

E. H. "Ken" Kenyon

Tape 2 of 2

Question: So, another question for you, too, if you had been getting letters from your girlfriend and your Mom.

Answer: Oh, sure.

Question: And they got some from you.

Answer: They had V-mail, and it was just for prisoners of war. And you folded them and flipped under the deal, they weren't sealed. And a strange thing happened years after we were married. The mailman was a very dear friend of Rosemary's. He admitted that he'd opened all the letters that I'd written 'cause he was so interested in what was going on in prison camp and he's read them. Oh, that was funny. We talked to his daughter the other day and asked her if she ever knew that. She said she didn't know that.

Question: So when you came back, had you decided at that point this was someone you were going to marry?

Answer: Well, she was in the Navy. She joined the Navy and she was a WAVE and she got leave and came to Phillips and spent 4 or 5 days with me and my family, and time was so short that I sent a telegram to him and said Due to 2 ½ years absence, I thought 10 days leave insufficient. Request 10-day extension, I signed it E.H. Kenyon, First Lieutenant, U.S. States Air Force. Commander Underwood, United States Navy. Right back in the mail, 10 days leave extension granted. So she got to spend some more time. So she went back to California, and I went to Coral Gables, Florida, and they found a tumor on my right lung that I had contracted somewhere in prison due to exposure they thought on this walk. So they sent me to Spokane, Washington, to get it removed at Baxter General Hospital. So I had it removed, then I was sent to Santa Ana for discharge, and while we were there, as I say, she was in the Navy, and I went and picked her up at noon one day to take her to lunch, and we never went back that afternoon.

That evening we went for dinner, and about halfway through dinner, the food was lousy, I said to her, Let's go to Las Vegas and get married. And she said Ok, so we went, we were both AWOL. When I checked in Santa Ana, the major put his arm around my shoulders, says, Oh, Lt. Kenyon, you were supposed to be here yesterday. I said, yes sir, I was getting married. He said, we won't worry about yesterday. You're hooked for the rest of your life. She went back to the Navy and they locked her up in the infirmary with an armed guard for 3 days, so I didn't get to see her for 3 days, but that was on the 6th or 7th of November. She was discharged on the 19th.

Question: So you were back in the country when the war in the Pacific ended then?

Answer: Oh, yes.

Question: What did you think about that when you heard about the bomb?

Answer: It was great! I couldn't see losing another million men over there going into Japan. No. I was ready for it to be over. I was discharged April 1 of '46, so.

E. H. "Ken" Kenyon

Tape 2 of 2

Question: From all that time over in Europe, is that the 2 times that were the worst, you think, is the day that you did go down, and the forced march. Was that the worst days you had? Was there anything that happened during that time that was a good day?

Answer: I think when we got warm in that glass factory was a good day. 'Cause we stayed there a whole day. But we still didn't have anything to eat.

Question: Did the, going back to Germany and then you met people who are German, especially, was it Elly is her name?

Answer: Ella.

Question: Ella. Was, that must have been pretty interesting to hear her point of view I suppose?

Answer: Oh, yeah. It was. She was in the Army. She was doing her job just like I was.

Question: And what did she do?

Answer: She was in the Propaganda Department.

Question: So she actually was military.

Answer: Oh, yes. She was military. No, I have no animosity toward the Germans. Never have had. I couldn't say much for their leaders.

Question: Did you like England when you were there?

Answer: I enjoyed England, very much. Had some good times in England. See, we were there from March until October. I have one regret. I had a chance to go back to England later in life. I chose not to go. I wished I had. But that's the way it goes.

Question: You could still go.

Answer: No. I don't want to anymore now. We don't travel anymore.

Question: Did the. Every year when the B-17 comes in, when you hear the, to me it's a very unmistakable sound when that B-17 that's restored flies in. When you hear that come over town, does it bring back...?

Answer: I took my grandkids out to go through it. We were in Texas one year, and we went to the museum down there for the Confederate Air Force. That's who keeps that plane flying. They had a big board on the wall showing their four B-17s, and there were 2 that were out flying around, the other 2 were in the shop. So we walked in and I saw these bunch of guys standing around talking. They all had orange jumpsuits on, and I said, Boy, you guys are really something else. The guy looked at me and says, What do you mean? I said, I came all the way from Olympia, Washington, to see your B-17, and you got the thing out flying somewhere, and I laughed. He laughed. He said, You're kidding. I said, No. He said, What's your connection with a B-17? I said, Well, I was a pilot and I landed one in the

E. H. "Ken" Kenyon

Tape 2 of 2

English Channel and bailed out of one, so I've got a real interest. He says, Common with me, so I went back up to the room and there was one that they were working on, and they had barricades all around and he moved the barricade. He said, Go on up in there and sit down. He said, Stay as long as you want. So I got to sit in one and look at all the clocks again. It was great. I enjoyed it.

Question: And your grandkids were with you?

Answer: No, just my wife that trip. My grandkids were out at the Olympia Airport when it was here.

Question: So were they pretty impressed?

Answer: Oh, yeah. They thought it was great. But, you know, I look at the size of these airplanes today. That's more like a fighter plane, and that was a big one then.

Question: So had you spoken to your grandkids about

Answer: Oh, yeah. I got them each a copy of that book. Yeah, they know.

Question: That's good, because a lot of people haven't. We do run into lots of people actually that they want copies of the tape because they have never told their kids, or the kids never asked so they thought they weren't interested.

Answer: Oh, I've written the story of my life up to the time Rosemary and I got married. And it's all ready for them.

Question: Do you know Wally Hoffman?

Answer: Name is familiar.

Question: He's from town. He was on the Schweinfurt Raid.

Answer: Was he?

Question: Yeah, very nice guy. He was instrumental in getting the state to fund this project. He was a B-17 pilot. We'll have to fix you up with him.

Answer: Yeah. I'd like to talk to him.

Question: Yeah. Nice guy. He didn't get shot down, though.

Answer: He made it.

Question: Yeah. He got, yeah, no, I don't think he was a POW. And then, so I got your name from Lauren, Lauren Schwissow, Very nice guy.

Answer: Yeah. Loren is tremendous.

Question: And then later today we interview Rachel Beck, who as a child was a colonial, and English child in China, and she was interned by the Japanese.

E. H. "Ken" Kenyon

Tape 2 of 2

Answer: She's the secretary of our Ex-POW Group. Rachel is really a super gal.

Question: Oh, really. Yeah. You know, it's funny. I was talking to her and we'd interviewed a woman in Richland, and she was in Lunghua Camp, and Rachel knew her. It's funny, in all these interviews; it's such a small world sometimes.

Answer: Yeah. It is.

Question: Well, that wasn't too painful was it?

Answer: No. It was great. I hope I did all right.

Question: Oh, you did great. I could go on and on, but...