

# **GLEN BARNES**

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## GLEN BARNES

My name is Charles Nelson. I am a volunteer with the Midway Village & Museum Center in Rockford, Illinois, which is cooperating with the statewide effort to collect oral histories from Illinois citizens that participated in the momentous events surrounding World War II. We are in the office of Midway Village & Museum Center in Rockford, Illinois, interviewing Mr. Glen Barnes. Mr. Barnes served in the branch of the United States Armed Forces during World War II. We are interviewing him about his experiences in that war. Glen would you please give us your full name, place and date of birth. We would also like to have the names of each one of you parents.

**GLEN:** I am Glen Barnes. I was born in Spokane, Washington, August 1913. My father was James Barnes. My mother was Bertha Barnes. They were—had come to the west from North Carolina and Tennessee several years before I was born in Spokane.

**CHARLES:** Are there any details about your parents or you family that you would like to give besides this?

**GLEN:** Well, my oldest brother, Matt,—there were six of us boys in the family and two—two sisters. My oldest brother served in World War I in France. He was in the Medical Corps over there and he had some real experiences to tell. Of course, it was a lot different when we finally got in there, in 1942.

**CHARLES:** The next is entering the military. What was life like for you before the war and—specifically during 1941?

**GLEN:** Well, at that time I graduated from high school in 1933. I got a job up in Idaho in a logging camp washing dishes and after that I finally wound up in the Clearwater National Forest, driving truck and finally driving a cat skidding logs and I really enjoyed that. I remember when I first heard—maybe I'm getting ahead of myself.

**CHARLES:** What thoughts did you have about the war before the United States became directly involved in the conflict?

**GLEN:** Well, I don't recall. I know I had some definite thoughts about Hitler and the way he was taking over Europe and I thought eventually we

were going to have to get into it. I had a lot of admiration for the English, the way they were performing. I got some real bad odds and, of course, when the Japanese did their little number that made me fairly anxious to get going.

**CHARLES:** How did you hear of the December 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese? Where were you and what were you doing at the time and what was your reaction and response to those around you?

**GLEN:** Well I was in a logging camp up in Clearwater. It was on a Sunday afternoon as I recall. About eleven o'clock. I was on an upper bunk. I had a little Emerson radio which was the only radio in camp. I heard the news and I was dumb founded. And it just shocked the whole—we had about 200 men in the camp and it was a real shock.

**CHARLES:** Had you formed any prior opinion or developed any feeling about what was taking place in Europe or Asia?

**GLEN:** Well, I was very concerned about what would happen if Hitler and Mussolini was to take over. I thought it would be pretty rough for the United States.

**CHARLES:** Do you recall reading newspaper accounts of German aggression in Europe?

**GLEN:** Yes. I read those. I took Time magazine and followed it pretty closely.

**CHARLES:** What events led to your entry into military service? Were you already in service, drafted or did you volunteer?

**GLEN:** Well, my draft number was coming up at the time I was a "cat" driver for [?] Forest, Clearwater Timber and as my number was coming up I decided to jump in and get it over with so I volunteered. And I was inducted in Spokane; I think it was in March, the 23rd.

**CHARLES:** Did you have any special memories of this event? About the induction?

**GLEN:** Oh, not really. It was quite simple. It didn't take very long. There was about six of us

and they immediately put us on a train and we went to Fort Lewis, Washington, for the formal induction.

**CHARLES:** How old were you?

**GLEN:** Well, I got to think. I was 32 or 33 I guess at the time.

**CHARLES:** What happened after you were inducted?

**GLEN:** Well, we had a week of hell at Fort Lewis. They were under war time restrictions over there. They had blackouts. It was on the coast. And it seemed like everybody was afraid of the Japanese were going to take over and they even had—Well, it was pretty strict around there. That's a very rainy cold climate around Seattle there especially in March.

**CHARLES:** Did you take your basic training in Fort Lewis?

**GLEN:** No. After a week of shots and KP and they sent me down to Logan's Field for the Army Air Corps.

**CHARLES:** What state was that in?

**GLEN:** That was in Texas. At Dallas

**CHARLES:** What were you trained to do?

**GLEN:** Aircraft mechanic

**CHARLES:** What did you think of the training?

**GLEN:** Well, it was pretty rough. It was hard. But it was very thorough.

**CHARLES:** Tell us about any other training camps you attended.

**GLEN:** Quite a few of them. I went from there—from Dallas—I went to Boeing at Seattle on B-17s to get better equipped to work on 17s on the line and from the Boeing factory, I went to Boise, Idaho, on the line. From there I went to Camp Luna, Las Vegas, New Mexico. From there to Gulfport, Mississippi, to a "tech" school on cargo planes. Then I went to the Ford factory in Dearborn, Michigan on R-2800 engines. Then to Jefferson Barracks for overseas training. Then my order came through of gunnery school at Arlington, Texas, and from then on I was in the Air Corps as a flying personnel.

**CHARLES:** Did you have any leaves or passes?

**GLEN:** I didn't get a leave until we finally got to Alfredo, Washington, on our first phase training and at that time my father passed away in Spokane so I was given a two week leave at that time.

**CHARLES:** What do you recall of this period about the places you were stationed, the friends you made and your association with civilians?

**GLEN:** Well, we had a real nice time in Texas. I got acquainted with a gentleman or a fellow soldier from Shawnee, Oklahoma. He had a car and we went up there once or twice to visit his family and they were very hospitable and treated me just like a family member. No. I had some very good experiences with civilians.

**CHARLES:** Where did you go after completing your basic military training? This refers to the conflict over seas.

**GLEN:** The final—after Alfredo was first phase then we went to Rapid City for second phase. Then over to Utah for third phase training; and from there to Grand Island, Nebraska, and then we were shipped overseas. We went to Presque Isle, Maine, overnight. Then we went to Goose Bay, Labrador. We had our own crew at that time and our own airplane and we got to Goose Bay at 7:30 in the evening. This was in January. It was really cold. At 11:30 that night, we had a favorable tail wind so they sent us off for North Ireland at 11:30. We arrived at North Ireland about 7:00 the next morning and landed at a place called Nuts Corners about 12 miles out of Belfast and we were there for two or three days. Then we were sent to our field at Glatten. We got there about the 20th of January, I guess.

**CHARLES:** What group were you assigned to?

**GLEN:** 457 Bomber Group.

**CHARLES:** What squadron?

**GLEN:** 749th.

**CHARLES:** And what [were] your duties?

**GLEN:** I was originally trained for a flight engineer on a B-17 but we already had a flight engineer and so they put me in the waist. Our ball gunner seemed to be having a lot of trouble in

getting used to the position so the pilot asked me if I would take over the ball for a while until a guy by the name of Kegel got straightened out. So I flew in the [?] for about 13 or 14 missions.

**CHARLES:** What did you think of the nation's war efforts up to this point?

**GLEN:** It was pretty damn confusing, really. We were able to hear the German propaganda there in England. In fact, about the second night after we arrived we listened to Lord Haw-Haw and he was telling us all about what was happening at home with our girlfriends and wives and everything else. It was a little disturbing to say the least. He infuriated the English, Haw-Haw did. At one point he called the Queen fat ass little bastard and my God that tore them. I mean they was ready to hang him if they could get a hold of him and I guess maybe they did, when they did catch him. But the English were a beautiful people. They treated us very nicely.

**CHARLES:** Tell us about your experience of entering your first combat zone.

**GLEN:** Well, when we flew from Nuts Corner down to Glatten they sent a captain up there who had had several missions and he made it sound pretty grim. He said you got to load you guns and fly under combat conditions down to Glatten. So that kind of put a chill on things, so we did that. And then it was a month before we ever made a mission. We did a lot of training flights and we saw some of the crews would land there. Like we were in the Pollbrook—I've got the map here.

**CHARLES:** Can you list for us, in order of occurrence, all subsequent combat action in which you were involved?

**GLEN:** Well, after several training missions on the 22nd of February, 1944, we went to Muenster to bomb a [?] plant. There were very few fighters. Moderate flak. That wasn't a very tough mission. Then the next one was on the 24th of February we went to Schweinfurt. We lost an engine going in and had contact with a 109 but a P-38 came to our rescue and we made it home OK. Then things were pretty calm until the 1st of March when they started sending us to Berlin. I went to Berlin three times pretty close together and on the 7th mission we went to Augsburg. That was a long mission—nine hours and 35 minutes. There were a lot of fighters. Then we started getting a few of the no ... missions across the channel which weren't too

bad. The longest mission we were supposed to go to Berlin and they sent us on over on a secondary target to Stettin in Poland. That was eleven hours.

**CHARLES:** In your missions, were there any casualties involved in your plane?

**GLEN:** The pilot and co-pilot got hit by flak. Not bad. One on the hand. The co-pilot was hit on the hand and the pilot—I think he got a piece on the cheek. It wasn't serious though.

**CHARLES:** And how were they treated?

**GLEN:** They were brought back to the—come back to the base and they took them to the hospital and patched them up and they had a day or two off and then they were back flying again.

**CHARLES:** What did you think of the war so far?

**GLEN:** It depended on the kind of mission we had. If it was an easy mission, it wasn't too bad. We'd go home and have a few beers down at the Crown [Wool Pack] which was a pub on the Great North Road close to where we were stationed and we'd forget all of our problems. I was fortunate enough to get acquainted with a girlfriend over there and we had some very nice times. I didn't worry about the damn war. If we was going to get it we was going to get it. That is the way it was and enjoy life the best we could.

**CHARLES:** Did you write many letters home?

**GLEN:** Yes, I wrote quite regularly.

**CHARLES:** Did you receive many letters and/or packages? If so, how often—what type of things did you receive in your packages?

**GLEN:** I know I made a request to my brother who was a fireman for Potlatch back in Idaho in the logging camp and asked him if he would have the blacksmith make us some good knives. We didn't have any decent knives. So the logging superintendent got busy and within about three weeks we had ten beautiful knives. They made them out of—I don't know what kind of steel it was but it was real nice. They sent them over to us. We got packages of food, cookies, clothes and things for the girlfriend.

**CHARLES:** Did most of the other men write and receive letters?

**GLEN:** Oh, I think quite a few of them did. I know I was pretty well taken care of in that regard.

**CHARLES:** Did you forge close bonds or friendships with many of your combat companions?

**GLEN:** Our crew was very close. We had a real good crew. They were all volunteers. Every one of them.

**CHARLES:** Have you remained in contact with any of your World War II companions?

**GLEN:** Not really. They're scattered out all over. The Bombardier—he's down in Florida—in bad shape. He's had several heart operations and he's really the only one that I've had contact with.

**CHARLES:** Prior to the end of the war were you aware of any civilian concentration camps existed. If so, please explain how you learned about them and how much you knew about at that time

**GLEN:** You mean in our country?

**CHARLES:** No. In Germany.

**GLEN:** Oh, yeah. We were informed about that. In fact several of our missions we were deliberately instructed to fly over the concentration camp to give the POWs a morale lift. Of course, we were flying high—they could hear us but couldn't see us. I guess that was a morale builder.

**CHARLES:** What was your high light occurrence of your combat experience?

**GLEN:** The last. We had a milk run for the last mission and that was the one I really kissed the ground when we got back.

**CHARLES:** Do you remember where you went?

**GLEN:** Yeah. I've got it here someplace. It was just across the channel on [?] I think Shadow Down [?] or something like that.

**CHARLES:** Shannon dun. That's in France.

**GLEN:** Yeah.

**CHARLES:** OK. Tell us what you and the other men did to celebrate America's traditional family holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**GLEN:** We weren't—when we were overseas, the only holiday we had was 4th of July—we were there 4th of July and there was a lot of gun fire. We had 45s and we did a lot of shooting up in the air and that was about it.

**CHARLES:** When and how did you return to the United States after the end of the war?

**GLEN:** We went up to the Clyde Anchorage and boarded the New Amsterdam and sailed back on the New Amsterdam.

**CHARLES:** What happened when you arrived in the United States?

**GLEN:** Well we stayed overnight. We got into New York about 4:00 in the afternoon. We had a lot of German prisoners on board who—they thought they would find New York all bombed because the propaganda had told them that the Luftwaffe had taken care of New York so they were astonished, of course, and we had to stay on board all night. I remember one GI said if they let him go he could be home, running at top speed, before he got out of breath. He lived that close to where we docked but they wouldn't let anyone off. And the next morning we went to Camp Shanks, I think it was and were treated to a nice meal and put on trains and went home then.

**CHARLES:** Please tell us about your military rank and your decorations, especially your campaign decorations.

**GLEN:** I was made Staff Sergeant. Of course, promotions were pretty slow. I was supposed to get Tech. Sergeant being an engineer at the last but that never came through. I got the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) an air medal with three clusters and on the campaign that went with it. I don't know what you call those.

**CHARLES:** This is return to civilian life. How did you get along with the member with whom you had the greatest contact?

**GLEN:** I got along OK. I was nervous as a cat. I about drove my mother nuts. Couldn't sit still. I was a nervous wreck for quite a while but finally got calmed down.

**CHARLES:** Were there any things you would do differently if you could do them once again?

**GLEN:** Yes, I probably would. After I got back, they sent me to Chanute Field and I had to go back up to Boeing again on the B-29 on engine change. They wanted engine change instructors. So the civilian head down there that was in charge of the school wanted me to stick around and take my test and stay there. That was a big mistake because I could have made a lot more money than I did if I'd just stayed there but I wanted out as fast as I could so I got out.

**CHARLES:** Is there any one thing that stands out as your most successful achievement in the military service.

**GLEN:** Well, I think we—our crew conducted ourselves well and we did what was asked of us and that's about it, I guess. I don't know what else we could have done.

**CHARLES:** How did you learn about V- Day and what was your reaction to it?

**GLEN:** It was about the same. I really can't recall too much about it. I had met my wife at this time. Hadn't gotten married or anything but she was — worked in the telegraph office in Decatur and so we celebrated the usual.

**CHARLES:** What was your opinion of the use of the atomic bomb when it was used against Japanese civilians in August of 1945?

**GLEN:** I was real glad that it was used because of the fanaticism of the Japanese soldiers who considered being was the greatest honor is about the only thing that could be done otherwise we would have lost a lot of men over there.

**CHARLES:** Has that opinion changed over the last fifty years? If so, how?

**GLEN:** No, I don't think so. I just thank God that we had Harry Truman there with the guts enough to go ahead and do that.

**CHARLES:** When and where were you officially discharged from service?

**GLEN:** I was at Chanute Field and it was on October the 6th, 1945, and my wife's birthday.

**CHARLES:** Do you receive a disability rating or pension?

**GLEN:** No.

**CHARLES:** Do you have any opinions or feelings about our nation— (End of side one. There is nothing more on this tape)