

The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)

Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Don Fox
Sgt. Japan Occupation Force
July 27, 2001

Don Fox

- RM This is Richard Misenhimer and today is July the 27th, 2001. I'm interviewing Mr. Don Fox. The interview is taking place at his home at 881 E. State Road 14 in Winamac, Indiana. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific Wars Center for Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historical information related to WWII. Don, thank you for taking time here today. Let me start by asking you, when and where were you born?
- DF I was born July the 3rd, 1926 at home down at Pulaski. No hospitals. (Laughing)
- RM Pulaski, Indiana which is about 10 or 12 miles south of
- DF Yeah, West of Winamac, uh huh, uh huh.
- RM What were your parent's names?
- DF My dad's name was Rudolph and my mother's name was Mary Ella.
- RM And where were they born?
- DF Dad was born in Pulaski and my mother was, she came from Grass Creek so I'm assuming that's where she was born.
- RM Okay, which is another little town just East of here.
- DF Right, uh huh, uh huh.
- RM Okay. Do you have any brothers and sisters?
- DF I got ahh yeah, there was 7 people in the family, 6 boys and 1 girl.
- RM Okay, so you had 5 brothers and 1 sister.
- DF Right.
- RM Were any of those in WWII also?
- DF Yes, my brother Ralph was the oldest, he was in. My brother Walt was next, he was in. My brother Gene was next, and he was in and I was in and my brother Loran. All of us were in WWII except Art. I don't know whether you knew Art. He was Korea.
- RM Okay.
- DF So Dad had 6 boys and they all were in service.
- RM Okay. Where'd you go to school?
- DF Pulaski, Pulaski High School.

RM When'd you graduate from high school there?

DF Well, I made 11 years and then I went into service.

RM Okay. What year did you, would that have been?

DF I would have graduated in '44.

RM Okay, alright. Then when did you go into the service?

DF January the 9th, 1945.

RM '45.

DF I remember that day. (Laughing)

RM Okay. We all remember those.

DF Uh huh, for what it's worth Brooks Roudebush and I took the same oath.

RM Oh, okay, alright.

DF Uh huh, he went in the same time I did.

RM Were you drafted or did you?

DF I was drafted. I was drafted.

RM And you went into which branch?

DF Army, uh huh.

RM And you had no choice.

DF No choice.

RM Then where did you go from there? Where did you take your training.

DF Camp Walters, Texas.

RM Okay, and that's near?

DF Dallas, Fort Worth area really, closest to Mineral Wells.

RM Okay, and what were conditions like there?

DF Well, you know I guess maybe I don't want to pull my own tail but I was pretty proud to be in the Army and I felt like they were teaching me to obey orders without asking questions. That was the military and I enjoyed it. I really did. I kinda thought it was a challenge and I kinda liked it.

RM Okay, then the barracks, what were they like?

DF They were 60 man barracks, 30 up and 30 down and they were, of course you know, we had to keep 'em clean so they were nice.

RM Right. How was the food?

DF Our food was fed, what do you call it, we all went in the mess hall and set down and they fed ya....

RM Family style.

DF Yeah, kinda family style. They gave ya the dishes and you jist took what you wanted and the food was great except for Sunday nights and then you had cold cuts. (Laughing)

RM Now breakfast, what'd ya have for breakfast?

DF Well, mostly powdered scrambled eggs and I don't recall ever having jist regular eggs. A lot of egg omelets or _____ omelets with eggs, stuff like that.

RM Uh huh, okay. How long was your basic training there?

DF Sixteen weeks.

RM Okay, and then where did you go from there?

DF I went from there to overseas. I got a little mixed up down there, I don't know whether I did or not but they lost my orders. Everybody else got shipped out about a month before I did but then when I got shipped out I came home course it'd be 10 days delay enroute with baby they called it.

RM Right

DF Then I went from home to Fort Riley, Kansas and from there to Fort Ord, California and then overseas. I went to the Phillipines.

RM When you finished your basic training, did you have you a specialty?

DF No, just a rifleman.

RM What rank were you at that point?

DF Just a private.

RM Private, uh huh. Then you went to the Phillipines?

DF When you go overseas you automatically get a stripe so you go to PFC.

RM PFC, okay. Back when you were in basic, anything in particular you remember about that, any humorous incidents or anything that happened there?

DF Well, hah, I don't know whether you want to get into this or not, you might want to stike it, but our barracks got quarantined because it got the crabs. (Laughing)
They quarantined the whole barracks. For a week, it took about that long to get

rid of 'em. So one time my cousin Leo Fox, was down there and he was through basic training, and he come over to the barracks that night and I said, "Hey Bud, I can't come out here, I'm quarantined." "What's the matter?" Well, I told him. (Laughing) So he didn't want to mess around. (Laughing)

RM Didn't want any part of that.

DF No

RM Any particular things you remember from that time?

DF Oh, well yeah, Brooks Roudebush, Tom Ziemba, he was with me. He got killed before I got overseas. I went to the Phillipines, and that's where he was and by the time I got down there, his sister wanted me to look him up, Bob Davis's wife.

RM Uh huh, yeah.

DF I got there and he was already, got killed so I didn't find him.

RM Okay

DF A few of the others I kinda followed but after you come home you know, you kinda loose 'em. There was a Don Hines from Royal Center and Steve Reames from over around Monterey. They all went in the same time I did.

RM Okay. You all took basic at the same time?

DF Yeah, uh huh, uh huh.

RM So then when you got to the Phillipines, you were a replacement at that point or what?

DF Yes, uh huh.

RM What outfit did you join there?

DF I joined the 24th Division 34th Regiment. The 34th Regiment was a regiment attached to the Division at that time, I think they did that when the war broke out. The 34th was actually out on it's own they tell me, the regiment and then of course the Division needed another Regiment so they attached us. And our home for the 24th Division was Hawaii, I think, at that time, home office for the Division.

RM Yeah, right, okay. Then about when did you get there?

DF You know that's when I'm loosin' my dates. I remember we crossed the dateline

but I don't know what day it was when we left Frisco, I know we were on the ship 25 days. We pulled into Hawaii, into Honolulu about 6:00 one night, of course it was almost dark. We took on supplies and pulled back out the next morning before daylight. So I didn't really see much of the Hawaiian Islands except I did see some of the ship wrecks, you know, that hadn't been cleaned up.

RM Still there.

DF Yeah, they were still there.

RM Okay, so it took you 25 days.

DF 25 days cause you know you zig zagged and we went by the Marianna's and I can't remember what other islands we went by, and we landed on the island of Leyte, of course Leyte at that time was already secure.

RM Okay

DF In fact of the matter, you know the war was just ended, when I was on the ship, they signed a peace treaty.

RM In Japan?

DF Yeah.

RM Okay.

DF They had dropped a bomb and they had signed a peace treaty. I went from there to the island of Mindanao where I made my replacement with the 34 INF. REP. Leyte was, I can't recall how big the island was but it was jist one big surprise place when I was there. We had to pull guard on that supply depo and it seemed to me like it was miles long and miles high but (Laughing). We had more supplies over there and I often wondered what they done with all that stuff when the war was over but that's part of war.

RM Yeah, right.

DF Uh huh, uh huh.

RM So with these 16 weeks, 4 months maybe, this was probably in the

DF It was in uh September.

RM August or

DF Yeah, August, September area, had to be because. It was in August probably because the bomb dropped what the 6th or

RM 6th or 7th

DF 6th, I think the 6th of August. 2nd one, I think was the 9th or 10th.

RM Right.

DF And then it was only about the 10th or 15th when they signed the treaty.

RM It was after the September 2nd when they had the ceremony.

DF Yeah, when they had the ceremony on the thing, uh huh, uh huh.

RM Where were you when Germany surrendered? Do you recall?

DF Yes, I was in basic training. I can't remember the date they surrendered either, but I was

RM May 7th or 8th somewhere in there.

DF Yeah, uh huh, yeah see I started on basic training January. Went in January 9th, by the time we got started probably the end of January so March, April, May or June and I think I gotta come home in July and the other guys came home in June.

RM Okay.

DF That 's where I was when Roosevelt died.

RM Did you have any big celebration when the war was over in Germany?

DF Not really, they didn't uh, Army wise they didn't have.

RM Okay.

DF I don't know if they did in the towns. We didn't get to town really that often, well weekends but not very often.

RM Then where were you when you got the announcement that Japan had surrendered?

DF I was on board ship.

RM On the ship?

DF Uh huh.

RM Then what kind of?

DF Oh that ship just about exploded but what are you gonna do? All you can do is yell and holler but I mean as far as, no booze on board or anything like that.

(Laughing)

RM You were in a convoy, I gather, right?

DF Right, well going over at that time, yes. Uh huh.

RM Okay. Did you have escorts, destroyers or whatever?

DF Oh, yeah, uh huh.

RM Did they shoot off their guns or anything?

DF I don't think so. I don't recall if they did. I don't recall.

RM I recall in some places they did.

DF Yeah, I heard that. Uh huh. But of course when we left the Phillipines you know, we was in a convoy and I can remember seeing ships out across that water like you could jist about walk on 'em they was. I don't know how many divisions or what we was but we actually made a landing on Japan when we went in.

RM Did ya?

DF Yeah, we went down over the rope side, you know and then into these landing crafts. I remember I was in the second wave, of course the war was over but our object was still to, I suppose what they did was they carried the orders through from what was really gonna happen had the war not ended.

RM Uh huh.

DF That's what I would have to guess. And we went into a town of Matsuyama that was our objective, was to go ashore and because there was a Japanese Army base there.

RM Okay.

DF So that was our objective, was to go in and take this thing, well of course, we didn't have no opposition so we just marched in.

RM Now this would have been in September.

DF Yeah, uh huh, uh huh.

RM Around the middle, do you recall?

DF I'd guess it was, yes.

RM Did you disarm the Japanese soldiers there?

DF No, they were already uh, you know I always felt like that prime minister musta had a lotta power because he evidently told them the war was over and they jist , they quit. They jist, now I guess they didn't down in the Phillipines, they tell me they found some of them down there years later but the island or the country itself, we had no problems with any of them.

RM Now this was how far from Tokyo or where?

DF Oh, it's way down south, the southernmost island

RM Where? Island of Shikoku

DF Yeah.

RM Right on the main island where the _____

DF Yeah, yeah. I can't think of the name of it. I can't think of the name of it. I don't think it's Kyushu. Well, it mighta been, yeah the southernmost island.

RM Okay.

DF And we landed on the Southern port of that island.

RM Now was there any troops there before you? American troops?

DF No, uh huh.

RM You were the first American troops in there.

DF Uh huh, uh huh.

RM And when you went to this Army base, what did you find there?

DF Just an empty barracks, wasn't really blowed out but the town was pretty much blowed up. There was no electricity yet, you know, so we used portable generators to try to get power back and things like that. One thing I do remember and this is the reason why I say this Japanese guy Hirohito must have had a lot of power because when we got into that town, the town I'd say it might be as big as Logansport

RM 25,000 or something like

DF Yeah, I'd say in that neighborhood, I really don't know, but when we got into that town, we just went in marchin' in combat form, you know, but we just walked down and pretty soon here's these little Japanese girls, kids waving American flags. Where they got 'em I don't know and they was singin', "You Are My Sunshine." Course us good old GI's, we was givin' 'em chocolate bars. (Laughing) And so they, course they was starvin' to death you know, so we just done that

RM Okay.

DF So it was you know, just very friendly.

RM Uh huh, uh huh. And how about the adult civilians, did you see any of those?

DF Well, yes and they kinda laid back and they didn't come right out like to accept you or anything but through the whole occupation, I never had much problem with 'em.

RM Okay. Then you didn't find any soldiers when you came in there then?

DF No, there was none organized at all. I remember a few weeks later, I've seen a lot of Civil War pictures you know, and the old boys comin' back home, walkin' back home in their ragged clothes, well I seen a lot of Japanese soldiers like that.

RM Okay.

DF But no weapons, no nothin'. They were jist lookin' fer homes and they didn't even have homes, most of 'em lost their parents and accompanying mommies and so it was kinda' devastating you know. It was kinda scarey, cause like I say, I didn't feel sorry for 'em cause I hated the Japs with a passion.

RM (Laughing)

DF But all of a sudden like, you know, you change your mind or I did.

RM Now, you didn't find any weapons then, any rifles or anything?

DF No, uh huh, uh huh.

RM They were somewhere else

DF I don't know if I'm getting' ahead of myself or not, like I said, I forget dates. I can't remember what island or what town we was in but we were along the shore and we went in and got some _____ Japanese wanted ta, you know they'd work fer nothin' probably, er fer food. And so they put us out on detail to go find some Japanese that would go to work and they run us into these tunnels that they had over there, all over that island and we'd put 'em back in there and get big ropes and they'd drag these bombs and all that stuff outa these tunnels and then we'd load 'em on barges and take 'em out and blow 'em up in the bay. It was honey combed, it was just full of stuff. I don't know if we ever got it all or not. I worked with, I don't know for a week or two, and then got moved on.

RM Now did your whole division go in there when you got off the boats?

DF Oh, yeah, whole division.

RM 20,000 or something

DF Sompin' like 'at. I have no idea. All I know is where we was supposed ta go and

I'm assumin', see our platoon well I know the whole company was in there, but our platoon had a certain path to go, and so the rest of 'em did too, jist like makin' a landing and they all congregated then inta _____.

RM And you had your rifle with the ammunition and all that?

DF Yeah, grenades, everthing. Yeah, we were combat ready.

RM Combat ready.

DF Uh huh, uh huh

RM And you were a rocket man in the platoon?

DF Uh huh

RM Wasn't a BAR man _____

Df No, I was in basic training but not in the.....

RM Okay

DF I wudn't big enough to carry that BAR. (Laughing)

RM That's a heavy thing.

DF Oh yeah, I fired it. It's a heck of a weapon but....

RM Yeah, yeah. Did you stay in tents there or what did you stay in?

DF No, we stayed in the barracks.

RM They hadn't been destroyed yet?

DF No, uh huh. And the barracks in Matsuyama now we went, well I went up to Hiro too, but in Matsuyama the barracks had a big concrete wall all the way around, more like a prison.

RM Oh.

DF And I don't know why it was like at, whether they was afraid the Japs ud run away er... (Laughing) Of course there were gates and things you know, so we just went in and out.

RM Okay. And how long were you there then?

DF Well, it couldn't have been very long cause we went from there to the next island and a little town of Hiro. And Hiro is not very far from Hiroshima.

RM Okay.

DF And I remember staying on board ship that night and it was the coldest night of my life. Had to sleep on that cold deck. We left one night and got there the next

day and no place to sleep except right out on deck, you know. Man it was cold, and this had to be in September or October, whatever.

RM Okay

DF And that was the coldest night of my life.

RM So you went ashore from there to a bigger island.

DF Yeah, uh huh, uh huh.

RM Was it the main island now or

DF Well, it was the island that Hiroshima's on.

RM Okay, yeah.

DF Hiroshima and what's the other big town?

RM Hiroshima and Nagasaki

DF No, Nagasaki's down at Sasbo or down south.

RM Okay, okay

DF Uh huh. What's the name of that town? Big city. Can't think of it now, but anyway we were pretty close to that.

RM Okay

DF And then one morning, like I said dates get away from me, one morning they got us up, after breakfast and they loaded us up on these Army 6 X's. Of course we took our weapons, we carried live ammo for a long time.

RM Okay

DF And took the whole I don't know company or battalion, mighta been the whole battalion, and we drove for I don't know, hour or two, of course you know before you get to camp you don't know where you're at. Pretty soon we stopped and the Sergeant come back and opened the door and he said, "Okay, get out." So we got out and looked around and we were in Hiroshima.

RM Oh.

DF I couldn't believe what I saw and I to this day don't know why we were there and that's what this Sergeant said, he said, "Well, welcome to Hiroshima." He evidently knew where we were goin'. Why we went into Hiroshima, I'll never know and I often wondered, I'm sure, I guess I'm not sure but the Corps of

Engineers or somebody was surely in there to check out the atomic stuff before we got there.

RM Radiation.

DF Radiation, but I don't know that. And it was a mess, of course we walked the streets jist about like, well like in combat formation, we were goin' in the town and you could see long sidewalks where they had these slit trenches, they'd still be a few bones in there where some of the poor guys never made it. Well, that radiation wouldn't let nobody make it. And off in the distance you could always see a big cement building or something but there wouldn't be no windows, no roof, no nothin', just a big building.

RM Yeah.

DF At one place, I remember we went across a bridge, well like this bridge over here, the railing on one side was on the bridge, the other one was down in the ditch and off down in the ditch was an old Japanese truck blowed down there, I suppose it was on the bridge and blowed it off of there or sompin' but there was no vegetation or nothing. And why, like I said why we went in there, I really don't know. We couldn't be lookin' for survivors. I have no idea why they sent us in there, but they did.

RM This had been probably 5 or 6 weeks after the bomb dropped?

DF Uh huh, uh huh, I'd guess that.

RM Okay, but there were no other American soldier there that you saw?

DF Well, yeah, over away from us. See I don't know, I'm thinkin' the whole battalion went in but see I don't know.

RM But they weren't there before you were I'm guessin'.

DF No, no, no. No, as far as I know there was nobody before us in that area.

RM Okay. And then you marched through there and what?

DF Yeah, well in combat order you know.

RM Yeah, sure.

DF On each side of the street, you know like when you in the movies, people well that's really the way they did it and we did it and that's jist the way it is.

RM Uh huh.

DF So after that then really after that we got back and we're still in Hiro that little town of Hiro and course, they're tryin to keep the American, us guys busy doin' something, so we'd go out on patrol. One time I went along because I drew that sector. I said, "Let me back up." I started, they wanted us to do things, so they said, 'Well, you can go to school. You can go to radio school, you can go to photography school, you can go to journalism, you can go to NCO. So I went down to the radio school, and I watched them guys on that Morse Code and I said, "That ain't for me."

(Laughing) So then they told me if you got to NCO school, 30 days and you can come out with 2 stripes, see I'm a PFC and I said, "Well heck, I'm gonna do that." So I went to NCO school and graduated and got my Buck Sergeant stripes. RM 3 stripes then.

DF Uh huh, had 3. I passed Corporal up, you know, didn't even go to Corporal, so I done that. And then like I said we was goin' out on these patrols, we'd go like maybe 50 miles to another little town or something and our objective, we'd always have a jeep driver, and an interpreter, a guy takin' down the notes and I jist went along as a guard. We took the weapons. We'd go into these towns and we'd go to the police station and we'd talk to the chief of police and we interviewed him with all the weapons and everthing, course they wasn't supposed to have no weapons and we'd go to the schools and see how the schools were doin', and in general checked out the community to see what was goin' on. It was kinda interesting. I kinda liked that. We stayed overnight in a Japanese hotel, where they had a, one of them hot baths, bathes, (Laughing) got to stay in one of them one time, then of course, the next day go back. I done that twice. Went to 2 different towns, I have no idea what the towns are now. I don't remember. It was interesting. And the Japanese, like I said, they treated us kinda like royalty. You know when we first got in there, well lets see, no that would be when I was a _____ buck sergeant, cause I was in headquarter platoon and they were still starvin' to death and they allowed us an orderly. So me and the company clerk and supply sergeant and the cooks, we were all in headquarters platoon you know, and you could get an orderly, a Japanese orderly to keep your room clean,

and make your bed and all that kinda stuff. So I got one and his name was Ito, me and Lyle Billings was, no he was my supply sergeant, a guy by the name of Fulton, I believe was my company clerk. Anyway this guy, he'd always come in every morning after we'd leave and make our beds and clean up the barracks and everthing and so he was pretty nice and all I did was go through the chow line twice and get him a second plate of food.

RM You didn't have to pay him anything?

DF No, but we did, you know. Oh, we'd give an extra candy bar or cigarettes or sompin', cause he was in his family and he'd take half the food home to them because they was starvin' to death.

RM Did more people bring food back for him or just yourself?

DF Oh no, everbody did pretty much.

RM So he had food.

DF Oh yeah, uh huh, yeah. Now there were a few but not very many GI's that really resented the Japs and they wouldn't think of doin' sompin' like that but then, I think a lot or most of those were the ones that actually were in combat down in the Phillipines.

RM I'm talkin' about the 4 of ya. Did the 4 of ya brought back food for him.

DF Uh huh, uh huh.

RM Yeah, yeah. So he had enough to take home

DF Yeah, he'd take some home.

RM And how old a person was he?

DF Oh, I couldn't tell, their age over there. I'd have to guess, he might have been 16, 17. Not very old.

RM He hadn't been in the service then?

DF No, uh huh. He had a sister. I remember him talkin' about his sister and I think his mother, now his dad mighta been either gone or I don't know.

RM The dad would have been old enough to have been in the service, the right age.

DF Yeah, uh huh, uh huh. Then after that they shipped us down to

RM Back up, did Ito speak any English?

DF No, but we got to where we could you know kinda communicate. I got to the

point where I could count to 5, well 10 I think at one time. And you know I was in headquarters platoon and like I said all the buildings with no electricity or anything so every morning you could go down to this great big, well about like a gym or something. There'd be all kind of Japanese in there lookin' for work. I think the government, I don't know if the Japanese or American governments paid 'em like a buck a day or something so I went down there and I asked for electricians. Well, electrician, the light in Japan if I remember right is dingi, and so I'd go in there and get a half a dozen of those guys and man they was jist tickled to death and they'd go out and jist work all day wirin' up the buildings and puttin' up new lines. The amazing thing about them is they'd climb poles over there at that time like the natives do down in the Phillipines. They jist had a rope at their feet and up that pole (Laughing) they'd go jist like a monkey.

RM (Laughing) Yeah.

DF They didn't use spikes like we did.

RM You were still at Hiro?

DF Yeah, uh huh. I don't even know if it was on the map. It mighta jist been an Army camp, because everywhere we stayed was an ex-Army camp.

RM Okay. Now how long were you there then?

DF I was probably there maybe 6 months. I stayed there and then we went from there down to Sasebo and that's when I don't know if you heard or read about the tunnel between the islands that's supposed to be what about 5 or 7 miles long or something.

RM No, I don't think so.

DF Well, there's a tunnel that you had to go through on this train to get there

RM On a train

DF Uh huh, so it's on another island.

RM Okay

DF And it was the home headquarters for the 24th Division see, we were in the 34th Regiment so they left us up there, but the Division then transferred down there so then they transferred us down there and of course there it was jist an occupational thing, you know, jist not doin' much o' nothin' really. Kept in physical shape and

whatever.

RM Were you still carrying a weapon then?

DF No, we got to the point to where we had 'em but we didn't carry 'em. We had live amo all the time but we never carried 'em, and we never kept 'em really loaded because when the Japanese orderlies were in your room, they weren't allowed to touch no weapons or anything so. I could back up and say, I can remember my first Christmas, 'er my only Christmas over there I guess, 'er no not Christmas but December 7th, first December 7th.

RM Okay

DF Everbody got panicky that the Japanese were gonna' retaliate on December the 7th. I don't know if anything like that came back home or not but it did over there. It went through the whole Army. So they doubled the guard on the gates, and we had to pull 2 on and 2 off for 36 hours. Course we doubled the guard and nothing happened but that was jist one of those things, precautionary.

RM Right, uh huh.

DF Front gate. You know I was a little panicky at first, cause you don't know.

RM That's right.

DF We had no idea, you know not really that long after the war was over but I felt like, they ain't got enough left to do anything with. Unless they had sompin' we didn't know about and you don't know that.

RM Uh huh, sure.

DF Cause I watch the history channel quite a bit and I see now where Germany was shippin' stuff into Japan to make the atomic bomb, had we been 6 months later they mighta had it before we did.

RM Right, uh huh, okay. Now you went back to this other island

DF Sasebo

RM Okay and then what happened now?

DF Well, really not too much, you know like I said, we jist kinda, well to get to the end of my tour of duty, got up one morning and it was Saturday morning, and a bunch of the guys said, "Hey, they've got a 6 X Army truck goin' inta Nagasaki, you want to go along?"

RM Nagasaki

DF Right, uh huh. So we got in this, I said, "Well, might as well. I ain't got nothin' else to do." Saturday morning and you know weekends were about like through the week any more over there so I got in this 6 X loaded it up and we went in to Nagasaki. It was quite a ways in there, seemed to me like it took us a couple of hours to get there but it wadn't nothin' like Hiroshima me, but of course that was about a year later see, and it was cleaned up quite a bit. I don't know if the Corps of Engineers had been in there or Seabees or who but it wadn't nothin' like, cause they were pickin' it up.

RM Were there any buildings standing there or anything?

DF Oh yeah, uh huh. It didn't do quite the damage, I didn't think, in my memory. It was more, but you know when you _____ either one of these at that time, out at the very fringe of where the bomb lost it's power, you could see the house might still be there but the, most of the roofs over there were slate and it jist peeled them off like cards cause the whole roof would be gone on the whole fringe of the outside. But in the interior, in the middle of that thing, it just disintegrated about everything, anything that was there jist, like I said the cement buildings, it didn't blow 'em over, it jist took everthing out of 'em, floors and nothing left. So, I got back in the truck and we got back to camp about, oh it must've been about 10, 11 o'clock at night, and of course we rode that old dirty truck at night so long and I'm gonna go take a shower before I go to bed and walkin' toward the shower and this guy said, "Hey, Sergeant Fox, you seen the bulletin board?" I said, "No, why, what's on the bulletin board?" I thought maybe we was movin' out, you know. He said, "Well, you better go look." So I went and looked and there was my shippin' orders to come home. So the very day that I seen Nagasaki, the next morning I shipped out.

RM Oh.

DF Uh huh.

RM Now what month would that of been?

DF I got home in, I got discharged in November so that would be September again. I was overseas, oh, about 14 months.

RM Okay.

DF From the time I went in about 2 years in service. About 22 months, yeah

RM Okay. And so there were your orders to come home.

DF My orders to come home so had to go to the mess hall and get my shots and all that kinda stuff you know and it wadn't too much, oh a few hours later we was on the train goin' to Yokohama. We shipped out of Yokohama. And I remember goin' out of Yokohama and this Japanese fisherman out there, man we're a wavin' and they're a wavin' jist like hey, friends and all you know.

RM Buddies, huh.

DF Yeah, uh huh. It was uh, they really conceded. Course you know I felt like the American people, oh I think some of 'em sure took advantage of some of the Japanese, but I don't think most of 'em did. We tried to feed 'em and do what we could you know. I remember when I went down to this one place in, I don't know what town it was, _____, went down there and here was a Japanese carpenter makin' barrels, you know these wooden barrels, he's doin' this all by hand. He had this old draw knife and he'd draw them down, course it was fascinating to me to watch somebody do something like that, and he was makin' them all by hand. And then on the sidewalks the Japanese, I don't know what kinda fish they were, minnows about that long, but they'd have a couple inches.....

RM Yeah

DF They'd have screen wires oh about 4X4 squares, and had all these little fish on there and they'd dry 'em. They didn't clean 'em nor nothin', they jist dried 'em in the sun, and the kids'd put 'em in candy sacks and they'd eat 'em like candy.

RM Uh huh.

DF And I tried about all their food, you know, their Japanese rice with the fish and stuff, some of it wadn't too bad.

RM Yeah, uh huh. Did you learn to use chop sticks?

DF I tried it and it didn't work. (Laughing) No, I didn't. If I remember right, I think countin' was ichi, nee, san, shi, go, that's one, two, three, four, five, that's about as far as I can get, similar to that.

RM (Laughing) Right.

DF Like I said light bulbs, denki, konnichi, korbanwa, sayonara that's about all I remember, you know that's 50 some years ago.

RM Oh, yes, I know.

DF (Laughing) That's the reason I can't remember these dates. I should've wrote 'em down but I didn't and your discharge doesn't tell you when you went from this place to that place, all it tells you is overseas duty and when you came home and when you went in and when you got out, that's about all it tells you.

RM Right,uh huh. Any other things you remember about your time there in Japan?

DF Oh, yes I do come to think of it. I think we were in Hiro but I'm not sure, I don't remember where we were at, but anyway they said that General Eisenhower was comin' to visit MacArthur, so they asked for volunteers to be honor guards, so me and a couple other guys was well, why not we ain't got nothin' else to do. So we had to go through training for about 2 weeks because they knew he was comin'. And so we go through training, you get in your white specks and your white gloves and leggins' and everthing and we go down to the train station. Of course down to the train station, up on all the buildings was machine guns and all kinds of guards, of course we had live ammo, although we were the color guard, honor guard, we still had live ammo, and they had all kinds of Army personnel around there. So we stood there for I don't know, half hour, forty-five minutes and pretty soon Eisenhower come off the train and he says, "I want to apologize, my orderly didn't wake me up." And I thought, well now look Ike, you can't blame everthing on your orderly. (Laughing) But it was a great experience, and then he walked right down past us you know, down to a staff car where MacArthur was, and so I got to see both of 'em at the same place at the same time. So it must've been a month later, like I said time gets away, that Secretary of War Stinson came over, and I got to pull honor guard for him too, cause we'd already went through the training, you know. So it was a great experience, I enjoyed it.

RM Yeah. Was that the only time you saw Ike or MacArthur or did you see him another time?

DF No, that's the only time I ever saw him, and he was like oh, at least from here to that road out there. I'd say 2 or 3 hundred feet away because we had honor guard a long ways down there.

RM Sure.

DF But they saluted each other and shook hands and I don't know, I suppose Eisenhower was just over there to see what was goin' on and consult. Now he did eat in one of the mess halls but it wasn't mine, or at least that was what they told me. They said he ate at one of the other company mess halls, but I guess he did that quite frequently, was fed in the GI's mess. He was a regular guy.

RM Yeah, uh huh. Anything else over there?

DF Well, I can't think of anything else.

RM _____ on the ship comin' home. How long did it take to get home?

DF About 10, 11 days, wasn't very long and when we came into Seattle on a Saturday night, course see this is the year after the wars over, and they still had that big sign out there, "Welcome Home GI's", and all that but they wouldn't get us off the boat because everybody was home for the weekend. We had to stay on that boat over the weekend before they'd unload us.

RM All the local people were home, you say?

DF Yeah, yeah well, the people in the mess halls and place, you know when we'd get off the boat, the first thing they gave you was one of the great meal, was about 16 ounce t-bone steak and all the ice cream and milk you could eat and drink but we didn't have anything like that in the other place.

RM You didn't have that there, huh?

DF Huh uh. I remember one time over there, the Navy came in and they said, "Hey, we've got fresh eggs, we're gonna have fresh eggs at the breakfast. All you have to do is go through the mess hall and tell 'em how you want 'em cooked and you'll get 'em." (Laughing) So we start through the chow line and get down there and here's this guy there, great big old cook pot and he's a breakin' these eggs and they're all goin' into this pot and heck they're all rotten. They'd spoiled. Once in a while he'd get maybe one out of 6 or 7 so I didn't eat any. (Laughing)

Heck, I'd eat powdered eggs. (Laughing) And our first Thanksgiving, well our only Thanksgiving, we had a big Thanksgiving dinner and some of the guys dressed up like girls and put on a little skit shows you know, and things like at. We had roast turkey, probably maybe had been frozen for a year or two or whatever, I don't know, (Laughing) and had sweet potato pie, they called it punkin' pie but it was good. It tasted like sweet potato pie, really.

RM How about Christmas over there?

DF It jist kinda came and went. Now what we done was we tried to find some little old plants you know and jist kinda decorated the barracks there itself. I remember one about that tall and we put little trinkets on it.

RM 16, 18 inches tall?

DF Yeah, uh huh. It was nothing, jist cause I don't remember any pine trees on that island. I remember when we went in at the southern island on Matsuyama that there were a lotta tangerine and orange groves in there. I was kinda surprised. Course they told us not to eat any of the fruit or vegetables but I ate oranges. (Laughing)

RM A few of those.

DF Right.

RM How about USO? Did you have any USO shows or anything?

DF We only had one down in the Phillipines jist before I shipped out but it was nobody big that I know of. I can't remember any names but there was some girls in gingham dresses danced and they sang, but no Bob Hope or anything like at. I wasn't that lucky. (Laughing)

RM Nothing in Japan?

DF Nope. I don't know if they did have. Well they had a USO place where you'd go to, you know to party or write letters or drink or whatever you wanted to but I didn't go to none of them.

RM How about Red Cross? Did you come across the Red Cross any where?

DF Jist when we was shippin' out to go overseas, they gave us all a prayer book, a little Bible I mean, and a diary and a cup of coffee. We were sittin' there on the pier waitin' to load up you know, when they come through. Oh we got involved,

I played a little baseball over there cause I played baseball at home you know. So we got up a team, the company, every company got up their own baseball team you know. If you was good enough to make a team, then you could get to go to other towns and play baseball. So we got up a team and we got good enough to go to one town and we got beat the first game so we came back, (Laughing) the end of mine. And I played a little basketball, I had a Japanese guy to make me a uniform out of silk, so I had a silk basketball uniform. It was neat, so we played basketball. And I got a set of tea cups, those were made special for me in Japan, the whole set and I sent it home to my stepsister and she started usin' 'em and broke some of 'em so I've got a couple three cups yet and I've got a cup and saucer I gave to one of my daughter-in-laws because she's a collector of things like at. But I went down to this place and I told this, he made 'em by hand for jist everybody who wanted one, so you know there's no more like 'em but they're only valuable to the guy who's got 'em as far as I'm concerned.

RM Yeah, and the design you picked out a design?

DF Yeah, he jist had things there and he said, "What do you want?" you know. We tried to get _____ but (Laughing)

RM On the bottom of this cup it says, Noritake, then it says Nipon _____

DF Yeah, I don't understand all that.

RM _____ Sha or some such. That's very interesting.

DF Uh huh, so I got the cup and saucer, I think I've got 2 cups left and one saucer but I'm not sure. So that was made in 19, had to be '45, '46.

RM '46

DF In '46 cause I was over there about all of '46 and that was after I'd been there a while so it was probably made in 1946.

RM So now you're back in Seattle and

DF Back in Seattle and like I said our first meal was steak, big steak, ice cream, milk and I don't know what all else, all the good stuff. But we was only there about 2 days, 3 days, like on a Monday until Tuesday or Wednesday then they put us on a troop train and we came home on a train on the Northern route into Fort Sheridan, Illinois where I got discharged. And on the way home, I know some of them to

me dumb GI's, went awol and I thought boy, I'm not gonna do it now, I'm too close to getting' out of this thing. (Laughing) I ain't goin' awol. But they'd jump off the train you know, we'd stop and they'd jump off the train, and some of 'em would jump off the train and go get a case of beer and get back on, but some of 'em, if they were close to their home or something they jist went home.

RM (Laughing)

DF I'm sure they didn't get too much out of it time they went back and got discharged so I got discharged in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. I got in there and they tried to talk ya inta oh gotta stay in, why don't ya stay in and re- up you know, and get in the regular Army. You don't wanna go out in civilian life, t-bone steaks around oh a dollar a pound, I don't know how much they was, but they was too expensive you can't afford 'em. I said, "Well, maybe I can't but I'm goin' home." So they said, "Well, now we can either process ya right now and it will take about 3 days or we can give ya, you've got 30 days leave time comin' any way, we can jist send ya straight home and then come back." Well, I thought about it a little bit and I said, "I'm goin' home." I coulda got paid for the 30 days but heck, I'm goin' home so I went home for 30 days and then went back up and got my discharge. Of course they tried to talk ya in again ta stayin'. Sometimes I wish I had of cause I kinda liked the military you know, but I'm also glad I didn't, because I know, later on when Korea broke out the 24th Division was the first division in Korea, and they took something like, I don't know, 60 or 70% casualties there for a while. I thought well, you got lucky again you know, I got lucky in Texas bein' a month late a missin' the war. So I thought well, you got lucky again, you better jist thank the stars so I didn't go back.

RM When you got home, did you notice much change in here?

DF Well, yes and no, you know like I said, I cheered when the war first got over and everbody first came home that everbody was welcomed home with open arms you know. My dad, he said, "Well, where ya been, the wars been over for a year?" (Laughing) "Why ain't ya home?" And I said, "Well they wouldn't let me." (Laughing) So any way, I'll _____ that.

RM Did you get plenty of mail back and forth when you were there?

DF If I would write, I'd get mail. If I didn't write, I didn't get mail, so that was my fault.

RM (Laughing) Okay.

DF Before I went in I was workin' for RBM down at Logansport and I believe it was Christmas, yeah it had to be for Christmas, they sent me a 5 dollar Christmas check, bonus or whatever. I had an awful time getting that 5 dollars cashed over there.

RM Is that right?

DF Well, they jist didn't, you had to prove that you were you and so I did. And then when I got home of course my job was still waitin' and I went back there. I didn't like factory work, so I got out.

RM Did you get any kind of ribbons or anything when you were in?

DF All I got is the 4. I got "Good Conduct", "Asiatic Pacific", Occupation Japan", What's the other one?

RM Look.

DF It was "World War II Victory Medal."

RM Oh, okay, you got those 4.

DF Got those 4.

RM Okay. When did you get married then?

DF In 1948, October the 17th.

RM So after you came back then.

DF So I was home for a couple years.

RM Okay, alright.

DF We were gonna go into town one day. Old Walter, he come over to my barracks and he says, "Don, let's go into town." I don't know what town it was, of course we had
to walk, either walk or hitch hike or get a ride with a jeep or something. There was about 5 of us, and we was walkin' into town and pretty soon we seen this old Jap and his buddy out there, had one of these charcoal burners (cars) tryin' to get it started. He couldn't, and Spike says, 'We'll get 'er started.'" So he says, "Now when that thing starts, you guys jump on cause I ain't a stoppin'.'" (Laughing)

He got that thing started and jumped on and he stole that thing and went right into town. (Laughing) And another time, I don't know what we were doin', where we got there, another time we stole a train. We was goin' across the tracks or something and Spike says, Walter Sparks, I think he died, I don't know. Anyway he says, "Let's go for a ride in that train." "We can't ride that train." He said, "The heck we can't." So he got up there and he pushed that old Jap out of the way and over there, the engineer doesn't have hardly anything to do except run the train, whenever it's gonna' turn, they have it all set up fer ya, so we got it into a town in there someplace and he got her stopped and we got off. (Laughing) Train robbers, heck we stole the whole train. (Laughing)

RM Any cars behind it?

DF Yeah, there was two or three freight cars or something and I think there was a passenger car but there wadn't nobody in it. We was gonna get in that and ride and he said, "No we was gonna take the train." So we took the train. (Laughing) Well, you know, you done crazy things like that.

RM This is the end of this tape.

Transcribed by Arlene Sanders
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