



Cpl. Ken Grantham
21st Squadron
Radio Operator

Born August 31, 1923 in South Texas, near Corpus Christi.

"The fifth child and my mother was having one child every year until me and then she waited a few years after me so I must have scared her or something."

We moved from there when I was only two years old. Went up northwest to what you call panhandle, tornado alley and I lived there until I was five years old. And my dad was farming there he got tuberculosis so they invited him to go to a dryer climate so then we had to move to Arizona but we got as far as Roswell NM, so I, the childhood I remember is all around Roswell, NM

I was raised on a cotton farm 13 seasons

When I was almost 18 they moved to CA. "My dad didn't own his own land and it was hard to get." They had a new program where they let the land rest so they had to give up farming and move to CA. cause of that I dropped out of school I finished about ten and a half years. Went to do construction labor as soon as he reached his 18th birthday.

Took all wood shop courses I could - took 3 year wanted to be a cabinet maker, at least a carpenter.

"I was about 19 and a half when I got my draft call. Fortunately I got assigned to the Army Air Corps."

First stop was radio and gunnery school in IL but Ken couldn't pass the physical for gunnery. "I was too tall, too heavy and didn't have perfect vision." Transferred to radio maintenance school in WI for a five month course.

Spent his first night on Ie Shima in a fox hole near the beach,

"We saw all these human bones around us. We finally figured out that we got in the middle of an old graveyard."

then they moved them over to their area where they dug fox holes for themselves. He shared a foxhole with Cpl. William Kelly from Paris, TX. "Went to sleep and it started raining like crazy. Before morning, the foxhole there was full of water." Moved so we had to move to higher ground. No sooner had we done that had to go on guard duty at the supply dump. "Looked like a mountain of stuff" Piles of boxes, half a dozen EM on guard duty. Assigned one of the pilots to be in charge of us. Pilot put two pup tents together with four pilots in it. It rained for two months "all we were doing there was putting on our raincoats and going out with our rifles and guarding all those supplies" The army corps of engineers lengthened the runways as the rain slacked off because the Japanese runways weren't long enough for US aircraft.

Once operations were started, Ken went to work maintaining the aircraft radios.

On Ie "We were introduced to K rations, and I have a lot of respect for K rations." Got 12 cigarettes - Ken gave his way. "Unfortunately, I started smoking out of boredom when I was waiting to go home on Okinawa just waiting for our turn to come back. "I was sitting there playing three man pinochle with Bill Kelly and one other person and they were both smoking so I started smoking sort of in self defense."

Of the Kota Inten; "from Seattle to Honolulu they thought they had spotted a submarine. The only ship with us was a little destroyoer escort and they were dropping some of the depth charges and so forth".

From Honolulu they went to Eniwetok where they waited to form a small convoy and then to an island in the carolina group. When we were headed to Okinawa there were so many ships you couldn't see them all.

Five holds Bunks were five high. "They just had us stacked up like crazy." It was hot in the hold and Ken recalls staying on deck during the days. He remembers sleeping on the deck at night

when they were near the equator. "It was pretty uncomfortable travel on that kind of a ship."

Remembers when the engine of the Kota had to stop for emergency repairs. The convoy moved on without them. "Next thing we know we're sitting in water where we know we have submarines." One little destroyer escort run a ring around them. Then they caught up with convoy.

Upon arrival they got off as fast as they could, down the rope ladder onto landing ships, full pack, bobbing around.

Whild on the beach he saw the kamikaze attack the Kota.

After the war, applied to go to college - went over to San Jose U. took physical science course, included radio engineering. Got a BA. Graduated into a recession and couldn't find a job. Eventually he was hired by a radio shop in San Jose- worked there for six years, then went to IBM where he stayed over 27 years in 1984. 26 years retiremnet. Over the years, Ken and his wife vacationed in travel trailers, each one larger than the last. Upon retirement they bought a motor home and traveled about 20k