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***Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas***

***Interview with James Robert Green
763rd Tank Battalion***

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This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 28th of September, 2002. I am interviewing Mr. Robert Green. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mr. Metzler: Mr. Green, let me start out by thanking you for spending the time to share with us your experiences during the Pacific War. Please give us your full name, where you were born, the name of your parents, some specifics of your family history, and then we'll just take it from there.

Mr. Green: My full name is James Robert Green, I've always gone by Bob, except in the army, first name, middle initial, James R., a lot of the army people call me Jim or James. At home I was always Bob. I was born on the ranch of my parents near Albany, Texas, the county seat of Schackelford. I still live on the ranch where I was born, November 10, 1924. I was the youngest of four children that my parents had. We were raised on the ranch. Due to the isolation, it was difficult for us to attend school. My mother was a school teacher previously, before she was married, and she tried to home-schooling with my two older brothers. Then later on my father acquired some ranch land south of Albany. The ranch we lived on was east of Albany. He decided to get a house in Albany because it would be between the two ranches, so we moved to Albany during the school period, and we'd go to school in Albany and go to the ranch anytime we could. We're rather be at the ranch than in town. When my two older brothers were old enough to go to high school, they were sent to a school in Roswell, New Mexico, called New Mexico Military Institute. They started out there in 1936, and then in 1939 I started out there. I was 13 years of age and started as a freshman, and I went there for four years. It was a Cavalry ROTC school. There were four troops of cavalry there at one time. The Army owned the horses and kept a cadre of regular army people to care for the horses. Lots of ranch boys went to school there. Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Texas. Texas had the most students when I was there, California was second. It was a very good high school. That was during the end of the Depression, and during the '30s that school had been able to get really good teachers, a lot of them from the northeast. Looking back, I think their high school at that time was really good.

The Cavalry ROTC with the horses was fun for us ranch boys. We could ride. The poor kids from the cities had a lot of trouble. We played polo and did all sorts of things. If you were really good at riding horses, they let you ride what they called "remounts," and you got out of a lot of drill and things by riding these young horses. The old horses were kind of funny. They knew the drill better than the kids riding them. The Cavalry drill had come down through all the years, and from Western movies we'd seen, the old commands that were given by arm signals which still carried over some to the military later on. And the vocal commands. It was pretty adventurous for the kids.

Mr. Metzler: When did you graduate?

Mr. Green: I finished three years of high school and then had junior college for two years. I started junior college the fall of '42. Pearl Harbor was '41.

Mr. Metzler: How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Green: We were playing touch football on Sunday, which we usually did, we'd always get up a touch football game. It's funny, I guess everybody remembers where they were and what they were doing. We were playing touch football and somebody came running out of the barracks and said "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." We kind of knew where Pearl Harbor was, but it wasn't in just common everyday usage. As a group . . .

Mr. Metzler: You must have been about 17 then.

Mr. Green: Yes. I would have been. There were a lot of military brass at the school, particularly navy, we had lots of Navy kids. We of course were very interested, but we were completely ignorant as to the ability of the Japanese to start a war with us. I can remember thinking, well, this won't take long. In two weeks we'll have those little suckers taken care of. We were completely unaware.

In our class, we all signed up for the Army, but they let us complete that year. That would have been in spring of '43 that I entered. We had two weeks off after school to go home and then we had to report back to Fort Bliss. We were still in the Horse Cavalry, that's what we signed up for. They sent us to Fort Riley, Kansas, which was the big Cavalry, CRTC they called it, Calvary Replacement Training Center. We went on the train from El Paso up through New Mexico and across. They dumped us off up there in the middle of the night at this little old depot. We sat on our duffle bags until daylight, and a truck picked us up and took us to Fort Riley. The old Army post was these old native rock buildings and stables, and Custer had been there in the Indian wars. But, they'd built this brand new, sprawling bunch of buildings and stables beyond the hill where the old post was, and they called it Republican Flats, for the Republican River which ran right along there. It was quite a big place. It was near Junction City, the Army town close to Fort Riley.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you in training there?

Mr. Green: We had basic training. Formerly, the years up until the year before we left NMMI, if you finished junior college you'd have four years of ROTC training and you were commissioned in the reserves as a second lieutenant. Since they took us after the first year, we went ahead and went through 17 weeks of basic training. About half way through basic training they finally decided the horse might be obsolete for the modern war and, I'll never forget how distraught those old officers were, the old Cavalry officers. They just were grief stricken. But, they switched us right over to what they called mechanized cavalry, which was jeeps and scout cars. We'd run up and down those section line roads in Kansas. They were lined with bodarc trees, and we'd pick

those old big bodarc apples, Osage oranges, they called them. Felt like a soft ball. Kept some old boy looking the other way, you'd knock him out with one of those bodarc apples.

They had about five or six P39s based in a little airfield there, and they were used in training. They had a canister of tear gas they carried, they'd catch us strung out on a road and come roaring down the road spraying that tear gas and we were supposed to learn how to disperse during an air raid. We got tired of being tear gassed, and one day the word spread, everybody get two or three of those bodarc apples. We saw those planes coming around, they came down the road, and at a given signal everybody threw these things in the air and you could hear the planes hit them. That night they read out a special order in formation that there would be no more throwing anything up in front of those airplanes.

After we finished basic training we had a big maneuver and we went down to Emporia, which was a good-sized Kansas town. I remember I was placed on a corner of the court house or federal building to guard it, they had soldiers on each corner. I heard a whistle and this old boy with an apron came out of a grocery store and he threw this big nice apple to me. It tasted pretty good. On one of those maneuvers, we were supposed to guard a crossroad. Early about daylight, we'd been there all night, about daylight this old woman came out of the house and said "You boys come on over here and I'll feed you breakfast." So we went over to this farm house and boy, she fixed us up the biggest breakfast.

After Fort Riley—everybody was nice to soldiers then, they nearly all had somebody in the Army or Navy—36 of us from NMMI still together. We had our own built-in brotherhood. They sent us to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to go to OCS, Officer Candidate School. Fort Knox was a big prewar army base, it had all kinds of brick barracks. We were there for 17 weeks at OCS, and that was pretty tough. They really poured it on us. I think there were 150, 175 started out, but only 100 graduated. After graduation, I remember that last formation as an OCS, they called us "candidates," and we wore a badge on our shirt pocket that had OCS intermingled. After that last formation that morning, the big Fort Knox main band came marching up the street with their drums and everything, a big band. They wheeled around in front of us and they went marching out and they broke out with the Colonel Bogey March. That was a very stirring march. We followed them down to the auditorium and a general made a speech. When they called our names out we went up on the stage and he gave us our diplomas and shook our hands. Some of the boys had sweethearts and mothers and sisters to pin their gold bar on. Those of us that didn't have anybody just pinned them on each other. When we went out the door, all these old NCOs that had been our instructors were saluting us. It was an old army custom that a new officer, the first soldier to salute him, he had to give him a dollar. So they were cleaning up, they were all getting these dollars.

It was a good feeling walking back to the barracks as an officer. We had new status.

Then I was sent down to Brownwood, Texas. I had my brother's car. He'd been sent overseas to England early in February of '42. He'd written me and said "I left my car in storage in Wilmington, North Carolina, here's the storage ticket. Go get it, you can have it." So I rode the train over there and I had his car during the service, and it was always full of guys. After we graduated at Fort Knox there were 11 of us in that car started out going to Texas, but we dropped a couple off in Paducah and two or three down through Arkansas and Missouri, until when we got to Texas we only had about six or seven. The tires were just gone, and we blew out a tire before we got to Dallas. That whole bunch that I'd been hauling around, they took up a collection and we found, I guess it was a black market guy, and he finally made himself confident that we weren't setting him up. He said "What kind of tires do you boys want? Do you want white sidewalls or black ones?" He took us out to an old barn, it was full of tires. He charged us \$100 apiece for those tires. That was a lot of money in those days, tires usually cost about \$15. Anyway, those boys chipped in and we bought those tires.

From Fort Knox I went to Camp Bowie at Brownwood and was with the 13th Armored there until they went overseas. I was a replacement second lieutenant in case something happened to somebody. Nothing happened, so they sent me back to Fort Knox, and then I was training newcomers to the Army at Fort Knox. That was a terrible job. I didn't like it. They didn't want to be trained, it was winter and snowing and we were out in the country. I got orders to report to Fort Ord, California, so I knew that meant going to the Pacific, which suited me. From Fort Ord we got all new equipment and new carbine, new boots, new duffle bag, new everything. Then they sent us to Fort Lewis, Washington which is right out of Seattle.

At Fort Lewis they put 30 new second lieutenants on a new DE, destroyer escort, that had been built at Bremerton or Bellingham, one of the shipyards up there. It's a pretty small ship, smaller than a destroyer. I think there were nine DEs going together. We went out the Juan de Fuca Strait, then turned and went up toward the Aleutians. Boy, that second day it was rough. We all got deadly seasick, I'd never been so sick in my life. One or two of the boys really got sick. The doctor had to try to get them to eat a soda cracker or something. We got up there and an American submarine appeared and they would start practicing. I guess they were trying to find the submarine with their sonar during the day. They did that two or three days. That didn't help those who were seasick, all that running around. At night the submarine came up and they'd blink back and forth for about an hour.

Finally they started south and the water got smoother and we got over being so seasick. A lot of the sailors got seasick too, they were just kids, new. Somebody said "Land ho," and we ran outside, and we were going by a real pretty green island, and they said it was Molokai, one of the Hawaiian Islands. In a little while we began to see the other islands. We went around Diamond Head and came into Pearl Harbor. They had a tug

boat there to pull a big old submarine around, they had to open for us to go in. They loaded us up into trucks and we drove a couple of hours up north and went to Scofield Barracks. You could still see the signs of the Pearl Harbor attack, Scofield had been attacked too.

Mr. Metzler: What was the date you arrived there?

Mr. Green: That was in January of '44. We stayed there awhile, then we got orders and they took us back to Pearl Harbor and put us on C54s, the big four engine plane.

Mr. Metzler: Military cargo plane.

Mr. Green: That was the big plane then. They'd already invaded Leyte, that would have been about September or October. We were headed there as replacements. The plane had to land, it wasn't like the jets today, they had to land at Johnson Island, which was just a little island big enough for an airstrip and some quonset huts and fuel tank. The boys stationed there were about going nuts. Then we landed at Kwajalein which had been taken only a short time before by the marines, it still looked pretty fresh, all the blackened trees. Then we next landed at Guam, which they'd just taken. From Guam we landed at Tacloban, Leyte. It had been a Japanese air base. The Seabees had put metal runways and the Navy was using it when we landed there.

They put us on trucks again and we started south down the road to Leyte. All down that road were support places, tents, hospitals, dumps. We were at a replacement center. There were still about 28 or 30 of us, all second lieutenants, all brand new. They read out the names of about half of us, and said "You all stand over here. You are assigned to the 7th Infantry Division." And then they read another bunch of names, said "You all stand over here. You're with the 96th Infantry Division." They hadn't named me yet, there were just two of us left. They said "You're assigned to the 20th Armored Group." Of course, that's what we'd been trained for. The other guys, a lot of them had been trained the same way but they put them in the infantry. They were terribly distraught, of course, and when we left them they were still bitterly complaining, but it didn't do any good.

We taken down to the 20th Armored Group, and they said we were just in charge of the correspondence for the tank battalions in the Pacific. There were ten or 12 tank battalions over here, and we'd handle the official correspondence. They said, "We're going to assign you to a tank battalion," and they did. We were assigned to the 763rd Tank Battalion. It was attached to the 96th Infantry Division, and they were still fighting on the south end of Leyte. They said, "You spend the night here and we'll take you down there the next day." They said there would probably be an air raid that night, and that excited us. They said, "If you want to use some of these slit trenches out there, why, help yourselves." But we were so worn out and tired by then, boy, I hit that bed, I was asleep. I had a cot, and a mosquito net.

The next morning they drove us down to the 763rd Tank Battalion. They'd already received orders to go to Okinawa, and they were trying to get ready. The battle for Leyte was winding down. they were using strong combat patrols with the Filipino guerillas to find the Japanese that were hiding. In just a short while, one morning there were all these LSTs—we were camped right on the beach in a coconut grove. The LSDs pulled up on the beach and we loaded up. That was "Operation Iceberg," that's what they called Okinawa. They'd given us a thing that looked like a Sears, Roebuck catalog, "Operation Iceberg" on it, telling all about where we were going. I'd never heard of Okinawa. It was 330 miles south of Japan.

It was the dangdest bunch of ships you'd ever imagine. Everywhere you looked there were just ships. I think it took five LSTs to haul that tank battalion. They put about 25 tanks on an LST. They'd open the doors and let the ramp down, drive the tanks down into the tank wells, and they'd let another ramp down and drive half tracks and trucks and jeeps up on top. It was absolutely jammed. The weather was nice, and everybody wanted to sleep up on the top, they didn't want to sleep down below. Their idea was if the boats got sunk, they'd have a better chance. And they had a bunch of life rafts and life jackets so if the boat did sink, they'd just float loose. Everybody picked up a life raft and tried to stay pretty close to it. And the Navy practiced GQ every morning and every night, daylight and sundown. And they'd man all the antiaircraft guns, and that was pretty exciting. We just tried to stay out of their way. I can still remember how they'd holler over the loudspeakers that were everywhere. They had one thing they'd holler, they'd say "Sweepers, man your brooms. Clean sweep fore and aft." And, "The smoking lamp is lit." You couldn't smoke until they told you.

It took about 8 or ten days to get to Okinawa. There was a poker game, and a bridge game, and a domino game going all the time, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Metzler: Where did you sleep on the LST?

Mr. Green: I was a replacement second lieutenant, so I didn't have much stroke, so they put me in the damndest little old compartment up in the front. The other, older officers of the 763rd had some nice rooms that were shared with maybe three other officers. They had double bunks. But I was in a little old compartment, I don't know what it was. There was a round hole you'd crawl through, and there was room for a bunk. It was right in the front and boy, when it hit these waves, it would really jar you.

Mr. Metzler: How many days did it take to get to Okinawa? That's a long way away.

Mr. Green: That's about 1300 miles and it took about ten days. A loaded LST was very slow, six or seven knots would have been about all it would do.

The commanding officer of our tank battalion was on the LST, and he called me in two or three days before we were to land, and he said "I want you to take a radio man and go

ashore with the 381st Regiment of the 96th Infantry Division and you radio back when they get successfully ashore, you contact Lt. Col. King and find out where he wants the tanks, and let me know." The morning of the attack we got up two, three o'clock in the morning. They had GQ over the loudspeaker and everybody got up—but everybody was up, anyway. They had breakfast of real eggs and steaks. I remember the doctors that were on with us, shaking their heads. They said, "That's the dumbest thing I ever saw. We're going to have to be operating on abdominal wounds and they're going to be full of . . ." That didn't give us a lot of good feelings.

The control boat came by and hollered up, they were supposed to pick the radio man and the liaison officer up, which was me. We climbed down the net on the side and got in the boat, it was about like a Chris Craft. We got in a line of LSVPs and Amtracks. I read later on that the line was eight miles long, out as far as you could see.

Mr. Metzler: Were your vehicles headed toward the shore?

Mr. Green: Going into the shore. Everything was firing on the beach, all the battleships. They had, I guess they were LCTs, they were smaller than the LST but they had rockets that they fired at the shore. After the firing stopped, a whole bunch of Navy planes came over real low and strafed the beach ahead of us. We got into shore, the coxswain said "This is as far as I go. You all get out." So we jumped over, waded out. There had been a seawall there made out of rock but it had holes blown in it from the bombardment, so we didn't have any trouble getting ashore.

We were with the infantry and I was looking all the time and asking everybody if they knew Lt. Col. King, I was supposed to talk to him. There wasn't anybody shooting, wasn't any gunfire at all. We all thought we'd have been in a fire fight by now, but the infantry just went ashore and they went about a quarter of a mile, and they organized in a line. I saw all these officers looking at a map so I asked a captain, "Is Lt. Col. King around?" and he said, "That's him over there with that map." So I went over with my radio man. They were all looking at the map, looking unhappy. I said, "Colonel King, I'm supposed to report to you. I'm with the 763rd." He said, "Don't you bother me now, they've put us ashore in the wrong place. I don't want to talk to you now." So I backed off. They were all looking at the maps and pointing different ways. Finally I called back out to the LST and talked to Col. Edmundson, my commander officer, and I said "I found Lt. Col. King but he says they're in the wrong place and they're going to have to move somewhere else. What do you want me to do?" There was a long pause, and then he came on and said something like "Yeah. I checked and they are in the wrong place. You just come on up north."

When he said that, the radio went out and it never did work again. My radio man said "I fell down when I got off the boat and I think I got it wet. The last thing I'd heard was north, so I said "Let's walk north," so we started walking. All this stuff was coming in to the beach and loading, and still nobody was shooting. No resistance at all. We'd

walked about half a mile when my radio man said "Look over there." I looked and here was the LST we'd come on, it had landed and tanks were coming out. We found some of our people so we got with them. We loaded up in a jeep. They had big tombs on Okinawa, that was one of the more significant things about the native culture, I guess. They were as big as this room, and . . .

Mr. Metzler: So maybe 30 feet long, 20 feet wide?

Mr. Green: Right, they were big. They had little doors you could go in, the front of them. They had all these ceramic jars inside with bones of the ancestors. The bones had been cleaned and put away in the jars. There were three or four kind of steps the jars were on. The tombs had been used by the Okinawans to escape bombardment. And also, the Japanese had used them.

Later on I was liaison officer with the infantry and would go with them on the observation posts with my radio man and relay messages to the tanks.

Mr. Metzler: What kind of tanks were these, which model?

Mr. Green: They had mostly M4A3 Sherman tanks. They did have one company of light tanks, M3 tanks. Mostly M4A3 Shermans. There were four assault divisions that cut the island in two, it was about five miles wide where we were, or maybe seven. Two Marine divisions turned north and the two Army divisions, which were the 7th and 96th, turned south after they cut the island in two. There still hadn't been much resistance, a little, but not much. Everybody was just giddy over not being killed. About the fourth day they encountered the Shuri line that the Japanese had built across the island.

Mr. Metzler: This was a line of fortification?

Mr. Green: Oh man, was it! It was a very intricate system of interlocking caves and tunnels. Okinawa had several ridges that ran east and west and there weren't any valleys running north and south that you could go down. The Japanese had fortified all those ridges. At first, since the landing was so easy, wild rumors were spread that the Japanese had moved all their troops over to Formosa because they thought that's where we were going and we were not going to have any trouble taking the island. They were all in that Shuri line waiting for us. The 96th Division that we were attached to, the 24th Army, General Hodge—the 24th Corps, I guess it was—the 10th Army was a combination of Marine and Army units that hit the island. Nimitz was the overall head man.

General Simon Bolivar Buckner was the Army man in charge, and Hodge was in charge of the Army divisions. He thought to keep the momentum up and maybe they'd be able to clean it up pretty quick, the way things were going. But the 96th Division ran into that Shuri line about the fourth or fifth day, and gosh, they didn't make a dent in

it. The 7th Division did the same thing. So then they added the 27th Division on the right for reinforcement. They didn't get much done. Then they just kept thinking that, well, we need to increase the pressure. The infantry officers kept think, if two regiments didn't do it, four will, and kept on it. They just took these horrible casualties, just kept getting terrible casualties. Finally they had to bring the Marines on the right. They'd finished up north, there weren't many Japs on the north part of the island, they'd all made their stand there. It was very ferocious fighting.

Mr. Metzler: Where were you when all of this was happening?

Mr. Green: I was still a liaison with the infantry and I'd be up on the OPs with them, they'd tell me "Tell those tanks down there we want them to go a little further south," and the tanks would say "Hell, we can't go that way," and back and forth they'd argue. I had some hair raising experiences on those OPs, because they were right up on the front lines.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me a few of those hair raising experiences.

Mr. Green: One day my radio man—I had a corporal from Robstown, Texas named Stone. He was a funny old boy, Corporal Stone. We were in a trench up on top of the Maeda Escarpment, that's what the Army called it, but we all called it Sawtooth Ridge. They had a trench dug on top and the observers were in the trench for the Navy. They had cruisers and destroyers trying to fire, and they had their fire director up on the OP, and all this artillery we had back behind the forward observers. They'd be in trenches looking down. We discovered, finally, that the reverse slopes of these east/west ridges were their specialty. They might let you take the forward slope because you could just pound it to bits with our artillery, and they might let you get on top after a struggle, but the reverse slopes—man, you had to just smoke them out and kill them out to take the reverse slopes. That was their specialty.

We were on top of the Maeda Escarpment, and it had been a terrible battle to take the slope to get on top. We were in a little trench and the observers were on either side of us with their binoculars. My radio man was sitting down in the trench and he was reading this mimeographed piece of paper which they'd send up from time to time. It would have current events, and it'd be printed, I guess, out on the ship. He said, "You ought to read this." He handed me the paper so I sat down in the trench next to him to read it and just after I sat down, friendly fire, artillery, failed to clear the crest of the hill and hit right behind us. The guys on either side of us were just sheared off at the waist. I felt something wet hit me on the back of my neck, down my back, and I looked down, and there was something that looked like a big piece of raw liver in my lap. The explosion had just shaken the ground. My radio man was kind of stunned, and big piece of shrapnel had hit the radio. If it hadn't hit the radio, it would have killed him. I got up and that was a piece of somebody's intestine on the back of my neck and down my back. I can still remember how bad that thing smelled. And that was either a kidney or piece . . .

(END OF SIDE ONE. SIDE TWO TAKES UP WITH:)

I think the medics were the real heroes of the war. They were really good. The Japanese would shoot them, so they quit wearing the arm bands and anything on their helmets. They did some incredible, heroic things to get to wounded people.

One day I was up in the OP and my company commander said "Come back here on the road behind the OP. We need to talk to you." I went down, and a platoon of tanks was lined up that belonged to First Platoon, 8th Company. They were all standing by the tanks, it was raining, and very miserable. They'd had a terrible battle the day before, the infantry had been turned back with high casualties.

The executive commander of the 96th Division was brigadier general, and his name was Easley, he was from Waco, Texas. He was an old Aggie. I knew his aide because his aide had gone to NMMI when I was there. His aide's name was John Tuberville. Easley was a rather peppery little old guy. They were losing all these Navy ships to the kamikazes around the island, and Nimitz was really getting antsy to get it over with so they could move those ships. they were really pushing everybody and Easley, of course, had been given the job to push the 96th, so he was up at the front every day.

Captain Kennedy, my commanding officer said "Lieutenant Braham is cracking up." Easley was up on the tank talking to him, and I never forgot what he was saying. He said, "Son, a platoon of tanks if like a string of spaghetti. You can pull it from the front but you can't do any good pushing it from behind." Braham had been loosing his nerve, and he'd gotten to where he was trying to stay back behind and send the others. Easley said "I want you to go down that hill and I want you to support those infantry boys. You didn't do a good job yesterday and we lost a lot of them. I want you to go down there now and put fire on the slope . . ." and Braham had his helmet on and he looked at him and he had tears running down his face and he said "I just can't do that. I just can't do it." And then he just sank down in the tank. Easley said "Goddammit, get him out of there and put somebody else in there who'll do what we want them to."

Kennedy said, "Let's get him out of there." So we did, and it was sad. He'd soiled his clothes and was just limp. Kennedy said, "OK, Green, you got to take over Braham's platoon." So from then on I was platoon leader. that was kinda of a tough place, where we were. You had to go through a little set in the hill and then you were on the other side going down the reverse slope. The poor infantry boys were all lined up along the road, all kind of crouched down in their ponchos, it was raining. Oh, they hated to go down that hill. But anyway, we went down the hill. We had to go around the boys that had been killed the day before, they were still laying in the road. The Japs had buried five hundred pound aerial bombs and used them as antitank mines and boy, if you ran over one of those, it was curtains. We were scared of hitting those. So I hated to get off the road, but I didn't want to run over those boys, so we pulled around them.

We hadn't gone too far when the tank behind us said "Green, you're getting hit." Sure enough, we were. The next antitank gun shell knocked out the transmission, and the driver said "It won't move." He was cranking the gears. Then another round came right through where we were and hit the loader got his legs. I looked over and saw this wink, like somebody had turned on a spotlight for a minute, and I knew that was a gun, but I couldn't see any sign of a hole in that cliff. A tank commander stands up in the turret and the gunner sits right in front of him, and the gunner has a 20 power telescope that's his sight. the tank commander has an open sight that coordinated with that 20 power sight, so I just turned the turret around and lined up what I wanted the gunner to look for and he could look through his 20 power and see something. He had a coax machine gun, coaxial. The coax and the cannon, their fire was lined up to go out, quite a way. Every fifth round was tracers in the machine gun, and it would make a line and when you got those going where you wanted them, then you could shoot the cannon. You had two switches on the floor, looked like dimmer switches on a car. they were very accurate. You could search around with that line of tracers and then when you thought you had them going where you wanted, you'd hit your switch and fire the cannon.

The poor loader was down on the floor making all kind of horrible noises, so I went down there and tried to put my hand over his leg, he was just bleeding to death. The gunner said, "Green, load me a round, load me a round. I see the so-and-so." I told the driver, "Reach back here and hold his leg," so he did, and then I loaded a round in the cannon. He said, "Do you know anything about a cannon? Did you ever load one?" When you fire the cannon, the breach automatically stays open, and then you ram another round in and there's a rim around the back of the round that sticks out and it triggers kind of a yoke, pushes that yoke, and that releases the breach which slams shut from right to left. You do it with the heel of your hand with your fingers to the left, if you don't you cut your fingers off. We'd had all that training, of course, so I could load as good as anybody. I loaded about three rounds, the gunner fired them, and he said "I think we settled that sumbitch." I guess we did, because he quit shooting at us.

I looked down. The driver had tied his shoelace around the loader's leg and I got a morphine syrette and jabbed it in his leg. I had the other tanks behind us come right up and bump into us and I had them start firing what we called "WP," white phosphorus, against that hill. We went out the escape hatch and slithered behind to the second tank behind us and got in. That ended that.

When I got back up the hill, we were all in that one tank, I had them back back and try to stay in our tracks, because I was still afraid of those bombs. We got back over the hill and we all got out and they took the loader off, and he lived, I found out later.

Mr. Metzler: Have you been in contact with him since?

Mr. Green: Years ago, I was with all those guys, but over the years it gradually quit. My driver was 41 years old, an old Swede named Al Bomgren. I was 20. I relied mightily on Al, I'd ask him "Do you think we can go down there?" and Al would look at it and he'd say "Well, I don't know, I don't believe we better try that." I'd say "OK." He was a smart guy. I got Christmas cards from him up until about ten years ago. He'd be a hundred years old now.

Mr. Metzger: Back to your story.

Mr. Green: We got back up and I got out of the tank and man, I got the shakes. Just like I had malaria or something. I had to sit down, and I was just shaking and General Easley came up and he said "I wanted to ask you what you saw behind that hill but I'll wait until you quit shaking." I said, "OK." He was a pretty nice old boy. He got killed.

Over the next day or two he thought up going around the other end of the hill, and then they were going to have a big bombing raid from the Navy planes, the CBFs, and drop at least 500, there might have been 1,000 pound, bombs. They wanted us to go first and shoot on the back of the hill and then pull back at 9 o'clock and then the Navy planes were going to come. So we did. When we tried to pull back, my tank got stuck. All the other tanks had been going across the ravine and the tank treads got deeper and deeper, and by the time we got there we couldn't get out. They kept saying "The air raid's scheduled, and they're already on the way, and you just send the other tanks on out of there and you just hope for the best." So we did. We were all buttoned up. It would have to have been a direct hit to hurt us. That was really something to watch those bombs. They had them on delayed fuses. The bombs would come down and they'd hit and they'd cartwheel and they'd roll, and then they'd burst.

I led those tanks ten for the rest of the war. Everyday was about the same. We got flame throwing tanks, about the middle of April they brought those in. They were the best, most efficient weapon, horrible weapon. That was the one thing the Japanese couldn't stand up to. That flame thrower looked just like a Sherman tank but it had 300 gallon tanks inside with gasoline and napalm and a copper tube ran down the cannon barrel and another tube carried the napalm, and the copper tube had pure gasoline. It had a little burner on the end and when you got ready to fire the main stream of napalm, you had a trigger and you could ignite the gasoline. It had a jet of flame that came out over the end of the barrel, and then the napalm would come out under it and be ignited. They called that little thing the "igniter" that you'd first light. Each platoon of medium tanks would have one, and sometimes two, flame throwing tanks attached to it. They were with the 713th tank battalion, and they were all flame throwers, and they would partial them out among the medium tanks.

You'd pull up in front of an obvious Japanese emplacement. They had doors dug straight in, and then they'd make a 90 degree turn for a way, and then another 90 degree turn, and you couldn't shoot back in there. But we'd learned to put the flame

thrower at an angle and thin the viscosity of the napalm and it would splash down and around and the flame was so intense that if it didn't burn them to death, it would suck all the oxygen out and they'd suffocate. It was a terrible weapon. It got to where you'd pull up, and when the igniter would go off, that little jet of flame would come down, the Japanese would come out of the woodwork. They'd come out of the ground, and just start running. You couldn't blame them. It was horrible.

One day we pulled up in front of a cave, got the flame thrower all set, the igniter went off, and out of the cave came this old man in a white kimono. He had an old scraggly beard, that funny hat that they wore. He came out with his arms upraised and stood there. My gunner was kind of cruel, he said "You want me to shoot that sumbitch?" I said "No, let's see what he wants." He stood there with his hands up until it was obvious we weren't going to immediately kill him. Then he turned and hollered, and started doing his hands like he was waving, and I bet a hundred women and kids came out of that hole. Boy, it just made us all sick to think what would have happened in another minute. There were women carrying kids, leading little kids. I thought that old man, I never saw any better.

It was a terrible battle.

Mr. Metzler: How many days before the battle was over?

Mr. Green: They declared it secure in about 83 or 85 days, but it wasn't over. We thought they were precipitate in their declaration. there were pockets—we fought for probably another two weeks. It was the organized resistance that was over.

Mr. Metzler: Where did you go after Okinawa?

Mr. Green: We were so decimated, they loaded us up and sent us to Mindoro in the Philippines. We were to be resupplied there. We weren't too enthusiastic after Okinawa, we just couldn't bear to think what it was going to be like in Japan. So we weren't very optimistic. But on the way down, we were off Formosa, I'll never forget, it came on the radio that the war was over. They said the war was over, they'd dropped new bombs that just blew up everything, and the Japs had quit. Every ship in that whole convoy started shooting their guns, the anti-aircraft guns. It was an exciting time.

The other second lieutenant I'd come overseas with and who had been attached to the 763rd, he and I ended up being the head commanding officer and executive officer of this tank battalion because all the other officers had been over there forever and they were older and had families, and they got to go home first. We closed out the 763rd Tank Battalion. We turned in all the equipment . . .

Mr. Metzler: About when was that?

Mr. Green: That would have been late '45, that fall, about December, I guess. We turned in our tanks. We gave a lot of our stuff to convents, orphanages, Catholics at Batangas in the Philippines. We had a sergeant that was a devout Catholic, and he'd gone down there to search and met all these people. It was run by a bunch of Italians and the Mother Superior was—the Japanese had been horrible to them, they'd raped all the nuns and bombed them—anyway, we gave them kitchen stuff and trucks and everything else. In gratitude they cooked us an Italian supper. It was kind of funny, that Mother Superior, she was a bright old gal, she was old, but she said "The Lord moves in mysterious ways. In 1915 I thought there was going to be a war in Europe and I didn't want to be there, so I came over here. I tried to figure out where there was a place where they'd never have a war, and here it came."

Mr. Metzler: During the war when you were over there, were you able to stay in contact Stateside with your family, mail and that kind of thing?

Mr. Green: My letters followed me all around. Finally when I was on Okinawa, a guy drove up—it rained, but this weasel, a little track vehicle, could manage mud better than anything—he drove up and he had a canvas mail sack and it was nearly half full of letters. So I sat down and I put them in chronological order, and then I found the one that was the most recent and read it first to see if anybody was dead or anything, and then I started reading those others. It took quite awhile. The mail wasn't really that bad, after they finally found out where you were, sometimes it would get there pretty quick.

I was in Manila, after the war was over, and I was able to call home on the telephone. Home was the ranch, and the telephone line from the little town out to the ranch was 23 miles of single wire that had been nailed on top of fence posts. I could really hear my mother and dad's voice over that line.

Mr. Metzler: You've told us a lot of emotional times, and some of the funny times. Any others that come to mind, times when you were scared or happy, or funny . . .

Mr. Green: There were some horrible times. I spent 50 or 60 years trying to forget them. There were some fun times. A good bunch of boys.

Mr. Metzler: Anything else, Bob?

Mr. Green: I think that's more than enough.

Mr. Metzler: I appreciate your taking the time to go through this with us.

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