

Pvt. Ed Shibley
1st Squadron
Engineering & Operations

Ed was born 11-24-1923. "I was born in Agawam, MA, during the days of the the Mid-Wives, no radios, certainly no televisions or PCs". "I grew up in a very close family." "We just hung out". There were seven in Ed's family 5 boys, 2 girls. The Shibley's lived on a pig farm with up to 500 pigs. Fruits and vegetables too. "One of our chores as young boys, my brother and I, was when vegetables or berries came into season was to go from home to home peddling what we grew including fresh eggs".

"I remember Bradley Field. When we were in high school they were training Chinese pilots there and we used to go to watch them crash."

"After we came of age we all enlisted". I was still a senior in high school." About half the class of 60 at Agawam High School enlisted.

"They sent us to engineering and operations school at Buckley Field in Denver, CO. School was three months, teaching to type, different parts of the plane, gunnery practice."

"And then we went from there to Seymour Johnson field in Goldsboro, NC. At that time we went to Blumenthal Field." "We froze our ass off in North Carolina."

As for the Kota Inten, Ed remembers that the ship was hot and recalls drinking warm beer. The East Indian crew had a dice game using three dice. At first they were beating the soldiers, but "eventually the American kids figured it out".

I mentioned to Ed that Dad had mentioned a boxing match on the Kota Inten and asked if he was a participant.

"I boxed in Florida. With the nose that I have and the blind eye, I figured I better quit while I was ahead."

In fact, Ed thought his eye was bad enough that it might have kept him out of the military.

Ed was below when the kamikaze attacked.

Once on Ie Shima, soldiers could watch kamikaze attacks from shore. "The ships were so well gunned, so they came low on the water to avoid the guns." "I still remember one ship getting hit and I could see the guys jumping over getting caught right in the flames." Ed remembers another time one of our planes was shot down close to shore and the pilot was rescued by a boat.

On the Kota Inten, one of the Captains who was eight to ten years older than him, was always giving lectures saying "when I say take that hill, we take that hill".

"The very first night we got off in the dark in absolutely strange country, it was really more kind of semi tropical... all trees, nothing too high; every bush six or eight feet high. Anyway the first thing here come the Bettys; they're bombing the hell out of us. So we're looking for the captain, son of a bitch, he took off and was hiding somewhere. We never saw him until the next day. And we were shooting at everything. So the only thing we found the next day after all of our shooting (and I don't know what we were shooting at we were just scared), we found one horse. Somebody shot a horse."

Ed spoke thoughtfully about the Japanese bomber attacks. "Most of the attacks we got, like bombers, was during the night. The island was very small. Every night. The Japanese bombers were called Bettys at that time"

"We had nothing on the island, we had to make our own showers and pitch our own tents."

"Monsoon season blew everything away, tents and all."

"There were so many of us in the service that they really didn't even need. We used to hang around the island sometimes for days and just do nothing. You just took care of yourself."

"You didn't hang around with officers, even a first lieutenant"

"I grew up accustomed to going to church with all the decoration and statues and I couldn't understand how we could have mass in the middle of a field with just a sheet thrown over a table and a cross on it. That's where we held our services. It didn't feel like church at all, but you got used to it."

"They took all of the people... all the natives inhabiting the island. They put em in, it wasn't a concentration camp, but you could call it that. They put 'em in an area, fenced it in and that's where they lived. Of course they fed them and gave them food, someone to take care of it within their own group"

"I was working in what they called engineering and operations. Our job was to make sure that we checked 'em going out and checked 'em coming in. Make sure nothing was in the runways."

"What I did mostly... you're on the strip and we had hand phones which were very crude. Really radios. You would try to guide some of the pilots through or give them warnings if they were on

the track when they come in to land. And it was very crudely done, cause they had crude equipment too, which we thought was great."

"That's what I did, and every day, and they made reports of those that didn't come back. You made reports of planes that often came back and crashed, on the strip usually, because the plane was probably partially shot away or the landing gear wasn't working and God knows what it could have been. And you made that report daily. As to who the pilot was. What the conditions were. If he was hurt or not hurt or if badly hurt or killed. [Three or four] of them made it home and never survived the landing."

Ed recalled a major attack on Japan towards the end of the war. There were so many US planes headed for Japan that by the time the first flights leaving Okinawa returned, the last flights of the attack hadn't yet left.

You don't hear much about the men who died from drinking home made whiskey using methanol. (A water-methanol injection system was used in the P-47). "More people [in the 413th] died from drinking bad whiskey than died in combat."

"One fellow, I remember him well. He was from Georgia. He said; 'I'm going to do everything I can to survive this war.' Son of a bitch, he got tied up in that booze and died." "I know three or four of them that were shipped home that went blind. That was a real devastator."

"I never talk about this."

"My brother victor, he was stationed in Italy. After the war in Italy ended they shipped him over to the Philippines." Ed forged Lt. Stanislaw Tomkiowicz; name on orders allowing him to fly to the Philippines. When he got back he was court martialed. Ed got 30 days punishment and lost his PFC stripe (which was \$4 a month pay a month lost as well). Ed's punishment was to dig a hole and fill it back in. The guard was one of his buddies, so Ed hired some Japanese for cigarettes to do the work while he read books for 30 days.

After the war ended, the 413th was on Okinawa. "Of course they had airplanes slight or never used. They took them, cut them up, they had these huge dumps, trucks and jeeps and airplanes and bulldozed them. The stuff, they just got rid of it. Guns by the tons.

Upon his discharge Ed received \$300 mustering out pay.

Ed's had a brother with tuberculosis and had been unable to serve in the military. He was married and owned a grocery store in Greenville, SC, so Ed moved there after the war and finished high school. In Greenville Ed became engaged to a girl he didn't want to marry, so he left town and came back to Springfield, MA.

[Before the war] "I wanted to become a coach at a high school level, an athletic director." A friend advised Ed that he was more of a business man and that he should to go to American International College. Ed took his advice.

Later in life became an entrepreneur. Among jobs was building apartments, renting them all and then selling the building. One project was 400 units.

Ed has 21 grandchildren. One of Ed's grandsons went to West Point.

When I visited Ed he mentioned he was a day trader. After our interview he showed me his two quads which he enjoys driving in the woods behind his home with his grandchildren. Of course, it's not strictly legal to drive in those woods, so sometimes Ed has to outrun the police on his quad. He noted that he knows the paths better than they do.