

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

- 35:48 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
- 37:08 Bikini Atoll, announcement, running experiments on ships seeing what effect the Atomic Bomb would have on them
- 37:34 Did not want to extend service, went home to go to University of Illinois
- 37:40 Some people at Bikini Atoll might have been exposed to radiation
- 38:06 Discharged in Washington, bus home
- 38:30 Classmates came home without injuries
- 38:45 How classmates look back on War now, wounded friends
- 39:23 Talking to younger people about War, they do not know anything about it
- 39:40 The Allies were not sure they were going to win the War in 1943
- 40:30 Impact of GI Bill: more people going to college
- 41:55 Servicemen come back loyal Americans
- 42:28 Great experience
- 42:30 Wrap-up
- 43:20 Video of photograph from wartime