YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans Project

China-Burma-India Theatre

O. H. 359

JOSEPH T. NIVERT

Interviewed

by

Jeffrey S. Suchanek

on

June 3, 1981

Joseph Thomas Nivert

Joseph Nivert was stationed in the China-Burma-India Theatre during World War II. Assigned to the Signal Corps, Joseph spent the latter part of 1942 in Dinjan, India, and early in February of 1943 volunteered for duty in China when the American Volunteer Group, Flying Tigers, were disbanded and reformed as a regular Army unit. Mr. Nivert was assigned to the cryptography, code, section under General Claire Chennault and later in 1943 volunteered for duty in the same capacity under General "Vinegar" Joe Stilwell in the Nationalist capital, Chungking. All decoded messages sent to Generals Chennault and Stilwell had to first go through Joseph's hands. Those considered top priority he delivered personally to the generals. Having spent three and one-half years overseas, he returned home in 1945 before the surrender of Japan.

Born on February 1, 1915, the son of Michael and Mary Nivert, Joseph grew up in Struthers, Ohio, and graduated from Struthers High School. Upon the completion of his military career, Mr. Nivert married the former Matilda Biroschak in September of 1945. They are the parents of two children, Joseph and Judy. Joseph established his residence in Austintown, Ohio, shortly after the war and found his old job at Hynes Steel waiting for him and he continued his employment there until his retirement in July of 1978. Joseph received the Good Conduct Medal, China Medal, 3 Bronze Stars, and the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre Ribbon during his military career. He is a member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. He was the national commander of the China-Burma-India Veterans Association. His hobbies include golf and gardening.

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INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH T. NIVERT

INTERVIEWER: Jeffrey S. Suchanek

SUBJECT: Signal Corps, General Chennault, General Stilwell

DATE: June 3, 1981

S: This is an interview with Joseph T. Nivert for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on World War II Veterans with Jeffrey Scott Suchanek. This interview is being conducted at Mr. Nivert's residence at 267 South Main Street in Austintown, Ohio, on June 3, 1981, 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Nivert, let's begin with some information about your background. When and where were you born?

N: I was born in Struthers, Ohio, on February 1, 1915. I attended grade school there, of course, and graduated from Struthers High School in February 1933. That was the extent of my education.

S: Tell me something about your family. How many were in your family?

N: I have five sisters and they're all still living. Mother and Dad are gone, of course. Several of my sisters still live in Struthers. I moved up here as soon as I came home from the service, up to Austintown.

S: Tell me something about the neighborhood you grew up in.

N: It was on the north side of Struthers. It was a mixed neighborhood and I suppose it was the happiest neighborhood in the world. There were a lot of good Slovak people there, some Polish. There were a few colored people there at that time, and we all got along really good. We used to have birthday parties at each other's house. We got along really good down there.

S: You grew up during the Depression. What can you remember

about the Depression as a young man?

N: What I remember mostly is my dad was a railroader, and I know that he worked perhaps two days a week, sometimes three days a week. We somehow never were able to get any assistance from the government. We had a family of five girls and myself, six children. It was prettv tough then. There are no two ways about it, it was tough. But we never received one ounce of assistance from anybody. We made it on our own.

S: What railroad did your dad work for?

N: Pittsburgh and Lake Erie. He was a car knocker, a wrecker. We always had a free telephone because wreckers needed a telphone to be called out when there was a wreck someplace. They would have to be under the Struthers Bridge there at a certain time. So we always had a free telephone. We had a whole neighborhood using our house. (Laughter)

S: Did your dad ever talk about his job at all?

N: He was a car knocker. They'd repair railroad cars. They would bring them into the shop there. Of course, later on he got to be an inspector out in Bessemer. He needed it then. He was an older man and was suffering from bursitis, like we all do. He did all right.

S: Was it dangerous work?

N: I guess it was very dangerous work. It seems that this gang--there must have been about twelve in this gang--were just like steelworkers. They were robust men, you know, real heavy workers, hard workers.

S: Okay, Mr. Nivert, let's begin discussing your military career now. Did you enlist or were you drafted?

N: I was drafted and I went into the service on March 4, 1941.

S: How did your parents and your family feel about you getting drafted?

N: They were so elated. I mean, at that time we all felt it was an honor to get in the Army. I knew I had a few bad teeth so before I got inducted I had my teeth all repaired and everything else to make sure that I would get in. I remember calling my parents from Cleveland, where my examination was, and I told him, "I'm in." They were really proud of me.

S: Where was the draft board in Struthers located?

N: Right at the city hall, I'm pretty sure. I can't even think of the number now, but I know Pete Bobby was on it. I can't remember some of the other names.

S: Then you were shipped by bus or train up to Cleveland?

N: I went by bus to Cleveland. From Cleveland they sent me to Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio, and from there I took a train to my first post. The station was Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

S: That's where you had boot camp?

N: That's where I had my basic training, at Fort Monmouth.

S: You were in the Army then?

N: I was in the Army.

S: Was training camp tough for you?

N: Well, it was March then, and it was really tough. The first day I thought I was a dead man for sure. Fortunately, I was in the signal corps and perhaps our basic training might have been a little bit different than infantry or anything else. Ours was a lot of learning, a lot of radio tests, how you pick up the Morse Code and different things like that.

S: How did you get placed in the signal corps? Were you given tests or anything?

N: I really don't know. It seems that they just took shipments of men and placed them in different places. Of course, they made errors because I recall that they shipped a bunch of fellows from down south up to Fort Monmouth. They had to ship them out within three or four days. Half of these guys couldn't read, couldn't write, or anything else.

S: So you would say maybe that training camp was a little more on the . . .

N: Call it more dignified or something, I don't know. We had our basic training, understand, but we had a lot of schooling too.

S: I was just going to say it was more brainwork possibly, than your normal infantry man.

N: Yes. Before we got in the signal corps, I know for a fact that some agency--it would be the FBI or something--went to certain people down in Struthers, like neighbors and the pastor. You had to be cleared somehow. As far as

I know, I was cleared to be in the signal corps.

S: When did you find out that this went on?

N: This was around the first leave that I came home, which would have been from down in Texas someplace. The people just told me that they were asking about me. You know, "What kind of man is this guy," and so on and so forth.

S: That's interesting. It's the first time I've heard of anyone going through that.

N: Well, I suppose the way it ended up, it had to be, because I did teach some cryptography and we had some elaborate code instruments that . . . It's strange, but we still don't talk about it.

S: How do you mean?

N: I know a girl veteran who has served in Europe. She worked some of these code machines and to this day she won't tell you how it worked or anything else. Really I forgot because it was none of my business. I mean, I knew how to do it and that's about all I knew about it. It was secret work. I was Message Center Chief most of the time. I handled all these messages for different offices and different generals and everything.

S: You said you ended up in Texas. How did that come about?

N: From Fort Monmouth I was shipped down to Camp Bowie in Texas. That was in Brownsville, Texas. Then I went to the 1941 maneuvers in Louisiana, which were really tough. I stayed at Camp Bowie, of course, until we heard the bad news on December 7.

S: Can you remember what you were doing when you heard the news?

N: Yes. It was a Sunday afternoon, if I recall, and we were just sitting around the camp, which was unusual for me. I was always in Dallas or Fort Worth for the weekend, but that particular week I happened to be there. We were eating some cold cuts, I guess, when we heard this bad news.

S: What was your reaction? Was it expected?

N: Of course it wasn't expected, no. We knew we were in the Army for something, but we never expected a war, that's for sure. It was just a couple of days after that that I got shipped out of there to San Francisco. I couldn't tell you why or how, but I got picked on.

We called them teams. My team was Team M. They took so many men from our signal corps which would do the administrative and cryptography work. We had so many men from a cavalry group, a total of nineteen altogether. The cavalry men were already radio men. Somehow they put us together and we became Radio Team M.

S: You don't know exactly how this was done?

N: No.

S: What was the criteria for that?

N: I wouldn't know how or why or anything else, no.

S: How long were you in San Francisco?

N: I wasn't in San Francisco, I was out on Angel Island. They put us out on Angel Island, which is the island past Alcatraz. We were there for a matter of about a week, I guess, because we boarded our ship in San Francisco on January 10, 1942. So I was overseas right after war was declared.

S: Can you remember the name of the ship that you boarded?

N: Yes, I was on the Mariposa. It was an ocean liner that was just transformed into a troop ship, I guess. We had a small convoy. There was the President Coolidge--that was another troop ship--the aircraft carrier Langley, and we had two cruisers with us. One was named the Phoenix, but I can't remember the name of the other one right now.

S: Where did you go on this convoy?

N: We didn't know where we were going. We kind of thought we were going to Java, but on February 1, which is my birthday, we landed in Melbourne, Australia. I remember the Langley left us just about two or three days before that and we understand that's when Java fell; the Langley was destroyed.

S: Why did you think you would be going to Java?

N: Just conversation. I don't think anybody knew where we were going, really, but at that time, I guess we were so close to Java that it seemed that that was it. But I don't think that anybody knew for sure.

S: What was the reception you got in Melbourne?

N: In Melbourne, they let all the children out of school. We would have been the first Americans that actually

went through there. They let all the children out of school, and we had to walk several miles to a camp. These little children were all over the place waving us on. It was a tough hike to get there. I can't even think of the name of the camp. I know we had little Pal-Liass's to sleep on, which was just a mat bag filled with straw and that was it.

S: People were friendly?

N: I thought they were very nice, yes, very nice people.

S: Getting back to your cruise over, were there precautions taken against submarine attacks?

N: Well, we zigzagged all the way. It took us from January 10 to February 1 to get from San Francisco to Melbourne, so we zigzagged all the way, that's for sure. Oh, yes, we had all kinds of precautions. The ship had several guns mounted on it. We had gun crews and lights out and typical wartime precautions.

S: How long were you in Australia?

N: We just spent ten days in Melbourne and then we loaded onto an Australian ship. The ship was named His Majesty's Ship Duntroon. From there we went to Perth, Australia. We stayed there for a few days. Then we stayed on the same boat and went on to Colombo, Ceylon, to Bombay, India, and we finally landed at Karachi, India, where we got off the boat. Karachi today is Pakistan. It was India then.

S: What was the name of your unit at this time?

N: All I knew was there were radio teams numbered A through M. I was the last team, Radio Team M. As far as I know that's all I was assigned to.

S: There were nineteen . . .

N: There were nineteen of us, yes.

S: How many radios did you have?

N: We didn't have anything right then. All that stuff had to be shipped. It followed us.

From Karachi we went by train across the whole country of India. We ended up in Dinjan, which is in upper Assam, just north of Burma. That's where we set up the radio station. Of course, that did take a long time to set up.

S: How many men were on this Mariposa?

N: If I remember correctly it would be over four thousand.

S: Were these infantrymen?

N: I suppose they had everything on there. There were a lot of air corps men. In fact, up on the top deck there were a lot of crated airplanes. We carried along crated airplanes and everything else with us, I guess.

S: Can you remember what planes those were?

N: No, I wouldn't know. The first plane I would remember would be the P-40. I'm sure these, as small as the crates were, it wouldn't be a P-40.

S: In other words, they were just pursuit planes?

N: Fighter planes, they were pursuit or fighter planes.

S: Your trip by rail up to Dinjan, what do you remember about the countryside as you went?

N: I suppose I told a little fib. We flew to Allahbad and just certain parts of the trip were by rail. It was beautiful. The people were kind. I'm sure they were. We saw some of the strangest people, I suppose, any soldier ever saw. Not only strange places, but strange people because we saw the beggars, the lepers, the cripples, the wallahs; we saw everything, everything that a lot of soldiers would probably never have seen.

S: Were you the first soldiers in India? Were there British soldiers already there?

N: British soldiers were there, yes. They were there probably a long, long time before we came. We were about the first American troop ship. There were some Americans there, but we were probably the first troop ship to come to India.

S: You said at Dinjan you set up the radio station and the code room. What was your function and what was the function of the unit as a whole?

N: Mostly to receive messages, deliver messages, and to send messages. This was Colonel Scott's headquarters then and Colonel Caleb V. Haynes headquarters then. It was just a little shack and that was it, but that was their headquarters. I'm sure that everybody heard of Colonel Scott. You know he's the one that wrote God is My Co-Pilot and so many other books. I'm sure that people have heard of Colonel Haynes. At that time I think he had the distinction of being the first army man that ever flew around the world. I'm pretty sure he had that

distinction.

S: Did you meet these men personally?

N: We rubbed shoulders. We always ate together. We didn't have any separate mess rooms or anything else. We just had a little thatch hut where everybody ate and everybody ate together.

S: In other words, there weren't any regular troops around, it was just like your contingent?

N: Right. Now, understand that there was Air Force there. Of course, we were together, us nineteen men.

S: You were like an elite then?

N: We did a little bit of everything. Not only did we set up the radio station and everything else, but we still had time to unload some lend-lease equipment that was shipped to Rangoon. When Burma was bombed and everything they shipped it up the Brahmaputra River. We unloaded boats just loaded with jeeps and trucks and things like that, all kinds of equipment. So we did just about everything, I'd say. Of course, there were so few men you didn't have much choice. You either did it or you did without. We needed the jeeps then, that's for sure.

S: Colonel Scott and Colonel Haynes, you rubbed shoulders with them. Describe them as men and describe them as commanders.

N: Colonel Haynes was perhaps one of the nicest men in the world. You could talk to him just like you and I are talking now or like talking to your father. I'm sure that he was a learned man and a well-educated man and certainly a military man. He was really nice.

Colonel Scott, on the other hand, just wanted action. He couldn't stay out of his plane. I don't know whether he's the one who put the extra bomb under the P-40 or not. Most certainly, he was one of the original pilots over there and he just wanted action all the time.

S: He was a member of the AVG then?

N: No, he wasn't an AVG. The AVG's were up in China at that time. Their contract wasn't up until July 4 of that year. That's when I went to China. When the AVG contract was up that's when I volunteered to go to China. They sent me to Kunming.

S: The types of messages you were getting, were they in code?

N: These would be code. They were very simple codes at that time. Even when we got to Kunming, the widest code used right then was the AVG code, which was simple. You just had a book and one number or one letter would mean a different word or something like that. It was a very simple code. I don't see how it could fool anybody.

S: Once you figured it out, right?

N: Oh, it was too simple, yes. It was just a matter of looking in the book and this means this and this means that.

S: In other words, if the Japanese were to get a code book they would know everything that was said.

N: I'm sure. I'm sure.

S: I'm sure you probably don't know if that ever happened.

N: I wouldn't know.

S: Where were these messages originally from, and who were you sending them on to?

N: Mostly from headquarters. See, right after war was declared, President Roosevelt sort of requested that Chiang Kai Shek be the supreme commander of the forces in China and in that area, so really our headquarters were in Chungking, China. That's where I ended up, incidentally. I stayed there for over two years. Most of these would be from pilots. I'm going back to the messages. They would be from pilots flying from the small stations. Like I told you, we had Teams A through M. They were stationed all over the area there. The only team that didn't last too long was the one that went to Burma, because Burma fell really early to the Japanese.

S: Did you know any of the men that were in Burma?

N: Sure. Peewee Reese was from Toledo, Ohio, I believe. I knew the lieutenant that was in charge, Lieutenant Matherne. Peewee Reese, incidentally, was one of the fellows that walked out of Burma with General Stilwell.

S: How about the other fellow?

N: I couldn't tell you. I know that he came back all right. In fact, the whole group came back all right. I don't know how they got back or anything else, but Peewee Reese did walk back with Stilwell.

S: What would these messages consist of? What would they be about?

N: Some of them were simple. Some of them probably shouldn't have been sent. They would even include promotions or transfers or something like that. A lot of them probably shouldn't have been sent. You have to understand that that was really early in the campaign.

S: Right. I'm just interested in seeing what was transpiring here early in the war.

N: I don't suppose that real, real important messages didn't come until later on. I mean messages from Washington D.C. and things like that. Later on radio stations were working good; even the men that maintained them knew what they were doing then and so on, and so forth.

I guess it was kind of a struggle. They say the CBI was confusion beyond imagination. (Laughter)

S: How long were you in Dinjan?

N: I must have got there in February, and I just stayed until July 4, 1942, because I went to Kunming, China.

S: The fact is, as you said, the American volunteer group that was commonly referred to as the Flying Tigers was disbanded and was reformed into the China Air Task Force.

N: They were known as the AVG's, the American Volunteer Group. We were the Flying Tigers; I'm pretty sure that started with Colonel Scott after the AVG disbanded. I don't know for positive, but I feel that it's that way.

S: Did you meet any of these fellows who were AVGers?

N: Oh, of course. Oh, sure.

S: Who would you have met?

N: The names escape me right now. I remember even the ones that bombed Tokyo. This was still while I was in Dinjan. You never saw such happy greetings in your life. They jumped over each other, they kissed each other. These people hadn't seen each other for weeks, or probably longer than that. I'll always remember them. That was a happy occasion. That's what they were.

S: Was there any stereotype you could say that the average AVG or Flying Tiger man was, like this Colonel Scott?

N: I'm sure that they were all the same kind. For every plane the AVG's shot down they got $500. And they

had a really good record. If I remember correctly, it was twenty Japanese planes to one American plane.

The British, they couldn't even come close. They didn't get any compensation. They were on regular army pay and their record was about two to one, or maybe even one to one.

S: So the Flying Tigers had quite a reputation?

N: They were devils, that's for sure.

S: You said you volunteered to go into China.

N: Yes, they needed personnel to go into China and I volunteered.

S: Why?

N: If you ever lived north of the jungle or in a thatched hut or where the monsoons are or where you could . . . Well, there's on old story, can I tell it?

S: Go ahead.

N: All right. Like the China-Burma-India Theatre, and especially in Assam and Burma, that would be about the only theatre of war where you could get shot by a Japanese sniper and you could get bit by a poisonous reptile. You could get trampled by elephants; you could get eaten by a man-eating tiger; or you could get decapitated by a headhunters you see. Then somebody added on that that's just going to and from the latrine. (Laughter) And it's true!

S: There were headhunters there?

N: Yes, there were. And I'll tell you, I don't know how I would have taken it if I had to stay there too much longer, with the monsoon seasons and the bugs and everything else. Out of our nineteen men, two of them went buggy within a matter of . . .

S: Oh, is that right?

N: Oh sure. It was really hard to take.

S: Was there stress, or tension maybe, with all these factors?

N: I don't know. Everybody's built different, of course. Some could and some couldn't take it. I'm sure that would be true in any battle or anything, you know.

S: When you got to Kunming, what did they have, a fighter

base there, or what was there that . . .

N: Yes, there was an air base there. That's where General Chennault was positioned.

S: Did you meet him?

N: Oh yes, I delivered messages right to his home.

S: Describe his personality and his commanding ability.

N: I didn't like him myself. They tell me that he might have been hard of hearing, and I know that the very first message that I delivered to his home, I said something and he didn't even answer me. I felt that was kind of rude. I don't think that he was being snobbish. I'm sure that he must have just not heard me or something. But I left there kind of dejected. That was the first time that I really had a chance to talk to the man. I had seen him before several times and saluted him before several times because we were on the same base together. But you can imagine my disappointment.

S: Sure. What was your rank at that time?

N: I was sergeant. The first thing I did in Kunming was to set up a message center. That's when I started teaching cryptography. They gave me, I think, twelve air force men and there were about twenty British soldiers. I remember Lucy Taylor, she was a civilian. I don't know what she was doing over there, but she was in my class. We started teaching. The AVG code was still in effect then, and some more simple codes. We still weren't in to real deep stuff.

S: I'm not familiar with Lucy Taylor.

N: I don't know either. Her husband was some sort of . . . I imagine he was a government official. I know I met him because I was down at their house, but I just don't know what title he had or anything else about him.

S: Or why she would be taking the course?

N: I know she wasn't in the military. She did work in our headquarters, I know that, but other than that I couldn't tell you.

S: Describe Kunming. Was it a village? Was it a city?

N: It was a pretty big city. It had narrow streets, of course. I was fortunate, I was based at hostel one. They called it a hostel. This hostel one was kind of a

swanky place. In the first place, the air field was pretty far out from where this hostel one was, so I was assigned a nice station wagon. It seemed like you could order breakfast there. You know, if you wanted two eggs and toast you'd get two eggs and toast instead of GI mess.

S: It seemed like you were special.

N: I don't think I was special, no. I don't know how I got in there, but most of these people would be . . . There was a technical group over there. They were over there with the AVG's, the USTGA, the United States Technical Group Association, or whatever they were. All they did was administrative work and maintenance work for AVG's. A lot of pilots, of course, were stationed there, and a lot of officers were stationed there because this was choice billeting, you know. I don't know how I got there, but I did. Of course, I didn't last too long. My next hostel was hostel four, and that was right in the middle of a cemetery, a Chinese cemetery, and that wasn't too much fun. (Laughter) We had oil cloth for windows and it was just a little thatch hut.

S: Was Kunming ever attacked while you were there?

N: There was all kinds of evidence of bombings, but before I got there. I think I had to be the luckiest soldier in the world. In fact, a couple of days after I left, Kunming got bombed. I was fortunate all the way through. In Kunming there was all kinds of evidence. We had a lot of air raids, a lot of alerts. The Chinese used to use the ball system, one, two, three balls. They'd hang them up on poles. One ball would mean that they were so far away, two balls would mean they were closer, three balls would mean that was it, you know. (Laughter)

S: They were overhead?

N: There were so many times when I jumped in my jeep with my code equipment and got to the hills.

S: You'd have to take your stuff with you?

N: I'd have to take my stuff with me and destroy it if I had to.

S: About how much time would you have before they would be overhead?

N: We had a lot of close calls, but we were never attacked. But I suppose it would come like within twenty minutes.

S: And that gave you enough time?

N: Yes.

S: What would you take with you in your jeep?

N: At that time we didn't have machines, like the sigaba that I mentioned before. It would be mostly books, paperwork, different written codes, and things like that.

S: You said you were teaching cryptography to these pilots . . .

N: No, they were just Air Force personnel, they weren't pilots.

S: Air Force personnel and British?

N: British soldiers.

S: Did you teach any friendly Chinese civilians?

N: No, no Chinese. I didn't have any Chinese with me.

S: You were going to mention something about the British?

N: These British soldiers were a different lot too. Some of them were really sharp, but I had two of them that I don't know why they tried to teach them code. I mean they couldn't even write their name. That's the type of soldiers they had. I didn't think too much of them.

S: Were they friendly?

N: They were nice people, oh sure. The one that I'm thinking of right now--I know his name and I don't want to mention it--poor guy, he was just as kind as ever, but he couldn't write his name. And I was trying to teach him how to read code! (Laughter)

S: Were these people fast learners, except for these people who were maybe a little slower?

N: Yes, they were really apt. As strange as it may seem, we went to the reunion in Minneapolis four years ago, and one of the Air Force men came up to me and he called me by my nickname, "Jake". I didn't know him, but he said, "You don't remember me?" His name's Feldman. He said, "You taught me code over in Kunming." I couldn't remember the group, but they remembered me, of course.

S: How long would a session take before they were good at the code?

N: I imagine it was like a three week course, and I think we had it four afternoons a week.

S: You said you were still using these simple codes then?

N: They were simpler. They became a little more advanced every month the war went on.

S: I'm really intrigued by your contact with Chennault; you said you rubbed shoulders with him. Were there any other experiences you had with him where he had shown his character, his personality? Was he one to get irritated easily?

N: I guess--this is just hearsay, of course--I guess he was hard to get along with according to a lot of his people. The only other real contact I had with him is that the GI's would write letters home. These letters were the strangest thing. Of course, all of them had to be censured before they left the post. Anything that contained something that sounded funny or read funny or something like that, Chennault or one of his aids would send them over to me. You could sit there and you could look at them, like, "We have beautiful bombs. These are colored green and orange," or something like that. Actually, we were so busy we didn't have time to mess around with them. So I just sent note to General Chennault and told him that these letters were burned. We looked at them. We couldn't decipher them. That was the easy way out. Why send a letter like that? If it meant something, it's too bad. We destroyed them and that was it.

S: Do you feel bad about doing something like that?

N: No, like I said, actually we were too busy. We were putting in long hours at that time. Personnel still wasn't up to strength or anything else. When you're tired you don't feel bad about doing something like that. It didn't mean anything to Chennault, it didn't mean anything to the U.S. Army so it was burned, destroyed.

S: Did you have a funny feeling that you were reading somebody else's mail?

N: Most of it didn't make sense. I didn't know the people who wrote them anyway. No, it didn't bother me in the least, no.

S: Obviously some of these letters contained just the usual.

N: It was probably just some simple code. I don't know whether they were telling where they were, or if they were telling them what they were doing, or if they could have been talking about them selling stuff at

the black market or something like that. I mean, I don't know. It probably meant something to the receiver if they got it, but to me it didn't mean a thing.

S: There probably were parts in the letters that described the everyday life. What would the fellows write about?

N: I didn't get those kinds of letters.

S: Oh, you just got the ones that didn't make sense?

N: I just got the ones that were funny, strange, yes. No, I didn't get the nice letters. It got so that I was so good at that that I used to censor my own letters.

S: What would be things that would be cut out, references to places?

N: Yes, descriptive. When they talk about arms or ammunition and places and even events. Say that something happened in this city at a certain time, it could appear in the papers back home and then somebody would know right away, well, "My boy's here and he's doing this and he's doing that." I don't think there was anybody malicious at that time. We were all good GI's.

S: You just happened to mention black market. Was there a black market that you knew of?

N: Oh sure. When I first got to Kunming they started paying me in Chinese money at the rate of fifteen Chinese dollars, yens, to one American dollar. Later on they started paying us in American money. While I was in Ohungking we used to pay for our own food--I was on per diem up there--we used to pay for our own food, and I imagine they took our lodgings out of there and everything else. But they paid us in American money and we always traded this in at the black market.

S: For what?

N: Before I left it would be like 500 yen to one American dollar, perhaps even more.

S: Obviously that was probably a worthwhile proposition for you.

N: Well, everybody did it. In fact, from Chungking we only had access to one plane and that was General Stilwell's plane. We'd give his crew our American money because the rate of exchange in Kunming was better , or wherever they were going. Sometimes we wouldn't see our money for a month till the plane came back, but we always

got it.

S: Would you be able to buy things with American money?

N: I never dealt in the black market other than trading some money, and I never did that by myself.

S: How would that be done? Would the Chinese himself work with you?

N: Oh they have slickers all over the world. The Chinese were just as slick as any American or any other nationality.

S: I keep asking because the black market fascinates me.

N: I wish I knew how it worked. I know that there used to be prowlers that used to hand around the GI's. I'm sure there were a lot of GI's who did sell stuff like cigarettes, or PX supplies, or something. Fortunately, I wasn't built that way. I couldn't do it. I could never accept a dollar like that. If I had anything extra I took it to the Catholic missionaries there in Kunming and in Chungking. I'd give it away. I wouldn't sell it, no.

S: But then if someone wanted to exchange your American dollars you would just give it to the Chinese that you trusted?

N: Oh no! I never gave it to Chinese. I just gave it to a crew chief. I just gave mine to an American man, and how they did it I don't know. I'm sure that they got a cut out of it too. No, I couldn't explain that.

S: Describe the relationship you had with the Chinese population. Were they friendly? Were they glad to see you? Did you trust them? Could you trust them? Did you have a lot of contact with them?

N: In Kunming I would say I didn't have that much contact with them, no. I only stayed in Kunming for, I can't remember now, it seems it would be like six or seven months before I was transferred to General Stillwell's headquarters in Chungking.

There, or course, with the Catholic mission, we got to know a lot more Chinese people. This was the wartime capitol. We had sponsored dances. We had, they called it the Victory Club where Chinese girls and American soldiers would go and we would dance together. We were invited to different dinners and teas, things like that where you have more contact with the people.

I really think the Chinese people are lovely people. They just minded their own business. They were simple, and they just went about life like the American wasn't there at all. They probably didn't understand any more than we did why we were there. Everything was funny to them; they had a beautiful sense of humor. I never knew what they were laughing about until I inquired one day. It seems you can say one word several different ways in the various dialects and every different way you say it it has a different meaning. And these people would just roar about nothing. It was a pleasure to watch them.

It seemed like families were closer there and you could see the old people and the little children. They certainly didn't live in any splendor or anything, you know, at least people that I had seen. I imagine some of them did because I went to some of the homes and they were pretty uppy.

S: Did you have contact with the man on the street? It sounds like you would go to these dances and things and maybe that was the upper crust type of . . .

N: Without a doubt that was, yes. Other than that we would kid around. We used to carry some of these water buckets. We would see a poor old man carrying a water bucket and we would try it. Of course, it didn't last very long; we spilled all the water. But other than that, they couldn't understand us and we couldn't understand them. I didn't learn any of the Chinese language. I know very little, like Hao pu hao. And thank you is hsieh-hsieh ni. They say you don't have to learn it. All you have to do is learn a few numbers like e, erh, shan, ssu, wu, liu, ch'i, pa, and after that say hotdoggy. Nobody knows the difference. (Laughter)

S: That's interesting. Did you or the personnel around you, whether in Kunming or Chungking, have the impression that the Chinese were putting enough effort into the defeat of the Japanese? Did you have any idea how the war effort was goning on?

N: I, and perhaps others, probably had a mixed feeling why we were there, you know. This is a strange feeling because we felt like we might be lend-lease to China or something. I could tell you that when I went overseas I had a .45 Colt revolver, a gas mask, and other equipment. When we got to China, for some reason, somebody said that the Chinese didn't have them and we were losing the face. So they took away all our equipment. Now, of course, we weren't in any war zone or anything like that. We weren't like the Merrill's Marauders or

anything like that. Maybe they had some sound reasoning, I don't know, but I ended up without my .45, and without my gas mask.

S: You didn't have any arms then?

N: I didn't have any arms, no! After I got to China they took my .45 away from me. That was my signal corps pistol!

S: Did you feel naked?

N: I sure did! Of course, the longer you stayed there, why you felt a little bit safer, you felt safer about it.

S: Did you or the people around you actually feel like the Chinese were allies, people you could depend on, or did you feel like a total stranger there?

N: We heard so many stories about the Chinese like the way they used to recruit men. If a Chinese officer or general started with so many men, say that he was going to march a hundred miles or so, he made sure that when he got to the end of the hundred miles that he had the same number of men that he started with, even though some of them would defect or get sick or perhaps even die or anything. He made sure by just grabbing anybody and saying you're in the army. I know this--I can't say it's a fact, but I'm sure it is because the Catholic missionaries told me--there were so many bandits there, little troops of Chinese that would steal anything. They'd attack Americans, attack trucks, attack everything, take everything that they had.

We knew the different provinces were still fighting against each other. Each province had its own warlord or several warlords. I'm sure the Chinese were concerned, but it seems that they didn't really get into it until the Americans started training. After the Americans trained them, they became better soldiers.

S: Did you have any information then on how the war was progressing, since you were in an information center?

N: Not really, no. We heard of all the movements and things like that. We heard about when the Merrill's Marauders came in. We knew that they started fighting in early 1944. We knew that the first infantry man killed in Asia was right from Youngstown, Ohio. There were others that died before that, I understand, pilots and so on, and so forth, but he would be the first infantry man that actually got killed in Burma.

S: How did you get to Chungking? Was that a volunteer or were you just assigned there? I understand that was the nationalist capitol.

N: That was the nationalist capitol and that was the headquarters, of course, for China-Burma-India. I suppose I sort of asked to get transferred. I wasn't a young man, you know, I was 26, 27 years old. I had ants in my pants, and I wanted to see and do things. I had heard about Chungking. I'm glad I went there because headquarters was there, and I worked right in headquarters. I had a wonderful commanding officer, and I was the message center chief there. I had our radio team there and I made all their work schedules and I made sure they got their pay. I was their house mother, more or less.

S: That was your function, then?

N: Well, my function was still Message Center Chief.

S: What is that?

N: It's an MO number, a military occupation number. I don't know the number offhand, but that's what my job was. I took care of all the cryptography, all the messages. I helped anybody when they needed help. I couldn't help the radio man too much because I didn't know code. Of course, we could tell him that their messages were too garbled or something like that.

We had a pretty good gang there. There must have been about fifty, or I suppose we numbered even up to 75 before I left Chungking. I made sure that they got their per diem, and I made sure they knew when they had to go to work. Of course, I had to go to work right with them. I made my own hours. I worked from five o'clock in the morning until one o'clock in the afternoon, and that was it. That's about all I can stand.

S: Then what would you do the rest of the day?

N: Take my clothes off and lay in bed and drink wangjo.

S: What's wangjo?

N: Chinese rice wine. Our barracks had some Chinese men working there. These Chinese were real honest. Everybody just left their money right on a footlocker or whatever we had. I had Big John, and Big John would know when I was out of wangjo. He'd take enough money to buy wangjo and I always had wangjo.

S: You paid them, then, for their services?

N: Somehow we chipped in, I guess. We chipped in and paid them.

S: You said all the messages came through. Is this where it started to get complicated?

N: Yes. Well, this is where they had the sigaba. Now, this was a more complicated code, of course. Nobody could break a message, even ourselves, if we didn't know what we were doing. On given days there would be a certain code word, or they would be different phrases or different things. You'd have to break this up before you could even start decoding the message. All it was, it looked like a typewriter. Once you had the code and the machine set, an X would be an A and a B could be a Z, you know. I'm sure it was probably one of the most complicated codes they had right then. Evidently, they used it all over the world because this girl from the European theatre of war used it over there.

S: I see, so it was like a typewriter machine, that you could set for different . . .

N: It was a typewriter machine. You'd have to know how to set it. If you didn't know what you were doing setting it, you'd never get anything out of it.

S: It sounds like sort of what the Germans had in their enigma machine. It was so complicated it was almost unbreakable.

N: Without a doubt they would have been similar, but I wouldn't know. I never tried to figure it out. As long as it worked, as long as you knew what you were doing, you were happy. We didn't sweat too much. The message either came out or it didn't come out. If it didn't come out, you'd have to send it back, you know, get a retraction or another message or something. Something happened.

S: What were some of the messages?

N: Well, we knew when Madam Chiang Kai Shek would fly. I think that all the Chinese money was printed in the United States.

S: Is that right?

N: Yes. In fact, I just sent some to little kids out in Colorado. The other day I was looking at it. They were printed in the United States. We knew when all the money was coming in. We knew all the different actions.

Of course, there were low priority messages. Like I knew when I was going home! Everybody knew when they were going to get a promotion of any kind.

S: That was rated "low priority"?

N: Yes. These would be just general messages. They'd come in on the same code most of the time.

S: What would be high priority? Would it be like the money shipments?

N: Yes, I guess that was important. I don't know why, but that was a high priority message. Nobody would see these messages other than the man decoding them, you know, and myself. If they were the urgent type, I always delivered them myself.

S: Describe General Stilwell and your relationship to him.

N: I loved that man! He was the nicest person in the world as far as I'm concerend. From what I read he was mistreated by our own government force, and I'm sure that he was mistreated by Chiang Kai Shek. To myself, he was a wonderful man.

If you want to hear something, I'm one of the few soldiers that ever knocked him flat on his back. If you can understand China, they have walls every place! Even in our number one house, where our headquarters was, there were walls running all kinds of ways. We had an alert up there. I had one of these code machines. I had to find a jeep to get out of the place altogether. I came in through one of these walls, the doorway, and I knocked General Stilwell right flat on his back. And he said, "You're in a hurry, soldier, huh?" "Yes, sir!" He said, "That's the way to be." And that was it. (Laughter) I never got any closer than that. Of course, you can't come much closer than knocking him on his back, I guess.

He wasn't there that often. He was always gone. We only had the one, his plane, which was a C-47, that's all it was. It would travel the whole area, I guess. His crew chief, that's the one we used to give our money to, would bring our money back to us maybe three weeks later, maybe a month later, whenever they came back.

General Stilwell, he thought of his men, though. Like in Chungking, we never ate fresh vegetables. I know one time he had to go to Chengtu for something. It was a meeting with the communist Chinese, I'm pretty sure. But he brought a whole plane load of fresh corn. We had corn on the cob for almost two meals there. Every other vegetable had to be boiled, cooked. All our water had to

be boiled. We just didn't know what a fresh vegetable tasted like there.

S: Would you say that he earned the nickname of "Vinegar Joe"?

N: Oh, there are people that knew him, like Peewee Reese at Burma. He fell in love with him, too. I'm sure that the title fit him really good. He looked vinegary anyway. He was well-loved by the Americans, I know that. But I'm sure he had his troubles.

S: What did you know about the controversy between Chenault and Stillwell? How closely associated were you to that? Were you aware of it?

N: Really, I didn't know anything at that time. Let's just say I liked Stilwell a lot better than I liked Chennault. I don't have anything personally against Chennault, other than he seemed rude to me that one time, the first time. Really, I don't think that there might have been any friction between them at all. Honestly, if you read your history, I don't think there was that much friction even after it all came out.

S: You would never hear Stilwell talk about Chennault or make a reference to him?

N: No. I had never heard Stilwell talk, other than when he was in headquarters. You'd hear different stories, but hearsay was hearsay. We were in headquarters and we knew that we had . . . The less you knew the better off you were.

S: That was the attitude, then?

N: That was the attitude, sure. I'll say it again, we had a good bunch of soldiers. I didn't see any action. But what I went though physically, it was enough to wear anybody out. Really, the less you knew, the better off you were. Nobody could pump me. Just say that I would be captured, I wouldn't know anything.

S: Getting back to these messages that maybe were high priority. Where would these originate from? Did you get some from Washington?

N: There would be messages from the United States. There would be messages from . . . I don't know when this might have happened, but they did split the theater up later on, where it was the India-Burma theatre and the China theatre of war. There were really hundreds and hundreds of stations. I was the last area.

S: So there was messages coming in at all times.

N: Oh, all times! We had a twenty-four hour a day operation, no weekends off or anything.

S: And these would be messages pertaining to troop movements or, like you said, money shipments? Do you remember anything ever coming from FDR himself?

N: No, truthfully I couldn't say that. If we did it would be coded. He wouldn't use his name. Even a message that we delivered probably would mean nothing to the message center chief, to the recipient; I'm sure that they knew what they were talking about. There were trips back and forth to the United States, too, you have to understand. They knew a heck of a lot more what they were doing than some lowly GI.

S: If there would be messages to Chiang Kai Shek himself, would you handle those?

N: No. The Chinese had their own army, of course. I don't know how their messages would get through, but I'm sure that they had a signal corps very much like ours. Chiang Kai Shek wasn't in our headquarters.

S: Did you ever see him?

N: Oh, sure. Of course, I met Chiang Kai Shek. In fact, one of his wives just died here, recently. I had tea at her house.

S: Oh, is that right? Tell me about that.

N: I can't remember that much about it. It was a beautiful home, I know that. All they had was hors d'oeuvres and tea. You actually drank tea. Of course, they had the hard stuff for the guys that wanted it, whiskey, scotch, anything you wanted, you know.

S: When did you meet Chiang Kai Shek?

N: I even snapped pictures of him. I stood right in front of him, snapped his picture and everything else. General Stilwell and Chiang Kai Shek and I can't remember whether it was General Hearn or who else it was, but I even have a picture upstairs someplace that I snapped. I was right with them, yes.

S: Did you salute? Can you remember?

N: I don't remember. We weren't very good saluters. We had some of the nicest officers. I didn't start saluting till

I got back to the states.

S: It was kind of informal?

N: Very much informal. The only thing that might have been different there is the officers had their own mess hall later on. For a while they ate with us. This would be in Chungking. My commanding officer, Captain King from someplace in Virginia, insisted that I call him Ernie. That's how close we were.

S: One last question about these messages. Can you ever remember something that would be classified high priority, and as you would deliver it to, say General Stilwell personally, that it caused any consternation, you know, immediate facial feature?

N: Well, no, but Chennault, yes. He used a bad word. He read the message and he used a bad word.

S: What do you mean, he used a bad word?

N: Well, like "son of a bitch," or something to that effect. And another time he was upset because this shouldn't have been delivered. You know, what are you going to do. It's for the general himself and you deliever it and he said this shouldn't have been delivered. That's why I say I never cared for him. But Stilwell, no. Chennault, of course, had his whole staff there. Most of the messages were delivered to his staff.

S: To maybe his adjutant?

N: He had all his aides there. They would get the messages rather than Stilwell. In fact, they were probably more concerned than Stilwell might have been.

S: Who would you say, out of the two, was more military? Stillwell had his whole staff there; did Chennault have that extensive an organization?

N: He had his aides, yes, just like Stilwell. They weren't G-1 or G-2 or G-3 or G-4; they might have been, but to a lesser degree. You have to remember that Stillwell, as far as I'm concerned, was the boss. I think that was why they brought him back to the States, wasn't it, because Chiang Kai Shek and Chennault . . . To me Stilwell was the smartest man. Chennault knew his fighters and he knew his men, and I guess he knew how to treat them. Both of them were congenial in the way that they played baseball when they got a break. They would play baseball. Chennault was more so that way. He loved to play

baseball.

S: While you were in Chungking, were these stops for like pilots? Would they be flying things into there?

N: Not in Chungking. In fact, the only airport near Chungking was in a little place called Peichiyi. That couldn't take anything but a C-47. You had to come in over a mountain and if you didn't stop in time you were in the river. That's how tight it was. In Kunming, of course, everything went to China by air, and of course, we had the Burma Road and the Ledo Road.

S: After the war you found out that Chiang Kai Shek was hoarding much of the supplies that were coming in to China for after the war in his struggle with Mao Tse Tung and the communists. Did you have any inkling that that might have been going on?

N: No, other than what I mentioned before. They had these different province warlords. I know they stole a lot of that stuff. I suppose there was a lot of stealing and robbing there for their self-gain or their self-motives. I can't say that we knew that to be a fact at that time other than . . .

S: Did you suspect it, though?

N: Well, it was pretty evident, yes. If you were waiting on a plane load of something from someplace and your supplies were never found, why somebody got it, you know.

S: Did that happen often?

N: I guess on the Burma Road it happened pretty often. I'm pretty sure trucks were much easier to hijack or steal or something. Oh, I'm sure that it happened very often. Who am I to know for positive?

S: But even the stuff that Chiang Kai Shek legitimately got, we found out he wasn't using against the Japenese. He was waiting for the United States to beat Japan so he then turned to use it against Mao Tse Tung. Did you ever remember having messages come through that referred to Mao?

N: I couldn't remember now, no.

S: What was your feeling, I mean the American group there, about a possible struggle between the communists?

N: Well, I think I summed it up before when I said we kind of felt that we were like lend-lease to China. It wasn't military, in a way. Really, we didn't have to

be. Later on they did start some inspections and things like that, but that was so late in my days. I left there in 1945, of course, and came back home. I was one of the first ones over there and certainly not the first one to come back.

S: Did you and your group have the feeling that, being in China or being in the CBI theatre, that you were sort of on the back burner, the tail end of the cow, as far as . . .

N: Well, a lot of messages told us that we were the forsaken theatre. We couldn't get supplies. You know, all the while I was in China I never had a beer. I suppose the big reason was we only had the one plane. It would come in every once in a while and they just never carried beer. They'd bring some PX supplies in.

S: You only had one plane to bring in supplies?

N: It was General Stilwell's plane. There was no other plane that would come in there. Maybe there were other C-47's that would come in there to bring supplies. We lived off the land, of course. We had fresh eggs to eat every day. We had chickens and some sort of beef they'd feed us every once in a while. A lot of sweet potato pie. (Laughter) Sweet potato pie!

S: It seems like it brings back some memories to you.

N: Well, I'll tell you, as good as we thought we were eating in China, when I was coming home I went back to India and they started feeding me these powdered eggs. I know that I put on about ten pounds in about three weeks, just eating powdered eggs and spam and things like that. There must have been a lot of nutrition in that stuff.

S: What kind of physical shape were you in when you came back? Did you lose any weight?

N: I weighed 172 when I went over. I remember my weight. I weighed 172 when I came back. I wish I could say that now, but I can't.

S: When did you finally come home, before the war was over?

N: I came home before the war was over, yes. When I got my orders, I flew to Kunming, of course , from Chungking. This was funny. When I came over the hump to get to China, I came over in a C-47, and we had no oxygen mask, no clothes, nothing. But to get back to Dinjan I had to wait till there were some oxygen masks available. We went back in a C-46. Going up there, why, everything

was all right. Coming home you took precautions. And I suppose that's good. I had really nice travel orders. From Chabwa I went to Calcutta. I stayed in Calcutta for about ten days. Then I took a train to New Delhi.

S: Did you do any sight-seeing in New Delhi?

N: They finally attached me to the 835th Signal Service battalion, and that's where our headquarters was. So while I was there, waiting for transportation home, I did go to Agra and I visited Taj Majal. I went to a rest camp there. I know it was up in the mountains, I can't even think of the name of the place now. It was a beautiful place. I don't know if it was . . .no. I was going to say Shillong, but I can't remember the name of that rest camp. Then from there we took a train to Bombay. I saw Bombay. We stayed there for about five days. Then I got on a troop ship and came back the same way that I went over, to Australia, to New Zealand, and then we landed in San Pedro instead of San Francisco.

S: Of all the cities in China and India that you were in, which one stands out in your mind the most?

N: New Delhi was by far the prettiest because they had beautiful government buildings there. Of course, there are two sides to every city. They had Old Delhi. They called it Old Delhi and New Delhi. Now, you wouldn't dare venture into Old Delhi because of some of the things that you heard happened there.

S: Like what?

N: Oh, there was all kinds of . . . Well, it would be just like the United States is today; murders every day, robberies, and things like that. Of course, the newer part, these government buildings were beautiful. They were actually beautiful buildings.

S: How did the Indian cities compare to the Chinese?

N: Well, I didn't see too much in China. The only cities I saw in China were small places, villages. They were mostly villages, other than Kunming and Chungking. Those were the only two cities that I visited in China.

S: Were they backward, would you say?

N: Well, they had a banking district. Kunming was much smaller, of course, but Chungking was the capitol then. They had some large buildings there. I prefer China to India.

S: Why?

N: It seemed that both of them were dirty as far as living conditions and everything else. They say China had the first sewer system, and I'm sure they still have the same system. It's just a bunch of rocks put together with water running through it and that's it. But, China I loved much more than India, I don't know, because of the smells. You can't understand these oriental smells. I can still smell them. I can smell them today. I can smell the food; I can smell the sewers; I can smell the paddies. I can smell everything today just like I did then. That's one thing that never left me.

S: You were one of the first Americans . . .

N: We came in on the first troop ship.

S: And you came home over three years later. What was the difference in the country compared to the United States?

N: I'll say that we were treated pretty nice. When our ship pulled into San Pedro they had a band playing for us, and there were a lot of people there to greet us. We were treated much nicer than, perhaps, anybody that fought in the Korean War or the Vietnam War or anything like that. Then I rode a train to Indian Town Gap and then they gave me a vacation. In fact, they gave me a honeymoon down in Miami Beach, Florida. When I came home I got married. My wife and I were engaged by proxy while I was in China. I never had a date with her. I came home and we got married, really fast, and we had a honeymoon down in Florida and the government paid for it. We stayed in the Hotel Raleigh, which was a beautiful hotel down there in Miami Beach. Everything was free for me, and for my wife I had to pay one dollar a day plus thirty-five cents for each meal that she ate. So I had a beautiful vacation.

I didn't get out of the service right away, although I had enough points and everything. I don't know why they kept me in there. They sent me to Camp Crowder, Missouri. I went to school there. They gave me basic training all over again. From there they sent me up to Utah and they assigned me to some ordinance outfit, and that's where I got discharged from.

S: There is just one thing I forgot to ask you about China. Your particular group didn't have anything to do with deciphering the Japanese code. Was that intelligence?

N: No, we didn't have anything to do with that. I'm sure that somebody might have had something to do with that, yes. Who would it be, the OSS, or . . .

S: Or the intelligence ranks.

N: Something like that, yes, because Japanese figures wouldn't mean anymore to me than the Chinese figure does. I wouldn't know what they were.

S: The last question that I have is did you notice any difference in the country when you came back, in the attitude of the population or the economy? Did anything surprise you?

N: Nothing really surprised me. I know when I saw my first--we called them GI kids--when I first saw my first American children after being overseas for so long, I just wanted to go out and grab them and just kiss them or bite them or something.

Of course, I came back here and my employment was still open for me and I know the bosses gave me a paid vacation. They put me right back to work. They gave me some sort of a present. I know they gave me a radio and something else aside from the paid vacation. I never took advantage of they called it the 21 Club where you didn't have to work for so long. The government paid so many dollars a month. As soon as I came home I went right to work. Of course, I told you, I got married in January of that year, so I was married then.

S: Is there anything you can think of that I haven't asked about your experiences?

N: Probably a lot of things. I'll tell you, I wouldn't trade that experience for anything in the world. We have a CBIVA now, which is the China-Bruma-India Veterans Association. I am a past national commander of the organization. I have the award of merits of the organization. Our vacations are planned around the organization. This year, for instance, I went to West Point and stayed in the Thayer Hotel where the hostages stayed. That was for the New York State meeting. I had never been to West Point and here was the CBI meeting so we went. In April I was in Denver, Colorado, when we had the spring board meeting. My daughter lives in Denver so I killed two birds with one stone. I attended the meeting and visited her.

S: How many members are there nationally?

N: Nationally, it's surprisingly small. It's just a little over four thousand active members. It fluctuates so much because our organization, of course, is a dying organization. Once we veterans pass on there's no more CBIVA. The only organization I know that's tighter than ours would be the Pearl Harbor Day Survivors. I understand

there is a lot of activity in the CBIVA. They are not national members, but we get our national roundup each month. Every month there are some thirty different reunions where these people have their own. Like the Air Force has their own, the Flying Tigers have their own, and the Pipeline has their own. They don't belong nationally, but they're still closely knit. You'll never find a closer knit group of people than we have in the CBI.

S: I'd like to thank you for this interview. It's been very informative. I know I took a little bit more of your time than I intended, but I think that shows the quality of the interview. Thank you.

N: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW