

Today is Sunday, July 7, 2014. This interview is being conducted at the home of Raymond Martin Walsh. My name is Fran Prokop and I am speaking with Mr. Walsh who is a Veteran of World War II and served in the Army. He learned of the Veterans' History Project through me and through his daughter, and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans' History Project. Here is his story:

Mr. Walsh, when and where were you born?

Chicago. September 7, 1919.

How many sisters and brothers did you have?

I had one brother, Robert.

And was Robert in the service at all?

No.

What did your parents do – what was their occupation?

Well, they never had a particular occupation. My mother, until later, until after all the children were born – she became a seamstress in order to help the family she was living –we were all living with – which was her parents.

Did your father have a job?

Yes, - an automobile shop for General Motors.

Were any other family members in the service during World War II?

Yeah, the Sherises – they were cousins of mine – they were John --

How did you enter the service – did you enlist or were you drafted?

I had a sister, too, Dorothy.

Were you drafted or did you enlist?

I was drafted.

And you went into the Army, right?

Yeah.

Could you tell us how it was in the Army when you first got in and how you were training?

Where – it was like locally – I can't think of the place - we have it down there somewhere.

Fort Sheridan, maybe –

No, sounds like – it's the one I was being sent to when the war ended.

(Mr. Walsh is 95 years old and is confused about dates and places. His wife, KAY, and his daughter-in-law, MariaElena Walsh are present to assist with the interview)

Did you have basic training or did they just send you out to war?

It was basic training.

Where were you for basic training? Do you remember?

I don't remember; I don't think I even have it written down anywhere.

Ray's wife Kay is here along with his daughter-in-law – they have a whole scrapbook of information about his wartime service. They will help fill in some of the blanks.

MariaElena: -- This is the training you had --

Inaudible – **This will be a problem. They have a document here showing Camp Crowder, Missouri. Mr. Walsh was in the Central Signal Corps School at Camp Crowder, Missouri.**

Yes.

He was here in December 1943 and he satisfactorily completed the radio communication course. So he is a qualified radio intercept operator – skilled – excellent in the Signal Corps.

I don't even remember seeing one of these.

Well, this is a copy of a document; they have a Xerox copy of this document.

What happened after basic training – where did you go?

Actually this little term is Japanese Radio Intercept Operator.

What happened after you finished basic training?

Unfortunately, they sent me to various places because they weren't all capable of giving me the correct information about everything.

KAY: You went to Florida, Ray.

Someplace in Missouri –

KAY: Ray, you had further training in Florida.

Do you know where in Florida?

Yes, that's right – Pine something?

Kay: Oh, Camp Pine – I saw that.

If we find it, we'll insert it – Camp Pine. Okay, now you're through with your training here in America, what happened after that?

Well, right after or during the training, I was called out one day with another fella – it was a huge room in a big hall, and we were to take – this was going to decide who was going to be in the signal corps for some reason, and I don't remember the other fella's name, but anyway, I passed with 100%, which was listening to dots and dashes – just like –

Morse Code –

Yeah, but sometimes there would be – tests were different so that the dots and dashes were more like – should be 5 or 6 or more in one sentence. Di, di dot – and then they'd wait a second and do it again. And they would say was the first one the same as the second one, and so on and so forth. And I don't know even how I did it but I came in first

Good for you.

Out of 130 people.

Wow. Where did you put this to use? Where did you go during wartime? Where did you serve? Did you go overseas?

No, then I got around the United States –

Kay: You went overseas to China, India and Burma.

Burma – well, that was, yeah, one section. I had –

MariaElena – Do you want to read this or -- it begins on the second paragraph.

There is a typed sheet here – I can include this with it – this is a whole history of his service. I think that I will read it; this way I'll have it in my transcript. That would help. Mr. Walsh is today 95 years old so we're having a bit of a problem with communication but his wife, KAY and daughter-in-law –

Maybe some of this would be better if I tell you everything that I know.

MariaElena: You know what? She's gonna read it and then you listen, and if something is wrong then you can correct later when she's through. Okay?

Well, the first thing I did was –

Camp Pinedale, California - I'm going to read the three pages, entitled

“The 11th Radio Mobile Detachment – WWII

“The 11th Radio Mobile Detachment was formed in late 1944 at Camp Pinedale, California and consisted of 134 officers and men. It was organized as a unit to provide replacement personnel for the 5th Radio Squadron located in India and China. The mission of the 5th Radio was to provide communications intelligence to the Commander of the China/Burma/India Theater. There were a number of Japanese Americans assigned to the 11th Radio Detachment to provide expertise in translating intercepted Japanese Air force voice transmissions.

“On December 19, 1944, personnel of the 11th Radio boarded a train and traveled to a port where they boarded a Navy troopship, the USS Randall, and sailed for Bombay, India. During the 34-day crossing a number of personnel became seasick – several as long as 20 days! After stopping for a few days at Hobart, Tasmania, the ship arrived. Several days after arriving in Bombay, the unit boarded an Indian troop train which had Spartan accommodations including meals that consisted of K-rations which had to be mixed with water from the train's steam

engine. The unit arrived at a British base near Calcutta on February 15 after a stopover for several days at an isolated military Indian base in central India.”

Did you want to add something to that?

I'm not getting a lot of that – the exact order that it happened from the time that I went down to Florida for basic training – that's what in the government's mind whether there was anything else. All I knew I was going for basic training down to Florida on a train –

MariaElena: Let her finish.

We've got your story here; it's pretty good. (continuing reading)

“After being at a camp near Calcutta for several weeks, orders came that the 11th personnel were scheduled to drive more than fifty vehicles including 48 2 ½ ton trucks to Chabua, India located about 950 miles NE of Calcutta in the Assam Valley. The trucks were needed to augment vehicles being used to carry supplies on the Burma Road from India to Kunming, China. It was an opportunity since the 11th was to deploy to a location near an Indian terminus of the Burma Road.

”A survey was made of the 11th personnel and it was determined that less than 40% of them had ever driven an automobile and none had ever driven trucks which were to be loaded with extremely heavy equipment. There was less than a week to train the men to be drivers and it was accomplished because that was all the time available before the scheduled departure.

“A crude hand-drawn map was provided the CO on the route to be taken from Calcutta to Chabua. During this trip there was only one minor accident. This was determined to be a remarkable achievement since the route was very poorly marked (if at all) and consisted of a dirt road most of the distance. On one occasion the trucks had to be loaded onto a ferry which could carry one vehicle at a time across a wide river.”

I know this is an effort on your part but I'm hardly understanding anything –

MariaElena: I'll explain it to you later, okay? We'll go over it, you and I.

Okay.

“In another instance the tires had to be partially deflated to allow the trucks to pass safely under bridges along the way. With the inexperience of the drivers on treacherous mountain roads with no guard rails and the crude map and inferior roads, it seemed to all of the personnel that a miracle had taken place when arriving at Chabua!

“There was a camp already set up at the Chabua site composed of Detachment B of the 5th Radio Squadron.”

When did you get all this information from him?

MariaElena: I don't know. I didn't write it.

How long ago was this written:

KAY: Well, I believe at one point there was a reunion, and we went to the reunion down in Indiana and I believe this was one of the handouts. And at this reunion was a good number of these people and a couple of the officers were there. So somebody went to the trouble of getting this ready.

How nice – very good.

MariaElena: stated that the hand-written notes at the end were written by Mr. Walsh.

“At that time the 11th Radio Mobile Detachment lost its designation and became part of Detachment B. there were other locations of the 5th Radio in India and the Headquarters of the 5th was in Kunming, China.

“Personnel of the Detachment were lodged in tents and Indian buildings called bashas. Operations of the unit were also housed in small, crude buildings as well as bashas. Morale was very good even though living conditions were not top notch. Supplies were brought in from an air base close by and communications had already been in operation with the Headquarters in Kunming.

“Soon after the arrival of the 11th personnel a number were transferred to a unit north of Chabua, some to Kunming and others to temporary duty locations in India as well as Burma. In mid-1945 the entire Detachment B closed down operations and all equipment and personnel moved to Kunming. Living conditions were far better in Kunming than they had been in India. From Kunming, within a few months, a number of personnel were relocated to Liangshen, China to a Detachment of the 5th Radio in Liangshen; personnel were billeted in winterized tents and ate in a mess hall. The roads within the camp were extremely muddy most of the time but morale was still as high as it had always been.

“During the later part of 1945, with WWII winding down and the Japanese surrender in the offing, the 5th Radio Squadron prepared to move to Shanghai, China.”

Ray has hand-written notes added, “then north to Liangchen, China, north of Kunming.

”Then in October 1945, a few days after the Japanese surrender, most of the men and equipment moved by aircraft to Shanghai. In that city all personnel were quartered in the Grosvenor House which had been a luxury apartment-hotel before the war. The complete radio intercept operation was situated in the penthouse of the Grosvenor House. After arriving in Shanghai, certain personnel were relocated to the Philippines but most stayed in the city until they had sufficient points to be rotated back to the States beginning in January of 1946.”

Mr. Walsh has added a footnote here in print, I suppose after the reunion in Indiana – “I was one of 13 that was in this group. We drove trucks with our equipment for various uses. Mostly we monitored Japanese radio messages on specialized radio equipment and set up a direction-finding station on the airport in Liangshen, in northern China. This trip was 1,000 miles to Liangshen and took 23 days of very rough travel.” Mr. Walsh is describing the above events. This is very interesting and yes, we will definitely include this as part of the whole.

How did you intercept these Japanese messages? Once you listened to them did you have to write down what the messages were?

I had an idea – you're talking about actually talking in the war itself –

Right, right.

Yes, I was over in one of the islands, I think it was -- Iwo Jima

KAY: No, no.

Well, being an operator, having learned in California the Japanese usage of the Morse Code and some extra letters and some combinations of letters – we had a little of that.

But you yourself didn't speak Japanese, did you?

No.

You just understood the Morse Code, which is international.

Well, the Morse Code is a set of signals; it doesn't speak anything.

Right, but they had their own special combinations of letters –

I knew, you know, everything about the Morse Code - which is di di dot – I know that, I know the numbers, I still know most of the Code.

I'm sure you do – so how long was he in – until the war ended?

KAY: Well, I wasn't his KAY at the time so this is – but he came home in '46. It's pretty clear he spent all of '45 and some part of '44; other than that, I don't know. Some of the things he's telling you – there are so many side stories –

Yes, exactly –

KAY: But to get right to the point, everything that is in there pretty much covers his service. And what they did – they actually have a combination –

MariaElena: I think this explains more too –

There's another sheet of paper here, a Xerox copy, one page, reads:

“Headquarters from the U.S. Forces China Theater, 29 October 1945 – SUBJECT: COMMENDATION TO: 5th Radio Squadron Mobile, APO 879.

“ The Signal Intelligence Service, China Theater, wishes to take this opportunity to commend the Radio Intelligence Unit, 127th Signal Radio Company and 5th Radio Squadron for the part they played in bringing about Victory.

“In the war against Japan Radio Intelligence has been essential providing necessary information unavailable from other sources. The Signal Intelligence Service is indebted to the Radio Intelligence Units for their regular and reliable supply of information upon which its operation has depended.

“The personnel engaged in Radio Intelligence activities are interested in knowing concrete examples of the results of their work. It is impossible to cite any specific instances of the considerable help that Radio Intelligence has provided, but it can be said that many successful missions have been performed that have proved invaluable in shortening the war, both locally and in the overall picture. The commendable efforts of the personnel of the Radio Intelligence Units reflected in the successful accomplishments of these missions are greatly appreciated.

“Specialized training of Radio Intelligence personnel and the cost of maintaining such units have been worthwhile ventures. The value and importance of their work justifying their operation.

**“The utmost security involved in Radio Intelligence is evidence in itself of its importance. During peace as well as war, this security should be continued in the interest of maintaining the effectiveness of Radio Intelligence. For the Theater Signal Officer: Leonard J. Seidenglanz, Captain, Sig. C. Sig. Ins. Officer.”
(A copy of this page is included herein).**

The final paper is titled “Headquarters, United States forces, India Burma Theater – E-X-T-R-A-C-T – 5 June 1945. AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE (awarded to Mr. Walsh and his Unit) – under authority contained in

Circular No. 345, War Department 1944, MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE is awarded by the Commanding General, United States forces, India Burma theater, to the following named units for meritorious service during the periods indicated: 5th Radio Squadron (Mobile) from 1 January 1944 to 21 December 1944 by command of Lieutenant General Sultan: by Vernon Evans, Major General GSC, Chief of Staff.” This will be included in the papers along with Xerox copies of the medals Mr. Walsh received during his service in the Army.

KAY: It was during that transitional time when the Army had an Army Air Force and they separated into the Air Force and the Army.

Instrument of Surrender – this is just a copy – they’ll have copies of this stuff; they won’t need this. Is there anything else that you’d like to add to your memories of service – anything specific, you know, something that happened when you were there that you can talk about?

KAY: Ray, tell her about the little girl that came out –

Driving on the Burma Highway – eventually we were going to end up in northern China – but we were not driving from where we had flown in India, up the Burma Highway and at one point somebody gave the signal, I forget what it was anymore, to stop – so our 13 trucks – the first one carries food, which was the thing we were always concerned about, you can imagine – not because we were hungry but we might be starving or something. But we were stopped and a little girl peeked out of, I guess like, kind of bushes, and she just stood there, and I started talking to her in English but she didn’t understand that. And - bok-shis (phonetic) – she was saying bok shis – and what that meant was food. She was asking for food. And I gave her, first of all, a can of something – cans that the U.S. sent over and they had a couple of cookies and a couple of cigarettes - but I didn’t have any of those, I didn’t want to give her – what would she care about that –

Yeah, right.

Anyways, she came out – sometime earlier in the trip to Burma we crossed with a group from Australia and I exchanged some of these cans with a can of salmon from Australia.

So now I had this and I never ate it – so I gave this little girl the can of salmon ‘cuz I knew it was good food and whatever. Before we started up again she comes out with the can saying that she can’t (give it to me) – take it from me unless she gives me something. So I said you don’t have to give me anything. Finally, they would not accept this and finally she came out with this beautiful bracelet she had on and she gave me that – whether it was jade or just colored glass. They made a lot of that, but – I’d show it to you but somebody already has it.

MariaElena: You gave it to your first granddaughter Susie.

KAY: It was jade.

It was jade, wow. Okay – for a can of salmon. She probably didn’t know how to open that can – they weren’t familiar with cans in India and Burma – I don’t know.

KAY: They have that strong cultural belief that you just don’t accept gifts –

Right, you have to give something in return. That’s an interesting story.

Okay, anyway – I can’t imagine being a bunch of starving people and they would not accept a can of salmon without giving you something back.

KAY: You know what else you might mention, Ray. You might mention that your unit is officially a member of the Flying Tigers. You have a card showing you’re a Flying Tiger. You could say we were like loaned to them or something.

Oh, yeah, oh, wow. KAY just handed me a photograph of Ray coming out of a place with #244 on it – this is not the Flying Tigers.

KAY: No, it was at that base.

There you go – Honorary Members of the Flying Tigers; okay. I’m sure you don’t want to part with that.

KAY: No, these are for you.

Oh, they are, wonderful – I will take them. My goodness, yes, I will take these –

These are just copies of originals.

KAY: Yes.

This is a picture of Ray when he was – do you have any dates on these – I mean like 1944 – that would be.

MariaElena: He's got all his stripes.

KAY: Maria was in the service herself – so she's –

Where would these pictures be.

MariaElena: India, yeah, that's India.

Okay, photographs taken in India probably in 1944 – it was one of these bases that he was at in India.

MariaElena: Is this in China – or India.

That would be China, I'm pretty sure.

KAY: Ray, you might tell the story about when you got on to that Indian troop train

Yeah, any stories about travel –

KAY: When your unit was going to get on the Indian troop train.

You mean the size of it?

KAY: Well, maybe he doesn't remember that story.

We got to India from our boat – that's a Chicago friend of mine – Smithson -- We got off the boat around midnight –I can remember wondering what I was supposed to do. They were supposed to tell us what we were supposed to do and they decided a certain group of soldiers getting off of one side of the boat was going to get on to a lower train – this was like at midnight. And you're arriving someplace and you haven't slept all day and you know that pretty soon you're gonna get off the boat; and you do, and now we're down there; everybody's mixed up. I don't know how big of a unit we were; we weren't like a huge group of soldiers or anything – just – and couple of us sort of took over and told those that were in trouble – why don't you just stand still there; we'll find out what's

supposed to be happening –where I should tell all of you to go – and we did that and they complied. Here we were in a foreign country at twelve o'clock at night; it was so funny.

KAY: What I was hoping you'd recall was that you all stood there with your duffle bags for awhile and then somebody came along on this train and they threw bug bombs into the train cars – and then

Oh, Yeah. A lot of trains were somehow infected with bugs and mice in some of them – well, we got 'em out –

KAY: Ray, you said that they threw these bug bombs in and then the train cars just exploded with bugs piling out, and then you guys got in.

Bugs got out, troops got in.

But when we started over, we were now gonna cross China and get to – I got the wall map -- Calcutta, I guess it was – the opposite side – like the eastern side – but I don't know for sure. We were going across, not the truck side, but trains were like for four people – were about the size of this table (very small) – you know and they're very small. And we sat most of the time – it took two days to do that.

Let me ask you this – most of the time when you were listening to the Morse Code were you in tents – were you in buildings – what were you in?

We were in buildings mostly --most of the time – because there was radio equipment set up, rather large pieces, maybe like a radio as big as this table and when you put the earphones on and listen for anything that came across in that area -- and many times that could be identified as a message from Japan – message from an airplane to an airbase – or from airplane to airplane. They were mostly, I understand, used later to put everything together as far as the Japanese Air Force – find out where most of their messages came from – and messages of what the Japanese planes saw. Now this was all because of the Code. You could copy that Code and turn it over to intelligence – intelligence would -- sometimes when they saw us – thank us for these messages which would help them identify – just last week, that dream that I had – it was a true incident rather than a dream.

What was it?

Well, when the war ended against Japan and I was still doing translating of Japanese messages – not translating but copying Japanese coded messages – the war ended and there was one officer who was in the Intelligence Department and they were the ones who were translating. After they had discovered the Japanese code of transmission, and this man came to the office – ha, ha, it sounds like a big place – he came in to this area where we worked with airplanes – and he was leaving for home the next day – and he wanted to see Ray Walsh – and I said that’s me. And he wanted to see me because the letters that we copied – he was so thankful for and especially mine because I was the best of the four or six operators that could do it. That was the thing – and I dreamt about that guy.

Well, it came back to you – (turn tape)

I had some experience the others didn’t. I was better because of my learning how to type. I learned that in Mt. Carmel High School --

Wow, Mount Carmel –

Many years ago and it didn’t take too long to catch on.

I found most men that I’ve interviewed who knew about typing got really good jobs because not everybody – some of the men I went to high school with – a catholic co-ed school – two men I was in class with who said now that because of their typing they got really good jobs in the service. That was later, of course, in Korea and Viet Nam – not in WWII. It’s important. You did a good job; he was happy for it and thanked you for it; that was nice.

Yeah, anyway, I don’t know anymore –

When you came home after the war was over, did you go back to your previous job or what did you do after the war was over?

My former job offered me a job –

What was that?

At the time – when I went in the service –

Yeah, when you came out –

KAY: You worked at the same place for 50 years – before and after.

What was it? Where?

KAY: United States Bank Note – previously Columbian Bank Note.

Oh, yes, I recall that name. As a printer – or what?

KAY: Ray, I'm going to tell her. He started as an office boy in 1937, and when he retired in 1987 he was managing the Chicago Division.

What did he do while he was a worker there.

KAY; They went from the beginning; when he got out of the service he went to

Northwestern on the GI Bill and did the Accounting training –

You're just making up those stories to stay out of jail.

Ha, ha, ha. I just wanted to make him sound good.

Right; that sounds really good.

MariaElena: He was vice president too, wasn't he?

KAY: Yes.

So you had a long, full life – interesting career.

KAY: You know how strange it is now to hear that anybody worked 50 years –

With the same company; very unusual today but that's something to be admired.

Almost unheard of today. Okay, so he retired as Vice President of the company.

Ray Walsh lives here in Carillon, where I live, and I've interviewed many veterans

who live here – men and women alike. It has been an honor and a privilege truly to

meet you and thank you very much for your service to our country and thank you

for this interview. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

KAY: Well, last Fall we went on one of the Honor Flight trips to Washington – leaving from Midway Airport.

Right, the Honor Flights to Washington, D.C.

KAY: Ray's son, Maria's husband, did 26 years in the Air Force and when they moved here he just worked at it until he got it done. He got to make that trip.

Well, that's good; good.

I never knew this sailor – this Honor Trip – and somehow or other I got on this sailor and this sailor just stepped in and started pushing me around –

Yes, they do that; I've seen them at the airport. I've been at Midway Airport when the flight came in one night accidentally – and I thought that was very nice; it was a long time ago – not too long ago; the flight came in at 10:30 at night.

MariaElena: I was going to say that in 2009 in the Fall, I used to fly to D.C. – from Anchorage to D.C. and I would stop and visit with him. And one time when I got there – KAY really would go pick me up and that time she dropped me off and she had to go run some errands so we were sitting – he and I – and then he asked me what did I do in the Air Force. And I said, oh, gosh, I didn't want to talk about it. But I said tell me about you – he said, oh, no no – and then the first thing he said is that when he was discharged – take him home, and he come to Chicago; he said there was no parades; there was nothing; nobody to meet him and then in the course of his life up to that point nobody ever had told him thank you for his service. And he said that he often would see in the paper –all the different – Viet Nam and everything – all heroes, heroes, heroes. He said I never hear them talk about us or me – and I felt really bad about it; and he shared a lot of things. So when I went home I started to pick up all of these things and I went to the Internet and I got a lot – it was kind of very difficult to find the Signal Corps unit – especially what he did. And it took me months; it seemed to be buried somewhere and it said this unit that they created was actually straight to the President – there was something – some general and then they answered to the President.

Wow, information went directly to the President.

MariaElena: Yes, and I found it, you know, kind of different, but it seemed like it was more of a secret thing at the time –

Yes, it could have been.

MariaElena: They didn't know where to put them and I guess later they divided the Air Force –but they put him in the Army but he was doing nothing what the other men were doing – this was something brand new – the Signal Corps.

I supposed there are many specialty groups that the general public isn't familiar with.

KAY: Under the radar.

Exactly. What about your husband – is he still alive?

MariaElena: Yes.

Maybe – does he want to be interviewed at another time – would you ask him?

MariaElena: Yeah.

We can go through this again with his information.

MariaElena: One of my neighbors, Bill Taylor, he is a Viet Nam veteran and he's got his head, and he was all burned –

I don't know him but I know who he is; I'll have to get in touch with him.

I will end this interview here although I spoke with Maria Elena Walsh for some time regarding her military service as a specialist and hope to interview her later.

**Raymond M. Walsh
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September 3, 2014

Mrs. Donna Borden:
Veterans History Project
Library of Congress
101 Independence Ave SE
Washington, DC 20540-4615

Dear Donna:

Thank you for the information you recently sent. I will follow the new instructions and prepare transcripts with double spacing henceforth.

I wish to inform you that since the interview with Raymond Walsh, Mrs. Kay Walsh told me today that Raymond Walsh passed away two weeks ago. It is important that this transcript be memorialized since these are his last words re: military service. He was in a very frail condition at that time and continued to spiral downward. I have taken the liberty of including COPIES of certain papers – I know that is not acceptable – but in this case it seemed fitting. Please discard them if they are unusable but do keep the transcription. His wife is so happy that he was able to participate to the extent that he did as am I.

I have other interviews lined up and will try to keep sending in VHP material.

Thanks again for keeping me supplied with Field Kits – but I will be using the older Versions until they are all gone.

Sincerely,

Fran Prokop
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