

**Theodore Joseph Beebe  
Second Lieutenant, US Army, Air Forces, WWII, & Korea**

**Interviewed by:  
Wayne Clarke (WC)  
Michael Russert (MR)**

**Interviewed at  
Evelin Senior Residents Albany NY  
11:15am on May 12, 2006**

Note: Beebe was 81 years Beebe at the time of the interview.

Camera Man: "Okay, we're rolling"

**WC** "This is an interview at Evelin Senior Residents Albany NY. It is the twelfth of May 2006 approximately 11:15 am. Interviewers are Wayne Clark and Mark Rossford. Can you give me your full name, date of birth?"

**Beebe** "February 1, 1925, my name is Theodore Joseph Beebe."

**MR** "Where were you born?"

**Beebe** "Albany, New York."

**WC** "Okay, What was your educational background prior to entering service?"

**Beebe** "I graduated from high school about a month before I went into the service."

**WC** "Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?"

**Beebe** "At home in Albany on Jefferson Street."

**WC** "How did you hear about it?"

**Beebe** "A news report, on the radio."

**WC** “What were your feelings when you heard about this?”

**Beebe** “I don’t recall that I had any particular feelings, other than I thought we were going to go to war.”

**WC** “Did you enlist or were you drafted?”

**Beebe** “I was drafted, out from Schenectady.”

**WC** “Where did you go for your basic training?”

**Beebe**- “Miami Beach”

**WC** “So, were you assigned to the Miami Airforce right away when you were drafted?”

**Beebe** “At the station I reported to, which was on Long Island the Patch Hawk.”

**WC** “Okay, how long was your basic training in Miami approximately?”

**Beebe** “Two months, sixty days.”

**MR** “Where else did you go from there?”

**Beebe** “I went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota for radio school as a radio operator.”

**MR** “How long was that school?”

**Beebe** “Six months”

**MR** “Oh, Okay”

**Beebe** “We went from there to Yuma, Arizona for gunnery training that lasted about two months.”

**MR** “So your position was a radio operator slash gunner also?”

**Beebe** “Yes”

**MR** “Did you have to learn Morris Code?”

**Beebe** “I had to. I had to do twenty words a minute. It was of encrypted messages, so these were five letter groups so you had a whole sheet that was nothing but five letters. A couple hundred of them on a standard size page.”

**WC** “When were you finally assigned to an air craft?”

**Beebe** “Well we were allowed to go on leave from Yuma, and we were called for thirty days reported to Lincoln, Nebraska. We were assigned to a crew who was sent to Rapid City, South Dakota. I was there for a few months.”

**MR** “What kind of aircraft were you assigned to?”

**Beebe** “It was a B-17.”

**MR** “Okay”

**Beebe** “I had difficulty flying, I was not functional. We had a very severe thunderstorm, the piolet managed to fly out, through it came back through it. I went to the medical dispensary and I told them I wouldn't go up again. I didn't care what they did with me, but I would not go up again.

The crew I was flying with on our next flight had a crash landing. Everybody walked away from it, probably because I wasn't there. The gentleman who filled in for me on that flight had finished 25 missions in Europe. He told everybody where to sit, how to brace themselves. But that's all I know about the accident.”

**MR** “What did they do with you?”

**Beebe** “Oh, you know KP for a while. (Chuckle) They sent me to Dalhart, Texas. They were assembling a B29 group to go to the Pacific, Japan would be the destination. We were actually sent to Okinawa later from Dalhart we went to Pent, Kansas where the squad that I was assigned to was in training.”

**MR** “Now what was your job to be at that point?”

**Beebe** “Radio operator at a ground state.”

**MR** “Okay”

**Beebe** “But they spent a lot of time training me, they weren’t going to lose it. I was associated with army men people, radio operators, all kinds of specialties. Most of us were drop outs from flying.”

**MR** “So, what were your duties as a ground station operator? What did you do?”

**Beebe** “Radio that pretty much was it. We eventually wound up in Okinawa. So anytime planes in my squadron were up, we would have somebody on the ground communicating with them.”

**MR** “Did your duties control aircraft control at all?”

**Beebe** “No. No, the squadron had us sent back reports where they were. If they were on a bombing mission they had sent back reports that they had dropped them.”

**MR** “Everything was encoded, pretty much?”

**Beebe** “Pretty much encoded, yes.”

**MR** “What was life like in that unit? Was it a good size squadron?”

**Beebe** “Oh yeah it was fine. You know it consisted of about eight of us who were radio operators and enough ground support people to maintain a dozen or two dozen aircrafts.”

**MR** “Were you intense or squad tense?”

**Beebe** “On Okinawa we started off with eight men squad tense. They were on a wooden platform. We were there for a short time. We had the typhoon that wiped out the whole area. There were three squadrons in the wing.

The headquarters squadron told all the men to go out and scrounge to get ourselves back under cover. The headquarter squadron was told for all the material that was brought in

were told to return to headquarters. The other squadron was told to turn in half the material they brought in.

The squadron that I was in told us to go and get whatever we could and build our house it was ours; and we did. We went out and scrounged the material. We were the first ones under cover. We even had one group of eight men build a house; that would have been very nice on any camp in the United States. They had double home sliding windows, doors, and partitions. The group I was with we settled something for a little less.”

**MR** “Did you have any problems with tropical diseases like malaria or Dengue fever or anything like that?”

**Beebe** “Oh dear, what they call that? I picked up a skin rash of some kind.”

**MR** “Jungle Rot?”

**Beebe** “Noo, I can’t recall what they called it anymore.”

**MR** “Dermatitis?”

**Beebe** “A little bit worse than that. They put me in a hospital so I wouldn’t contaminate anybody else, primarily. It was an infectious kind of disease that I had. I probably got it helping some natives out of the back of a truck. But I was there for about three or four weeks before they sent me back to my unit.

Shortly after I got back they decided to break up the unit that I was with. I got reassigned to a single core company. They were maintaining the grounds communications with planes in the air at that time.

When we arrived on Okinawa we were to be part of the eighth air force. They were moving the eighth air force from England to the Pacific Theater of cooperation. General Doolittle was the commanding officer. It was his intention to get in a strike on Tokyo before the war ended, so that the air force would have an evidence record that had operated both the orders of operation. Or so was said, I was never far up the ladder to know for sure. That never happened for one thing because he did not have all his flight crews there.

His intention was to use all of the ground service people that were there that he had on sight to make his first strike, only because we were weeks with in the armistice that did not happen. I and my associates were thankful for that.”

**MR** “Did you ever see him personally?”

**Beebe** “Never saw him.”

**MR** “Where were you when the atomic bombs were dropped?”

**Beebe** “On a ship at sea, I believe between Hawaii and Eniwetok.

**MR** “What was your reaction? Do you remember at all?”

**Beebe** “I think we all felt that that would probably bring on the end of the war. However we still continued. On that truck we did stop in Hawaii for a short time. We did not get to see anything in Hawaii. We were put in trucks and driven to the beach, went in for a swim got back in the truck and they close it all up, and took us back to the ship. We didn't to get to see the island at all.

We went to Eniwetok. We did not go ashore on Eniwetok .From there we went to an island called Ulithi. It's just a few degrees north of the equator. There was nobody on the island when we went ashore. There was a structure open, post structure with a roof on it. It was full of beer when we arrived. It was full of empty bottles when we left.

We went back on the ship; it was a training exercise we had to go down cargo nets off the side of the ship to be loaded in small landing crafts and went ashore from there. I can still remember going down that cargo net. I didn't dare look down. One of other things is I don't swim, and if you did look down the depths of the water were endless. (Chuckles) I could see the hull of the ship kind of moving away from me. Anyway I did manage to get off. (Laughing)

We went for a swim; the water was so warm it was like in bath water. We went from there to Okinawa. The regulations at port we arrived at dusk, it said no ship was allowed to anchor in the harbor overnight with troops on board. We were at that time subjected to kamikaze attacks. I did have an air rig during the time we were there. I do not know whether it was real or not.

The owner reasoned or allowed the ship we were on to stay in port is that we had a small generator on that ship. So, we were able to add to the defense system in terms of smokes for whoever was reading couldn't pick out a target. On the trip over they had stopped running the smoke system. The first time they had a drill on the ship for abandoning ship because we were torpedoed or something of that kind. They had filled up the whole with smoke and we almost choked to death. They stopped running the smoke generator, so when they went to Okinawa for cotton they still left it open with smoke again.”

**MR** “When you left Okinawa where did you go from there?”

**Beebe** “Seattle. I got discharged out of Fort Dixon, New Jersey.”

**MR** “Now you were then called up in 1951?”

**Beebe** “I went into ROTC when I went to college.”

**MR** “Oh, okay. Did you go on the GI bill?”

**Beebe** “Yes. I would not have gone to RPI, I would not have gone there if the GI bill didn't quite cover my expenses. I got married in my freshman year. They allowed us credit in my first two years and the air force started a program just prior to starting my junior year. So I went in to ROTC.

In January they told us, after my senior year they told us we could expect to be activated when we graduated. Thirty percent of the people dropped out of the program and on graduation day I went to the commissioning service in the morning, received my orders to report in a couple few weeks, and got my degree from college in the afternoon. So I went to Right Patterson Air Force base in Ohio. That's the second Lieutenant of four hundred second Lieutenants reported to Right Patterson Air Force base, so all engineering personnel they were signed to various laboratories. The at Right Patterson at that time they did all of the specifications for all the air force equipment except for electronics.

I wound up in an office that was the final review of all specifications being developed at Right Patterson. There were seven of us in the office, in the inspector general's office came through and interviewed sevenths of people all the way up in the office. They had seventh second Lieutenants complain about the office and the way they operated. They had invited us to visit with the inspector general kernel that ran that office. My other six guys selected me to be the one to do it, and they sent somebody along to keep an eye on me because they didn't trust me. We spent two and a half hours outlining the operation of that office for the gentleman that ran the inspected general's office.

I was reassigned, they stuck me in a mail room, I wrote up a plan for how that office should operate. It was scheduled for Friday. I couldn't go in on Friday, I was sick they had to cancel the meeting and I rescheduled it for the following Monday. They found out who the guy was who was leading the program to change the office on Monday. I was reassigned to the inspector general's office as an investigator from that point on. I only had a few more months in that tour of duty; we were expected to be released pretty soon. So that tour of duty lasted for seventeen months.

I worked eight to five shifts five days a week. I had two occasions in which I fulfilled a military function while I was there. There were forty generals on that field and only two hundred privates. There were more second Lieutenants than there were privates.”

**MR** “Now what were your duties there?”

**Beebe** “I was reviewing specifications for ground equipment to be sure there was nothing in them that were metal. We second Lieutenants thought we could do a better job at screening the material we didn’t need the people at our competence level to review the specifications. There were some restrictions on what kind of comments we could make; we didn’t think that made sense. But that pretty much was it.”

**WC** “You stayed in that position until you were discharged?”

**Beebe** “Yes. Well I went into the inspector general’s office for about three months.”

**WC** “Now were you discharged from active duty in 52? You had gone into the reserves then?”

**Beebe** “I went into the Reserves. At one point a few years later I had to decide that if I was going to stay in the reserves I had to do something because they were going to be putting me out, and about that time I came down with a serious illness so I had to go for a physical. They sent me over to the induction center in Albany where they were taking in draftees at that time. There was no active military war at that time. I got to the end of the line and the officers just told me I was 1A and I asked him if he read the last line on the medical report that I had to fill out. He read it and said well I know that you’re not going to like this, you’re 4F. The sergeant from the air force that was there told me that the air force would review the circumstances, but I knew they were just going to discharge me and they did.”

**WC** “What year was that?”

**Beebe** “About 1956.”

**WC** “So you did make use of the GI bill you mentioned?”

**Beebe** “Yes.”

**WC** “Did you ever use the 52-20 club?”

**Beebe** “I don’t recognize it.”

**WC** “There for 52 weeks you get an unemployment insurance of fifty dollars.”

**Beebe** “For a short time, but I went right to work as soon as I got out of service in 43. I was working right away. I went to work for Mike’s insulated company in Schenectady.”

**WC** “Okay, did you ever join any veteran’s organizations?”

**Beebe** “No, I have not.”

**WC** “Did you ever stay in contact with any one you had served with?”

**Beebe** “For a time. Jonah by the name of Bernard Sloane, he lived in Brooklyn. But he’s the only one and after eight or nine years I lost track of him. He moved once off and I couldn’t keep up with him.”

**WC** “How do you think your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?”

**Beebe** “I probably was better disciplined when I came home at least from my first tour of duty. I think the second tour of duty got me a job at the electric company. I got interviewed then, before I went in service, more to just give it a shot other than anything else. I don’t think at that time they would have picked me up. When my tour of duty was just about over with I set up an appointment with them and they hired me on a basis that I had been a second Lieutenant in the Air Force.”

**WC** “Alright, well thank you very much for letting me interview you.”

**MR** “Hold on, do you think if it would not have been for the GI bill, you would have not gone to RPI?”

**Beebe** “I would not have made RPI, no it’s too expensive, even then. I do think I would have gone to a college somewhere but it would not have been RPI.”

**WC** “So, the GI bill afforded you that opportunity?”

**Beebe** “It afforded me that opportunity.”

**WC** “Alright, okay thank you.”