know how to spell it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

The gunnery officer's name might have been Hemmingway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you involved in much direct combat there on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Only by being in a CP with the radio and being bombed and shelled by the Jap Navy. So if that's direct combat I was there, if not I guess I wasn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean with a rifle, up and shooting with a rifle on the front lines.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No I didn't have to carry it around.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were fortunate there.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Overlooking the airfield, I think we might have had twelve, as I remember might have had twelve machine gun emplacements around the airfield.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened there?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I don't know about the field but the radios were all up in the hills and back in the jungle so I don't know what happened there. We were stuck around the airfield.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

What about that time you saw that P-38 chase that Japanese plane to the water, remember that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

My son's reminded me of some P-38's came onto the Canal later on, I don't remember how

long. But this P-38 and a Zero got into it and the 38 chased him to a high altitude and then they both headed for the ground. We watched that 38 chase that Zero right into the ground. The 38 pulled out, he was alright.

Mr. Misenhimer:

There were a lot of air battles down there.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you see many of those?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

We weren't overloaded with airplanes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No that's right. You were lucky to have a P-38, those were good airplanes.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes. We thought we had the war won when three or four of those came in at one time and landed on the airfield. But before that was the what, the P-40 the old wildcat? And I think that Major Smith was one of them, one of the pilots at the time when they first came on with the first airplanes that landed there. That's the only name I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, there was a lot of air battles there.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Gobs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I wouldn't know about a lot of it because I was stuck at the CP. We were overlooking the airfield and our guns were on it.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Could you actually see those Japanese ships come aground when they ran them aground on the beaches?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No, no. No we were too far back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Japanese had their battleships and other ships do a lot of shelling on Guadalcanal.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

It seemed like they preferred the 15th of the month mostly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's the name of that island across the bay there from

Mr. Jerry Cox:

That was Tulagi.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tulagi, right. Now that bay between Tulagi and Guadalcanal they called that Iron Bottom Sound because of all the ships sunk there.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes. As we speak I showed my son a book that I have about the history of the Canal or a history of the Marine Corps actually. And the Canal is listed all through the book.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah that as a lot of big fighting, that was the first big battle in the Pacific of the war.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

That was the only big one at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right, right.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Didn't you guys relieve the Army of their M-I's when they came ashore?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No, I never did see anything of that. No I had the 03, the bolt action.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had the Springfield bolt action.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes sir. That's the best made gun.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Tell him maybe what you're telling me about thieving from the Army, getting their supplies.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well maybe I shouldn't tell him about all that.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Yeah they may come looking for you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Go ahead and tell me.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Okay I'm going to tell you. I'm forced to tell you. We had a I think a full Bird Colonel that drove around in a recon car. And he didn't have to have a driver, he was one of the old bunch. He'd done his own driving. But come air raid time and everybody would head for shelter, here come the old man with his recon. And now I wound up every trip with him and four or five other people, we would go out and raid chow dumps. Because we didn't have any and they did.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

The Army dumps.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

But that got us through for awhile until the Navy came back. Then they gave every man supposedly a one pound steak. And I had steak, my teeth were loose and I had a steak in my pocket for probably a week. Just getting rid of a mouthful at a time.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

What about grandpa being there? Wasn't he there?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Oh my son just reminded me, my father

Mr. Kevin Cox:

That you didn't know.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

That I didn't know was on the island probably at the same time I was. But he was a 34-year Army veteran when he finally died. And my wife's father was a flight surgeon with the original Flying Tigers in China.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

That was grandpa, he was with the 125th Infantry Regiment.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

With the Americal Divison.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

The Americal Divison yeah, they lost their flag on the Canal. And then we got it back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well a lot of things I guess that I don't know anything about but that I was there until they declared it, the Canal secure and that was when I was sent to New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well in December of '42 the Marines transferred off of Guadalcanal and the Army came in.

That was in December of '42.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

They brought in that 125th Regiment early to reinforce the Marines before the rest of the division or I assume the same division quite a while before they showed up I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when y'all left Guadalcanal did you go to Australia or New Zealand?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I went to New Zealand. That was supposedly to reorganize the battalion. New guns, new men, the whole bit, you know. That was to a little town Masterton, about sixty miles inland from Wellington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all happened there?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well that was the reorganizing time, that took almost six months.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Did you hit more area then?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well yeah that was it. Well anyhow about the end of the time, end of the six month rehab time for us we were put with the 2nd Division that went to Bougainville.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about Bougainville, how was that?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

You had a new name didn't you, the battalion?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah they changed the battalion name from the 3rd Defense to the 3rd Anti-aircraft group. And it was also, I was in G Battery Machine Gun Group on the 2nd Division with them. But I think I only lasted there about two months. I had malaria and my time was up in the Marine Corps. I

got out discharged on points.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when did you get discharged?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I got discharged January 12th in '46.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So this is after the war?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, so a lot of things happened before that. Let's go back to Bougainville. What all did you do on Bougainville?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I was a radio operator there and I was only there, they were building a new airstrip, the Japanese had already started that airstrip. And they finished it and then the Japanese were trying to get off of the island and we were firing anti-aircraft bursts against the side of a volcano where the Japanese were using to get around the jungle so they could get out. That was a live volcano on Bougainville.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you were in anti-aircraft artillery on Bougainville, right?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of weapons did you have?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

90 millimeter. They had some 155's and 105's.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All Triple A. Well the 155's and the 105's were they Triple A or were they field artillery?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I don't know, they were firing those things from the beach. You know I was back off of the beach a ways.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in this Triple A outfit were you on the gun or were you in the office?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I was still on the CP.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Were you out living off pineapples?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Where was that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

That had to be on the Canal.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Okay, we got it covered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Back to the Canal for a minute. While we were waiting for the Navy to come back to feed us, they had left with the food and a lot of ammunition, we were getting pineapples, eating pineapples off the trees to get by. The trees off the island.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

You had fish heads and rice from the Japanese?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah. Canned no less, rich stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Back in those days on the Canal the Japanese had what I call "wonderful hard tack." That stuff was really great and it took good hot coffee to dissolve it so you could eat them. I tell you they were delicious, I thought. Maybe it was because we were hungry. But that's really that's about all I know. After Bougainville I was sent home with Malaria.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you came home after that then?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what date, do you have an idea when you came home?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

It seemed to me like I left there in July, I might have got home the last of July or early August.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

It would have been '46 I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well no the war got over in '45.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No. It had to be '44 or '45 one of the two.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Well you got married in '44 wasn't it?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

So you had to be home before then.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I was home in August of '44.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were home August of '44?

Mr. Kevin:

Then you wound up out at Quonset Point, how did that happen?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well that's where I got discharged from.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Oh. Well you were out there for awhile though, correct?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well we stayed there for a couple of years, doing work there, after I got discharged. Now that's about all I can tell you that will help I think, if it does you any good at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I've got some questions here for you. What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Almost all of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any occasion that was really bad?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well only the bombing and the shelling raids. After that it wasn't so bad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were over there did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes. She killed us a lot of times.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of her?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I thought it was a pretty good program. They had good music.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's what I understand, right. What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I thought we had pretty good ones. I didn't know much about officer material at that time anyway. It's still pretty new to me. I didn't especially like being told when to go to bed and when to get up, when to eat, and that sort of thing but maybe a lot of others didn't either.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of the medics, did you have much experience with them?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

They were great. That's all you need to say about those people.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, they did a good job.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes, they always did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I didn't know much about morale, I wasn't even sure what it meant back then in those days. But I thought it was pretty good. And once in awhile somebody would go bonkers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were overseas could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I only got a couple of letters. I got mail from my girlfriend and once in awhile from my foster parents. I think it was pretty good actually.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Twice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of a ceremony or anything?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did they do to you?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

My job, I call it a job, my initiation into the equator crowd they had a huge fat cook with a sweaty belly, bare belly and some of us had to go up and kiss his belly. And then my case when we crossed the equator we had an officer named Halloran that was in charge of the anti-aircraft, as I remember it. He had a big, I had a big head of hair and they lifted up one of my curly locks and cut it off and they almost skinned that Major and I think he hated me from that day on. And it's strange you ask about the officers, I was talking to a lady here in town who was a pharmacist at our local drug store and her married last name is Halloran and I think that's what this Major's name was that was our gunnery officer on the 90 mm's. Our gunnery officer who I think his name was Halloran, Major Halloran, the Japanese used to come in twenty-four airplanes at a time at about 24 or 26 thousand feet. Now this is back to the Canal days. And one of these, in our latter days that gunnery officer picked off about twenty of those twenty-four airplanes, one right after the other. And all you could see is falling airplanes and a parachute once in awhile, sometimes they'd open, sometimes not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was interesting.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

We understood that their bombers only had a bomb sight in the lead plane of each formation.

And when they dropped everybody else would drop theirs then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you say you came home in August of '44, what did you do when you got back to the States then?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

My wife proposed to me and we got married.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you get married?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

August 26.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got back in the States what else did you do, for the Marines what did you do?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

What did you do after you got back to the States?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I landed in Quonset Point Naval Air Station, got discharged and we got married of course. And then I stayed in Rhode Island for a couple of years and worked at a Navy, I guess it was a Navy Base actually. They were selling, what do you call that supplies when they

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Surplus.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Surplus. They could carry surplus material. Then I got back home and tried farming for awhile, got to working at a chemical plant about five years. And decided I couldn't hack that and went into the coal mine then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Then we raised a family and then wound up with about twenty-eight years in the mine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now back up, what date were you discharged?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

On January 12th, it would've had to have been '44 I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Earlier you had mentioned '46, but it was '44.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well I went in in '42 and I had four years in the Marine Corps, when would that put me to?

Mr. Misenhimer:

That'd been '46 then.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Okay well then '46 was right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After the war was over? Is that right?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah it ended while we were in Rhode Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you got married in '44.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were married about a year and a half before you got out. Is that right?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

You said you were in four years, which would make it '46. I thought you were still in the Marines when you were out at Quonset Point for awhile but you weren't?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah I worked at a Naval Air Station at Davisville.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

In the Marines, right?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah, I don't know I'm all confused now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's okay, we don't worry about it. Now you were back in the States when the war got over, is that correct?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes. I was around the Naval Air Station at Quonset Point the day that the war ended. A carrier had come in at Quonset Point and they had all kinds of gunfire when the war ended.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you were still in the service at that point?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I'm not sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now Germany surrendered on May the 8th of '45, do you remember hearing about that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah, but I don't know where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then Japan surrendered on August the 14th of '45. Any kind of celebration then?

(End of side one of tape.)

(Beginning of side two of tape.)

Mr. Jerry Cox:

So that's two of us still not sure anymore. Too much time's gone by.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

But you're sure you were in four years?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yes, *(laughs)* yeah, that I'm sure of. I think I went in on January 12th, I got discharged on the 12th. Four years later, that would make it '46.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Because I know you got out of the war on your points and my understanding always was that you were doing something out of Quonset Point as a Marine for a good while, a year or more at least.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well that would have been at the Davisville Base, that's when I worked for the Navy then after I got discharged with Russell Allen, from Rhode Island. Remember them?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Yeah, but you're overlapping there somewhere.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well might be, I'm confused a little bit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me ask you a couple of questions here. April the 12th of '45 President Roosevelt died, do you remember hearing about that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I'm not sure anymore.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Okay, tell him that's fine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he understand me?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Yeah, he said he wasn't sure anymore. You don't remember where you were when you heard Roosevelt died?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No I don't.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

He doesn't remember that part.

Mr. Misenhimer:

May the 8th of '45 Germany surrendered, do you remember that and did you have a celebration?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

We would have been, I remember that but I don't remember where it was.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

What about the atomic bombs, do you remember hearing about them?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Are you really meaning discharged or just like inactive duty or something like that, when you say you were discharged? Because you got out of the combat zone on your points, they wouldn't have turned you loose.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I came back to the States and it seems like I was in the States a year, or maybe a little better. I

had to call in when we got married to get permission to get married. So I would still have been in then. But that would have been in '44.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a copy of his discharge or anything like that there?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Not that I can get my hands on right quick.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You know all these dates are on there.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

They're in this house somewhere, we can show them to Kevin as soon as I find out where they are.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

His records got burned up in that fire in St. Louis in '75. The ones that he didn't have on hand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

There's still places to get some of those, other places have them, but most of them were destroyed there in St. Louis.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I've got my honorable discharge and who knows where it is. I think it's in the safe in the back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on August the 14th of '45 when Japan surrendered did you have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I don't have it anymore.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

He's not remembering that exactly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If you remember they had all these big parties. You remember the picture of the guy on Time's Square kissing this girl?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I remember seeing that but I don't know where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well I've interviewed that guy.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Well okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So I interviewed him, right. Now have you had any reunions of the people you were in the service with?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I used to in the 1st Division but I didn't see anybody that I knew. Oh I guess I was talking to you Kevin. No I haven't been back to any reunions of the 1st Division, not anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you kept up with anybody you were in the service with?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Jones.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Who?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Jones.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Only one and he's dead.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No, I don't think so. Did I have any trouble adjusting to civilian life wife?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

I'll go ask her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Corporal. When I got out, my discharge shows I was a Corporal, Line Corporal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Buy a house or go to school or anything?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No sir, I haven't asked them for anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then did you join the 52/20 club when you got out?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Mom says that dad did not have any particular problems adjusting to civilian life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay good. A lot of them did but I can understand why a lot of them didn't either, right. Well Jerry anything else you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No, I haven't thought much about it tell you the truth up to now until I found out that you were going to be around. And I don't mind that, it's just I didn't mean it the way that sounded but it

....

Mr. Misenhimer:

You're doing well today, you're doing good. Now what ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

There they are right there, that's all I got. I didn't do anything outstanding. Kevin's looking up the medals, we've got them inside a picture frame here. He's going to probably read it off to you.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Here we go. Here's one for Honorable Service, Good Conduct Medal, Combat Action Badge or Ribbon, American Campaign Ribbon, Asiatic-Pacific with four Bronze Stars.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay that's Battle Stars.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Okay Battle Stars. Okay, I thought well that don't look right. And World War II Victory and Presidential Unit Citation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a pretty good set of medals.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Then Rifle Sharpshooter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any others?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

They got Marksman with a stinking 45 pistol.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

That says quite a bit. They weren't made to be accurate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall in the service?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No, I guess I haven't spent any time trying to remember anything that happened. I'm sorry about that, no I'm not sorry about it, I would do it again. But if I had a choice or had to go back into the service right now at my age I would take the Marine Corps if I had a choice. They teach you how to stay alive. Like Patton said, he'd kill the other SB and you stay alive, that's the way you're supposed to win it.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Did you ever see any Naval action?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah, off of Savo, yeah we did. Not Naval action but I was within range of some of it in the Pacific where you could see the flashes of the guns on the sides. But the only exciting thing was that one day out of the Fiji Islands at Torpedo Junction we were stranded for twelve hours. Something happened to the ship, it quit operating for twelve hours. The destroyers were circling the whole time. We had probably almost five thousand people on that ship.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

That would make you feel naked?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

On that ship he shipped out on was, however they said it and I would say it Beetle Juice
(*Betelgeuse*).

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

I think it was an attack transport, I'm not sure.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

It was a French liner at one time.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Oh, there you go.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

That's what they told us. And it must have been because it was nice looking inside. Too bad
you didn't make it here, we could have had a cup of coffee.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now Jerry have you been on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No sir, I want no part of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No part of it, huh?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Why is that?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I guess when I've traveled, when I've been home, when I go my wife goes. And she couldn't go and I didn't care to go. And I think we have seen most of it and they tell me now that the really good one must be around Memphis or Nashville that's better than at D.C. Do you know anything about that? It's a war memorial I think, do you know Kevin whether it's at Memphis or maybe at New Orleans?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

At New Orleans is probably what you're thinking of, the World War II Museum?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Yeah. Folks they tell me the real place to go is the one at New Orleans, the World War II Museum, supposed to be the best going.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It's really good, I've been there, right.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Is that true?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes it's good, very good museum, right.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well that would probably, if I've got enough time on my birthdays left why I may hit that thing before I go.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now were you all at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg recently?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

No sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was some of your family there or somebody there?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Not that I know of. We've been to the, my wife and I have been to the Normandy Cemetery in France where my brother's buried. But that's been a few years ago already.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well the reason I ask about the Nimitz Museum that's where I got your name from them.

Apparently someone's been there and registered your name there.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Oh I contacted them, I've got or dad has a Japanese document that dad's gonna donate to them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh okay, I knew there was some contact there, yes okay.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

They said they'd have you contact dad. And ..., let's see I was thinking of something else, my brother-in-law actually has been there and he really bragged on it and he really doesn't follow history all that much. But him and his wife thought it was just pretty fine.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

I hope we didn't waste

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh no, this has been good.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

If you ever get this way stop and see me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Will do, right, I get down there sometime, who knows. My home's in Texas but I spend the

summers here in Indiana.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

Well my wife has a father buried in Texas. Do you remember where that is?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well Jerry thank you for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Jerry Cox:

You're welcome and thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you've thought of?

Mr. Jerry Cox:

If we can think of something else I'd be glad to tell Kevin so he could get a hold of you.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Did you get that, I texted you Uncle Wayne's headstone. Did you get that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'm sorry, what was this now?

Mr. Kevin Cox:

I texted you a picture of Uncle Wayne's headstone, dad's brother.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, I have it. Jerry, Kevin, both of you thank you for your time today and for information you've given me here.

Mr. Kevin Cox:

Okay, if we can be of any help you're welcome to call back. I don't know, I'm like dad I don't know what else. But I thought it was something, like I told him they made history so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes they did.

(End of interview.)

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