



Cpl. Ken Grantham
21st Squadron
Radio Operator

Ken was born August 31, 1923 in South Texas, near Corpus Christi.

"I was 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."

When Ken was two years old his family moved from southern Texas. "Went up northwest to what you call the panhandle, tornado alley, and I lived there until I was five years old. My dad was farming [cotton] there. He got tuberculosis so they advised him to go to a dryer climate, so then we had to move to Arizona but we got as far as Roswell NM, so, the childhood I remember is all around Roswell, NM."

When Ken was almost 18, the Granthams 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 [my father] had to give up farming and move to CA. Cause of that I dropped out of school. I [had] finished about ten and a half years." Ken worked as a construction laborer as soon as he reached his 18th birthday.

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

Ken's 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." Next, Ken transferred to

radio maintenance school in WI for a five month course followed by a two month advanced course.

"We left Seattle, WA on April 17, 1945 with a destroyer escort which dropped depth charges when they sighted a submarine." From Honolulu they went to Eniwetok where they waited to form a small convoy and then to McKinny (sic) island in the Carolina group. "When we were headed to Okinawa there were so many ships you couldn't see them all."

Of the Kota Inten; Ken noted that there were five holds each of which had bunks 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."

Ken recalled that after leaving the Carolines the Kota had to stop for emergency repairs and the convoy moved on without them. "Next thing we know we're sitting in water where we know they have submarines. The only ship with us was a little destroyer escort doing a figure eight around us." Eventually the engines were repaired and the Kota Inten caught up with the convoy.

"We were diverted from Kadena Okinawa because the enemy had retaken the area the day before our arrival." Upon arrival at Ie Shima they got off as fast as they could, down a rope ladder wearing full packs, into landing ships which were bobbing around.

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

Ken 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."

Next they moved to their assigned area where they dug fox holes for themselves, "then put our pup tents over them". Ken shared a foxhole with Cpl. William Kelly from Paris, TX. "[We] went to sleep and it started raining like crazy. Before morning, the foxhole there was full of water." Ken and his unit moved to higher ground and as soon as they had they were assigned to guard the supply dump. "[It] looked like a mountain of stuff. Piles of boxes, half a dozen EM on guard duty."

According to Ken 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."

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

On Ie Shima, "We were introduced to K rations, and I have a lot of respect for K rations." Each package contained twelve cigarettes and initially 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 [return to the US]. 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."

After the war Ken went to San Jose State University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree. "I graduated into a recession and couldn't find a job."

Eventually Ken was hired by Jennings Radio Manufacturing in San Jose where he worked for six years, then went on to IBM where he stayed over 27 years until he retired in 1984. Over the years, Ken and his wife Barbara (DeVore) vacationed in travel trailers, "each one larger than the last". "After Mattel named their sweetheart dolls 'Barbie & Ken' we were called 'The Dolls'." Upon Ken's retirement they bought a motor home and traveled about 20,000 miles in ten months.

