

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

Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Jamie J. Davis
1st Marine Div. PFC
Hq. Co 1st Marine Regt.
Foreward Observer-Okinawa
Navaho Code Talker

Interview with
Jamie J. Davis

My name is Richard Misenhimer. Today is February 7, 2003. I am interviewing Jamie J. Davis, also known as Pinky, at his home at 1302 Madison, Alice, Texas 78332. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific Wars, Center for the Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of information related to World War II.

Pinky, I want to thank you for taking the time for this interview today.

Jamie J. Davis

Okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you, where were you born?

Mr. Davis

Holden, Louisiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birth date?

Mr. Davis

4-5-25

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Davis

I have two brothers and one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were either one of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Davis

Both my brothers. One was in the Navy and one in the Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they both come home?

Mr. Davis

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they overseas?

Mr. Davis

Both of them. One was in Honolulu and the other one was in CBI.

Mr. Misenhimer

How old, was he there for Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Davis

No, afterwards.

Mr. Misenhimer

Afterwards. Where did you go to school?

Mr. Davis

I went to high school at Freer. I went to college at Texas A&I at Kingsville.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you finish high school? What year?

Mr. Davis

1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

December 7th '41, Pearl Harbor was attacked. Do you recall where you were that day and what your reactions were?

Mr. Davis

I really don't. I've thought about that but I really don't recollect except that it was on a Sunday. Again I don't know. I may have gone to Sunday School.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the Service?

Mr. Davis

1944. July 14.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do between the time you finished high school and you went into the Service?

Mr. Davis

I was enrolled in school at Texas A&I University in Kingsville.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your major?

Mr. Davis

My major at that time was Chemistry.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you went in, were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Davis

It was part of the draft program. I didn't volunteer, it was induction until the National Emergency was over.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Davis

The Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose that branch?

Mr. Davis

They had a number of people on that particular day, so many for the Navy, and so many for the Army and so many for the Air Force and so many for the Marine Corps. They only needed two for the Marine Corps, so I ended up being one of those.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you volunteer for it?

Mr. Davis

Oh yeah, I volunteered for it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was this at?

Mr. Davis

San Antonio.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you in San Antonio?

Mr. Davis

Just one day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Davis

We went to Parris Island, South Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to come home before you left, or did you go straight .

Mr. Davis

No, straight to Parris Island, South Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel out there?

Mr. Davis

By train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Davis

Hot and boring. It was in the middle of July. Full of soot. It was okay. It wasn't too bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long did that take?

Mr. Davis

It only took us, seemed like it was about three days.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a place to sleep?

Mr. Davis

Oh, no, we sat in the chairs. The cars had chairs back then.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you arrived at Parris Island, what were things like there?

Mr. Davis

It was hustling and bustling everyday, going through the ritual of getting rid of your civilian clothes and getting you GI issue and getting you hair cut and getting a physical.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got your uniforms all at Parris Island.

Mr. Davis

Right. We got what we had, which were just the green dungaree type things.

Mr. Misenhimer

But not in San Antonio?

Mr. Davis

No, we didn't get anything at San Antonio. We went to Parris Island in civilian clothes. That was the Boot Camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do recall what your first day there was like?

Mr. Davis

No, I really don't. It doesn't stand out in my mind. Anything in particular.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long was boot camp?

Mr. Davis

Eight weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do there at that time?

Mr. Davis

We trained and we took physical exercise and we went through the rituals of trying to be good Marines. Also little hikes and we had a week long rifle range. If you didn't qualify as a marksman or better, you had to go back and start over. With another platoon.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rifle were you using?

Mr. Davis

M1 Garand rifle and I qualified as an expert rifleman and there were only two out of our platoon of forty who qualified experts.

Mr. Misenhimer

We've all seen the pictures of how mean the Marine Drill Instructors were, was that true with your Drill Sergeant?

Mr. Davis

Pretty mean. Pretty mean. I had one, Sergeant Clark, he was an old pro who had been there twenty years, had hash-marks plum out to his elbows, and he was tough. He was tough. He seemed tough

to me.

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot of long marches?

Mr. Davis

Not too many long marches. We had marches every day but there were some days when they flew the red flag at the parade ground, we didn't march. It was too hot and humid. It didn't bother me coming from South Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

You are used to that every day.

Mr. Davis

Some of those people who came from up North, a cooler country, it just nearly killed them. It was a hundred degrees and one hundred per cent humidity every day at Parris Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

South Louisiana is hot too.

Mr. Davis

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there?

Mr. Davis

We lived in barracks. We had barracks and everybody just slept in barracks. Had top and bottom bunks. The whole platoon, our entire platoon was in one barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Forty people, you say.

Mr. Davis

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Mr. Davis

It was good. There was nothing wrong with the food. It was pretty starchy. They served a lot of pork because they raised a lot of hogs in North Carolina. I thought we were going to eat up all the hogs. We had pork nearly day. I'm not a big fan of pork, coming from Texas, and especially in the

summertime. Pork is really not supposed to be eaten in the summertime.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, it is wintertime for us.

Mr. Davis

Oh, yeah. But it was okay. I gained weight so it had to be something good about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were about nineteen years old when you went in.

Mr. Davis

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any thing in particular stand out in your time in that eight weeks of basic training?

Mr. Davis

Probably the highlight, this is probably the minimum, you know, some people compare some others, since I qualified as an expert rifleman, when we got back off the rifle range, I got a week where I didn't have to do anything. I didn't have to get up when everybody else did, I didn't have to do exercise, I didn't have to do KP Duty and it was sort of a reward for being an expert rifleman.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do with your time, lay on the bunk?

Mr. Davis

Oh, no it was just some of the guys, some other platoons qualified like we did, they had more than one platoon out there at the range. That was about it. We didn't have anything outstanding, any type of event that was different than ordinary.

Mr. Misenhimer

What other weapons did you train on there?

Mr. Davis

Just the M1s.

Mr. Misenhimer

No machine guns, mortars, hand grenades?

Mr. Davis

We got that when we went to Camp Le June for basic training.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished boot camp there, where did you go then?

Mr. Davis

I got off two weeks. I got to come home. Took two week furlough and came home and then reported back to Camp Le June, North Carolina, sometime about the 1st of October until December 1st, more or less, I was at Camp Le June in North Carolina. It was a basic training camp, in there we learned all type of weapons. We had hand grenades, we had machine-guns, we had the carbine and BAR, an automatic weapon. They trained us in all those, but basically everybody in our outfit, carried M1s.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was about how long there?

Mr. Davis

More or less, from October 1st to December 1st. Two months.

Mr. Misenhimer

Eight weeks.

Mr. Davis

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that stands out in the time you were there?

Mr. Davis

Only that we went on I guess what you call a forced march, where we had full transport pack, the whole ball of wax and rifle and everything, we had a twenty-three mile hike and only three of us made it, the rest of them fell out. They was following along behind, you know, a guy would just fall out, they would load him and haul him back to camp. But I was one of the ones who made the full march.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was a platoon of forty again, right?

Mr. Davis

We had thirty-nine. I don't know how it went from forty to thirty-nine, but we only had thirty-nine. We had an even number.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the group that you were in boot-camp, were they the same ones with you in basic?

Mr. Davis

No. None of the ones in boot-camp went to basic with us. Why, I don't know. There were some of

them that qualified for other places. They had needs for people out there. Some of them went to the Great Lakes Training Station.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went for a twenty-three mile hike.

Mr. Davis

Yeah. We went to boot camp for that. Once I got to Camp Le June, of course everybody got to take two weeks off. And everybody had to report back. Some of them, I'm sure, went to Camp Pendleton. I never did see them again. I got to the point, I had all new friends. There wasn't anything really outstanding at Camp Le June. Running an obstacle course and the bayonet course. The bayonet course was my specialty because I set a new record. The length of time it took me to run the course.

Mr. Misenhimer

Pretty good record there?

Mr. Davis

Yeah, it was a good record, because no body had ever run it that fast.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean the short time.

Mr. Davis

Yeah. From there, that was for basic training. They told us about explosives, too. We did have some schooling in explosives and primer cord and things of that nature.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were most of your Instructors in combat and came back?

Mr. Davis

Yeah, my instructors, yes they were.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do an obstacle course where they shot the live ammunition over you?

Mr. Davis

We had that too. We had to crawl under the wire and all that stuff, you know. Other than that, it wasn't memorable, just out there doing the job.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is was somewhere around December 1st of '44, when you finished that up.

Mr. Davis

Right. We got a train there and went the long way around to Camp Pendleton in California.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't have leave to come home then.

Mr. Davis

No, no. Once we got through there we had to come straight to California. The only leave was between boot camp and basic. Our train took us through all the states across back up the northern route through Colorado and back down to Pendleton. I didn't know trains went that a way, but that's the way we went. I remember stopping in Colorado and getting out on a big platform up there and exercising.

Mr. Misenhimer

That took roughly how long?

Mr. Davis

It took, well I guess it was about six days>

Mr. Misenhimer

And again, a chair car, right.

Mr. Davis

Yeah. Oh no, no berths or nothing, just sit up in a chair, that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was the whole train troops?

Mr. Davis

All were troops, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

All Marines?

Mr. Davis

I don't know that. I really don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back to Camp Pendletown, what did you do there?

Mr. Davis

We got to Camp Pendletown and we lived in barracks, we were getting primed to go overseas. We were going to leave pretty quick because they started giving us shots. Gave us all our shots. We were there a very short period of time because I left on the 14th, boarded out at San Diego and went

overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ship did you get on?

Mr. Davis

I don't know the name of it. It was an old banana boat that they had converted. That's the absolute truth. It was an old freighter that hauled bananas, and they had converted that thing to a troop ship, and it was hotter than hades. They had three bunks stacked on top of each another and everybody got sick but me.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how many on the ship, do you have any idea?

Mr. Davis

We had, I think there was about fifteen hundred people. We had a, it was a replacement, all marines and it was either the 100th replacement or the 129th replacement draft. We were to replace those that had been lost at Peleliu. 1st Marine Division. They went to Peleliu. I don't think it says on here about that replacement draft. I read it some where one time and I don't remember where I read it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you left there, where did you go?

Mr. Davis

We left San Diego and we went to an island in the Solomons called Pavuvu, which was just off Guadalcanal. Like so many times in the service, when we got there they said, "We didn't know you were coming." There was fifteen hundred of us and we didn't have any where to sleep, no tents, no nothing, you know. It was in December and that's their summertime.

Mr. Misenhimer

It is summertime year around down there.

Mr. Davis

It is really summertime in December. Hot and muggy and it rains everyday at four o'clock. We trained at Pavuvu and joined up with the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal. They had just gotten back from Peleliu. They had took a lot of casualties. That's what we were there for, to replace those that had gotten killed or sent home. We went through our training there at Guadalcanal and left there,

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to Guadalcanal. Was your training on Guadalcanal or on Pavuvu?

Mr. Davis

Both places.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you get from Pavuvu to Guadalcanal?

Mr. Davis

We had to have LSTs and LCVPs and just landing type boats that we were going to use on Okinawa. Of course, we didn't know we were going to Okinawa, we didn't know what we were going to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you did it for practice.

Mr. Davis

Yeah. Just going through the practice landings and it's not very far. We didn't go very far by boat to get to Guadalcanal. We went back and forth to Pavuvu to practice landing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have also squad tactics and that sort of things, to land.

Mr. Davis

Oh, yes. They had things set up to simulate the enemy, you know, and things you are supposed to do when you confront them, that sort of thing, and just getting ready to go, you know. What the fundamentals were as best they could.

Mr. Misenhimer

The veterans over there had been through, probably Guadalcanal. What was their attitude?

Mr. Davis

It was good. They had a good attitude, none of them was really down. They were there to do a job and they knew they had to do it. That was their theory and that was their attitude. Nobody looked back.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there any of those who had been at Guadalcanal also?

Mr. Davis

I didn't see any, I don't think anybody from Guadalcanal was still there. If they were, they were some of the higher Officers. Chesty Puller was there. In fact he was one of our Commanding Officers. He was a much decorated Colonel of the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was the Regimental Commander at Pelilu.

Mr. Davis

He made lots of...

Mr. Misenhimer

He was on Guadalcanal too.

Mr. Davis

Yeah, he was on Guadalcanal. He went to Okinawa too. Chesty Puller.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have by then?

Mr. Davis

I was still a private. I never did get better than a PFC, as far as that is concerned. They didn't promote you too fast in the Marine Corps. About four years to get another stripe, that's what they used to say. If you stay there four years you go from Private to PFC. It didn't take me but two.

Mr. Misenhimer

On Guadalcanal, how far were you from Henderson Field ?

Mr. Davis

Never did see Henderson Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

You weren't that close to it.

Mr. Davis

Never did see it.

Mr. Misenhimer

RBI, what do they call it? Lunga Point or any of those things?

Mr. Davis

No. One of the significant things, I guess while we were there, just prior to going to Okinawa, they had a lot of air-craft engines, and other things that they had shipped to Guadalcanal, replacement motors and things of that nature, and even some moving vehicles, jeeps and things like that they weren't going to take to Okinawa. They loaded all those on an LST and took them out into the bay and dumped them over the side. They were brand new engines for the airplanes, they came from Henderson Field. They said they didn't want anybody else to have them so they just dumped them in the water.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, you are out there dumping surplus equipment into the drink.

Mr. Davis

Yeah. We left there, I'd say, we left somewhere around February 10th we left the Solomon Islands and headed toward Okinawa. We didn't know where we were going, they never told us. We were rendezvousing with the other ships as we went and it just kept getting bigger and bigger, more ships, and finally, about a week before we got there, they told us where we were going, showed us maps, and what we were going to do. We had no idea where Okinawa was and an island and it didn't mean a thing. The closest thing they could get to Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right. What kind of ship were you on, at this point?

Mr. Davis

It was a, I think they call it a APA, our Headquarters Regiment was on there, how many people was on there, I don't know how many troops but I was attached to the Headquarters Company of the 1st Marine.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were in the Headquarters Company. What was your job at that point?

Mr. Davis

We were what you call a Joint-Assault Signal Company and we were instrumental in operating, when we got to Okinawa, to direct Naval gunfire. At Okinawa there were the positions we could get to, we took our co-ordination maps and all that other stuff, of course, most of it was done by Officers. We did all the hard work and they did all the smart work. That was our job, to coordinate Naval gunfire to strategic positions of the enemy. That was our sole purpose.

Mr. Misenhimer

By two-way radio?

Mr. Davis

Yeah. They had SCR 300s, I think they call those two-way radios. They also had some Navahoes with us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Code-talkers.

Mr. Davis

Code-talkers. We had code-talkers. One of them was named Chief Medicine Horse. I'll never forget him. He was with us there, every night he would tuck his mosquito net in, he said, "I may get killed by a Jap, but I'm damn sure not get killed by a mosquito." His name was Chief Medicine Horse. There was a couple of others, I can't recall their names, they were code-talkers that operated in order to try to keep the Japanese from understanding what was going on. They couldn't understand what was going on.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you work directly with them, then?

Mr. Davis

One of them. We had one in our outfit and there were others and they would talk back and forth. Some in the front and some in the back. Some in the rear echelons and some in the forward lines.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your outfit was how big?

Mr. Davis

The General Headquarters?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, you said you had one code-talker when you were out there. How many people were there?

Mr. Davis

There was about, I guess there were about twenty of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Twenty and one code-talker out there.

Mr. Davis

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

So it was a large convoy that you were in going over there?

Mr. Davis

Oh, it just got bigger and bigger and bigger, you know. They finally told us, about the last week, I'm guessing at this now, where we were going and what we were going to do. There was the 1st Marine Division and the 6th Marine Division, and to the best of my knowledge, there was two Army Divisions that landed at Okinawa. I'm not sure about the Army, but I know the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions landed. We landed April the 1st, 1945. They were calling it the L-Day. Instead of D-Day, it was L-

Day. That's when I went ashore, April the 1st .

Mr. Misenhimer

What wave were you in?

Mr. Davis

I was probably in the third or fourth, it was somewhere around, it started at daylight, I guess it was around ten o'clock before I made land. I guess it was probably the third wave and we had no opposition. We landed in the vicinity of Yon Tan Airfield, with hardly anybody there, no Japs or anything hardly at all. The function of the 1st Marine Division were to set out, originally to set up lines and cut the island in half, one end of the Island to the other, stop anything coming or going, you know, North or South. The 6th Division all went North, and the Army went South. The Army didn't go very far. We cut the Island in two in two or three days. The third day, they said, "We are going to cut the Island in two and that's all we are going to do. We're not going to do anything else. We'll let the Army take the South and the 6th Marines take care of the North. We got it made." We went down the side of the Island, you know, and found an old Japanese schoolhouse over there. We housed up there eating canned peaches and we thought our part of the war was over. But that was April 1st , like I said. That was the most memorable thing that happened on the first night was, unfortunately we were holed up there right off the Yon Tan Airfield, we dug a little hole and got in them, fox holes, one of the guys in the foxhole next to us had inadvertently pulled the pin of a grenade and it went off in the hole and killed all four of them. There was four guys in it. It was one of those things, you know. Could have happened to me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he playing around with it and pulled the pin or what?

Mr. Davis

It was purely accidental, you know, it just went off. I'm sure it was purely accidental. It is pretty hard to pull those pins out of there, so it made you wonder. I've often wondered about it, that maybe he was scared and ready to check out. We did have those Betty Bombers come by, at night, those two-engine bombers from Japan. They would come over, and it sounded like a washing machine. They would drop a few bombs and nothing that ever affected us.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were crossing the Island, did you have to fight your way across ?

Mr. Davis

Very little opposition at all. We had some, not very much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have to call the Naval gun-fire in?

Mr. Davis

We didn't call any Naval gun-fire in, none at all.

Mr. Misenhimer

You left on February 10th and didn't land until April 1st. That is about forty days.

Mr. Davis

That was forty-five days. I was on shipboard forty-five days.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get out of shape or did you exercise?

Mr. Davis

We exercised every day. We didn't spend a day without exercise. We all got up on deck and exercised.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many bunks there? How many high?

Mr. Davis

I think it was three. I wouldn't swear to that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever get sea-sick?

Mr. Davis

No. That's not the real sea-sickness, I'll tell you about that later on. I have a good story for you. After Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you went in, did you slide down the side of the ship into those cargo nets?

Mr. Davis

Yes. We loaded on the LCVPs and we went in on those landing boats and just like they show in the movies.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any shelling on the ships going in?

Mr. Davis

Not any. Not where I was. We didn't have any casualties, not at that point.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned the grenade, did anything else happen along the way there?

Mr. Davis

That's about all. We cut the Island half in two and it was a week, maybe ten days the Army went south. They didn't go hardly any place. They run right into Shuri Castle and all those Japs holed up in the caves and they were getting the hell beat out of them and we said, "Well, we are going down there and help them out." So that's when we turned south and eighty- two days later we got through. That's where most of the action was. The 6th Marines went north. They ran into some opposition, not much. They went to the north end of the island and in a weeks time they were already up there. But everything was down south. All the honey comb caves that the Japs had. All the artillery that they backed out on those narrow gauge tracks and shoot on top of the mountains, you know, with them. It was quite eventful. It seemed so long and drawn out. It was a slow process, trying to dig them out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now tell me about your attack to the south, one day you started your attack.

Mr. Davis

Well, we coordinated Naval gunfire, like I said, you know, we would lay down our information. They had P38s, big reconnaissance planes, and they had some little small airplanes that did some reconnaissance work, we got most of our information from that. Some of it, we would just go up and personal observation, you know, right near the front lines, to pick out targets that we wanted to shoot and we would coordinate that with the Naval ships in the Bay, in the Gulf out there. I remember one distinctive time they had what they called TOT, time on target, and those P38s had found a mass troop evacuation in some of those ridges, and they were moving all their equipment and men from one particular spot to another, and they got spotted by this P38. They sent the word to us and we called the TOT, which was the time on target, where every body shoots and all the shells explode at more or less the same time. When we got to that point it was unbelievable, the number of dead Japanese and the artillery pieces they had were hand drawn, you know. It was quite a moment, you know, and my part of the Okinawa Campaign, to see what damage we had done with those. Of course, a lot of that too was white phosphorous shells and that was really tough. It was hard on every body. Get some of that on them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now were the battleships firing or cruisers or what?

Mr. Davis

Cruisers. Shuri Castle was built too. The walls were thick. Some of those shells were just getting bounced off of it, we didn't penetrate it, you know. There wasn't too much in Shuri Castle, there wasn't too much there. They had such a honeycomb system, those ridges down to the south, that's where most of them were. That's where our main opposition came from. It was slow digging them out, too.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you at Shuri Castle?

Mr. Davis

Yeah. I was there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went by or whatever?

Mr. Davis

I went in. It was quite a place, as best I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was quite old too, I understand.

Mr. Davis

Oh yeah, it was real old. Real thick walls, they were thick walls, some made out of stone.

Mr. Misenhimer

What weapon were you carrying at this point?

Mr. Davis

I was still carrying the M1.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever have to use it?

Mr. Davis

Some, but I wasn't really into that part, except one time in there when "C" Company got shot up pretty bad and they ran short of personnel and they came and there was five of us went over to "C" Company as Infantrymen for three or four days, until they got some replacements. We didn't see any really close-in fighting, you know. Of course there were a lot of times they were receiving orders, like we did. We had a good bit of those, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

And their artillery, they way they were rigged up...

Mr. Davis

They would back them out on the back side of those ridges, on a little train tracks and they would fire several rounds and before we could get over there to see where they was coming, they would run them back inside the mountain, you know, or the hill, and we had a devil of a time ever figuring out how they were doing that, you know, without being seen. But, they finally spied them doing that, you know, that is called getting back in the hole.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you were you were acting as artillery observer, how close to the front line were you?

Mr. Davis

Some times we were right there with the front line troops. It was a lot of action going on, you know, it was tough. Very.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have an Officer?

Mr. Davis

Yeah. We had an Officer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Second Lieutenant? First Lieutenant?

Mr. Davis

First Lieutenant. Rodgers was his name. He was a Navy guy. He was in the Navy and then we had one named Peterson that was in the Marine Corps. He was Second Lieutenant Peterson. But Rodgers was the one who stayed with us, through nearly the entire Campaign. He was the one who did most of the coordination work.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a lot of equipment that you had to carry with you?

Mr. Davis

We carried, no not really, we carried those SCR radios and we had hand-generators that we carried and the little generator with a stand on it and you would sit there and crank it by hand to generate enough spark to make a radio report, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about maps? Did you have to carry them with you?

Mr. Davis

Yeah, we had lots of maps and I recall we had to protect the maps. I remember one time when I had diarrhea, real bad, I mean bad. I had to go, I just went out in the middle of this rice paddy and squat and doing my thing, you know, and I heard damned old machine gun putt, putt, putt and I thought he was shooting at me. That's not a very good position to be laying down, we were out on a limb. Personally, I didn't get hit. One of those eventful things was, I guess we were just about to NaHa as a part of this campaign, we were pretty close to the shore, and they had tombs over there, where they put their ashes, they buried their dead in these tombs. A lot of us, you are a part of the family, those tombs or mausoleum or what ever you want to call them. We would get in those and we would get in there and there were ashes in there or bones, whatever. We were just above NaHa when they mounted another offensive by getting a whole bunch of young troops in rubber boats. At night they would try to get in behind us just to split us up, where we would be cut off from everybody else, That's the first time I'd seen them use these night scopes. They were just brand new and you would just get the image through them. One of the guys picked out, these troops were down there in these rubber boats, they were pretty close to us and we called for flares so, we started shooting flares until it got daylight and we could see them better. We were up high and they were down low. We were in the prime spot.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you shooting at them?

Mr. Davis

Yeah, oh yeah we were shooting at them. We killed a lot of them, course I was doing some of that shooting too. It was unfortunate, some of those kids looked like they were fourteen, fifteen years old. They were young. And the rifles they were carrying, they still the grease in the barrels, you couldn't have shot them if you wanted to shoot them. They didn't have anything to shoot with, you know. It was unfortunate for them, fortunate for us, I guess. They were not seasoned troops, they were real green.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they Okinawans or Japanese?

Mr. Davis

They were Japanese. They weren't Okinawans, they were Japanese. It didn't amount to a great deal,

you know, it was a just a few less on their part. This was getting real close to the tail-gate. We was getting down to the end. Course the end of there was some of them wouldn't surrender, they jumped off the cliffs on the south end. Quite a few Japs committed suicide down there. I didn't get to the point to see that happen. I was told it happened, but I didn't see it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Lot of civilians too, I understand.

Mr. Davis

Yeah, civilians and the Japanese.

It seemed like it took forever, and now it seems like it was only yesterday, you know?

Mr. Misenhimer

You got quite a few notes there, anything in you notes there we haven't heard?

Mr. Davis

Not to this point, no. That's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

General Buckner, the Army General was killed there. Do you recall anything about that happening or anything?

Mr. Davis

His name was Buckner wasn't it?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, Buckner.

Mr. Davis

I remember them telling me about it. I remember when Ernie Pyle got killed, Ie Shima, which is another little island off Okinawa, and he was killed on my birthday, on the fifth or so. I had a birthday, it was somewhere along that time Ernie Pyle got killed. I remember them talking about that, what a good friend he was to the GI and everything, you know? I remember Buckner getting killed, remember them telling us about it, but of course Franklin Delano Roosevelt died too.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you hear about that?

Mr. Davis

Oh, yeah, right away. April the 12th, wasn't it?

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the reaction of the people when they heard about it?

Mr. Davis

Well, we were really sad, you know, he got us out of the depression and got to see better times. It was a sad time. But when you are nineteen years old you don't stay sad very long, I was twenty, that's about it, I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, next there on your notes.

Mr. Davis

Well, after the island was secure, which was June the 21st, 1945, that was it. We moved immediately to the north end of the island, set up camp and started training to go to Japan. There was no R & R, there was no R & R stuff, the R & R means to train again. We went up on the north end because they had some steep cliffs up there. We knew what we were going to look at when we went to Japan, the same situation. We were really training hard, they told us that is the next step, there's nothing else between here and there. We got Iwo and we got Okinawa, and the next step is Japan, and that's what we were training for. We kept training until they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We didn't know what happened. All at once there was people down on the beach, were we had came in, they started shooting guns and celebrating. When the fireworks went off we thought we were being re-invaded, you know, we didn't know what was going on. We finally got the word that they dropped a bomb, we didn't know what it was. We didn't know about an atomic bombs, on Hiroshima and for all intents and purposes the Japs had given up, it was over. After dropping those two bombs. That's what they were celebrating, and they killed a bunch of their own people doing that.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand, the shrapnel falling down.

Mr. Davis

Oh, yeah, killed a lot of people down in the beach area.

Mr. Misenhimer

The ships too, weren't they all firing?

Mr. Davis

Oh, yeah, everything. Every body just went nuts, you know. We were glad to hear that because we weren't looking forward to going to Japan, you know, not under those circumstances. We had no idea what an atomic bomb was, we didn't, you know. Once we found out what destruction it did,

you know, we could see why they would want to quit. That probably all that saved my life and a lot of other peoples lives. There would have been a lot of people killed going to Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did the 1st Marine Division take a lot of casualties there in Okinawa?

Mr. Davis

Not a great deal. I don't know how many, I don't have anything on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your outfit, your twenty?

Mr. Davis

Nobody. Nobody got killed, one Navy Corpsman assigned to us, got shot in his helmet, but it didn't go into his helmet, it just bounced off of it. We didn't have any casualties.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then after the big celebration, then what did you do?

Mr. Davis

Well, they said to get all this geared up we would have to go to China to accept the surrender of the Japanese and China. We found out we were going to Tientsin, China to accept the surrender of the Japanese in China. That was in early September, the first part of September or the last part of August. The bombs were dropped in August.

Mr. Misenhimer

August the 6th and the 9th. August the 13th was the actual surrender of Japan.

Mr. Davis

We found out we were going to China, we were not sure where we were going. They came and went loading detail, you know, to load up supplies to go to China. So I was one of those volunteers, there was sixty of us went on this AKA cargo ship and no sooner did we get on that thing when a typhoon alert was, we didn't know about typhoons, so we went out to sea in that AKA and ran out there into unbelievably rough weather, for three days and nights, you know, two-hundred mile an hour winds, high seas, forty to fifty foot seas, to the best of my knowledge. That's where everybody got seasick but me and the cook. I never did get seasick. I was on that ship prior to Okinawa forty-five days and never did get seasick. A lot of people did. Going over, especially on that old banana boat, every body got sick but me, I guess. But anyway, getting back to where we are, that typhoon was really something. It went right through the middle of Okinawa. We were out there for three days and nights

and it never did calm down. It was just mines floating everywhere. We never did hit one, we were lucky. The Good Lord was looking after us. We shot a lot of those things and exploded them. But anyway, we went back to Okinawa to pick up our Regiment.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which Regiment was this now?

Mr. Davis

Still the 1st Marines. Back to pick up our Regiment, and we got back to where we had started and there was small craft way up on the mountain, up there so high, the surge had gotten so high, all those boats up there and the only thing left on that island that the Marines had put on there was Quonset huts. All of outfits came down there soaking wet, every tent on that north end of the island blew away. There just wasn't nothing left. They didn't have any casualties, at least I don't remember any, none of our outfit anyway. Anyway, from there we went to China.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there another typhoon earlier than that while the war was still going on?

Mr. Davis

No. This is the one after it was over. It was right in the first of September, pretty close in there, to the 1st of September because September the 1st was the only typhoon we had.

Mr. Misenhimer

This could have come after you left.

Mr. Davis

It could have, yeah, it must have come later. Of course a typhoon is stronger than a hurricane. They estimated it was over two-hundred miles an hour. It was only one, that was enough.

Mr. Misenhimer

The second one was later.

Mr. Davis

It must have been after I left. Because we left there and went to Tientsin, China. Went up the river to get to Tientsin, I remember that. We landed at Tientsin, I guess it was the 3rd of September.

Mr. Misenhimer

How do you spell Tensin?

Mr. Davis

Tientsin, I believe that's right, that's the way I spelled it here. We went up the river and landed at

Tientsin. I'm not sure what river that was, we were housed in some old Japanese barracks. That's where we stayed while we were in Tientsin and we went through all the formalities of the surrender and all that, everybody had their best, of course we say green uniforms, we didn't have the blues, we just had...

Mr. Misenhimer

Your green dress, not your dungarees.

Mr. Davis

No, we had the green dress, we wore the green dress every body was wearing to show up nice to the Japanese, which we did. We stayed there as occupational troops.

Mr. Misenhimer

When the Japanese surrendered to you, what did you do with them?

Mr. Davis

I don't remember that, I guess they were just free to go home. I don't recall doing anything with them. It was just a, you know, the war was over and they could go home. We were going to go home once it was settled, to my knowledge.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you take weapons away from them? Did they turn weapons in?

Mr. Davis

I don't really recall.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there a large number of troops that surrendered to you?

Mr. Davis

Not a great deal, It was mostly a formality with the Officers and Staff.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Davis

We stayed there just as occupational troops until December the 27th, 1945. I got a good case of the kidney stones. They didn't have anything there to treat it with except morphine to deaden the pain. I stayed at the hospital two weeks there at Tientsin, then they shipped me out on a C47.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could be. Twin-engine?

Mr. Davis

Twin-engine C47. It had bucket seats in it I guess it was for the para-troopers, I guess that it was used for, it had bucket type seats in it. We came from Tientsin to Shanghai. This is really memorable. Probably one of the most memorable things ever to happen to me. On the way to Shanghai, one of the motors quit. We flew on in to Shanghai and they took us off the plane. We went to a hospital ship. We spent the night on a hospital ship while they worked on the airplane. The thing about the hospital ship, it was snow white. It was white on the outside and it was white on the inside. Every thing was white. We hadn't seen anything that clean. We went from the hospital ship back, the next day, and we took off again, we went to Okinawa. Real quick, you know, the same one. Same old plane, on to Okinawa and they worked on the motor. From there we had to go to Iwo. So we flew from Okinawa to Iwo and you know what happened. We were half way to Iwo and we got into a terrific rain storm and that motor quit again. We landed at Iwo at night, the middle of the night. You often have heard stories of how the sand was around there, it wasn't a fabrication. It was. Volcano, I guess caused it, the sand was black and it was hot. They worked on the motor again, we were going to go from there to Guam. Guam is a long flight, you know. A day and a half to get that motor running again, we went on a ship, got on a plane and flew to Guam. We went into Fleet Hospital 103 at Guam, and took treatment for kidney stones, and the usual thing they did at a Fleet Hospital. Finally passed all the kidney stones. They didn't operate, they just passed them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in quite a bit of pain all this time ?

Mr. Davis

Oh, yes. I got morphine twice a day. I almost turned into a junkie, but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you made this trip, were the same pilots flying each time?

Mr. Davis

The same guys, same guys. I asked him about that the second go from Shanghai to Okinawa, he said, "The thing is, as long as this plane has one good motor, this plane is good. It flies just as good on one as it will on two. We are going to be in big trouble if that other one goes out." I said, "Yeah, we sure will."

It was the same plane, same pilot all the way through. I stayed there at Guam until around the 1st of February. When I went back, I went to Tsingtao. I stayed at Tsingtao, and actually worked in an

office, a supply office. I could type so they made me a clerk, you know. I stayed there until on or about June 8th. I got enough points to come home. So we left China and came home on the USS Butner. I always thought it was Buckner, but it wasn't. Nice ship. It was a good ship, troop ship. It was a good one. Good food, good accommodations, and everything. We took the great circle route to come home. We went out by Japan and took advantage of the currents, you know. We landed in San Francisco, it took about sixteen days, so we landed in San Francisco in June, I guess it was. It only took us sixteen days, so it was the latter part of June that we landed in San Francisco. We stayed there a week, doing what we had to do, you know, book work and all this other stuff. From there I went to San Diego, California, for final discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date was your final discharge?

Mr. Davis

July 6th, 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you came home from there, is that right?

Mr. Davis

Yes, that's right. They tried to talk me in to reenlisting, I told them, "I believe I'll just go home for a while and think about it." I didn't think about it too long.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were PFC then?

Mr. Davis

I was PFC by then. I already got fifty-four dollars a month then. I had a hundred and fifteen dollars train money so on at discharge. Five cents a mile from San Diego, California to San Diego, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

From San Diego to San Diego.

Mr. Davis

Yeah. Isn't that something. I came home. My parents had moved from Freer to Premont. That's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all Battle Stars did you get?

Mr. Davis

Just Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any medals or ribbons?

Mr. Davis

Just Campaign Ribbon, Pacific. Good Conduct Medal, I was a good boy. Where I was you couldn't get into too much trouble.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get back with souvenirs?

Mr. Davis

I tried to bring back a forty-five that I swapped a cigarette for a forty-five. Japanese soldiers had forty-fives, I had it in a bag to bring home and they said they were going to have an inspection the day before I left to get discharged, so I turned it in, you know. If they had caught me I would probably still be in jail.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you get the sword from?

Mr. Davis

There was a guy gave it to me on Okinawa. He found it in a cave. One of them caves. Those caves were really elaborate. We went into them and they had kitchens, they had hospital, medical facilities, all kinds of medicine and everything. It was really neat. Where they had those things set up. It was pretty neat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the USO at any time?

Mr. Davis

Never did. Let me take it back, Seemed like to me, I think they came to Okinawa.

I think it was Kay Kaiser, I think we did have one. We just had one, I think it was on one of those USO tours. It was pretty big.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the Red Cross? Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Davis

No too good. They weren't not very good to the troops.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they do?

Mr. Davis

They seemed like they catered more to the Officers, that was my observations, they didn't do anything to me, but it seemed like they catered to the Officers more than they did to the enlisted people.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about mail? Did you get mail with any regularity?

Mr. Davis

Yeah, yeah. Reasonably good. The mail that I wrote, most of it went home in one piece, some of it they had cut out parts of it that I wasn't supposed to talk about, you know, my parents would get it and some of it was deleted. Yeah, mail was pretty regular. My parents stayed with it. I didn't write about Iwo Jima, but that's where I was and they hadn't heard from me in a week or two or three, and all at once I wasn't there, I was in Okinawa. Then they were concerned all over again.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your Commanding Officers, what did you think of them?

Mr. Davis

They were good. They were good and I had respect for them. Of course I got to talk to Chesty Puller. He was a rough, tough, burly guy. He was Chesty that's how he was. He was good. This Lieutenant Rodgers that we had with us, he was a fine person. He was just like the rest of us, there was no class distinction, you know. Of course, when you are in combat, there is none of that anyway. But the Officers were fine. I had no complaints, they were good to us.

I think it's kind of ironic that I didn't tell you before, just now thought of it. This Sergeant Clark that I had as my Drill Instructor at Parris Island, South Carolina, went on and ran into him in Okinawa, just about half-way through that campaign. I said something to him, "Sergeant Clark, imagine that, what are you doing over here?" He said, "Well, they got me just like they did everybody else." He was a short heavy-set guy, always red faced. I said, "How are you doing?" He said, "I'm doing alright." He said, "You look healthy enough." " Well, I'm healthy so far. I guess you trained me right." He was okay, he was tough, that's the way they had to be.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they wear the "Smoky Bear" hats like you see?

Mr. Davis

No, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean when you were in boot-camp.

Mr. Davis

No, they didn't wear those.

Mr. Misenhimer

What you consider was your most frightening time?

Mr. Davis

I guess when I was out there taking a crap in a rice paddy and the machine gun was shooting at me, was one of them. Between that, and not knowing whether, after the war was over, then get killed and be on that air plane, didn't know if it was going to make it from one island to the next.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would be scary.

Mr. Davis

Little bit hairy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you been to any reunions?

Mr. Davis

No, didn't have any. Didn't have any contact with anybody. That going back to reunions and talking about whatever, I never been to high school reunions or college reunions, either. It just wasn't my thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you came back, did you go back to A & I?

Mr. Davis

Yes, went back to school. Got a degree in Chemistry then stayed another year and got a degree as a Natural Gas Engineer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Dr. Dotterweich.

Mr. Davis

Dr. Dotterweich and Van Mooney, they were our instructors, but Dotterweich primarily. I went back to school on the GI Bill in 1946. Got out in '49.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on your trip down to Guadalcanal, it took about fifteen days to get there. Were you in a Convoy or by yourself or what?

Mr. Davis

It was just a couple of ships, maybe three, was all part of the same replacement draft. All of them weren't on the same ship, all of the ships that was with us was the replacement draft.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they have any kind of destroyer escort or anything like that?

Mr. Davis

No, I don't remember any of that. We just went on down there. I remember crossing the International Date Line, you know, they would lock on the Davy Jones thing, you know, they indoctrinated you, and all that stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Equator or the Date Line?

Mr. Davis

We crossed them both.

Mr. Misenhimer

Crossed them both. Did you get what they call a "Shell-back" when you crossed the Equator?

Mr. Davis

Oh, yeah. I had a little certificate on that, at that time and they had a hazing, a ritual from the guys who had been there before. It was sort of a fun thing, some diversion anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back home, what was your feelings? Did you see any change in this country, or how were things when you got back? Did you see any changes?

Mr. Davis

No, not really. I didn't go back to Freer. My parents had moved so I went to Premont and I had never been to Premont. I had passed through there. Every thing seemed about the same.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was about two years from the time you left until you got back.

Mr. Davis

Yeah, yeah. Of course it was a long train ride. I didn't go to San Diego, Texas. I went from San

Diego, California to San Antonio and I just got off there in San Antonio and caught the bus and came home. But as far as any obvious changes, none. That's only two years time, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

This is your brother now.(Showing me a picture.)

Mr. Davis

That's my brother. He lives in Colorado. He's retired from the Sun Oil Company. He decided he would come home by ship. So he got on the ship to come home instead of flying home, and the ship came to Okinawa, and when it got to Okinawa, it docked at Okinawa. He said, "I've got a brother here," he went to the Commanding Officer, "He is up on the North End of the Island and I would like to go visit with him." He said, "No, you can't get off. We are only going to be here a couple of days, we can't let you off. If we let you off now you will never get back on." So they wouldn't let him off. He was a Captain, my brother was. He wasn't very happy about that, so he didn't get to see me. But he left there and he went to Hawaii. When he got to Hawaii, he went back to the Commanding Officer, and said, "I've got a brother on this island, I'd like to go see him." "You got a brother on every Island in the Pacific." "No, just two." So they let him off there and he got to see my older. My older brother was in Honolulu, he got to see him. He didn't get to see me. It took him around sixty to sixty-five days on that ship to get home.

Tape transcribed by
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