

**Edward J. Beard
Veteran**

**Michael Russert
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New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

**Interviewed in his home
Penbrook, New York
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Q: Sir could you tell me your name and the place of birth and when you were born?

EJB: My name is Edward J Beard, I was born August 5th in North Buffalo and joined the army in 1939

Q: What was your education before you joined the Army?

EJB: 2 years of High School

Q: Did you work at all before?

EJB: Yes, I was a painter

Q: How old were you when you enlisted?

EJB: In the National Guard I was about 21 years old

Q: Can you tell us about your enlistment in 1939?

EJB: We went to the 1940 maneuvers. It was quite an experience after firing the guns and doing all the things that you do in combat. And then on January 27th 1941 we were inducted into the regular service as a harsh drawn Tim Loughton reunion.

Q: Can you tell us what it was like to in a horse drawn field artillery hit?

EJB: Oh Boy, I took up horse shoeing I'm kind of a damn fool if it's dangerous or heavy I go for it and to show our second I got kicked named banged around spending a little time in the hospital and the Mercers were standing up and he's boxing with me and that's kind of funny but this one horse was particularly dangerous so we decided the veterinarian an officer decided to dope him. He doped him but too much and I put shoes on a dead horse. They still couldn't believe it, I put shoes on a dead horse. I didn't know I just thought it was knocked down and I said okay come on and he didn't move he was done in.

Q: How many horses would it take to pull artillery?

EJB: About a thousand horses, one of the firing batteries probably about 80 horses.

Q: What kind of artillery pieces would you use?

EJB: 75 millimeter

Q: How many horses pulled each one of the artillery?

EJB: It took 6 horses to pull each artillery piece and then the caisson came later, a limber in the caisson so there were 6 horses for each gun, 12 horses actually pull the gun and then pull the caisson. We were wonderful safes and gunner for guns, each horse and each gun meant involves 12 horses and four times 12 is 48. There was 48 horses right there plus the cannon ears and then drivers and it took the drivers run to the left hand horse or would think I'll be on the horse that lasted until that summer the rumor certify that the horses were gonna go and we were in the process of getting rid of the horses when Pearl Harbor occurred, so I was in for Pearl Harbor and then we went to 4 schools. We were school troops, there were people who are trying to become officers and the only way they could become officers was to have the experience of firing real guns or giving the commands to fire the guns and I was a recorder at the time, I recorded the deflections and there's much more to it than that but when we came back to fort I can't think of the name of this") The Columbian Army Air Base is where I transferred to the Air Force 1943

Q: Before you start I'd like to go back to one thing, Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor

EJB: We were visiting a house they had no electricity, no radio there wasn't any television at that time and about 5 o'clock somebody said they bombed Pearl Harbor I said where's that, I didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor "I was an Army Man" and we found out when we got back to camp that night, that night they doubled the guards and then there was, the war was on. The next day we heard Roosevelt say a state of war has existed between The United States and Japan after they bombed Pearl Harbor, So then from that time until- well my unit went to Fort Sill where we did school trooping. They called it school trooping because these people are officers kind of and they had to have guns to fire and we did the firing then that was '42, the summer of '42 in a summer of '43 we came back to a post in South Carolina, near Columbia that's when I joined, I got fed up with the artillery and I joined the Air Force and finally to make a long story short I became a gunner and I became an engineer but I had to go through gunnery again to become an engineer and I became a flight engineer and then I went to New Guinea and I flew 27 combat missions

Q: What kind of Aircraft did you fly in?

EJB: B-25 airplanes, Mitchell Bombers Twin-tailed two engines, they go about 300 MPH faster than that in the dive, anyhow finally they sent us up to an island off New Guinea The island and Lindbergh was there I didn't try and look him up and he shot down a couple Japanese airplanes and we flew missions before we landed there in biak we carried out a mission, I remember one mission there was only 4 planes went up there, we lost one and major Colthrough he was the Squadron Commander he got an engine shot out and landed on one engine. After that I went to the Philippines that was 1944 it was a November 12th I got the date right here I can prove it on my discharge, November 12th, 1944 I was hit by a kamikaze I was down in hatch number 5 and a Kamikaze came right across the hatch 5 and I was down in there. They killed about 100 men and wounded about 150 I was one of the 150 wounded in the right arm and I spent the rest of my time finally I they sent me back to the England General Hospital in Atlantic City where they operated and I could hardly move my index player and my right arm and then after he operated finally I got the complete use of that arm back again and they said that when he went to operate he was destined to be one of the great neurosurgeons and I guess he was pretty good because he asked me I asked I was kind of groggy from I was conscious but I have a dragon I said oh I have to say sir he said he had a sense of humor I thought he said we'll make military courtesy proportional to the pain and yeah anyhow I never suffered I never felt any pain and I mean I said I could just tell me that I made a complete recovery and then I got my discharge from the Army it was after v-j day November 6 1945 so I was in from 39 to 45 counting my National Guard time and I got wounded and I wasn't too different to go from horses to airplanes I thought it was a unique experience that's about the whole thing

Q: Well could you tell me about what were some of your other combat of mission?

EJB: we lost the plane and then major calls our gun mentor shut out and he was losing altitude he was gonna go wind up in the drink in the Pacific Ocean but the engineer chopped all the radio equipment and all excess stuff in that airplane got rid of about maybe seven or eight hundred pounds and the plane subject gained altitude and we landed first and then major costs are blended on one engine later oh and then there was one of their mission I remember we went up and we made a frontal attack along New Guinea and they were firing at us and I heard a crunch of aircraft and the aircraft under the plane and I looked I saw the black smoke sail out from underneath this there was a hole in the wind big enough for me to crawl through and then was there was firing on side of the both engines my poet says our boys I'm glad they straddled us incidentally his father was superintendent of schools in Birmingham Alabama near the southern fellow he's a great pilot really great I've been lucky to be on the same crew with him do you remember his name Theodore Roger Wright. and my navigator was from that city just north of New York can't think of the name of their town right now but he flew every mission with Theodore I flew 27 combat missions and Theodore he finished his 50 missions and became squadron commander before he

left but I remember that one mission when we went there any aircraft buses right underneath the airplane and I can cross him there's a made a hole now in the run big enough for me to cross through and it was both homes I'm the leading edge outside of them for putters and I remember my pal sank I'm glad they straddle the sport they'd hit in the middle here that's where he was sitting miss we were all situated right in the middle of the airplane so there was some very exciting missions and then there was what I used to call milk runs I remember the first mission I flew on December November 1st 1941 I remember the date I know miss oh yeah 1944 it was it was April 1st 1941 April Fool's Day and we had to drop leaflets to the Japanese I remember Chapman captain Connors he says I have the foggiest idea with this Australian action is I have the foggiest idea but this stuff is all about accept these I should imagine designed to make them frightfully homesick well I got a kick out of him when he expressed himself and he says you didn't know what this is all about except it says I shouldn't imagine it was designed to make them frightfully homesick it was Japanese characters all over the thing and both going under Britain arch bridge the Guerlain come on and I can see where were you incidentally well I'm mentioning what we dropped of them you shouldn't see the graphic stuff but we were doing the Japanese girls and ostriches it was more than graphic I showed it to an Aussie soldier he's that's right my thesis he's given the bloody gammas you pecan can find a mate can find a sailor down in Sydney's pieces and make out with her that's perfectly all right and then all kinds of experiences artillery I stole they can't get beer one time then okay this guy says we gotta fund again and open these no we he's super got to find a douchebag guys what the hell you're gonna live with the douchebag he says let me look past those around the house like beer oh that was there was fun times and their gruesome times like and ring in my ear as long as I live hearing dying mana but after that shift got banned hearing men groan their last and then funny incidents like stealing a keg of beer so that 39 to 45 I feel like Captain General Patton said she's astronauts how about that there are Mises if I tell you about that their army says I only get incoherent so I'm doing that's what I'm doing I'm incoherent I'm doing the best I can what would you say was the finest memory that you have to month your best memory of your service Oh after I got out and we had a dinner every year and I'm in Red Bank or in Lawrenceville New Jersey and my captain he's home eases I was a good soldier boy coming from him I must have been something cuz he wasn't tough he was a tough guy to please

Q: What was your reaction to the atomic bombs being dropped on Japan?

EJB: Well I took me by complete surprise. All I know is they dropped a bomb then I've seen though the world was over with it took everybody and bullying me was completely surprised I guess and we're damn glad it was over with you didn't want to go back in the for any more of that stuff didn't shut it I got bombed and hit and I didn't want any more I net it I remember the guy lieutenant asked me says will you volunteer for any more services hell no I love all my bomb loaders and the draft dodgers have a crack at combat

I said now see if this country's in still trouble I'll down volunteer for four more combat duty well that's what I told them alright then I thought who the hell sent you around to ask question like that

Q: What did you do after the war?

EJB: Went to work for my uncle he was a painting contractor so I spent I made a career out of being just a painter doesn't sound very glamorous in there wasn't but I could climb I could paint anything in match colors I finally learned to be a tradesman had I just put paint on with the roller or a brush but to match the colors and I wound up at the Clarence school system where I handled them at enemy came a boss myself and college kids and high school kids were working for me the guy says how do you cut in so sharp Isis I don't I said make my kids do it why did you get married Oh married 1948 I married a girl and she only lived about four or five years after that and she died then I married my sister her sister and I had one two kids from my first wife and she had a daughter that was the same age as my son so we had three kids all together and she died about ten years ago would you say the word affected your life do you think your life don't think stripping around before and after the war and my army experiences are the central part of my life I think yeah happy soldiers with horses was a great experience I'm pretty darn good rider and then I had to make good mechanical aptitude and so I became a flight engineer I knew it'll be 25 through stem to stern every part of it I know one time that kid was he was putting a gumming around and it doesn't that get a guest it he's I don't know I swore and you're gonna find out and I told her I told him as a sergeant about it he hit his head he's oh my god that can leaked oil and been a mess so knowing what to do around the airplane was important and we always made an inspection of the airplane to see if what I used to run up the engines and pre-flight it before the pilot got in there's only one time I made a real bad error I forgot to take the Muslim cover off the 75 millimeter gun and we had to fly without firing that gun and my pod was pre perturbed at me but nobody's perfect the plane

Q: The plane that you flew did it have a name?

EJB: No no that some of the net planes it was one of them with a yeah bald eagle painted out they call it old Baldy but the ones we got they have time to name them individually we just blew newer b-25s like the ones with the 75 millimeter gun that was the latest one of the middle innovations later they found I ever the five rocket launchers they are more effective

Q: did you fly the same plane each mission or

EJB: No on different planes but every plane we flew it was thoroughly checked out and patched up and fixed up to fly again like one time I told this captain Isis sometimes when so many times millimeter guns go off it wrecks the hydraulics he says suppose you

let me worry about that I says okay is how much you worry about a captain this is the only one thing and we fly in these airplanes

Q: How did those planes handle?

EJB: since I had this stroke it affected my tongue I think it's very dry and it's partially paralyzed and I can't talk as plain as I maybe should they may be a drink of water will help.

Q: Are any of your crew members around today?

EJB: not that I know of he did go to visit my navigator one time my radio man was killed when I were warned the same time that wounded me killed him and I did go up to see my navigator one time in that city north of New York City I can't think of the name of that city Yonkers I just thought of it now yeah Yonkers where he lived he was in the dry cleaning business

Q: what was do you remember his name?

EJB: Oh yeah I'm trying to think of it now (Says name) there's only a little guy but he knew his stuff about navigating dead reckoning anyhow he doesn't know anything about celestial navigation but he was a good dad reckoned we almost found where we were flying to it and arrived okay

Q: Now on B-25 what was a full crew how many was there?

EJB: five there was a pilot and the navigator one two and the radio man three fly to Germany me four gunner and the top turret he was a fifth one, crew of five like b-17 had a crew of ten

Q: Did you join did you join a veterans organizations?

EJB: oh yeah I've been a member of the American Legion for 50 years I got a plaque on the wall in some states I joined it in 1951 and I'm now it's I've been a member about 51 years never sued the American Legion I found out about you guys and I Wrote sent pictures and verifications might discharge this shows that I'm gonna discharge that I was wounded in 1944 November 12th 1944

Q: is there anything else you'd like to mention?

EJB: I can't think of anything offhand except that I was I wasn't drafted I joined in 39 right after hostilities started in after Germany went after to Germany went after Poland and England and France it's an air war on Germany that's why the about the time I signed up and joined the National Guard and some guys that waited they got drafted in ten months they were over fighting in combat and I thought the only thing I never crosses the Mississippi River that's about all

Q: Why did you choose the Air Force?

EJB: oh I'm fed up with the artillery he says you like blowing that whistle no choice you can take this whistling sick and where the Sun doesn't shine