Video Recording Log
Veteran Jesse Dowell

Name of Interviewer: Bill Williamson
Name of Veteran/Civilian: Jesse Dowell
Birth Date: July 25, 1926

Recording format: Mini DVD

Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 45 minutes  Date of recording: March 14, 2008

Location of recording: WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.
00:10 Introduction
00:30 Mahomet High School, 1943, registered for draft
01:22 Drafted when 18 even if still in school, infantry
01:55 Volunteering for Navy to avoid infantry
01:58 Principal sent students to recruiters
02:10 Wanted to fly, pilot schools closed, told to become bombardier
02:39 All classmates went into Navy just before turned 18
03:25 Told to report August 8th, 1943
03:40 Basic training, Jacksonville, Florida, Naval Air Station
03:50 Placement tests: ordinance test, top percent went to bombardier school
04:23 Classified bombing training, 6 weeks: new radar bomb site, could bomb at night blind, specifically for invasion of Japan
04:50 New air group, 22 bombardiers, invasions at 500 and 1,000 feet
05:13 Spring and Summer of 1945, training almost a full year
05:35 Training as crew, June and July 1945, Corpus Christi, TX, Naval Air Station
05:45 Flying boat bombers, BVM, 12 crew, 12-hour missions
06:02 Missions to hunt for Japanese submarines and ships at night
06:23 Told would be going to Japan for invasion, but not written instructions
06:47 Bombardier asked commanding officer why they would be flying at 500 feet: because needed to take out all enemy land mines and bunkers before invasion to avoid mistakes of European invasion
07:20 Start bombing at sundown before invasion
07:28 New secret bomb that would fill bomb bay, 12 feet long, 7 feet high
07:46 Gunners would be strafing to knock out land mines: could be knocked out at 500 feet
08:12 Describing plane: in the nose, Plexiglas with twin 50-caliber machine guns
08:52 New secret bomb site, his job to keep pip between crosshairs with knobs, describing process
09:49 Training with dummy bombs, 5 pound smoke bombs, 6 weeks
10:27 Other crew members: all had dual jobs
11:08 Dummy bombs, arming bombs, propeller would arm bomb once outside plane
11:56 Did not land with bombs on plane, would dump them
12:08 24 in air group, training new group each week, Anawetok, 200-300 could have been bombing and strafing before invasion
12:50 All volunteers flying in Navy and Air Force, told they could join infantry if they did not want to bomb
13:08 Commanding officer told them they were going to bomb from sundown to 3 a.m., go back to Anawetok, put in large tanks of poison gases; someone asked if it was against the rules: yes, but have to be prepared in case Japanese would use poison gas against Americans
14:15 Japanese treated American soldiers unfairly, did not know what to expect
14:27 How would they prevent killing American soldiers? Invade when wind was blowing inland; Leak word invasion on November 1st; many people died in other invasions at low tide, invade at high tide, full moon
15:50 Maybe 2000 bombs with poison gas prepared
16:05 Width of invasion beach probably about same as Europe, 24 miles; not told where it would be, but later a marine told him it was to be on South end of mainland Japan
17:07 August 1st, about 2 months before invasion date, told might fly in about 2 weeks
17:40 Next Tuesday, August 6th, first Atomic Bomb; second Atomic Bomb; 8:30 a.m. intentionally to kill as many as possible
18:30 Heard stories: Japanese Emperor called Truman?
18:40 Truman called special meeting of Senior Admirals, Generals and religious leaders to Washington, D.C., told about Atomic Bomb and discussed locations; Truman wanted to bomb Tokyo
19:03 Religious leader told him it would kill the senior religious leader of Japan, all civilians would want to die also
19:25 Decided to bomb cities with no American prisoners, Hat Arnold decided which ones
20:25 Atomic Bomb pilots flying off another island in B-29’s
20:50 Flying off of water, flying boats BVMs, almost as big as B-29’s
21:15 Flying boats had been around since before WWII
21:25 PVY Catalina: describing
21:55 Flying boats replaced PVY Catalina, could fly higher, faster, longer, with more bombs
22:10 Could land on land, amphibious, wheels on side, PVY
22:30 Other uses of PVY's: for all invasions, to rescue pilots that had been shot down: President Bush; dropped torpedoes, deliver mail
24:10 July-August 1945, did not tell a lot about invasion
24:58 After second Atomic Bomb, still in Corpus Christi, TX: celebrating all night
25:28 Hoping to get to fly at least one mission, did not
25:34 Did not know about Atomic Bomb: top secret
25:41 Plans for how they would have traveled to Japan
26:24 VJ Day, afterwards, did nothing
26:48 Selected to be on Public Address system in Corpus Christi, TX; orders to go to Great Lakes to move closer to home in order to be discharged, told would be within one year
27:15 September: hurricane in Corpus Christi, TX, tracking storm, predicted it would hit and it did
29:05 Planes at base: all went away
29:42 Base survived hurricane, buildings mostly new for WWII
30:11 All instructors had been to combat, told details, special training
30:36 If flying 25,000 feet and got shot down, wait to open parachute until at 10,000 feet, otherwise lungs would freeze
30:56 Some instructors had been in prison and escaped
31:10 Japanese treated Americans shot down terribly
31:18 Had to tell Japanese name, rank, serial number, but they would try to get you to tell them where you came from, and you had to lie; would cut off your ear and make you eat it
32:16 Tactics: if over land, do not open parachute until at 500 feet
32:49 Taught how to tell difference between Chinese and Japanese based on sandals
33:25 Survival training
34:48 Back home within one year on August 17th, did not have a lot of points
35:20 Sent to Great Lakes, announcement that said they needed 3 aviation ordinance volunteers to go to Bikini Atoll
Went to Whidbey Island, near Seattle, to decommission ships: hundreds of ships being sent to storage on West Coast, worked one day a week handling keys.

Bikini Atoll, announcement, running experiments on ships seeing what effect the Atomic Bomb would have on them.

Did not want to extend service, went home to go to University of Illinois.

Some people at Bikini Atoll might have been exposed to radiation.

Discharged in Washington, bus home.

Classmates came home without injuries.

How classmates look back on War now, wounded friends.

Talking to younger people about War, they do not know anything about it.

The Allies were not sure they were going to win the War in 1943.

Impact of GI Bill: more people going to college.

Servicemen come back loyal Americans.

Great experience.

Wrap-up.

Video of photograph from wartime.