

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Marvin Lee Dunlap

Springtown, Texas

April 26, 2018

U.S. Navy

USS Duluth, CL-87

Okinawa

In Tokyo Bay September 2, 1945

Japanese Surrender

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is April 26, 2018. I am interviewing Mr. Marvin Lee Dunlap by telephone. His phone number is 817-523-4186. His address is 724 Cherry Lane, Springtown, Texas, 76082. His alternative contact is his daughter Patti Dunlap at the same address. Her cell phone number is 972-849-5098. 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.

Alright Mr. Dunlap, thank you for doing this today and I'll call you "Mr. Doboard."

Mr. Dunlap:

Hello.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what is your birthdate?

Mr. Dunlap:

6/05/1925. I was born sixth and fifth, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Dunlap:

I was born in Estelline, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Dunlap:

I had five brothers and two sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were any of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Dunlap:

I had three brothers in the service. I had one in the Army Infantry, and I had one in the U.S. Air Force, and I had one in the U.S. Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Are any of those boys still living?

Mr. Dunlap:

No. I'm the only one living.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If they were I would have liked to interview them. Now what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Dunlap:

My daddy's name was Ben and my mother's name was Ollie.

Patti Dunlap:

Benjamin and Ollie.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunlap:

Well we all had a hard time. We raised our own food, had everything that we could. Had very little money. And any kind of a job we get to pay a dollar we took.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well he was a farmer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you own the farm or was it rented?

Mr. Dunlap:

No, we leased it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a garden?

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh yes, we had a big garden and we canned.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That helped with the food then.

Mr. Dunlap:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about chickens and a milk cow, did you have chickens and a milk cow?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yeah we had chickens and turkeys both. And a milk cow, we had our own milk and butter.

Pigs, we had our own pigs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you had stuff to eat then.

Mr. Dunlap:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go to high school?

Mr. Dunlap:

I went to high school in Springtown and when I went into the service I got my GED.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your last year in high school?

Mr. Dunlap:

I think 1943. I went in the service in '44.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On December 7, '41 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh yeah. Yeah I remember hearing about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you hear?

Mr. Dunlap:

We had an old battery radio.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when you heard that how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well I knew that sooner or later I would have to go to the service. I wanted to go when I was eighteen years old, my daddy wouldn't sign my papers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you actually go into the service?

Mr. Dunlap:

I went into the service in May of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Dunlap:

I went into the United States Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well a little bit of both. I volunteered for the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Dunlap:

I always wanted to travel. And a couple, three of the boys already went, they talked about how they traveled, so I thought I wanted to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go for your boot camp?

Mr. Dunlap:

I went to Newport, Rhode Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how was that boot camp?

Mr. Dunlap:

It was pretty rough, nine weeks of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did they do to you?

Mr. Dunlap:

We had a lot of drill carrying them wooden rifles. And swimming, we had to go to take a swimming test. It was just hot, hot and tiresome.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do a lot of marching?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes we done a lot of marching, all the time. If we wasn't doing anything else we were marching.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had they been in the war?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes he had, he had been overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished boot camp then what happened?

Mr. Dunlap:

To Newport, Rhode Island for amphibious training, now it was really rough. We had to try to climb over that wall and had to crawl through them firing over you. And done a lot of drilling. It was five weeks of it. And when it was over I went to Virginia, Newport News, Virginia. I went aboard a new ship, the *USS Duluth*.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the name of that ship?

Mr. Dunlap:

USS Duluth.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And that was a light cruiser?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes, it was a light cruiser.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the number of it?

Mr. Dunlap:

Number 87 (CL-87).

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now back to your amphibious training, what all did you do in amphibious training?

Mr. Dunlap:

We mostly just drilled. We did hand-to-hand fighting with a rod and we went to the firing range in Maine. We had a lot of hand-to-hand fighting drill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you practice landing on the beach?

Mr. Dunlap:

No we didn't. We all got a chance to leave the amphibious force and we went on this cruiser.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job on the cruiser?

Mr. Dunlap:

I was a gunner on .40 mm anti-aircraft, a four barrel.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of training had you had for that?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well we had a lot of drills. When we got to sea it'd either pull a sleeve by an airplane or pull a sled and we'd fire on. Had to go to a firing range in Maine for some practice. And we drilled on it all the time off of that ship until we got over to the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what day did you join that ship?

Mr. Dunlap:

It was in September of '44, but I don't remember the date.

Mr. Misenhimer:

September of '44?

Mr. Dunlap:

Somewheres along about then. I helped put it in commission, I'm a plank owner on it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you left there where did you go?

Mr. Dunlap:

We were in the Atlantic Ocean for about five or six months, taking training and kind of patrol duty and training and everything. And we went from there through the Panama Canal to Pearl Harbor. And from Pearl Harbor we went to Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do at Okinawa?

Mr. Dunlap:

I was on a .40 mm anti-aircraft gun.

Patti Dunlap:

But what did y'all do when you got there?

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh we whatever, we helped protect the carriers and all, until we got into an air attack. But the main deal was to help guard them other ships and bombard everything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you arrive at Okinawa?

Mr. Dunlap:

All I know, we just were
at Okinawa.

Patti Dunlap:

When did you get there?

Mr. Dunlap:

I think in April or May, I don't really remember for sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April 1st of 1945 was when they landed on Okinawa.

Mr. Dunlap:

Well it's somewhere along in then, because we was in this storm off of there on June the 5th on my birthday that damaged many ships off of the coast of Japan. So it was either May, June somewheres along in there. Our ship was damaged in that storm and we had to go to Guam to a dry dock for three or four weeks. And it tore 108 foot off the bow of the *USS Pittsburgh* in that storm.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now back on Okinawa, were you attacked by many kamikazes?

Mr. Dunlap:

No, well I'm not saying. They all know they were foreign planes. And after the five minute surrender speech our Captain says seven planes were shot down over our ship. That's his numbers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you shoot at many planes?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well quite a few and whether I hit one or not I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was your ship attacked by airplanes?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes. Not really too often there at the last by the time we got out of dry dock.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you say your ship got damaged, how did it get damaged?

Mr. Dunlap:

Our ship got damaged in that storm. But our maintenance people saved our bow, but they couldn't save the *Pittsburgh's*.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now back when you were in combat, what was your most frightening time there in combat?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well Lord I don't know. It wasn't never no fun. All I know is we survived.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now how was the morale on your ship?

Mr. Dunlap:

It was good. The morale was good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think of the officers you had on your ship?

Mr. Dunlap:

They were all good. We had one that nobody thought too much of. But all the rest of them was

real nice, our Captain and all was real nice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened to you?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well I'm going to tell you something you probably never heard of. We had to spend thirty days in the river in Shanghai, China.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that.

Mr. Dunlap:

You go in there and stay thirty days and rotate out. And both ships couldn't be in the river at the same time. And when one rotate out at night the communists would raid the Naval Base and wreck it and steal everything else. That's the reason there had to be a man-of-war ship in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you do while you were there?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well we just stood watch. I had shore patrol several times. And had liberty and rest of time we just took care of our ship and our guns and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do on liberty there?

Mr. Dunlap:

They had an enlisted man's club. And when we got to China they told us that, "Don't eat nothing on the beach." Said, "Don't even eat a peanut." Said, "If you've got to eat come back to the ship or go to the enlisted man's club." And they had some nightclub there we went to a whole lot called the "Little Club." But most time we'd hang out down at the enlisted man's club.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you left there where did you go?

Mr. Dunlap:

We left there, I think we went back to Pearl Harbor. And from there we went to Australia. We crossed the equator, 180 degrees. We went to Australia. We spent six days in Melbourne, Australia and five days in Sydney.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How were things in Australia?

Mr. Dunlap:

It couldn't be any better than the way they treated us. They claimed it was five thousand people a day come aboard our ship in Melbourne while we were there visiting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what month were you in Australia?

Mr. Dunlap:

I don't even remember, I've got a book and I can look and see.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it after the war was over?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yeah, it was after the war. It was in 1946, after the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you crossed the equator did you have any kind of a ceremony?

Mr. Dunlap:

All they did was initiate you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, what all did they do to you?

Mr. Dunlap:

And you don't believe the way they treated us, initiating us.

Patti Dunlap:

What did they do?

Mr. Dunlap:

They run us through a belt line, crawling through. Some of them used a deal made out of ducking cloth and soaked in water. Rest of them used their belt or whatever they had. And they give us stuff that make you throw up and had to kiss that old fat chief's navel. It wasn't no fun. And I was on lookout and my binoculars were two Coca-Cola bottles together, painted black. And we're supposed to be watching for any planes or anybody coming in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you crossed the equator you become a Shellback, is that right?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yeah, you become a Shellback once you cross the equator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Dunlap:

We had real good liberty in Australia. People treated us decent and everything. And we left there we went back to Pearl Harbor. And from there we just cruised and went to Wake Island and all around. And we had started to Eniwetok and they turned us around to go back to Japan and pick up some war prisoners, they were the big people of the war. And we hauled them to Guam. They took them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did they do when they got to Guam?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well they were tried for war. They were big backers of the war.

Patti Dunlap:

War trials or war crimes?

Mr. Dunlap:

They never stated that, we don't know what happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were these Japanese or Americans you took there?

Mr. Dunlap:

Japanese. It was the bigwigs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, so these were Japanese prisoners?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well we were in Trinidad while we were in the Atlantic Ocean. And we stayed there a day or two. And when we left the Atlantic Ocean we went through the Panama Canal. That was an all day job.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was it like going through the Panama Canal?

Mr. Dunlap:

It was unbelievable the way it worked. We were having to clean up the ship after coming into that fresh water. And we didn't get to observe it like we would have liked to have, most of us didn't. And after the war our ship was one of the first ones in to Tokyo Bay. And we got close

enough to the *USS Missouri*. We sat and watched them go aboard and sign the peace treaty and everything. And then when they started letting them come home we were in the first group to come home. We come into Seattle, Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So as soon as the ceremony in Tokyo Bay was over you came back to the States, is that right?

Mr. Dunlap:

We came into Seattle, Washington for Navy Day. And they had a big parade, I was in a big parade for Navy Day in Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year was that?

Mr. Dunlap:

I think it was the last part of '45 when we come in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well we had something went wrong, we had to go in a dry dock in Bremerton, Washington. And we left there and we went down to Long Beach, California. And we were in and out of there several times. And then when I had less than year to do, they transferred me off to the *USS Iowa*. That was in Oakland, California then, it was Frisco at the Bay. The *USS Iowa* (BB-61).

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was your job on the *Iowa*?

Mr. Dunlap:

I was a trouble shooter on .40 mm gun mounts. I had three gun mounts I had to take care of.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

We went out and had gunnery practice out of Long Beach and in Frisco. And then went along then until I got discharged. I got discharged in October of '47 in California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you went in how long did you sign up for when you went in?

Mr. Dunlap:

I first went in for duration and six months. And then in November of '45 I enlisted for two years. And we were in Long Beach, California and I was coming off of liberty one night and the Officer of Deck said your brother's down there in your bunk. I thought it was my brother coming in from New Guinea. But it was my little brother in the Navy come aboard. Me and him was on a ship together for, oh probably a year.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And that was on the *Iowa*?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was nice. What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well there's so many I really don't know where to start. I had a lot of shore patrol duty, it was pretty rough, especially in California.

Patti Dunlap:

Why? Tell him why it was rough.

Mr. Dunlap:

Well one place in California and little Filipino sailors come through causing a lot of trouble. And we locked them and got them straightened out. And just people had too much to drink. Some of them were on leave.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Dunlap:

No, really didn't. They never ever make our ship or nothing. The only thing we see was when we'd go into California, we'd go to Long Beach and Los Angeles. Los Angeles we'd go to the Thirty Second Club. Bob Wills was playing in there all the time and that's where we'd go.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well I've got one special. I've got a little old box, wooden box, I got in Japan in 1945. And it's in as good of shape today as it was when I got it. It's put together with wooden spikes and it's got some writing on it and it's supposed to be an armor box. Now I don't know what an armor box was, but that's what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's nice.

Mr. Dunlap:

And I got home with a pair of scales, but they all disappeared, so. We couldn't have a camera or anything. But I bought some pictures from an airship photographer that was good.

Patti Dunlap:

The flag.

Mr. Dunlap:

I've got a flag that flew over our ship with forty-eight stars in it. And I had a pistol that was like a Luger. And I had a locker inspection one day and I didn't get it hid and the man inspecting the locker took it. So I'm satisfied he took it home with him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Dunlap:

Only thing we had with the Red Cross was coffee or something like that, go in and eat. But the Salvation Army, they would go out of their way more than the Red Cross would. And the USO was good. Most places we'd go and get a bed to sleep at night for twenty-five cents. And they'd feed you breakfast, everything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April the 12th of 1945 President Roosevelt died, did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh yeah, yeah we heard about it the same day. The ship had a radio that connected all around. And the signal man picked it up. But we had a radio that could pick up nearly anything sometimes on the ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Dunlap:

They didn't know what to think. They didn't know what was going to happen. And when Truman took over, well everybody seemed pretty well satisfied.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you when you heard that?

Mr. Dunlap:

Was over in the Pacific, I don't know if we were around Okinawa or where we were at for sure, but we were in the Pacific Ocean.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On May the 8th of '45 Germany surrendered, did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh yes, we heard right off. Bull Halsey, as soon as he got the word he made a five minute speech. And that's when it was still shooting down planes. He told them, he said, "You send planes over my ship," and he said, "I'll shoot them down." He didn't say our ship, he said my ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now is that when Japan surrendered or Germany?

Mr. Dunlap:

That's when Japan surrendered.

Patti Dunlap:

He's talking about Germany.

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh. Yeah, we heard about it, they didn't think too much of it because we didn't know anything about it, just that they had surrendered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunlap:

Oh yes. Yeah we heard about it. We had never heard of the atomic bomb until they dropped it. We were off the coast of Japan when they dropped it. They dropped both of them. And I told them, I told her, she went to Nagasaki, Japan before the darn thing cleaned up. And it's unbelievable. It was two or three buildings standing in Hiroshima.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Dunlap:

Yeah, yeah we listened to her all the time. When we first went into the war zone in the Pacific, she reported our ship as being sunk. And we just got there. But she reported it sunk. Yeah we

listened to Tokyo Rose.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunlap:

Well not really, until my little brother come home. He'd come home on leave about the time sun go down and he'd want to go out. And I thought boy I did too. But after he went back well, it was alright.

Patti Dunlap:

How did you adjust?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well the first year I was home I helped my brother-in-law farm, I lived with my sister and worked for him farming. And then I finally got, the first job I had paid a dollar an hour hot topping a Highway #51. And then I went to work in the oil field. And I worked in the oil field for thirty-seven years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Dunlap:

I was a 3rd Class Petty Officer, is the highest I got. On them ships you were just allowed so many of each rank, so many gunner mates, and so many electricians and all that. And you had to wait until somebody got transferred or discharged before you could make a rank. And I come out as a 3rd Class Petty Officer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Dunlap:

I got a Victory Medal and I got a Medal for Asiatic/Pacific, with two stars, one star for Okinawa

and one for Japan. I got a Good Conduct and I got one for China duty.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else?

Mr. Dunlap:

No, that's all that they give me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got out did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Dunlap:

I used it to buy a house.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use it to go to school or anything?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well I went to school for a little while, but didn't go very long. I went to work in the oil field, forgot about school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your ship?

Mr. Dunlap:

No, we never had no reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes, I don't know of but one that's living today. And Herman Neely lives here close to me, not too far from me. Me and him went into the service together. But the rest of them, I don't know anybody that's still around.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall about World War II?

Mr. Dunlap:

Well all I remember is just all I went through, and so. It kept me traveling, I'd done a lot of traveling in the service that I would never have been able to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunlap:

Yes I have and it was the first time I was ever on an airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When was that?

Mr. Dunlap:

In 2013.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip out there?

Mr. Dunlap:

It was real good, it's just a one day trip but it was real good. I was in Washington, D.C. in 1944 when we were stationed down in Norfolk. But we didn't go on the town much, we just went to the Pepsi-Cola service center. Fifty dollars a month you couldn't do much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Dunlap:

Every time we mailed a letter home it had to be censored.

Patti Dunlap:

Did you get your mail on a regular basis?

Mr. Dunlap:

Pretty regular. Sometimes when we were over at Okinawa and around well sometimes they'd be late. But they censored everything you mailed out and come in. Anything in there they didn't want they'd tear it out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Patti Dunlap:

He can't think of anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Dunlap:

Okay, thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, we'll keep in touch.

Patti Dunlap:

Alright, thank you for calling.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bye now.

Patti Dunlap:

Bye, bye.

(End of interview.)

Transcribed by:

Gayle Misenhimer

Harlingen, Texas

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

July 1, 2018

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848