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Veterans Student Project

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### A Veteran's War

Mr. George Samuel Mixell served in World War II, one of the fiercest wars that America was in. He was positioned and or fought in Panama, New Guinea, and Australia. He fought bravely in combat and served his country well. During this interview, Mr. Mixell shared his stories and experiences during World War II.

Mr. Mixell was an orphaned child and never knew his biological parents. He had two foster mothers; the first lived in Harrisburg and the other lived in Rossville. . When he was 7 years old he was diagnosed with lung cancer and was sent down to New Jersey. They cured his cancer within one year and then he went to live with his second foster mother, Rebecca, whom he called Becky. She and her mother raised 20 boys. She was a very religious woman and made an impression on her boys, especially Mr. Mixell.

Mr. Mixell attended high school in Wellsville, Pennsylvania. But, Mr. Mixell was an inquisitive young man and he was anxious to see the world. He wanted to see the Panama Canal. The construction of the Panama Canal is famous and integral because it is a ship canal that joins the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. It was built from 1904 to 1914. So during his senior year of high school he dropped out and went to York, Pennsylvania to enlist in the army. It was later that he found out that the State said that anyone who enlisted between the years 1940 and

1945, and didn't finish their last year of school, they could go to their local high school and get their diploma, last one issued from the old building. He enlisted to go to Panama and he was supposed to be there 3 years. While in Panama he met a beautiful Spanish woman, but there was a difficulty due was a language barrier. The recruiting agent promised to give him the position that he wanted, which was a tail gunner aboard one of the bombers in the Air Corps. He was a part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He asked the sergeant when he was going over to the air corps. The Sergeant told him that he was already in the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry and that he would handle the 50 caliber machine guns and he would learn to throw grenades and use bazookas, which is all a part of the heavy weapons industry. In the next month and a half he went through troop recruit training. It was 114 degrees in the shade down there and the soldiers had to wear wool clothing, which Mr. Mixell had always been allergic to. They would spray the men with a hose to make the uniform soaking wet in order to keep them cool. For training they dove into dug outs, and went in trenches and through barb wires. He never went through anything harder in his life but he said that they made a soldier out of you. They learned to march 100 men together and if you were not in step, you were in trouble. If a soldier failed any subject in training, then they did not get their graduation certificate and they would have to start training all over again.

Mr. Mixell contracted malaria while in Panama. A female mosquito, called an Anopheles, bit him and that night he was burning up with a fever. Malaria is a parasitic disease with flu-like symptoms, anemia, and high fevers. The parasites, sporozoites, travel to the liver, where they mature and release another form of the parasite, which then infects the blood stream. These parasites multiply within the blood cell, causing them to rupture. The symptoms of anemia occur between the first 48 and 72 hours of contraction. The sergeant told him that he had malaria and told him to go to the hospital. He had to take a shot glass of ply nine which to him is the worst

tasting medicine ever. He took it down in one shot and half an hour later passed out. He was unconscious for 7 days. He went in there weighing 189 pounds and came out weighing 86 pounds. The sergeant told him that malaria kills 99 soldiers out of 100. He came back home with the malaria and struggled with it for years, because it continued to remain in his blood. He lost a lot of money due to his treatment for his malaria. And on cold days, if he doesn't dress properly, he gets the chills.

He then came back to his unit and it wasn't long after that that Pearl Harbor was attacked. On the morning of December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Hawaii was attacked by the Japanese Imperial Headquarters. 2402 men were killed, 1282 were wounded, and 188 aircrafts were destroyed. The U.S. responded with an attack on their civilians rather than their military, by dropping a nuclear bomb in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. The men were called together and the officials told them that they had been living off the government and now they were going to earn it and pay the government back. In a couple of weeks they began shipping out. The Arizona National Guard was brought in and placed with them. All of the old men were taken out of both units and sent to Germany, while all of the young men were sent to Australia and New Guinea. And they fought up the coasts and were there for 3 years.

They went into Panama and went up in cave up on a mountain side that the Japanese had hollowed out. They kept all their ammunition there and man power. The Japanese slaughtered them trying to attack that mountain and killed them and wounded them. Finally that unit was pulled out and Mr. Mixell's unit marched in against them. The colonel came out and said they were going to attack that mountain and he had a Sherman tank brought out and ordered a flame thrower to set on top of the tank. The Japanese opened up fire against tank but it was no use. Tank blew whole mountain up and the cave blew up.

Mr. Mixell became a bodyguard for the Colonel, which he considered it an honor to be his bodyguard. 500 troops were sent up through the jungle which was completely destroyed and obliterated. The Japanese had sharp shooters and they were picking off the men and you couldn't see where they were firing from. 500 men hit the ground for cover. 25 men were killed and 15 were wounded. Mr. Mixell, the Colonel, and his other bodyguard, Charlie got up to that area and all the men violently told them to get down. Mr. Mixell was laying at the Colonel's feet and because he was at that level, he saw a Japanese sniper tied up in coconut tree. Mr. Mixell began firing at the sniper. He saw pieces flying off of him so he could have been dead already. Because he was down on the ground, he saw a trench 75ft long and saw 7 rifle barrels standing up in the trench. He pulled a grenade off of his belt and threw to the trench, landing 5 ft away. The snipers put their white t-shirts over their gun barrels to show that they surrendered, known at Geneva cot, which means that you are not supposed to harm them. A runner came back saying not to long after that, that 2 soldiers were assigned to take them back to the prison compound and the soldiers said that the snipers tried to escape, so the soldiers killed the snipers. Those that had been wounded by the snipers were grateful to hear that they were dead.

In the jungle there is 6 months of rain and 6 months of dry season. The men were jumping in fox holes half full of mud and water. While in rest camp, he learned how to set a trap. He took a string and tied it between two trees around the front of the trench and hung a vegetable can and bent the lid over and hung it on the string a foot above the ground and put empty cartridges in it. If anything hit it, it would make a loud alarm sound. At 2 am it went off and everyone jumped out of their bunkers into the foxholes armed and ready. Mr. Mixell threw a grenade over where the trap had been set. In the morning he went out to see what he got and he found a German police dog laying there dead. The Japanese took the U.S. uniforms and beat

the dogs with their uniforms to fill them with contempt for the soldiers. The dogs would attack and kill you and go straight for your throat. They were sent out after dark.

One while eating lunch, clean out of the battle area, all of a sudden artillery shells were heard being fired. He saw guys with their feet and arms blown off and blinded, one who had just been eating their lunch. You never knew when you were safe, they was no such thing as safety. When he was bodyguard, he and another man were told to go back behind the line, 7 miles back, where the ammunition dump was to load boxes in a jeep and all of sudden artillery was heard being fired. A second shell was fired and Mr. Mixell told the man they better get out of there. He bent down to pick up a box and when he did the man drove off the jeep loaded with the boxes of ammo. Then the third shell was coming down. There was a huge tree with roots coming out of it and he dove under one of the roots for safety. The third shell came in and hit right on the dump. He could have died if he wasn't under the root. He got a concussion, leading to hearing loss. After the war, he got hearing aids. You don't need be hit by a shell directly. If it is fired in the area where you are and when it explodes, that concussion can kill you right off. He was 10 feet away.

They had their hardest battle in Australia at Sarmi and Wakde. They were outnumbered four to one. One of their Marine Corps had gone in there to fight the Japanese and their military group was called Tojo's Best Troops of His Nation, nicknamed the Tiger Marines. They were tough and fierce warriors and they fought like Native Americans. They had all types of tricks that could kill you. If you picked up a fountain pen and pushed the button it could blow up and take your whole hand off and it could blind you. Marine Corps came out of the battle bandaged up and limping on crutches. They lost half of their unit about 3 or 4000 of them were killed attacking that Japanese forest.

His sergeant, Sergeant Perkins, was a Patton Sergeant. He went out on a patrol while Mr. Mixell was in the hospital with malaria. The radio beside his bed in the hospital said Sergeant Perkins was killed today in an ambush. He was like a father and a brother combined to him. He never knew a man I loved so much. He laid there and cried for half an hour. And when he came home, at Christmas, he'd think of him and cry. There is a Perkins restaurant in Carlisle. But he doesn't go there today. If he can stay away from it, he will because it brings back heartache to him. Mr. Mixell said that he's not one to be sentimental to very quickly, but that breaks him up. The way he met him at rest camp is, he used to sit at night and make hot chocolate. And Sergeant Perkins would come walking down the road and he smelt the hot chocolate. And he'd come in one night and he'd say hey George, I'm a lover of hot chocolate at night. Can I come in for a cup? They had been there for thirty days and every night he came in and they'd talk. He had a wife and three little children out in Michigan. He wished before God many a time that'd he'd gotten his home address so he could have written to his wife and told her was a grand time they had together. But he never got that opportunity. All these events in your life take place and you can let them break you or make you.