

VETS

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When he went to volunteer, there were two recruiting offices, the Army and the Navy, side by side. He chose the Navy, Blaikie said.

After that, he began training as a fighter pilot for the Marine Corps.

"The original field was too small for the new students, so farmers went out and plowed their property flat, and that's

where we originally practiced our takeoffs and landings," Blaikie said.

He never did make it to combat overseas after training.

Because of his experience in the federal program, he was pressed into service training pilots on aircraft instruments.

One of the most promising students, Blaikie recalled, was Ted Williams, the legendary Boston Red Sox baseball player.

Williams was a Marine Corps fighter pilot in World War II and later in the Korean War.

"If he hadn't have gone into

the service twice, his records would have been untouchable," Blaikie said of Williams.

Blaikie said he also came to know Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, an ace fighter pilot with the Marine Corps who led the legendary "Black Sheep Squadron" in the Pacific Theater.

Blaikie, Williams, Boyington and the Black Sheep flew the Corsair, dubbed the "Whistling Death" by the Japanese because of the eerie sound the plane made while diving.

The Corsair was much faster than any Japanese plane, he said.

Toward the end of the war, Blaikie was assigned to a fighter squadron that was shipped to Midway Island in the Pacific.

He said he didn't know it at the time, but they were being prepared for the invasion of Japan.

That didn't happen, however. Japan surrendered after United States planes dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"I was playing tennis on Midway when we got word the war was over," he said.