

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

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Charles Clevenger

July 16, 2001

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(3rd Marines - 1st Division - Anti-aircraft Unit)**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is July 16, 2001. I'm interviewing Mr. Charles Clevenger and this interview is taking place at his home at 3203 Evergreen, Rochester, Indiana. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War's Center for Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historic information relating to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer: Mr. Clevenger, thank you for taking the time to answer these questions and telling us about your experiences today. I'd like to ask you when and where you were born?

Mr. Clevenger: I was born here in Fulton County in 1925, May 4th.

Mr. Misenhimer: May 4, 1925. OK. And what were your parents' names?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, Edith and Walter Clevenger.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK, and where were they born?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, my Mother was born here, well they were both born in Fulton County, but she was born out here at Richland Center, which is about a mile and a half north of here, and my Dad was born over at Athens, which is about four miles east of here on St. Road 14.

Mr. Misenhimer: So they were both born in this area?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer: When did your ancestors come into this area? Do you know?

Mr. Clevenger: No, I'm afraid I couldn't answer that and be really truthful, but it

was in the 1800's because I've got pictures of them being here in this area in the 1800's.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. Where did you go to school?

Mr. Clevenger: I went to several schools. My Dad was a dock foreman for a trucking company back then. I went to Lincoln/Columbia here in Rochester. Then we moved in 1935 to South Bend and I went to Lincoln School up there, and from there we moved to Marion and I went to Tim Clark School, McCall Junior High, and then Marion High School one year, and then graduated from Central in South Bend in 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer: 1944?

Mr. Clevenger: And that was mid-term graduation. The first they ever had. They gave us mid-term graduation so guys going into the service that wouldn't be home for the regular graduation.

Mr. Misenhimer: And then when did you go into the service?

Mr. Clevenger: March 2, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer: Which branch? Marines?

Mr. Clevenger: I went into the Marine Corps, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer: How did you choose that branch?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, I suppose somewhere or other I had a lot of sickness during my life so far and I felt like I was going to try and get in something I thought would be the most demanding branch and I wanted to prove that I was good enough to be in what I thought was the tops.

Mr. Misenhimer: Where did you take your training?

Mr. Clevenger: I took it in San Diego, California.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. And how long was that training?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, I think it was two months at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer: And what were the conditions like there?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, of course, I never went through any Boot Camp any place else, but it was pretty demanding. We were out in the bivouac area. We did have a Quonset hut to stay in at night. From there I did get to go in the service. They asked you what branch you wanted to eventually get into. What branch of the unit. I wanted communications and they wanted to put me in tanks. I finally got into communications.

Mr. Misenhimer: And how old were you when you went in?

Mr. Clevenger: I was 18, pretty close to 19.

Mr. Misenhimer: What was the food like there in San Diego?

Mr. Clevenger: Good as far as I was concerned. They were only getting K rations overseas, but we had excellent food in San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer: In comparison? OK. After your eight weeks there, did you go to additional schooling in communications?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes. They sent me to radio school there in San Diego, California, and as I recall that was about three months. You took semaphore, blinker and mostly the CW (continuous wave).

Mr. Misenhimer: Which is Morse Code?

Mr. Clevenger: Morse Code, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer: Any special recollections you have of that time? Any particular friends or anything?

Mr. Clevenger: No, I was still going from one outfit to another. They never left you in one outfit.. Well, now that you mention it, seems like there was a guy from Oklahoma, and to send a “C” he would go dah-dit-dah-dit, which if you were writing it down and you would put down two “N’s”. Of course I understood him by his hand. In communications, you learn different guys and how they handle the sending key and I knew he sent dah-a-dit, that was a “C”. And he was from Oklahoma. Of course Vern Carols was from up here at Hammond. He and I went through Boot Camp, but we did not go through Radio School together. I don’t know what outfit he went to. After we came home on furlough, we went back and I lost track of him till after I got home from the service. We were out camping at Bass Lake one evening, and a couple came down from the Hammond area and were camping with us. They said Vern came home a couple of months ago and he was tired and went to bed, and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Any particular incidents or humorous things that happened to you in training that you can recall?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, of course, I did have an asthmatic condition when I went in. After Radio School the Red Cross, and also the doctor back home

were trying to get me relieved out of the service because of my asthma. They sent me to the hospital at Oceanside, Camp Pendelton, for a month. During that one month I was not found to have asthma so they sent me back to duty. My first night back in camp it was real bad with asthma. I went to the doctor the next day and at that time I was in a group that had just gotten back from Guadalcanal. They were checking these guys 100% to see if they were qualified to go back out again. So, consequently I was the only one that was still a Stateside guy. The doctor heard the asthma, so he wrote a page and a half and told the Corpsman to mark me disqualified. I was marked down for disqualified, but somewhere or other the Corpsman went and stamped on there, I think it was for Thorisus which is MU-mu. Later on, a couple of weeks later, I got to San Diego and they were checking us for overseas duty. I went through and the doctor says, "You're OK, you go." So I said, "there's a page in there," but he said, "I couldn't hear any asthma." "You want to see the world don't you?" So I went and saw the world.

Mr. Misenhimer: Where did you go from there?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, of course we boarded right there at San Diego. It was the USS Merryweather. From there we went to Pearl Harbor, which took eight days because we were zig-zagging. We arrived at Pearl Harbor about the 15th, and I think this is about the 25th, they –

Mr. Misenhimer: The 25th of what month?

Mr. Clevenger: Of February.

Mr. Misenhimer: February of 1945?

Mr. Clevenger

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Mr. Misenhimer: How did that work?

Mr. Clevenger: It worked out beautifully. I was told afterwards that they sent a

letter through that we accomplished something that had never been done before. I never got to see the letter. This was only by word of mouth that it came that there was such a letter, but I never got to see it.

Mr. Misenhimer: When did you get to Okinawa? What month?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, it was in April.

Mr. Misenhimer: April.

Mr. Clevenger: We were supposed to go in on April 1st, which was on D-Day, but we didn't go in until I think it was on the 5th. All at once the landing was so easy. They decided they would get all the gear they could get in before they moved us in because the opposition wasn't as strong as they thought it would be. It wasn't until the Army went south that they hit a bunch. It was on the 5th that they moved us in and we began setting up our unit mid-island, just about 1,000 feet south of Yan Tan Airfield.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now you were in the 1st Marine Division, right?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, no I was in the 3rd and 5th Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK.

Mr. Clevenger: The thing was we were the 1st Divisional Anti-aircraft Group, and we were attached to the complete island. In other words, we controlled every anti-aircraft on the island all the way from Army, and of course our own. Of course it wasn't until after the island was secured that I was moved out of it because the war was over at

that time. When the war was over I got into the 1st Marine Division and we went to China.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now back here – what size anti-aircraft guns did they have?

Mr. Clevenger: It was 90 mm.

Mr. Misenhimer: And now how did the officer know it was a bogie?

Mr. Clevenger: Well because our big screen came back in and gave us as a – in other words the planes that were up their flying would send off signals that they were friendly. If a guy didn't turn it on, he would get himself blown out of the air. So, he made sure his radar was set on the frequency that was for that particular day. If he didn't, he would get it changed real quick because the night he goes off the area he'd know, "Oh, I should have it on." Of course they didn't have the same frequencies, the Japs, that we did.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. So they had what they called IFF? Identification Friend or Foe?

Mr. Clevenger: Right.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. What else happened there?

Mr. Clevenger: Well of course, I was one – after we got our particular area squared away, and we did get our SCR (signal card radio) 299 set up with a van that had a 500 watt radio in it. When I went to radio school they taught us how to do a PBX which was a carry-out that fit on your back. It was quite an experience to operate a radio that was about four times bigger than that. Instead of sleeping in wet

foxholes I took three days of continuous watch so I left the guys that had dry foxholes sleep in them, and the third day I couldn't take it any longer. I had to go to mine. Eventually, I think there was a guy by the name of Ashley. I told him I thought I had a couple of pillow cases or bed sheets that I had brought from Saipan. I said we could go out there in the rice paddy field and cut that and make a straw tick. So we went out there, and of course as I said we were just south of the Yan Tan Airfield, and we were operating on getting the rice cut up, and getting it into the straw ticks, and then – Bam. All at once I hear something that was a different sound. I looked up and here was a Jap Zero coming off from Yan Tan. He was firing full blast at Ashley and me. I told him to hit the deck. He was looking the other way and I looked into the guns that were firing from that left gun. I suppose as far as being in combat, that was as near combat conditions as you can get. You could hear the slugs hitting the side. He went and made a turn out over the Bay to the west, and when he made that turn it was the wrong thing because they just blew him out of the sky.

Mr. Misenhimer: The anti-aircraft did?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes. Of course the ships were setting out there. I don't know if it was one of ours that got him, or the ship, but it just blew the plane apart and you could see the guy falling separate from the plane.

Mr. Misenhimer: But he had been shooting at you, right?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes, but he didn't get to see it done. Asley said, "Were we shooting guns at him?" I said, "No, he was shooting them at us." He didn't get to see it, I did. I'm just reading "The Old Breed" book and it's about the operation of it, and thank goodness I wasn't down on the front lines. The sledge hammer really had it rough down there. We've got a guy here at Fulton, Lawrence Norris, who is an ex-sheriff. He was in Bougainville all the way to Okinawa, and he has done some talks over here at the Historical Society. I've got his name and address if you want to go to Fulton and interview him.

Mr. Misenhimer: I have it. OK. Then you got there just after D-Day? Into Okinawa then?

Mr. Clevenger: Well I was sitting out at a neighboring island at D-Day. We went ashore five days later.

Mr. Misenhimer: That's right, April 5th or 6th, whatever. Then how long did you operate this radar there?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, I know we operated it up to the night the war was over because I remember I was operating the radio that night and I looked out at the harbor and I could see all kinds of fire going off out there in the harbor. I hollered into the Communications Officer and said, "We've got a bunch of trouble and it's not coming across my radio." He says, "Why?" I said, "I don't know but there's a bunch of stuff going on out there in the harbor." I said, "Wait a minute. They are

sending up ‘V’s’”. He said, “I wonder if we’ve just won the war.” I said, “I don’t know, but I’ll turn it over.” I got the one station of Tokyo Rose and I got in on another broadcast and found out the war was over. I was on radio watch at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you were operating the radar, what was your job there?

Mr. Clevenger: My job was just to operate the radio, but you keep the radio open. After we were there about two weeks they got telephone lines run to the stations and we had to make hourly checks on the radio in case the Japs had cut a line we would still keep in communications with our outfits.

Mr. Misenhimer: How many anti-aircraft batteries were there in this special group you were in?

Mr. Clevenger: I really don’t know. We had all the way from the first, the 30th anti-aircraft, the 16th, the 8th and we had 99th Sixth Army. Let me check – I keep a diary, but I don’t say I kept a diary, but it was pretty close to it. We had the 2nd anti-aircraft, 16th, the 5th the 8th and the 1st, and then the Army was the 997th.

Mr. Misenhimer: And there were Army battalions?

Mr. Clevenger: These were units. 2nd Anti-aircraft Artillery, the 16th Artillery, the 5th Artillery, the 8th. I think that the buddy that I have in Boone, Iowa, was in the 8th. That is Doc. Bullard and we are still in communication with each other. These code names, or the names that we give over the radio when we went to voice, but mostly we

were on CW. The voice we had these names that I've got down in here.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. What were those names?

Mr. Clevenger: OK. The net call was Eckbrook and Imitate was the 2nd Artillery. Masquerade was the 16th. Munich was the 5th. Seamark was the 8th. Calcutta was the 1st and Shuttlecock was 997. In other words, if they wanted to call us and talk to us they had to call Eckbrook and then we would give permission for that particular station to call us and talk if there was no other traffic. So you tried to get the one most in trouble, or whatever. Later on we went to a net call. The 16th was Alderman, Chili Sauce was the 8th, Crooner was the 5th, Red Coat was the 2nd, Finger Bowl was the 1st. Wolfgang was the Army 997th. They changed them around so that in case the communications of the Japanese got to knowing who you were talking to you changed. So that was pretty customary.

Mr. Misenhimer: So, the Japanese were listening in on all of your calls and all that?

Mr. Clevenger: We assumed so, yes. That's the reason that they knew who was there, who was doing what. In other words, at the time we went in, I would write home and say I was on Okinawa. Because the Japs knew we were there. But it was about 8 months later that they said no longer do you say where you were at. In other words that was the only time – when I got to Pearl Harbor we would write home and I was censored each time you wrote a letter. Your letter was read

by your Commander, and you really didn't want any secrets. If you did, the enemy might be able to interpret what as going on.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. Then all the fighting was going on while you were there?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes, it was South of me. I was going to say, we came in there. After we got secured I began asking permission to go out and roam the island. I was out hitchhiking the island and one time I got with the 24th Army. He was going down to Anhow and we had just taken Anhow. He was going down there and he stopped and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm just riding, looking the island over. It's a beautiful island." He said, "We going down to Anhow. I'm going to check on the 105." He said, "I'm over them." So I rode down there, and he said, "We're going to get to an MP pretty soon. You'll probably have to get out." I said, "Why's that?" He said, "You don't have a red square anywhere on your trousers, and only red squared trousers are allowed in that area." You would understand that if you're a combat man. I knew what he as talking about. I had a dungaree jacket on and I was USMC in an Army jeep. He says, "My orders have here for only two guys to go through. I'll give it to this guard and if you want to go on down." He said, "It's up to you." I said, "We'll see what happens." So we pulled up there and he says, "I'll bet you he won't read it as to what's there." The MP looked the thing over and

handed it back to me and says, “Thank you sir.” So, we went on. I had a buddy of mine that was in the 5th Army Transport so I looked him up. I knew he was in there, and he said, “I’m about to take a load of food up to the front lines. Do you want to ride along?” So here I am. I’ve got my K-bar with me, which was a knife. I’d hate to say it, but I did not have a rifle with me. Anyway, we went down to the front lines and I got to see what was going on down there. We unloaded the food that he had there, and that was quite an experience to see. The bodies being moved and how they were moved in their trucks that had little racks on them, and there would sometimes be 16 bodies on a truck. So it was quite a thing to see the handlers bringing the bodies in. Anyway, I was not supposed to be there.

Mr. Misenhimer: What rank did you have at that time?

Mr. Clevenger: I was still only a Private. I was told on the way home that I got to PFC, but I was told that when you got past the International Date Line the Commander of your outfit had the authority to give you PFC rank. Well, we never got it. When you have that many guys and that much to do, you forget some of the rules and regulations. I’ve never held it against them. Just before I left China they gave me the rank of PFC. When they discharge you they give you one rank higher, so I came out as a Corporal. It looks good on paper, but it was only about three or four days as a Corporal. That was all.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now, you're at the front lines there. Could you hear the rifles being fired and everything?

Mr. Clevenger: Oh yes. It was still in contest. In other words, we just went up to the city limits, just south of it, and put the gear down right there, the food—

Mr. Misenhimer: What kind of food were you taking down?

Mr. Clevenger: It was in boxes. We pulled along side one and my buddy said, "If you ever see any pineapple, I like pineapple." That was Ishmal and he had been in on Tinian and he's the one that told me how to be prepared for this before we got into it. But, anyhow he wanted pineapple if I ever saw any. There was a case of pineapple, well several cases back there beside us when we pulled in there and they put it in rows. I don't know what they were taking off ours, but I saw that case of pineapple in there in the truck, and I put it back. He had a full case of pineapple when I came back.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now this was fresh pineapple?

Mr. Clevenger: Fresh? Well, it was in the cans. It was cut and in cans.

Mr. Misenhimer: Canned pineapple, OK. So it wasn't C-rations you were taking up there? Something they were going to prepare?

Mr. Clevenger: No I don't think that C-rations were there. I don't think we got C-rations until we got to China. We were still in the K-ration deal. This was actual food so that if they had a field kitchen near the front lines they could prepare it. I only brought out one can of pineapple.

I think it was a #10 size can. It was in a carton and the carton was open. I just brought the one can out. I thought that was going further than I should, but we did get that back to Ishmal.

Mr. Misenhimer: And he enjoyed the pineapple?

Mr. Clevenger: On yes. I thought that night he was going to get sick of pineapple. When I got back he was in the field hospital of ours, and of course in the field hospital we apparently had straight alcohol. Well, to keep the guys from breaking into it they put kerosene in with it. He drank that, and he was pretty sick. He said, "I'll still eat the pineapple." I thought that would cure him of pineapple, but I saw him eat it after that. Sure surprised me. Ishmal was quite a guy. You had to know him to appreciate him. He was a F.O. on Tinian. He had seen a lot of action and told me a lot of what and how to do it. If it was your first mission, you always wanted to find somebody who had been in one before. If there was any way of getting through it, he would try to get you through it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Was Ishmal with your anti-aircraft outfit?

Mr. Clevenger: He was in communications. He had a radio up front on Tinian, but that's really all I know about him.

Mr. Misenhimer: He was an F.O. Corpsman Reserve?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes. Now he lives in Illinois. I went over and looked him up once since I've been back, but I haven't been back to check on him. I should, but your life gets involved with several things. I have kept

in touch with him though. Well, in fact, the ones that I've kept in touch with were the ones I met while I was in China. The ones that went overseas with me and we stayed together through China, and then left on the first ship back. We returned to the States as soon as we had enough points. Ellis was from Hershey, PA, and he and I were almost like brothers. He died about eight years ago. He and his wife came here about twelve years ago and we had a reunion of five guys that were in China together. He was well then, but then he had a heart attack about five or six years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer: And when you were in Okinawa, did you ever get shelled or anything like that?

Mr. Clevenger: We were bombed on April 21st. Ben Toban was killed with a daisy cutter bomb. The next morning I had the unhappy duty of cleaning up the tent that they were bombed in. We got GQ that night. Everybody was as far as I know. In our group, this was down over the ridge from us, I think Ben Toban was in wire communications and telephone, and so they had just put Coral, the CB's out there on our radius out in front of us. I really think that from Yan Tan that that was another airport runway because they laid it down just about the distance you'd set up an airplane from the runway. So we talked to the guys that had been in their foxholes and they said they were cold and they were going to get up to get a jacket. Well, they were gone long enough getting a jacket and they came back and

assumed that they had went to bed. It was just as well. It was just another GQ and they'll call it off. But the Japs didn't see it that way.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now what is a daisy cutter?

Mr. Clevenger: Well it's a bomb – it's a 500 pounder and it has a nose on it about 18 to 20 inches long. When it hits the ground it detonates the bomb so the fragments do not go into the ground, they go like it says – it's a daisy cutter. I wipes out the ground around them.

Mr. Misenhimer: Parallel to the ground?

Mr. Clevenger: Naturally. There are some that goe into the ground, but most of it is for the purpose of destroying the enemy.

Mr. Misenhimer: Anti-personnel?

Mr. Clevenger: It was very effective. I don't know, but I would guess that we had the same thing. I don't call that any different than what is normal to use in a war zone.

Mr. Misenhimer: I see that you have some notes there. Anything else there that would be interesting?

Mr. Clevenger: This is all the way with the important things that I thought had happened to me since January 7, 1945 when I went aboard the USS Merryweather 203. January 8th, '45 - 9:00 a.m. we left San Diego for Pearl Harbor. The 12th we took an appendectomy aboard from an LCM. I don't know if anybody had ever seen this or not, but

here you are in the center of the Pacific and all at once there's a guy that needs an operation on another ship along side of you. He can't just get out and walk across and you can't carry him across. So, what do you do? You throw lines across, put a heavy rope and send him across on the carrier. It is surprising to see it done. I'm glad that I got to see it. We had a surgeon on our ship and he operated on the guy, and within two hours he reported over the PA system everything was "go". I thought that was something to write about.

January 14th, 2:00 p.m. - we arrived at Pearl Harbor. January 29th - we left Pearl Harbor, got on the USS Typhone. At that time I was in the 1st Divisional Anti-aircraft group. I was assigned bridge watch because I knew semaphore and blinker. I was Signal Bridge Operator on every ship I was on except the Merryweather (the first one) and the Oregon (last one). On the 29th, left Pearl Harbor on the USS Typhone to signal bridge watch and we got in some of the biggest swells that I've ever seen in the Pacific. Our ship was an APA, and yet we would go low enough that a DE aside of us, you could not see him when we were down. When he was down, he definitely couldn't see us. When he came up it looked like a little ship sitting on top of a sandbar. On February 1st we crossed the International Date Line. I don't have February 2nd. Bam! February 5th we pulled into the Marshall Islands and I was on watch as we came in. I had Signal Bridge Watch. I had Liberty and went

ashore on Perry Island. I collected some sea shells there. I think at its highest point it is only about 6 feet above sea level. The trees on that island were all about three feet tall, and they were all just shredded. You could not believe how our batteries had torn up that island. On February 12th we left the Marshall Islands. February 16th we pulled into Saipan. On March 14th loaded onto an LST-641. March 26th, left Saipan Harbor for Okinawa. April 2nd - arrived at Okinawa and we set outside there in the Islands. On the 5th we unloaded. April 21st - Ben Toban killed with a Daisy Cutter Bomb. May 8th, 0645 - Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Three Powers. Now we knew it on the night of the 7th because that's when the anti-aircraft guns out there in the harbor on the ships told us they were sending the V's up.

Mr. Misenhimer: That was when Germany surrendered, right? They did the same thing when Japan surrendered?

Mr. Clevenger: Well I hate to say that I don't remember. I wasn't on watch that night. It seems like we were on Saipan when that happened and I took a radio watch that night for Dougan. He was a guy that wanted to box and he went to a boxing match. He went to a boxing match that was with another outfit. I think I was on Saipan when that happened.

Mr. Misenhimer: What date did you just say there.

Mr. Clevenger: That was Germany on May 8th. Sorry. Germany unconditional

surrender to the Three Powers, and that was the night I was on radio watch for Dugan because he had gone to the other outfit to box.

Mr. Misenhimer: And that was on Okinawa?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes, Okinawa. January 23rd, this is going back. I joined the 1st PAAG and on June 23rd Okinawa was secured at 1300. That would be 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Sept 2nd - Japan surrendered. So that would have been the night of the 2nd when the harbor lit up. On Sept 16th I went into the 1st Marine Division. On Sept 30th we went to Tinson and on Oct 16th we went to Tom Chom, which is north of Tinson. April 23rd - boarded the USS Rambo for China. It was a 224 APA when I went into China. The reason why I'm saying this is because last year the Marine Corps was 224 years old. I wrote into The Leathernecks and told them that I thought this was quite a coincidence that I went into China on a 224 which ended my career, sort of, but it was never noted. Anyhow, June 30th - nine months to the date in China we boarded the Merchant Ship Deborgan. July 1st - loaded the ship. July 2nd - finished loading and were scheduled for Sing Tow. At Sing Tow we saw the fireworks that night. It was on the 4th of July. The ships were all decorated with their flags from one mast to the other. It was quite a sight. July 5th - Left for Yokohama, Japan. July 9th - arrived in Japan. July 10th - docked and had Liberty in the afternoon.

Mr. Misenhimer: This is in '45 now?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes. 1946. July 11th - at 1730 left for Uncle Sugar, which is the United States, and July 26th - crossed the International Date Line again. August 7th - went through the Panama Canal. August 14th - docked at Norfolk, VA. August 11th - convoyed down to Camp Legume at North Carolina. August 23rd - received Honorable Discharge from the Marine Corps. August 25th - arrived home to stay. And that's my diary.

Mr. Misenhimer: Interesting. Let's go back to your time in Okinawa. Anything else interesting happen there? You mentioned the daisy cutter, and you went down to deliver food and all. What were some other things that may have happened there?

Mr. Clevenger: When we first got there we were in foxholes. I was pretty fortunate to be back behind the lines. Yan Tan airfield was just to the north of us about 1,000 yards. The planes were taking off from there day and night. About every four hours there would be a squadron take off and another come in. If you were on radio watch you knew because you had one radio set on their frequency which we listened to. I'm sure Japan was doing the same thing. I had one extra set that I set on Tokyo Rose and whenever I got back it was still set on Tokyo Rose so I wasn't the only one listening to it. A lot of people thought that was bad, but Tokyo Rose played Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey music. The guys on the front lines wouldn't have had that. To us, and especially myself, I like good music.

Mr. Misenhimer: What did you think of Tokyo Rose? Did you think she was bad for us or good for us?

Mr. Clevenger: To me she was a morale builder. If she said your girl friend back home was going out and doing this, that and the other, I didn't have a girl friend back home. So it made me feel good that I didn't have a girl friend some place. As far as I was concerned, Tokyo Rose was it and the music, and of course we were coming into Okinawa. They thought that this was quite an operation. A lot of people may not realize. Every ship that left the States, no matter what islands they left in the Pacific, they were to head for Formosa. Well, three days out of Formosa everybody turned and headed for Okinawa. Tokyo Rose was broadcasting was reporting then that we were going to come off of an LST with the most men that we could bring across. She said that they were going to wipe us out. Then she changed her story three nights ahead of time. We went to commission not to go one place, but we'll get you there. Well of course she didn't know what or how to do it right at first to get out attention. Especially one night when Ishmal was with me. As I recall we had secured Naha and Silas. We had secured all of Okinawa, but they were still coming in and bombing us. At night they turned the search lights on and you could see the Betty's go across and back. A Betty is a two-engine bomber.

Mr. Misenhimer: What happened when Betty went over?

Mr. Clevenger: When our anti-aircraft opened up on the Betty you would go into the fox hole. You just didn't know where the shrapnel would be going and they were directly overhead. All at once I heard a sound that I hope I never hear again. It was a drowning voice that was real loud. I thought "what in the world was that?" I grabbed the carbine and started out of the fox hole. Ismal grabbed me and I told him to let me go. He said, "No, you don't want to go out." I said, "Hey, I don't want to be in this hole, so I'm going." He says, "You don't want to be outside and have something going on." So I'll never forget Ismal for that. Come to find out, it shot an engine out of the one side of the Betty and that engine took off full blast. That's why it sounded like the drone was coming where you were at. Well, the next day I went over to a little town by Yan Tan Airfield, and they called it China. I went up to this little town of China and we saw that plane about 500 yards, it was quite a distance, and that engine buried in the ground. It was a good thing that Ishmal kept me from going out so I wouldn't get hurt. Those were the conditions you learned to do if you were in combat. You don't just jump at anything. You hold off and see what goes on.

Mr. Misenhimer: What were some other things that happened like that?

Mr. Clevenger: Well one time before we even got set up Ishmal was building a fox

hole. Maybe five guys could sit in there comfortably. We were making fun of him. This was sometime before the 15th. So it was between the 5th and the 15th when Ismal started this. It was quite a thing. He put some boards across and put some bags on it. We sat there, and this Ashley said, “Well, I can’t stand to watch him. I’m going to help him.” The rest of us sat around and made jokes when we weren’t on radio watch. He said, “You guys will find out that this is worthwhile one of these days.” The 15th was when we got our first bomb run. The Betty’s were hitting us because they came into our area. As I said, we were just south of Yan Tan Airfield. The overrun of bombs came into our area. In other words, they weren’t purposely hitting us, they were just hitting Yan Tan. As far as I know they were just regular bombs, not Daisy Cutters. And Bam! When it was over with fifteen guys came out of that fox hole. The next day there was a lot of dirt moved and Ismal wasn’t moving it. We all got into the act. So again, if you’re in these – you learn. If somebody has been in this you want to pay attention to what he’s doing because he’s doing it for a reason. Ismal was one of my favorites to remember of being there because out of the outfit I think he was the only one. When we got aboard the LST on Saipan and we left the first morning afterwards, our Colonel Benner, comes up and he called a group meeting there at the hatch. He said, “You see these eagles?” He just took them in his hand and he went

over the rail and throws them off into the Pacific. And he says, “Now I’m Benner and you guys are whoever you are.” Now he says, “Clevenger, you come up and say to me, ‘Colonel Benner, what do we know.’” I said, “General Clevenger, it’s up to you.” But he says, “If you think you’re going to get me shot, you’re crazy. I’ve been in these before.” So I’m saying, as far as the enlisted men, very few of us had been. I myself had not been in combat. I know that Ellis hadn’t. He and I were real close. One night, right about sundown, a Sergeant was called over by the Captain and he wanted to know “Where’s my cigarette ration for the day?” At that time we were getting a carton of cigarettes on Friday night for the whole week. Of course I didn’t smoke, so about Wednesday or Thursday night I was giving my carton away to whoever needed it. This guy was doing the same thing. The Captain goes to the Sergeant and says, “Where’s my ration?” He says, “Well you don’t smoke so I didn’t get them for you.” He said, “Well, you always gave them to me before.” He said, “Sorry, I just didn’t get any. Instead of 121 I just got 120 cartons.” Well, the next morning he went down to the motor transport and found a jeep. He rode up to the 7th Regiment, which was the one that supplied the food to us. He went in and asked how many cartons of cigarettes he got. They went down and looked at the sheet and he said, “Well you got 121.” Of course right away that guy lied. So he walked over between the

Sergeant and this Captain he was talking to and he says, “If I don’t get my cigarettes before sundown, if we have a bomb attack tonight, you’ll not see morning.” Believe it or not but he had a carton of cigarettes before the night was over. It really wasn’t the carton of cigarettes, he got his issue. In other words, you’re in a combat situation, but you are not going to do anything to an individual as far as lying. When the guy tells you something, they definitely mean what they say.

Mr. Misenhimer: What was the Sergeant going to do with those cigarettes? Could you sell them?

Mr. Clevenger: Apparently he was going to sell them to one of the other guys who were smoking heavily. I always gave mine away. The thing is, if you don’t smoke, even in the K-rations you always had five Camels. Lucky Strikes were real common. Of course I don’t know what kind of cigarettes they had back then, but I do know those brands were pretty prevalent. They were wanting one kind or the other as a general rule. When we were on Saipan we listened to a radio that was from Guam. This was our own. He had LSMFA. But you will always know that Lucky Strikes Makes Fine Tobacco, but how could you get an “A”? He kept advertising this for two or three days and all at once he says, “Now I’ll tell you what it is.” “Lower Speeds Makes Fewer Accidents. That was on Guam. I’ll never forget that.

Mr. Misenhimer: That would be a good slogan for today wouldn't it?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes it would work for today. Of course a lot of young people today wouldn't know what LSMFT. But the lower speeds would be what we need today for fewer accidents.

Mr. Misenhimer: OK. What were some other things that happened there?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, outside of me hitchhiking, I can remember one day my Aunt wrote to me that her brother-in-law was there, which was my Uncle's brother. A guy by the name of Dale Army, and he said he's in such and such an outfit. Well, being in communications, and we had a switchboard inside of our van there with the radio, I had to operate as a BD96. In other words, it had 96 stations on it, but we didn't use all of them. Anyhow, I went and started calling around to where Dale's outfit would be. Of course I got the message center on it, which we were not message center on the switchboard, and they said I'd have to go down by the traffic circle. So the next day I went down to the traffic circle and called, and got hold of his outfit, and I talked to him. He wanted to know where I was at. He couldn't understand how I could talk to him. He thought maybe I was at Pearl Harbor. I said, "Well, communications are good, but there's no way you can talk to Pearl

Harbor from Okinawa.” I said, “I’m here on the island with you.”

I said, “Where are you at?” He said, “Well, just a minute.” He asked a guy on motor transport and he said, “Well I’m eight miles south of Na Ha.” I said, “Are you standing in water?” and he said, “Well, no.” I said, “Well you’re not eight miles south because it’s five miles to the end of the island.” So, Bam! The next day I went down and asked him where the traffic circle was that particular day and he didn’t know. So I went down and looked him up. It was out on State Road 13. I walked into his outfit and there he was and a guy from Rochester was there too. A guy I knew when I was a lot younger. We left Rochester to go to my different schools, but anyhow Paul Miller. And I walked in there and saw Paul Miller, and Dale Army, and got to talk to them. Before I left they said “we’ve got to go after a load of bread, would you like to ride with us?” I said, “How long?” “Half hour.” Believe it or not, they went out and got a jeep with a trailer and we went through the traffic circle on the other side, and he he had been going through it every day and did not that it was the traffic circle on Okinawa. That was near Kadina Airfield. I was fortunate that I was ambitious enough to go and look around. Aneno had a CB buddy and I can’t tell you the name of the CB outfit. I looked it up and went in there and got him to learn where we were, and he came in and saw Aneno. Aneno was about 6’2" guy in our outfit. He weighed about 190

pounds and he had done professional boxing. He was teaching our guys how to box. Aneno was a guy to really know because he knew how to handle himself. He was an interesting guy, but not combat-wise. I went to see Colonel Benner and asked him for permission to leave. He said, "Don't miss your radio watch or you'll not go again." I never missed a radio watch and he gave me a permanent pass. I've got that pass in here some place. When I was aboard ship I was always on communications and had the opportunity to have early chow as well as late chow. The Navy thought quite a bit of us guys that would come up and help operate the signal bridge with them. Going from Pearl to Saipan we had a GQ one day that was in a convoy of nine. In the center of the convoy was a tanker. All at once GQ sounded. Well, just before GQ had sounded I saw a break in the clouds and a B-29 go overhead and he was headed State-side. He was headed in the other direction. But we sounded GQ – everybody in the fleet. All nine of us. Our Captain came out of his quarters and said, "What's going on? What's going on?" The signal they give you, we were supposed to have a periscope on the starboard side. Well, I had been looking because I knew the signal and I had not seen a periscope. He said, "Have you seen it Charlie?" I said, "No I haven't." He said, "Has anybody else reported it?" I said, "No. I haven't seen it." We were the lead on the port side of the line, and

he says, "I wonder what's going on." I said, "I don't know. If nothing else, get on the radio and see if that 29 can do us any help." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well a 29 just went across." He said, "Well we're going to send GQ their cancel order." He says, "That tanker over there, if you're aboard a tanker, you're on nerves." He went and signed GQ because he just didn't know what that was. So that was an incident that nothing happened. If you want to know other than combat, well we went into Okinawa and I don't know what day, but this was just before April 1st. We were coming into the tornado or typhoon. We had a full moon behind us and this was two o'clock in the morning and I was on signal watch. I looked up ahead and at two o'clock in the morning I saw a rainbow. If you've never seen it at night, it's quite a sight. You could make out five different colors in that rainbow at two o'clock, and that was when the typhoon was coming in. Well, before it got to us we got into the swells, and on a LST by the gyroscope it can take a 45 degree list and we were taking a 47 degree list. Now if you understand that, a flat-bottom boat, and I call it a boat because in the Marine Corps you're taught to call them a ship because it cannot be lifted aboard another one. So a LST is considered as being un-liftable. I don't know how they could because it is large. But anyhow, it was a flat bottom and we were taking 47 degrees, and I know we rolled over one time. I looked

out and the only thing you could see was a wall of water and as high as I could see and before it could hit us we rolled back over the other way. That was the worst night that I had at sea. I thought we were going to be swamped, but no water actually came aboard. Our Captain had been the Captain of a ship of one type or another for 47 years. Well, he hadn't been a Captain that long probably. He was sick that night and couldn't handle the controls of the BAM.

Mr. Misenhimer: I understand the other Navy people call the LST, Large Slow Target?

Mr. Clevenger: Could be. We took that 641 into Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer: Large Slow Target, eh?

Mr. Clevenger: Right. We sat off shore for a few nights before going into Okinawa. The first night we were there, they came in, BAM! The Japanese came in with the fighter planes and we were on this island this side of Okinawa. The Navy boys came through and locked us in our compartments. They didn't catch us that way again. I'll take my chances up on top side underneath a jeep, a recon, anything, but there in that hold and there's only eight of us in there and there's a 6 x 12 wall you are looking at. When you hear the pom pon going off, the 40 mm above, and you can't see anything, they don't catch you the second time. When you hear GQ you go top side and that was about four o'clock in the morning when they caught us the first time. They never caught any of us guys from then on. We

went topside. Aboard ship I was fortunate because I could take semaphore and blinker. The Navy guys put us underneath their wing and I went down at two o'clock in the morning and had donuts. Even helped make them.

Mr. Misenhimer: What kind of equipment did you have on the LST besides your men? You had your equipment, and –

Mr. Clevenger: We had all of the radio equipment and all o the radar. We did not have an anti-aircraft battery with us. It was our purpose to confirm all bogies. As plain as to say that was a bogie and to us a bogie was the enemy. Of course it was just an airplane flying – Aboard ship one time I heard a guy say that their radar man had picked up a LST. I can't remember what ship it was. It was going 200 miles an hour and landed on Okinawa. Well, of course, we all know that a LST, if it does nine knots that is about the maximum for it. But at 200 miles an hour he misread his screen and it was an airplane instead of a ship. Again, those little mistakes can be made and the guy taking the reading knows that its not it. The guy was excited and he was doing his best, but he was reporting what he was seeing.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you left Okinawa, where did you go?

Mr. Clevenger: We went to China.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you take your radar with you at this point, or what?

Mr. Clevenger:

No, at that time they transferred me into the 1st Marine Division before I went there. I think it was about a week before we left for there, about the 16th, so it would have been two weeks before we went there. Going into there a lot of people thought it was going to be a cream cake. But rifle that happened more on there. Going into the Yellow Sea there were a thousand land mines or water mines that were loose that had lost their horn that the Japanese had put there. We had a convoy of 37 ships. Now if you can imagine that. We were the second one on the starboard side back and the DE was sweeping across in front of us trying to blow them up before we got to hem. If they didn't, they would sit there cross-wise and the complete convoy would have to do an oblique angle and then straight away again. If it was on our side our gunners and some guys with some M-1's would shoot at them no matter if they were out there 500 yards. They would still shoot at them. But the 20 mm was nothing to doing it. If you didn't get them then the guys on the ship behind us, they would be shooting at it. Eventually you could look off in the distance and you'd see a geyser go and you would know that we had went by and one DE set there and he got it. Then he would come up and begin to patrol in front of us. I think we had four DE's in front of us. To me, after I got transferred to Ton Shan, and maybe this isn't interesting to you, but I was put aboard and they needed communications between Ton Shan and

Shing La Tow, which is 90 miles. Because of that 90 miles it took all day from every small town like Delong or Tiosa, or any little town. I've got a list here. There are around eleven towns between there, and every town that you stop at you would drop off communications. I never saw anybody get off the train because everybody was dressed in black. It was hard to know who was getting off and who got on. If a bridge was blown up in front of us I was to radio ahead, tell them what bridge it was, and then they would send a train from the north down to us. If we were coming from the North, they would send one from the south to meet us and then the people would trade trains across. In most cases there was still enough of the bridge to walk across. I've got pictures of a train engine sitting on about a 30 degree angle where they had blown it and of course they couldn't save it, but it was sitting on the track. We had a Captain come over one time that had just gotten out of officers school. We had 16 guards on there with M-1's, and of course me with mine. At that time I was fortunate enough that we put a radio jeep on. Right at first we had a hand generator, a TBX. I usually took another radio operator with me. I would take a telephone man and he would operate the generator. This Captain says, "Now you guys in the coach car, you'll leave your rifle there because we're here on a peaceful mission." And he says, "You just disperse yourself among the train. And I'll see you at the next

town.” Well, of course, me being an old salt, I said, “Hey, Captain, you can’t do that.” Well of course the Captain didn’t enjoy that and because I was still a private, he said he would get even with me. I said he couldn’t do that because we would get shot between here and before we get to Shing La Tow. He says, “No, we’re on a peaceful mission, and nobody carries a rifle.” And he says, “I’m going to talk to you.” I said, “Well that flat car there is mine,” and I had a jeep at that time. “If you’ve got a message to send you get on the flat car and you give it to me, otherwise I don’t want you on that flat car.” Now that seems strange, but I only answered to communications officers. A lot of people don’t understand that. I was not being disobedient, but if he had a message I was at his disposal. He went on two or three towns, and between the next two towns there was quite a curve we took and I knew that there wasn’t hardly a time that I didn’t get shot at on the curves. So I invited the Captain to ride in my jeep on the flat car to the next station. Well, I’m not a brave guy, but I was trying to prove a point because we took two shells inside the canvas. When I looked across the jeep that Captain was on the deck with me. I said, “What’s going on?” He said, “I’m just following you.” When we got to the next station every man got his M-1 rifle back. From then on there were no problems.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now, who was doing the shooting?

Mr. Clevenger:

The Communists. No body had told us that. At that time we were leaving China. We were in a Civil War when they sent us in there. As far as I knew the only thing we were going to do was to take a ship back. As far as we knew, there was nothing else to do. Of course we might get some firing from the Japs or something, but we had been doing that. No problem with that. The 1st Marine Division could do that. All at once the Communists were doing their thing against the Nationalists. Almost every bridge had a Marine or a small detachment. You ran an outpost there so they couldn't blow the bridges up. I was at one and I know it was the second one south of Ton Chan. Ton Chon means mountain of sugar. If you will recall in 1980 Ton Chon was destroyed by an earthquake and 80,000 people were destroyed at that time. The mountain of sugar is nothing but slag from the mines that were underneath of Ton Chon. I've got pictures of being up on top of that. The mountain is about 600 feet high and the only thing I can see is that it just caved in on all of the tunnels that had to be in there. Anyhow, I got in a fire in this outpost. A blanket was on fire and was thrown on me. I threw it off. They had to take me to Kinson. From there they sent an engine down from Kinson and they took me up to the hospital in Kinson. I was there and then I was supposed to go State-side. The Doctor says, "I'll be making arrangements to get you State-side. We'll be flying you out of here." Well, of

course, the guy that threw the saturated blanket on me, he went back to the camp and told them that. The next morning when I went down to see the Doctor, he says, "Well, you are a 776 operator." I said, "Yea." He said, "As long as you can operate a radio I can't send you." So I got back to my outfit. When I got back to it all of my gear had been given out. I had quite a time getting all my gear back. I never believed this could happen but it did.

Mr. Misenhimer: Who threw the blanket on you and why?

Mr. Clevenger: We were at this outpost and it was at night. I mean outpost, there were no lights, so we had an old fashion gasoline lantern. One that you would pump up. They were filling up this gasoline lantern and a match was struck and the gas can caught fire. Well, we told him just to leave it burn because we had all cooked chow over an open can. That's nothing new. I'm sure you would have done the same thing. We've even heated water to take our bath in out of a helmet. People may not think so, but you can do it. Anyhow, there were around 14 of us guys standing around. I was standing on the other side of the tent, and we all hollered at him to leave it alone and he was scared. He had to put it out, so he went and got a blanket and put it over the gas can. He did it with such force that he upset the can. It spilled gasoline all over the blanket so he was carrying the blanket out and everybody was to get out. I was behind him. It just got too hot and he flipped it back. It went on me and then I

flipped it off. I got the whole side of my face burned, my ear, and that's on record. I thought I would get State-side, but I had to go back. I was one of the first ones in China that got to operate a base station with the speaker instead of a headset because I couldn't put the headset on. I had a purple ear.

Mr. Misenhimer: What month was this and what year?

Mr. Clevenger: That would have been just before the New Year of '46. I spent Christmas in Kenson.

Mr. Misenhimer: Christmas of '45?

Mr. Clevenger. Yes. Another interesting thing. Maybe I've told a lot of people, but to me it was interesting. We put, notice the "we," the Americans put notices on the bulletin boards and newspaper and on the Chinese radio that we were going to do right hand drive at the first of the year. Well, don't get me wrong, but when you go to the right hand and you've got people in the outlying communities, they don't know what a radio is. They don't know what a PX is or a drug store. So if you live in one of these villages, there are no trains. That's the reason why the train stopped for as long as it did because there were villages around that would come to the train. Well, we had rickshaws that were going the wrong direction. On January 1st you couldn't believe the chatter that was going on. It was a good thing we couldn't understand Chinese too well. I know we weren't giving the King's English, but that was very interesting

to change. In a way I'm glad I was in Kenson no matter the situation. Of course I was in the hospital on the second floor, and to look down on the streets and see the confusion, I was just thankful at that time that I was in the hospital.

Mr. Misenhimer: So China had been driving on the left hand side before?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes. They were English dominated you know.

Mr. Misenhimer: They are right hand now?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, I don't know. I haven't been back to China since I left, but when I left everybody was on the right side. But you've got people in these villages that never knew what a school was. So when you put on a bulletin board, what do you want to call it? The big boards. These people, if they have a newspaper, they couldn't read it anyhow. They didn't have radios. So even if you put it on the radio, these villages didn't have radios. A village would be 16 families and they lived in. Sixteen families for the purpose they could protect each other. If you went out on your own on a little two acre plot, or whatever you were fortunate enough to own, to farm, boys of 14-18 years of age would come in and steal you blind. So you formed villages and every so many miles would be another village and it had 16-18 families in that village. That's what you did. You protected your holdings there.

Mr. Misenhimer: You were sent to China to bring the Japanese troops back? Did you bring quite a few back?

Mr. Clevenger: From Sing Tow was the main port that they got to, but we took them there at Kinsen. Lawrence Norris was in one of the Honor Guards there at Kinsen that saw them sign the surrender papers in Kinsen. At that time they had moved me up to Ton Shon so I didn't get to see that, but I saw Japanese on trains and they were heading down to Tan Kou. That's where they shipped them out from our area. In Sing Tow they shipped them out from there. It was a large port there. I don't know of other ports, but I do know those two ports that I was familiar with.

Mr. Misenhimer: How long did it take to get all the Japanese out of China?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, I would say we had them out of there within two months. Why we were still in there, what were they saying? The Communists finally chased us out of there in '48. To me, and I hate to say it this way, but the original 1st Marine Division wouldn't have permitted the Communists to take over. Because that group that we went in there with, and when we got our replacements all at once, as an illustration, to buy anything, a ring. You go in and say, "Well, \$4.00." They say, "No, \$5.00." And you turn and walk out. Well you got it for \$4.00. After the new recruits came in all at once, all at once that ring went for \$35.00. So with the new recruits coming in, they didn't believe what the prices were when we first went in. I do not have a great admiration for Wal Mart because of their Chinese association because I have seen kids in

second story buildings working under conditions that are completely deplorable. Yet they come over here selling shoes and they want \$120.00 for them, or more, and you know that they were only paid five or six cents an hour over there to do it. And those were just some of the things that I saw. I know there were more than that. Normally I was on the outpost at Ton Shon.

Mr. Misenhimer: So after you got out of the hospital in '46, how were things going by then?

Mr. Clevenger: Well, I didn't see them in my area. I'm not sure over in the Burma area.

Mr. Misenhimer: So what were you doing then at that point? The 1st Marine Division? What did they do at that point?

Mr. Clevenger: As far as I know, the only thing we were trying to do is keep the railroads open to keep the Communists from blowing them up so we could get communications going. If you didn't have communications by the railroads, in other words, the Japs, I hate to put it this way, but the Japs were 20 years ahead of us when we got there. That train had been on schedule, whatever train, had been on schedule for 20 years and he says, "How's that?" Well, let's say you in Delong or some small town, Tiosa. Half way between there and your next town the people in that town are responsible to keep the track open. If you don't keep it open and something happens to the train the next day, the Japs would come in and kill the first 10

men they saw. It wasn't that they would pick out the strongest or the weakest. They came in and picked out the first ten. All at once, you keep the road open. So for 20 years, and then we get there and you are the Americans. I don't think we kept a schedule that was a schedule. We did our best and I know I read an article a while back where a guy said that he got drunk and took an M-1 into the cab of an engine and told the guy to go and he got him out ten miles. Well I don't believe that because we were coming in from an outpost and I and Cal, and that the guy from southern Indiana. Cal was fortunate enough that he could understand a little bit of Chinese. I said, "Hey instead of us sitting here, and being in an outpost, let's get home." Which was Ton Shon. "Let's go there." He says, "How's that?" I said, "Well, get in that cab and force that guy to do it." Well, he went up into the cab of the engine and I heard him talking and again, their Chinese I don't understand, but all at once I heard the bullet go home from that carbine of Cal's and I thought, "Oh." I heard the Chinese say something and I heard Cal laugh. He came out and I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well, I threatened him and I sent that bullet home and you might as well shoot me here as I'm going to get killed from here to the next town anyhow, so it will just keep me from that that far." So we went back and slept in the coach car the same as we normally do. Those guys were completely scared of the Communists and unless

you're there and see how that government controls people it sure isn't America I'll tell you. We are a very fortunate country.

Mr. Misenhimer: How long were you in China then?

Mr. Clevenger: I was there ten months, to the day.

Mr. Misenhimer: When did you finally leave?

Mr. Clevenger: I left on June 30th of '46.

Mr. Misenhimer: June of '46 when you came back to the U.S. then?

Mr. Clevenger: It took 47 days to get me back. We got on the Deborgan F, which was a merchant marine ship, and the best they could do is again, the nine knots. We went up around Sing Tow harbor. We went in there and fueled up. We did not get to go ashore, just fueled up from the bay. We took off. Well I was fortunate enough to know a sailor on there and he was an engineer sailor. He took me down into the bowels of the ship. If a person has never been there, it is a very interesting thing. You've got the cylinders down there and you are walking around in the crank case of a car. And you don't realize it. The bearings are oiled by a line that comes in there and feeds oil into that line. A guy will stand on a platform between this and this thing is at least 10 feet in diameter, and it must have a 40 foot radius. He timed that thing and when it came around he slapped the bottom of that cylinder, which is the cap. If the oil is

slimy he's got enough, but if it's crusted. He has to get more oil on it because it's starting to burn. Then you go back along the shaft and when you talk about torque, the shaft in this thing, well you're in the bottom of a nine foot hole and three feet of it is the shaft and you're walking along the side of that. You know that you're at least 40 feet under water and you get back there and you see the screw and you see these bearings. You can see water coming in. Don't get me wrong, but thank goodness luck was with me because when you see this water coming in, but the water keeps the bearings cool. There were two bearings in there that were taking more water than they should have. He said for us to make it to the States we've got to get these repaired. When you look up that shaft and you can see the torque on this, every time we hit a wave the shaft would keep turning at the beginning, but at the end it wasn't turning, and then all at once it would turn real fast. We got to go into Yokohama and for two days they replaced those bearings. For eight days out of there we had fog. The fog was day and night. Again I was fortunate in that I was on signal watch and about 15 feet above you head is the fog horn, and about every three minutes the fog horn blew. That's day and night, every three minutes. So when you got to the end, I was fortunate that I only got a four hour watch a day. But you were flag when that four hours was off and you could get away from that fog horn. I had an interesting experience. There's none of them

that rate a citation or anything. I was in places at the right time to get to this and see a lot of it. Lucky was an ex-Navy man that had been discharged. When we had that fifty-fifty in Yokohama, 50 one day and 50 the next. He was there that one day when we got off. We went in and went to a dance hall just to have something to do because I didn't dance. Lucky was tap dancer as well as he had been an amateur. Well he had been in the Golden Gloves. He was just a little guy. I don't suppose 5'2". How he made the Navy is beyond me. Anyhow, he had his khaki on. Well of course my khaki, when I was in the hospital I was issued and I was not there to receive it so my legs were not long enough to fit the trousers so I had to put cuffs on them. Well, the Provost Marshall there in Japan says, "No cuffs." Well, our gunnery warrant officer gave me permission to go in with cuffs. Of course the MP there, he comes up and he says, "Hey, mate."

Mr. Misenhimer: Now you said when you went there, the MP told you about your cuffs?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes, that I had to fold the cuffs down. So, nothing else but you sit there at this table and you roll the cuffs down. Of course there were three or four merchant marines sitting around our table, plus our crew that was there. I was bringing back the 3rd and 4th radio gear. I was going to disband it on Camp Legume, North Carolina, and so

this Sergeant asked me to be with him to bring the radio gear back. But anyhow, he said “roll down your cuffs.” The Sergeant tried to explain to him why I had cuffs. He started walking away. Pretty soon he came back and he said, “Your commanding officer said you could have cuffs?” I said, “yes.” He said, “Well what rank is he?” I said, “Warrant Officer.” He said, “Our’s is a Major and he says no cuffs.” So consequently I rolled the cuffs down. We’re sitting there, and don’t get me wrong, what fun you have. Lucky was out there dancing with a Japanese gal, and he came back and sat down with us. It was hot. It was in July and it was good and warm, and my sergeant said, “Hey, Lucky, it’s awfully warm out there.” And he says, “Yea.” He was sweating up a storm. He had two or three napkins wiping his brow and he says, “Why don’t you roll your cuffs up a little.” Don’t get me wrong, this was leading to something else. But it did. He says, “Hey—“ Course he was not in on this first conversation. He was out there dancing. So he rolled up his khaki outfit, he rolled his trouser legs up to the calves of his legs. Well, immediately the MP’s knew that something was up. All at once he was out there dancing again and the Sergeant calls the MP over and says, “Hey, that guy out there has cuffs.” “You made my buddy roll his cuffs down. What goes on here? You got partiality?” He says, “Well, I’ll get him.” He came back over and then Lucky sat at our table after he got through with the next dance.

The MP comes over and taps him down on the shoulder, and says, “Hey, mate. No cuffs.” Lucky looked up at him and says, “Hey, I’m not in the service. I got my discharge papers here in my pocket.” He reached in his pocket and come out and showed his duplicate, a little plastic card we had back then, and he showed that to him. He said, “But you’re dressed in a service uniform.” Lucky said, “Well, I was in the Navy, but I’m discharged from it. I’m just wearing the clothes I had then.” Well, my commander says, “No cuffs.” Lucky turned around and says, “bull shit.” Well of course the MP starts to walk away and he said, “What did you say?” Lucky says, “Well, I think I said bullshit.” Well, there was quite a brawl happening. I and Washington went out the back door and you’d be surprised how many MP’s were heading that way. We didn’t know a thing that was going on and we went back to the ship. Lucky did get back, but he was pretty well bruised. One of those merchant marine guys was a colored guy. Aboard ship we didn’t know this. Along the side of the bulkhead he would take the side of his hand and hit the bulkhead. Before we got out of the door, we saw him drop three guys just by hitting them underneath the rib cage and he dropped three guys. Of course what he had done was karate. Well we knew karate, we didn’t know what it’s called now.

Mr. Misenhimer: Ju-jit-su.”

Mr. Clevenger: Yes. He had just dropped them by that blow and that guy, the rest of the way home, we were 47 days till we hit the States in Norfolk, Virginia. We went down and went through the Panama Canal and docked in Norfolk, Virginia. I think I got down there on the 20th and the 23rd I got discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you get any ribbons, or medals, or anything?

Mr. Clevenger: No. Of course they sent me these, but they are just regular merit ribbons. I got two stars because when I went overseas in combat conditions and I was on Okinawa and because I was in actual combat. We only had one start down there at St. Louis, MO. I went back to the China Marines Association. I'm a lifetime member. Through them I got some other ribbons. A while back through the Leatherneck, it said there was a chance to get an Okinawa ribbon. I sent and got it and I think it cost me \$35.00, or something like that to get that one.

Mr. Misenhimer: One of these is the Asiatic Pacific Campaign ribbon and the other one is the Victory World War II ribbon. And the Okinawa one there.

Mr. Clevenger: That's the China. That was issued in St. Louis. Those were St. Louis and these were issued through the China Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer: You didn't get these when you first got out?

Mr. Clevenger: No, we sent for them from the VA board downtown here.

Mr. Misenhimer: Right.

Mr. Clevenger: I've got a boy that doesn't care too much to know what I did. He'll listen to somebody who has been in Viet Nam and tell me what kind of a war they were into, but somehow or another he just doesn't think I was, and really I wasn't. I was very fortunate to be back behind the lines. Other than the bombing, I was practically in no danger. Of course, aboard ship as far as I'm concerned when you're aboard ship you are in danger at all times because of the torpedoes. Definitely going into China with those thousand mines floating out there and of course I've got that recorded in that book over there.

Mr. Misenhimer: The typhoon.

Mr. Clevenger: These things are just what people – well, you weren't in combat and no, nobody was getting me in their sights that I know of. One day walking off the traffic circle, there were no jeeps and I was walking. No traffic, no units there. I was along side of a stream. I looked over and there's nothing but caves over there and the adjoining cliff. And here I had a K-bar with me. That was the last time I went out without my carbine. From then on the carbine and I were inseparable. I wasn't going to take any chances walking that somebody would shoot at me from a cave. But, again, that's not being heroic, that's just being – hey, that's what you're out there for. Just to kill or be killed. Wake up to the fact. This is it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you stay in the reserves or anything when you got out?

Mr. Clevenger: No. I made up my mind that I didn't want any more service, and yet it's like the slogan says, "Once a Marine, always a Marine." I do have – well belong to the China Marine Assoc, and of course I've got a Marine hat that says, "Once a Marine, always a Marine."

Mr. Misenhimer: I see a Marine flag over there.

Mr. Clevenger: Yes, and of course at the Cina Marine conventions – we've got two grandsons we are raising. All at once we go to a supper at the China Marines and they had these flags on each table and all the women there think the boys should have these. I've got six or seven sets that haven't been opened. I think quite a little bit of the American flag. Of course I've got a book over there telling you how to display it. Our first night in China, they sent us from Tin Ko up to Tinsin. Our orders were only to go to Tin Ko. They said, "They've been waiting up there three days." This was supposed to be a secret operation, but this Chinese officer that met our officer, and I don't know who he is because I just joined the outfit and I happened to be his radio operator. I was standing beside of him. And he says, "They've been waiting up there three days for you." You would not believe the reception we received. We went on up there and when we got up there the streets were just loaded. They met us with Japanese transport trucks. Well we got in them and if you don't know what I'm talking about, they were built so they are

coal fired. So here it was, a rainy night, we'd just come out of the South Pacific and we're cold. They sent us up there and we don't have any food with us. We don't have any winter gear and it's 40 degrees. So all at once in the front of this bed of the truck I look up there and there's a stove. Hey, that's pretty convenient that they do this. Well, I tried working myself up there to get to the stove, which I didn't because there's too many others in our group that was in the same coldness. Come to find out that was doing the power of the gas that comes off the coal that runs the engine. We were eight miles out to the race track that we want. To go that eight miles I would say it took us 3 ½ to 4 hours to go that eight miles. You could not believe the people that were hanging on the side of the trucks, coming up shaking our hands, saying "Ding ho." Ding ho was a favorite word. Everybody knew Ding ho. Course we stayed the first night at the race track. The next morning they said we need somebody down at the station in case the food does come to us. Well, Cal and I were down there with a new radio that we had never seen before called a 6-10. It was the first, I'm going to say crystal, it was the first crystal set that we had run across. Well we went down there. We went up into the conning tower of the station because when we got to reading on it, it said 5 miles maximum limit. Well the race track was 8 miles away. We were down there three days and nobody came down to check on us. After the first night

that we were down there, which would be our second night in there, there were two flags hanging down from a walk way up over the railroad tracks. One of them was the Communist flag and the other was the Nationalist flag. Well that first night that Cal and I were there, which was the 2nd, on the morning those flags were not there any more. One of them was there. This is the flag that was hanging down.

Mr. Misenhimer: That is the Nationalist flag?

Mr. Clevenger: Yes, the Nationalist flag. And it was hanging over the Tinsin railroad. Cal got the Communist because he thought he wanted to keep something that would be going out of China that would be more of a keepsake because it would be gone. Well, it didn't work that way. After he got home, course he's a minister down at Washington, IN, at a church down there. We talked about four years ago and come to find out his Dad, after about three years, found out it was a Communist flag and burned it. So, I've got the only flag that flew down from the railroad station that night.

Mr. Misenhimer: Quite a souvenir.

Mr. Clevenger: Well, it is for me. Of course I will fly it because it is a Nationalist flag. I wouldn't fly it if it was a Communist flag. I wouldn't burn it. I feel like that anybody that fights for their flag, that flag should not be burned. I don't care if it is a Jap flag. I would not burn a Jap flag. Doesn't mean that I would fly it, but I would not burn it.

There's too many men that died for that.

Mr. Misenhimer: To dishonor it.

Mr. Clevenger: Right, and I won't do that.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you got home, did you see much change in the country here in the U.S.

Mr. Clevenger: Well, no because it had only been two and a half years. We were just getting through the war. Dad had a milk route. I began to deliver his milk route because the place that I was going to go back to work, it already had the guys that they let out first that they had to hire back first. They can't hire more than it takes to run the outfit. I had to fish around and get a job on my own and of course, being a veteran, there's a lot of us. And so where are a lot of us veterans going to work at? Now then you would not have as much trouble saying I'm a veteran because a lot of us are dead. And you wouldn't have too much trouble. As of then, there were gobs of us and that's all the way from the European theater to the Asiatic. It's just one of those things and you just fall in and you start making your own living and you do. We had a factory, Sealed Power, that came in here and I was fortunate to get on an electrical gang that was building it and from it they hired me from there because I knew where some of the electrical wires were. I was not an electrician. I was only a helper. But that was enough to get me started.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Clevenger: No, I'm the one and only.

Mr. Misenhimer: An only child, OK.

Mr. Clevenger: Since you mentioned that, all at once all of our batteries, the Navy, everything broke lose. Our Colonel came running up there. I was on radio watch at this time. He said, "What in the world is going on?" I and the Lieutenant that was on duty had summarized and he says, "Get in that control right now." I hit all the radios and he went on and says, "I want every man, every officer out there to check every rifle, gun and anything that can fire and I want a report the first thing in the morning on who fired what." And you'll never believe it. The next morning the report came and there was nobody in all those anti-aircraft batteries, not a one. And not a one – and I was on radio watch. I took my rifle in to the tent to get it checked on. I was told walking down there, "Hey. If you fired it, there's one over here in this tent that you can use to take in." A 90mm had gone straight up, came down and killed nine men and that was the last day of the war. And what a loss we had there because our Colonel definitely knew what was going on. The next day my Colonel called me in the tent. By that time we had a tent set up for him. He says, "I understand you were riding with the 24th Army yesterday." I said, I don't know. I was out hitchhiking. You gave me a permanent pass." He said, "I just got a call from a

Lieutenant and he said one way or another he found a wallet with your name in it.” I don’t have my wallet with me. He said, “You have to go down” and this is at the traffic circle, “and go west and there’s a high cliff. These guys are at the most beautiful place.” I went down there the next day then and got my wallet. But that’s when the Colonel found out that I had went down to the front lines. He says, “Hey, how did you manage to get by because you don’t have a red square on your trousers?” The guy reading the orders just didn’t read all of the orders. I said, “I had USMC on the jacket and I didn’t cover it up.” He said, “I don’t want that to happen again.” He’s the kind of guy you don’t want to push too far. He did get to Colonel for nothing.

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