

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR
(ADMIRAL NIMITZ MUSEUM)**

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**George L. Haggerty
Newport News, Virginia
March 25, 2004
3rd Platoon, G Company 2nd Battalion
1st Marines, 1st Marine Division
First wave, Peleliu
Three Purple Hearts
1st Marine Amphibious Corps**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is March 25, 2004. I am interviewing Mr. George L. Haggerty by telephone. His home address is 914 Prestwick Lane, Newport News, Virginia 23602. His phone number is area code 757-877-5099. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific Wars, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Mr. Haggerty, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today. Let me ask you the first question, what is your birth date?

Mr. Haggerty

November 16, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Haggerty

Brooklyn, New York

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your parent's names?

Mr. Haggerty

My father's name was George L. Haggerty, same as mine. My mother's maiden name was Marie Dunham.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Haggerty

I did not.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Haggerty

I went to high school in Garden City Heights High School, Long Island, New York.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Haggerty

1938.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you finished high school?

Mr. Haggerty

I worked in the summer at a summer job. Then I went to the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer

OK, and that's a military school as I recall.

Mr. Haggerty

Military College of South Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you graduate from there?

Mr. Haggerty

No, I didn't. I left there due to financial reasons after a year and a half. I transferred to the Long Island branch of New York University at the middle of my second year. That later became know as Hofstra College and University.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, I'm familiar with that name. Did you finish there?

Mr. Haggerty

No, I did not. I ran out of money after two semesters. Then I took a job in Newfoundland under contract with the U.S. Army; with the Newfoundland Base contractors in 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you grew up during the Depression and apparently the Depression had an effect on you and your family; what effect did it have?

Mr. Haggerty

Well, it was very strange. I had a very strange childhood. I don't think there is anyone who had a similar one. If you want to hear it, I'll give it to you and I'll try to cut it short.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure, I would be interested.

Mr. Haggerty

My father was wealthy until I was 12 years old. He was the general superintendent of Rogers & Haggerty Construction Company. My uncle was the president. They did most of the construction work on subways and tunnels under New York City. They built the New York side of the Holland Tunnel. My father's family had been in construction work and his older brother was the president of the company. He was a rags-to-riches type person; he was a self-made man and he was a multi-millionaire during the 1920's. Then I became 12 years old and for family reasons my father and my uncle had a break-up and split up. My father ended up with nothing. I went from being a rich kid at 12 to being a

poor kid at 13. It wasn't because of the Depression; but it was the fact that my father couldn't get another job. There weren't many jobs available and my uncle black-balled him.

Mr. Misenhimer

I see, that is a rather unusual story.

Mr. Haggerty

Yes and a separate story in itself

Mr. Misenhimer

So you went up into Newfoundland with a construction company there. You stayed there until 1941?

Mr. Haggerty

I stayed there until 1942. I signed a year and a half contract with the Army and we were building Fort Pepperell for the Army at St. John's, Newfoundland. When the war started I was in the construction company barracks. Actually, I was in the construction company mess hall when it was announced that Pearl Harbor had taken place. So, I went over to the Marine Barracks, 60 miles away, and tried to enlist in the Marine Corps in Argentia, Newfoundland. They didn't have the authority to enlist, plus the fact that I was under contract to the Army and they wouldn't let me go until my contract ran out. I was the fuel supervisor of the construction company. I handled all of the ordering and distribution of all fuel supplies; gasoline, oil, coal and anything that was fuel for the various machinery. So I had to serve out my time. I returned from Newfoundland to the United States in November of 1942. I had 30 days before I had to sign up with the draft board because I was under age when I went up to Newfoundland. I had 30 days to sign

up. But rather than sign up with the draft board, I thought I would choose my own service and enlist; and I did. I enlisted in the Marine Corps in December, 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the Marines?

Mr. Haggerty

I had some association with the Marines when I went to Citadel. If you know Parris Island is very close to Charleston and we had some Marines at that Marine Detachment on duty at the Citadel. So as a result I had read a lot of romantic books about the Marine Corps and I guess I was still young and romantic.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you went into the Marines where then?

Mr. Haggerty

In New York City, at the recruiting station in New York City.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Haggerty

Parris Island Boot Camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any time off between when you joined and when you reported to Parris Island?

Mr. Haggerty

We got a few days. They let us stay over Christmas and New Year's. We left the day after New Year's, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

So it was January 2, 1943 when you actually reported down to Parris Island?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, about there. It was the first week in January, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your experience in boot camp.

Mr. Haggerty

Boot camp was not too much of a shock to me because I had considerable military experience when I was a teenager in high school. I belonged to; at that time they had what they called the Junior Naval Militia. It was sort of like the high school ROTC programs now. I belonged to that and then the rifle team. I had been a Boy Scout. I had been active in all those types of things. Then of course, I had a year and a half at Citadel. The first year at the Citadel was a lot more strenuous than boot camp. I was up at Newfoundland after the war broke out. The Army took all of us construction workers and organized us into a volunteer military force. For a year, I was the First Sergeant of the regiment. So when I got to boot camp, the Marine Corps was not difficult for me at all. It was difficult for a lot of people; but it wasn't for me.

Mr. Misenhimer

In the movies we see how rough the Marine drill instructors were. How were your drill instructors?

Mr. Haggerty

They were rough; and to those that didn't take to it very well, they were very rough. If you just did what they said; and I knew enough to obey by that time. I didn't have any

problem with them, in fact, after a few weeks, they used to turn the platoon over to me for drilling. Actually I knew more than some of those drill instructors did. I was an honor graduate of my platoon.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was that boot camp?

Mr. Haggerty

Ten weeks I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything in particular that you recall from that time; any humorous incidents or anything that stands out?

Mr. Haggerty

Well, yes, I got a nickname actually from when I was assisting the drill instructors in drilling the platoon, the recruit platoon. One day I got carried away; I put them at port arms and we were supposed to go to right shoulder arms; left shoulder arms; port arms and so on; I left them at port arms and forgot to go to left and right shoulder. So I marched them for half an hour at port arms and I earned the nickname of "Port Arms". I always got a kick out of that. In fact, I would see some of them years later, and they would say, "How are you doing, Port Arms?" (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there?

Mr. Haggerty

We had those, what do you call them, those rounded huts?

Mr. Misenhimer

The Quonset huts?

Mr. Haggerty

Quonset huts, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else from your boot camp?

Mr. Haggerty

I guess there was always a humorous incident almost every day with somebody, but I can't remember all of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have inspections every week, or quite often?

Mr. Haggerty

Every day in the morning.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did many people get demerits or gigs or whatever they called them there?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yes. Another thing, the boots were treated pretty roughly you know. There was no hands off; the gentle policy didn't exist then. Several of them got beat up pretty good.

Mr. Misenhimer

By the drill instructors?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

At that point there was none of this hands-off type thing.

Mr. Haggerty

No, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, before we go on I forgot to do one thing. There is an agreement with the Nimitz Museum.

“Agreement read.”

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, it is.

Mr. Misenhimer

So when you finished boot camp, what happened then?

Mr. Haggerty

The Marine Corps had started, since I was the honor graduate of the platoon, I was sent to Camp Lejeune where they had organized an Infantry Training Battalion. The purpose of it was to get graduates from boot camp who they believed might have officer qualities. I was sent there and we went through, oh gosh, about a two month program there. The commander of that battalion was a Lieutenant Colonel Justice Chambers, who was a decorated hero of Guadalcanal. He was severely wounded and he was back and reassigned after he got out of the hospital. He commanded the Infantry Training Battalion. This was the forerunner of the present Infantry Training Regiment that still exists at Camp Lejeune. It specializes in infantry weapons and tactics and that sort of thing. I went through that and made Corporal there and then I was sent to, when I

finished that course, I was chosen to go to officer training at Quantico. As a PFC where everybody was a PFC, Officer's Candidate School; we went through eight weeks of Officer Candidate School; commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserves. I went through ten weeks of officer training at the Officer Basic School at Quantico.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date were you commissioned a Second Lieutenant?

Mr. Haggerty

June 16, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, go ahead with the rest of your story.

Mr. Haggerty

Then I went through ten weeks of officer training and then I was assigned back to Camp Lejeune in September, I believe it was, of 1943. I was assigned to be a student at a Combat Infantry Intelligence School. I went through ten weeks of training of that; finished that and I was assigned to a replacement battalion as a platoon leader. We proceeded in January of 1944 to Norfolk, Virginia where we embarked on the USS *Extavia*, a converted United Fruit liner. I remember very clearly because it was a sister ship of the ship that my father went to France on in World War I. So you can imagine how old it was. They had welded a bunch of bunks up in the hold, the cargo hold; which when we got into bad weather over in the South Pacific fell all apart. We got on the *Extavia* in January and we proceeded down the coast. We had destroyer escorts of course because the Germans subs were quite active along the coast and in the Caribbean at that

time. We were all blacked-out and it was fine when we boarded ship in Norfolk because it happened to be snowing when we boarded ship. By the time we got down to Cuba and Haiti and the passageway there, the weather was kind of warm. Being all blacked-out and buttoned-up and no air and the heat; it became quite uncomfortable. We were about 35 days enroute to New Caledonia; Noumea, New Caledonia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's talk a little bit about your trip down there to the Canal. Was there much seasickness?

Mr. Haggerty

We went between the passageway between Cuba and Haiti and we got in the middle of the Caribbean and one of the boilers blew up on the ship; right in the middle of the night and lit up the whole sky. We were trying to be quiet; and then everybody knew where we were at. The destroyers immediately took off and left us and we went on, on our own at about 3 or 4 knots to the Canal Zone. Went through the Canal on the Atlantic side and we got to the harbor on the Pacific side off of Panama City and we layed over there for about three days while they repaired the boiler. Then we went on to New Caledonia. We went quite a bit south of Hawaii and the Samoa's. We were south of Samoa and we ran into a hurricane. The hurricane blew off all the life boats and life rafts that were on the ship. So there we were, 1500 troops on this old ship with no life rafts, with no life nothing. Then we lost the other boiler due to the hurricane. Captain Hadden was a good skipper because he kept the ship headed into the wind. We didn't broach it; if we had broached we would have been gone. We didn't broach and he kept up enough speed; he got about 2 to 3 knots forward speed out of the ship; which we were actually pulling back

about 10 knots because of the wind. So he had to keep up enough speed to keep us headed into the wind. The hurricane left and we continued on about 3 or 4 knots all the way to Noumea, New Caledonia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that where the bunks and all broke loose, in that hurricane?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, and everything stopped. The plumbing went out, bunks went out; everything, the ship was a mess.

Mr. Misenhimer

What accommodations did you have on that ship as an officer?

Mr. Haggerty

We were not in the cargo hold; although we had to go down in the cargo hold to keep the troops under control because they were close to mutiny actually. They had one compartment in the ship where they had all the officers of the battalion except the commanding officer and a couple of his staff. We were in bunks. I would say the compartment they had us in was about 12' x 15'. There were about 30 officers in there. The bunks were three tiers high and close together. That's where we were.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it like for the enlisted men?

Mr. Haggerty

They were in these welded cots that they put up in the cargo hold that fell down. They were about 6 or 8 bunks high.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh, it was terrible. Terrible seasickness.

Mr. Misenhimer

I suppose that makes quite a mess there in the hold when they all got sick.

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yes, and then the plumbing backed up. We didn't have any water to drink for about the last 10 days. We drank; they had a whole bunch of papaya juice on this ship, so we drank papaya juice. A lot of the men were dehydrated. There was one Second Lieutenant officer that was in critical condition. It was kind of a bad trip, but we made it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you unescorted at this point, or had the destroyers come back?

Mr. Haggerty

We were unescorted.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, so you were just taking your chances.

Mr. Haggerty

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

What unit were you in at this point?

Mr. Haggerty

I was in a replacement battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, so you hadn't been assigned to a regular unit yet?

Mr. Haggerty

No. When I got to Noumea, New Caledonia I was assigned to 1st Marine Amphibious Corps. I was assigned to a camp about 10 or 12 miles outside of Noumea. I was assigned to be Commanding Officer of a Seabee company, a construction battalion company. They had been brought over there separately from us. They actually just got there a few days after we did. They had been drafted; of course, road construction type people and they had no military training whatsoever. So, with my background of military training and being First Sergeant of a construction company, volunteer company in Newfoundland; they figured that I would be a good one to train them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now I understand that most Seabees were older than the others, is that correct?

Mr. Haggerty

That's right, yes, most of them. My First Sergeant was a Chief Petty Officer, who was brand new to the Navy but he was an older fellow. I was 23 then I guess, and he was about in his 40's. But I had been with construction people all my life. My father was in the construction business. I worked for a construction company; I was a First Sergeant in construction. So I talked their language and got along great with them. We had a wonderful time. I trained them for about 4 or 5 weeks. It was really a very pleasant experience.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now New Caledonia I believe is French, or at that time was French; is that right?

Mr. Haggerty

It was at that time yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the reception from the French people there?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh very nice. We had great relations with them. Now, Admiral, what's his name with 1st Marine Amphibious Corps, we were under him, who is the Admiral, Bull?

Mr. Misenhimer

Bull Halsey?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, Bull Halsey's headquarters were there. Our 1st Marine Amphibious Corps was under him at the time. After I finished training the Seabees they sent me up to Pavuvu in the Russell Islands to join the 1st Marine Division.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now back on New Caledonia, what did you live in there?

Mr. Haggerty

Tents.

Mr. Misenhimer

How large was your Seabee company?

Mr. Haggerty

It was about 150.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Mr. Haggerty

Terrible. It was terrible; except for when we went into town and got some French food. The French made some wonderful steak and eggs. I think we had the worse food; I'm very easy on food. I'll eat just about anything. But there was one thing I could not eat and that was rare for me. We had goat meat from Australia. I'm telling you that was the worse smell when it was cooking and eating it. (laugh) It was like shoe leather.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it goat or was it mutton?

Mr. Haggerty

No, mutton was good. When we could get mutton, I loved that. Goat meat; I couldn't take that. Nobody ate it. I don't know why they even bothered. Nobody ate it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went from there up to Pavuvu?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel up to there?

Mr. Haggerty

By plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

The entire company?

Mr. Haggerty

No, they didn't go with me. I don't know whatever happened to them. They were

assigned to a Seabee battalion somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

So up there then you joined the 1st Marine Division.

Mr. Haggerty

I went solo and as a matter of fact, I flew to Guadalcanal and I went on a landing craft from there to Pavuvu.

Mr. Misenhimer

You landed at Henderson Field, did you?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, that's where we landed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything that you recall about Guadalcanal at that point? What it looked like? Much wreckage or anything?

Mr. Haggerty

No, not at that point although I spent some time in the hospital at Guadalcanal after Pavuvu and I got to see more of it. Then we had another training exercise at Guadalcanal for about a month before we went to Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you joined the 1st Marine Division there and what regiment and what battalion?

Mr. Haggerty

I reported into the Division Adjutant's office. They sent me quickly on to the 1st Marine Regimental Headquarters, where I reported into the Adjutant of the 1st Marine Regiment. Then I was taken to Colonel Puller's tent and introduced to him. He wanted to meet all

new incoming officers. I met him in his tent. He was asleep; we had to wake him up. He was in a pair of khaki shorts, period; that's all. Nothing but khaki shorts. I introduced myself to him; he introduced himself to me and he said, "Have you had any combat experience?" I said, "No sir, not yet." He said, "Ok, I'll assign you a regiment. I'm sending you to the 2nd Battalion and they'll take it from there." So, I said "Thank you sir" and I went to the 2nd Battalion and checked in. The Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion introduced me to Colonel Russell Honsowetz, who was the Battalion Commander at the time. I was assigned to the 3rd Platoon, George Company.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have at this point?

Mr. Haggerty

Second Lieutenant.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you arrive there/

Mr. Haggerty

That was around April or May of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened there?

Mr. Haggerty

We immediately went into training for Peleliu. We didn't have any of the conditions; Pavuvu was terrible. The main thing I remember about Pavuvu was the land crabs and the coconuts falling. We had several casualties from men being hit in the head with falling coconuts. We were bivouacked at a coconut plantation. We had land crabs and

rats all over the place. We had to use mosquito netting on all of our cots. We didn't have any; incidentally, we didn't have any mattresses when I first got there. We just had the bare cots.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now this is the folding Army cot?

Mr. Haggerty

The folding canvas Army cot, yes, with no mattress. The Navy hadn't; the logistics hadn't supplied the mattresses yet. The officers, we could have had them but Colonel Puller wouldn't allow any officers to have mattresses until he had mattresses for every enlisted man.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of that policy?

Mr. Haggerty

It was alright; it was fine with me.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think it's a good policy.

Mr. Haggerty

I could sleep without them; I could even go without the cot. That was good for morale and leadership; good leadership.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think Puller did look out for his enlisted men, is that right?

Mr. Haggerty

Well, he did in training and at camp. I'll go no further than that. He believed in saving

the men for battle; not in saving them from battle; saving them for battle.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, right. I caught the distinction.

Mr. Haggerty

We trained and in one of our training exercises, we had to use the amphibious tractors and so on and jumping over the sides and assaulting make believe beaches and all of that, I happened to land on some coral and broke my right ankle about two weeks before we were due to go to Peleliu. It wasn't a bad break; but it was a break. They just strapped it up with the high boots to wear. I didn't want to miss Peleliu so I just went with it. I've suffered from it ever since though. That ankle is in bad shape at my present age.

Mr. Misenhimer

You're 83 now I believe, right?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, I'll be 84 this year.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you recall from your time on Pavuvu?

Mr. Haggerty

We did a lot of hard training. It was good training. It was training for small units. We didn't have enough space to have enough coordinated training between the battalions. Each battalion had a good training program, but we didn't really have a good regimental training program because there wasn't enough room. It wasn't good for division training at all; which we corrected before we went to Okinawa. We took each regiment down individually to Guadalcanal for about 3 or 4 weeks of training; so that you could operate

as a regiment. That was the drawback of Pavuvu for Peleliu.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, I've interviewed a number of people who have been to Pavuvu and no one spoke favorably of it.

Mr. Haggerty

It was a rat's hole. It belonged to the land crabs and to the rats; not the human beings.

I'll tell you one thing that was very interesting there. Before we went to Peleliu, Bob Hope came to Pavuvu to put on a show. We had a small landing strip for Piper Cubs and he came in; he and his troop in about three Piper Cubs. He made it to come and entertain the 1st Marine Division, which I thought was very nice. It was kind of risky. He had to fly up from some little island between Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands. They tried to dissuade him from doing it; but he insisted on doing it. It was very nice.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it Tulagi that he had to go to get there?

Mr. Haggerty

No, I'm not sure; it might have been. I just don't recall.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else there on Pavuvu you recall?

Mr. Haggerty

I had a few additional duties as Combat Cargo Officer for my company. I had to load my company and it's supporting arms onto an LST. Each company had an LST. We had some supporting tanks that went with us, a couple of tanks and all the vehicles that we needed to go along with the supporting equipment. I went to a two week Combat

Loading School at Pavuvu. I loaded a ship and just thanked God that I got it loaded right.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned the food was bad on New Caledonia; how was the food on Pavuvu?

Mr. Haggerty

The food on Pavuvu was just all canned stuff and powdered; powdered milk, powdered this, powdered that, canned this, canned that. The cooks and the people in the galleys did a pretty good job in dressing it up.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave there?

Mr. Haggerty

We left there around the first of September.

Mr. Misenhimer

The actual invasion of Peleliu was .

Mr. Haggerty

September 15. My platoon was in the assault wave, assault company, assault battalion; attack regiment. That was the first wave of infantry troops.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did that trip take up to Peleliu?

Mr. Haggerty

I can't remember exactly when we left. It was either the latter part of August; we must have left by the 1st of September because I know it took two weeks or more. That was harrowing up there on the LST. They had these big pontoons on each side. They carried them on the sides of the LST so they could take them off when they got to the island to

form them into docks for unloading equipment and supplies. We had these big things on each side. I tell you when that ship rolled, because the LST has a pretty round bottom you know, we got into some pretty rough weather. It's a long ways between Pavuvu and Peleliu. If you look at the map you can see it is quite a distance. We ran into a lot of rough weather. We were really rolling; sometime up to the maximum. Every time we would roll from one side to the other these pontoons would be out of the water and then they would come down and hit the water and the whole ship would just shudder. We though the whole thing was just going to fall apart.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the pontoons carried horizontal or vertical?

Mr. Haggerty

They were strapped onto the sides along the long part of it, just under the side of the ship; they had to be vertical under the side of the ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you carry any type of landing craft on top of your LST?

Mr. Haggerty

We had, in the hold; we had these craft that we were going to land in. We had landing track vehicles, the LTV's, we had on our LST all our tracked vehicles; amphibious tractor. They went out the prow and down into the water. That was about a 3 or 4 mile ride in the darn thing and they didn't go very fast. A couple of them sunk; not from my ship, but some of the others lost them. Then of course the tanks, a couple of tanks stayed in there until the LST could pull up to one of the docks.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many of you Marines were on this LST?

Mr. Haggerty

Our whole company was on there: 250.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's pretty crowded on an LST.

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yes it was crowded. There wasn't nothing on deck but Marines. That's where they had to sleep; on deck.

Mr. Misenhimer

For two weeks that would really be something.

Mr. Haggerty

There was nowhere on the LST to sleep.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, and the latrines are not very many on there or anything like that?

Mr. Haggerty

We just had to share the ones that the LST had. It was a mess. It wasn't a cruise ship (laugh).

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm assuming you went in a large convoy up there?

Mr. Haggerty

Right, the whole division.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about when you go there.

Mr. Haggerty

We got there on the morning of September 15. We disembarked from the LST in our amphibious tractor. I had most of my platoon in one tractor. I didn't have them all; I had about a squad and a half. My Platoon Sergeant had the other squad and a half in another amphibious tractor. We went in abreast. We got off the LST around 6:00 or 6:30 in the morning. We didn't hit the beach until around 8:30. It was a long ways to go in. We had to cross the coral reefs. We were on amtracs because you couldn't get the landing craft over the coral reefs. The tractors went over the coral reefs. Then when we got over the coral reefs, which were I guess about 500 yards out from the beach, from the shore line, the Japanese started opening fire on us with all kinds of artillery and mortars and machine guns. It took us about half an hour more to get that last 500 yards. We finally got in but we lost a lot, we lost a lot of them. It was pretty much of a mess; but I was fortunate, my whole platoon made it in. We ran across the beach and machine gun fire was laid down by the Japs. We got across that; I think a couple of men got hit there. We jumped into a, most jumped into a; the Japanese had built about 25 yards in from the shore where the water line was, they built these tank traps. These big tank traps so that when we brought the tanks in they could catch us because the tanks would fall into them and we would be immobilized. But we ran into them for protection from the machine gun fire. That didn't last more than five minutes, if that long, because they had those tank traps; they had mortars and artillery zeroed in on them. So as soon as we got into them they let go with the mortars and artillery. We had to get out of there in a hurry and move inland, which

we did. But we lost quite a few people doing it. The casualties were beginning to mount up quickly.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you the first people to hit the shore, or were there others ahead of you?

Mr. Haggerty

The only thing that was ahead of us; the night before they sent some SEAL type people in; underwater people. They didn't actually go ashore; they just tried to clear the area between the coral and the shoreline. There were a couple of armored; you know they had armored some of the LVT's, put 37 mm canon on them; they were kind of mini-tanks although they didn't have the armor of the tanks; they just had the skin of the LVT. There were a couple of them that went in; but they were knocked out before they got any further. We were the first troops; the first boots on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened then?

Mr. Haggerty

We proceeded inland and we got held up by orders at the edge of the airfield. That afternoon, it was after noon time by then; we were still receiving casualties; the fight was still going on. All around us, over us planes were still hitting their targets; they were still firing their artillery. We brought some of our artillery and we were firing back at them. They were shooting at us; we were shooting at them. Late that afternoon, the Japanese launched a combined infantry attack. It was very poorly executed. It wasn't coordinated and I feel sorry for the Japs because it was a total failure and they were just about annihilated by our gunfire. It was scary for a little while. We didn't know how it was

going to turn out. One of their tanks came right through my platoon area and landed in a ditch in back of my platoon area. The occupants tried to get out but they were shot down as soon as they tried to get out. The tank ammunition caught on fire and it was turning dark. We spent the night in shell holes with that tank ammunition popping; blowing up all night. *(tape ended)*

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, so this tank came through, review that.

Mr. Haggerty

One of them came right through my platoon. I tried to stop it with a Thompson sub-machine gun which I carried. These weren't the huge tanks that you see today. They could even call them tankettes in a way. They were very small thin-skinned tanks. They had a small canon, not 37 mm maybe a 40 mm something like that. That was the best they had; but a Thompson sub-machine gun was not an adequate weapon to stop one. I jumped into a shell hole as it went by and it missed me by about 4 or 5 feet and went into a ditch behind me. It foundered in the ditch and everybody turned their weapons on the occupants as they tried to get out.

Mr. Misenhimer

What caught it on fire?

Mr. Haggerty

The ammunition blowing up. When it was fired on, we must have hit some of the shells. The BAR's or the machines guns or whatever hit some of the ammunition stored in the tank and set it off.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the heaviest weapon you had in your platoon?

Mr. Haggerty

BAR, Browning automatic rifle.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did your tanks finally get ashore?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh, I tell you, I didn't see any tanks of ours. I don't know when they got ashore because I didn't see any of our tanks until the fourth or fifth day. I know they were there but I don't know where they were.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had mentioned that you had some on your LST but of course they didn't join you at that point in time. What kind of tanks did you have, the M3 Stuart, or what was it?

Mr. Haggerty

Mostly the old Sherman. I don't know what they were; I wasn't a tanker.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened next then?

Mr. Haggerty

We stayed there in that position, at the edge of the airfield for that night. Then we jumped off on the attack the next morning and moved on up eastward along the edge of the airfield in a tree line. It wasn't much of a tree line because all of the trees were blown down. We moved up along the airfield and we were stopped up short; the Japanese had harder resistance around where their command post was. It was fairly close to the

foothills of the razorback coral ridge that ran the length of the island. We stayed there; we were held up that night. We had to do a lot of consolidating of positions and coordinating our movements with the adjacent battalions and regiments. We had three regiments, the 1st, the 5th and the 7th, with three battalions, each battalion was beside us so we had a lot of coordinating to do. We stayed and held up there the second night and then I was hit in the leg by mortar shrapnel. About the middle of the night they evacuated me to a ship. It wasn't really that serious, I didn't think. They insisted that I get help; a lot of blood, but it wasn't too serious. I went out that night to a converted cargo ship, an AKA. They converted the AKA's into hospital ships you know, temporary hospital ships. I was on one of those. I stayed over night, the next night. The next morning I told the doctor, "My leg has stopped bleeding and I can walk on it. I would like to go back in." They didn't want to let me go but I insisted, being young and romantic. I got an LCVP to take me back in. A young sailor, Coxswain, I don't think he was over 17 years old. He was driving the LCVP. I got in it and proceeded in it and he said, "We have to go north of where you landed because I can't get across the coral reef. They told me I can get into the beach north of that area." We were going in and we got nearly to the beach and there was an LCI, I don't know if you're familiar with an LCI, it's a Landing Craft Infantry, they used them a lot. They installed a rocket on those. They became rocket ships. They had these banks of rockets that they would launch. We passed one about, oh we were about a quarter of a mile out from the shoreline and we passed it. We weren't over a couple of hundred yards from it. I don't know what happened, but all of a sudden that ship just blew up; came up out of the water. I could see 10 feet of sky between the water and the bottom of the ship. Then it came down and

it fell apart and sunk. I don't know what happened. We proceeded on in to the beach. I asked the Coxswain if he knew which beach he was on. He said he had no idea. So I told him, "Pull up over here. It looks pretty good." So he pulled up and let me out. He let me out and he went on back.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you the only person on the LCVP?

Mr. Haggerty

Yeah, I was the only one there. You see how fouled up war is. So I saw a road and I knew that; I was pretty familiar with the island having studied the maps for several months; so I knew approximately where I was. But if I had a map I could map the place. For starters I figured out that my battalion was inland from there. I figured that the boat headed not too far from where I was wounded the night before and I proceeded to walk along the road. I didn't see anything, no Americans, no Japanese nothing. I'm going along and all of a sudden off to the right, I guess I had walked about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile I saw troops. I thought well, they must be mine. At first they thought I was Japanese and I had to convince them that I wasn't Japanese. I came in and there was my Battalion Exec and the Battalion Command Post. He said, "Where did you come from?" I said, "I just came across that road there." He said, "We don't own that. That's still owned by the Japanese. They're all over there." I said, "I didn't see a single one." So anyway, he was astounded at that; as was I. He said, "Your company is up at the foot of Bloody Nose Ridge if you want to join them go ahead." I said OK and he pointed out which way to go. I went up and found my Commander; his name was Joseph Fournier. He was of French-Canadian descent. His home was in Vermont, the southern part of Vermont, just below the border.

He was a Guadalcanal vet and a Cape Gloucester veteran. He was a First Lieutenant. I joined him and he said; "We've only got about," we went in 250 strong with 6 officers; he said, "You and I are the only officers left." In the time that I had been gone we lost all of the rest of the officers, either dead or wounded. He said, "We've only got about 20 men." He said, "I've been trying to get up on that ridge there across the little plateau in front of it. We've lost a lot of men trying to do it." Colonel Puller insisted that we keep attacking it. So he said, "If you can get half a dozen men to volunteer to go with you, there is a field-piece, the Japanese have a field-piece up there which is on tracks because they run it in and out of the caves. There are all kinds of machine gun nests around it and the Japanese are entrenched around it. If you can get up there and get that field-gun out of there and stop them from firing at us, I'll see that you get a Navy Cross." So, being young and vulnerable, or gullible rather, I said, "Ok, I'll try it." I got six volunteers; a couple of them I knew; some of them I didn't know at all. I think there were two of them from my platoon. I got these fellows together. We had to cross a flattened space on a plateau in front of this ridge where the gun was, where the field-gun was. That was about a flat open area that we had to cross of about 150 yards. I said, "We'll go creep and crawl and run in spurts, you can take my hand signals. When I tell you to run, run and hit the deck; run about 25 yards and then hit the deck and then we will make it difficult for them to make targets out of us." Well, we got up there. Oh yeah, Lieutenant Fournier, the Company Commander told me, "When you get up there, knock out the field-gun." He said, "You signal to me, I'll be here. I'll get all the rest of the volunteers that I can and we'll come up and consolidate the position." I said Ok and we went on. We got just up on the plateau and I could see why they hadn't taken the position because there were a

couple of concrete foundations from some Japanese buildings up there. I could see why nobody had gotten up there because the whole area was littered with Marine bodies. As a matter of fact, I'll never forget I saw two Marines that were behind this wall that was burned out and I ran up and hit the deck in between them to get some ideas from them. I thought maybe they knew what was going on; but they were both dead. So I couldn't get anything from them. We proceeded on up. I don't know how all the people died; when I got up to the foot of the ridge, I only saw three people from mine. I think the other three were either killed or wounded. We crawled our way up the field and they were throwing hand grenades. We threw several hand grenades up there and I think we got it because it stopped firing. They had been firing mortars and hand grenades and in fact, some of the grenades that we threw up there they threw back down at us. We crawled up out of this field when they stopped firing. Then I had two men left and there was kind of a lull in this little battle. I got up and I said, "Let's signal the company that they can come on back. I mean tell Joe Fournier to come on up. We'll hold this position until he gets here and then we can consolidate." So, we signaled and signaled and signaled and nothing happens. Some armored LVT's come up. They had armored these LVT's with 37 mm canons. Two of them came up and they started firing at us. They thought we were Japanese apparently. They didn't know that we were up there. They had no idea. The only one that knew was Joe Fournier the Company Commander. He's the only one that knew we were up there. He didn't tell anybody else that we were up there. He had been told by the Battalion Commander to try to get up there; who was told by the Regimental Commander to try to get up there. These plans were not relayed back to them at all. I held on and then a couple of Japanese; a Japanese officer and a couple of others came out

of a cave and tried to capture us. We didn't fall for that; the BAR man cut into them right away. So we waited a little while longer and our LVT's were continuing to fire at us. I said, "We've got to get out of here. Right over there looks like the best place to slide down the side of the plateau." I sent my two enlisted men down and then when they were down, I slid down after them. My plan was to get back to Fournier and find out what had happened and ask him why he hadn't brought the reinforcements. I quickly found Lieutenant Fournier on the edge of the plateau with the top of his head; he had apparently been looking over because he had a little hole between his eyes and the whole back of his head had been blown off. That's why he didn't come up to reinforce us and nobody else knew we were there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had taken out this field-piece up there then, right?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

But the Japanese got it back, or where you able to disable it?

Mr. Haggerty

We disarmed it with hand grenades but then I got hit by some more mortar shells. As a matter of fact by hand grenades that landed pretty close to me. I had several wounds from hand grenades. I went to get patched up and the Corpsman insisted that I go back to the ship and the battalion was through anyway. That was the end of the war for my battalion. We didn't have any more troops left. We lost our combat capability and that was it. I went back to the ship again and they flew me back to Guadalcanal to the

hospital. I spent about three weeks in the hospital in Guadalcanal and then rejoined the division at Pavuvu; what was left of it. They were reorganizing and getting replacements and all these other things. When I got back to the division I checked in and right away was; Major Charlie Brush was the Battalion Executive Officer. I later became good friends with him. He had tried to get one of my men a Silver Star. When I mentioned to him that Fournier had promised me a Navy Cross, he said, "Let's see what I can do, see what I can get for you." He said, "We thought you were dead. We didn't know that you were in the hospital." Communications were not good in those days. He said, "We had no idea that you were alive." Then he came back to me and said, "I tried my best, but all the Bronze Stars, Silver Stars and Navy Crosses; we've used up our quota. They won't give us any more." So it was not by heroism, but by quota. I was enlightened at that time to what it was all about.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to Peleliu for a little bit. Let's talk about Peleliu a little bit more before we go on. We talked the other day about the necessity for taking Peleliu. How necessary was it to take Peleliu?

Mr. Haggerty

At that time, I had no idea.

Mr. Misenhimer

But I mean your thinking now though.

Mr. Haggerty

Since the research that I have done for many years now, 60 years of research or more, reading about it; I think it was terrible the lives lost. It was a terrible decision.

Mr. Misenhimer

Whose decision was it?

Mr. Haggerty

You know I really don't know, but from what I read it was pretty much the decision of Admiral Nimitz.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's my understanding too that it was Nimitz; even though some people blame MacArthur it really was Nimitz' decision.

Mr. Haggerty

I'm not going to blame anybody because I don't have any evidence that would hold up. All I know is hearsay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Same thing I read books on it. Now let me ask, on Peleliu, was that the place, on the, I think it may have been on the west side, there was a kind of a bay there with a pier sticking out that they tried to take.

Mr. Haggerty

I believe yes, I think so. I think that was under the; I think the 5th Marines took that, the 5th Marine Regiment.

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm not sure I just remember reading about, they talk about that pier sticking out there and the problems they had there and all.

Mr. Haggerty

That was on the other side of the landing site. The island was only about a mile and half to two miles wide.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, very small island really.

Mr. Haggerty

Very small.

Mr. Misenhimer

And the total casualties were horrendous.

Mr. Haggerty

Oh, they were. The place was littered with bodies.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anyway, you're back at Pavuvu and you're getting reorganized there.

Mr. Haggerty

I was reassigned; came back and they had reassigned a replacement platoon to my platoon in George Company. Shortly after that, Charlie Brush said, "Since you couldn't get any medals with your battalion, to make up will this satisfy you? I'm going to recommend you for regular commission." Which in those days was considered pretty good stuff. He said, "I'll recommend you for regular commission and that's the best that I can do at this time." I said, "Ok." I also made First Lieutenant. So I got recommended for regular commission and made First Lieutenant. I don't care about the medals it really doesn't bother me. A lot of people said, "Why don't you put in for, you know, this thing?" I don't really need the medal. There were too many men that served. I'm an

Infantry person and there were too many Infantry troops that deserve all kinds of medals that Generals and Admirals and Colonels and Navy Captains don't deserve, that never get them and get killed. Their only reward is getting killed. Medals and ribbons, the old song goes, medals and ribbons mean nothing to me. We got back and reorganized; I got assigned as Machine Gun Platoon Leader in Fox Company. The Machine Gun Platoon Leader is sort of like an S-3 Operations Officer because your machine guns; you've got three machine squads and those machine gun squads are each assigned to a rifle platoon. So while I'm the Machine Gun Platoon Leader responsible for the training and administration of the machine gun squads, the three squads. The squads are distributed to the rifle platoons during exercises and combat. They are under combat operational control of the Rifle Platoon Leaders. That leaves the Machine Gun Platoon Leader free to assist the Company Commander with any operations.

Mr. Misenhimer

In a machine gun squad, how many weapons and how many men?

Mr. Haggerty

They were all light machine guns in the rifle company. The heavy machine gun company was partnered with a battalion, under the battalion control. And that again was broken up among the rifles as needed. All my squads were light machine guns.

Mr. Misenhimer

And a light machine gun is an air-cooled 30, or what is it?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, and air-cooled 30 caliber. The heavies are of course the water cooled.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many machine guns in a squad?

Mr. Haggerty

Two.

Mr. Misenhimer

So in your platoon there would have been six machine guns then?

Mr. Haggerty

Right. There would be two for each rifle platoon. You could distribute them a different way if you wanted to, you know if the situation called for it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure, but that was the standard way?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, that was the standard way.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Haggerty

We trained for Okinawa and went down to Guadalcanal for about three weeks and trained down there as a battalion and as a regiment. We had a regimental exercise down at Guadalcanal. There were still some Japanese troops in the hills; they were spotted by some people. Then we went back to Pavuvu. Each regiment had to go down and spend about three weeks at the Canal and train as a regiment; regimental sized exercises.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, your battalion was practically new people at this point, right?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yes, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Very few of them had been through the other.

Mr. Haggerty

That was very much so.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was Puller still commander?

Mr. Haggerty

No. He went back to the States after Peleliu. I don't know exactly what happened. He got his medals. There was some dissatisfaction among some of the hierarchy about the medals. The Division Commander was under quite a bit of criticism; had been and still is.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who was the Division Commander there?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh, what was his name?

Mr. Misenhimer

It wasn't Smith was it?

Mr. Haggerty

No, actually he held the thing together. O. P. Smith was a Brigadier General. He was the assistant Division Commander. Let me get you his name. I have been reading books on this for many years. I've got the Marine Corps monograph on Peleliu and Okinawa both.

Major General Julian C. Smith.

Mr. Misenhimer

I thought it was a Smith that might have been there.

Mr. Haggerty

Oh no, hold it, wait a minute. He was involved, he was the Expeditionary Commander. The Amphibious Corps Commander was General Geiger, an aviator. The Division Commander was Major General William H. Rupertus, affectionately called Roop the Snoop by troops and Brigadier General Oliver Smith was the Assistant Division Commander. He was a fine officer, General Smith; one of the best. He was a scholar and a gentleman.

Mr. Misenhimer

I had the good fortune to meet General Geiger at a seminar at the Nimitz Museum several years back. I just said hello, I didn't get to know him at all. He was one of our speakers there. We had a seminar on the Cactus Air Force.

Mr. Haggerty

You know, a strange thing that I mentioned to you earlier that Halsey had his headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia. I never did meet him there; I wasn't at that level. But, after the war I was assigned to a Marine detachment to the Naval Ordnance Plant in West Virginia and I would see all of the Marine detachments. He came to visit the Naval Ordnance Plant and a reserve company that had been organized in Charleston, West Virginia. He was entertained by the Captain of the Ordnance Plant and of course I was invited to the reception and everything. I met Halsey there. Pretty slick; it's a funny funny world. That was in 1948.

Mr. Misenhimer

So here on Pavuvu you got a regular commission as First Lieutenant.

Mr. Haggerty

I hadn't received it yet, but I had been recommended. I got it after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were training on Guadalcanal; down there is a Sherman Tank, a relic that they used to fight against; do you happen to remember seeing that or anything?

Mr. Haggerty

No. We spent most of our time in the foothills and the mountains.

Mr. Misenhimer

This is up quite a ways; I guess it's towards Cape Esperance up there. It's out there and it was used for practice and all but probably more for artillery or something.

Mr. Haggerty

Our training area was north and west. One of the best things we enjoyed at Guadalcanal during that training period was the wild watermelons. They had all kinds of watermelon there. We had all the watermelon we could eat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, how about malaria? Did you ever get malaria?

Mr. Haggerty

A lot of people did, but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know it was very prevalent on Guadalcanal. I'm not sure about Peleliu.

Mr. Haggerty

I don't know if it did any good, but I took those pills that turn you yellow you know?

Mr. Misenhimer

Atabrine?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, the Atabrine. I took it but I don't know if it did any good or not, but I didn't get malaria.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you all leave Pavuvu?

Mr. Haggerty

We left Pavuvu around the first of March. We were 30 days enroute because we landed on Okinawa on April Fool's Day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right, Easter Sunday. How did you travel up there; what kind of ship?

Mr. Haggerty

We went on a; my battalion, went as a battalion, on the same ship; it was an APA.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you recall which one, the number or anything?

Mr. Haggerty

No, I don't.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's fine. The accommodations were better than the LST right?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yes, much improved.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you arrived up there what happened?

Mr. Haggerty

Well, the 1st Marine Regiment was assigned as reserve; 5th and 7th were the attack regiments. So they landed about 6:00 in the morning and I think they called it L-Day, Love Day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, I don't know why they changed it, but they did.

Mr. Haggerty

I don't either. We didn't disembark until about 9:00 in the morning and we didn't hit the beach until about 10:00. Of course the other regiments, there was very little resistance. The other regiments had gone inland and we had a relatively peaceful landing. We moved inland then quickly. We were assigned a mission to go right on across the island; to the other side of the island and to sweep everything in front of us to see if we could find any Japanese. I guess about half a mile in from the beach we ran into this airfield. I don't remember the name of it. It was a single airstrip; it wasn't a big airfield. It was used for Japanese fighter planes. I remember as we got to the edge of the airfield we didn't know if there were any planes there or not. There probably weren't any planes there; they had evacuated the air craft. I guess they had except for one. We got to the edge of the airstrip and lo and behold here comes this Japanese fighter plane down the airstrip with a big red ball on it. He took off right over our heads. By the time it got

airborne it flew about 500 feet in the air and all of a sudden somebody had spotted it and relayed the information to the ships and somebody on the ship; they all opened fire on him with their anti-aircraft. That was the first casualties I think we had in our company from shrapnel. They meant to hit the plane; but they never did hit the plane; it got away.

Mr. Misenhimer

How serious were your casualties?

Mr. Haggerty

I never found out. I just found out that some people were hit. I don't know what happened to them or how serious the wounds were. You just don't find out that stuff. You just hear scraps of information.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure, friendly fire.

Mr. Haggerty

So, that was kind of interesting.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then what did you do?

Mr. Haggerty

We proceeded across. We ran into some very light resistance; went on across the island; went across from west to east; from the China Sea where the ships were on to the Pacific Ocean on the east coast of Okinawa. On the way, it was kind of interesting, we had a couple of stops; it took us about three days to get across, over to the far side of the island. We proceeded cautiously. Our intelligence was practically zero. Our intelligence information was practically zero. We didn't know where they were. We heard that a lot

of the Japanese troops had put on civilian clothes disguising themselves as civilians; which turned out to be true. They were intermingling with the civilian population; because the civilian population was as anti-American as the troops were anyway over there. I don't know why it made much difference. I think it was the second night that we saw all this anti-aircraft fire. It lit up the whole sky from our ships. It was the Japanese; the kamikazes had come in. I found out the ship that we had been transported on; a kamikaze hit right down the smoke stack. It blew up and sunk. There were a lot of ships lost to that kamikaze attack.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this the first kamikaze attack? Or had there been some before that?

Mr. Haggerty

The first one that I knew of.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were with the headquarters rather than with your actual platoon up on the front line, is that right?

Mr. Haggerty

No, I was with the company. Then we went on; they told us to consolidate our positions along the west coast. I think I have a map here that shows it to be; anyway, it was a big bay on the Pacific right on the west coast at the center of the island. It's a beautiful country; an absolutely beautiful country. We took positions there along the coast in case the Japanese wanted to consolidate along the coast; to try and move some troops in that way. While we were there we did some receive some casualties then because my company was assigned as part of the security for the Regimental Headquarters of the 5th

Marine Regiment. They were on our right flank. We were attacked by aircraft. We saw these Corsairs. The Navy was using Corsairs then. We saw these Corsairs fly over us and we were admiring them and they went out around; circled around and they came back and all of a sudden we're looking at them and they are opening fire on us; unloading everything they had, machine guns, bombs and everything. They wiped out half of the 5th Marine Regimental Infantry. They thought we were Japanese. Friendly Fire. Again, showing you how poor our communications were in those days. I guess it's better today; I don't know. It was one of those accidents that happen.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was no way you all had to display anything to indicate that you were Americans, right?

Mr. Haggerty

No, except get out and wave at them.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Japanese would do the same thing, probably.

Mr. Haggerty

Yes. We didn't have the slightest thing on our mind that we would have to protect ourselves against something like that. That was the only beginning. My company; we were under the destroyer fire, artillery fire; we had friendly fire from the ships, the aircraft, from the artillery. That was the most dangerous part of being on the front lines. We were just as afraid of the friendly fire as we were the enemy. We were there and then they decided a few days after that to run us up to the northern part of Okinawa where the 6th Marine Division had been having trouble. There's a peninsula up there where Ernie

Pyle was killed, if you recalled when Ernie Pyle was killed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, he was killed on a little island up there Ie Shima.

Mr. Haggerty

We went up there but they got that under control. Then we were told, "Now get back in the trucks" and we had a few light skirmishes with the Japanese; nothing serious. We didn't have any casualties; I think the Japanese did, but we didn't. Then we came back down and all of a sudden we were loaded on to trucks and sent down to this other front. We were supposed to relieve an Army division from New York; it was the 27th or the 77th, I don't; New York National Guard Army Division. They had been severely mauled by the Japanese down north of Naha. We relieved them. That's when we had the destroyer fire laid on us. They didn't know we were there. We suffered a lot of casualties. So we were pulled off the line for a couple of days to reorganize and get some replacements in because of all we had lost. At that time I was still Machine Gun Platoon Leader but I also had two rifle platoons under me. So I was leading two rifle platoons plus a machine gun platoon. We had lost our Rifle Platoon Leader; we had one left. He was wounded shortly after that. We had to wait because we didn't have any rifle platoon leaders left. I couldn't handle six platoon leaders and the machine gun platoon all at the same time. I might as well have been the Company Commander. At that point I was made the Company Exec. We had got 4 or 5 Second Lieutenants fresh out of school as replacements for rifle platoon leaders. We got a bunch of troops, enlisted men as replacements because we were in pretty bad shape. Then we got those organized and we were sent down to attack around Naha at Shuri Castle. I guess you've heard of Shuri

Castle. We got down there and had a lot of casualties on the way. It was kind of a piedmont area with little rolling hills and suffered a lot of casualties. I was the Exec so I was running the Company Command Post with the First Sergeant. We were down there getting close to Shuri Castle and we had been pinned down for about a day. Getting ready to participate in a coordinated battalion move forward attacking Shuri Castle. I was sitting with the First Sergeant in an old shell hole discussing some personnel matters, I was trying to get them straightened out and that's the last I remember. Whether it was a mortar or a shell or what; it was a direct hit on the First Sergeant who was sitting right next to me. I was evacuated. I didn't have hardly a scratch on me. When I came to, I had pieces of him all over me. I couldn't walk straight for about a month. I guess I had an extremely severe concussion which I think you can imagine when a shell lands on a man sitting next to you. It was kind of a loud one. I think I was more lucky to survive that than I was anything at Peleliu. That was the end of the war for me.

Mr. Misenhimer

They evacuated you out to a hospital ship right?

Mr. Haggerty

I was evacuated by plane from Okinawa to Guam. I spent a couple of weeks in the hospital in Guam then they put me on a plane to Pearl Harbor. I layed over in Pearl Harbor for about two weeks and I got a ship, a freighter, from Pearl Harbor to San Francisco. Then I was sent back to New York on leave and the war ended.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day was it that you were wounded there, do you happen to know what date it was?

Mr. Haggerty

May 15, 1945. I spent six weeks on Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you consider Okinawa or Peleliu the hardest fighting?

Mr. Haggerty

I can't answer that. How do you compare hell to hell?

(tape ended)

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, then they evacuated you back to, did you say San Francisco?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes. I got train transportation from San Francisco across the country. Can you imagine that? Plane from Okinawa to Guam; plane from Guam to Pearl Harbor; ship from Pearl Harbor to San Francisco; and train from San Francisco to New York. Some trip, huh?

(laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

It took quite a while I guess, right?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yeah, from May 15 and I was in the Army hospital in Okinawa for a week. Then I was in the hospital in Guam for a couple of weeks, about two weeks. When I finally got plane transportation from Guam; we had to land on Johnson Island, one of the engines went out on the plane. We had to land and get a new engine. They put the old engine in the plane with us. We were sitting around the old engine that wouldn't work. Went from there to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane were you on?

Mr. Haggerty

It was one of those, DC-6 or something.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it a four engine?

Mr. Haggerty

No, it was a two engine plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Probably a DC-3 or a C-47 or C-46.

Mr. Haggerty

I don't know, I don't know much about the plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anyway, it was a twin engine so you came in on one engine then?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, on Johnson Island. They took that engine right off and put another engine on and we were on our way.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in the hospital in New York?

Mr. Haggerty

No. I was on sick leave in New York. I reported to Quantico.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you arrive there before the war was over or after the war was over?

Mr. Haggerty

Did I what?

Mr. Misenhimer

You arrived at Quantico about when?

Mr. Haggerty

I arrived I think in September and the war was over. I was in a bar in New York when the atomic bomb hit and the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have much celebration?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, oh yes. I was right around the group that celebrated in Times Square, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right, I've seen pictures of that. So you were there with that group.

Mr. Haggerty

I try to be at as many places as I can. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

What else?

Mr. Haggerty

Well, that's about it. What else would you like to know?

Mr. Misenhimer

Ok, I've got several questions. What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Haggerty

I've got purple hearts and combat action ribbons.

Mr. Misenhimer

You've got three purple hearts?

Mr. Haggerty

Three purple hearts and combat action ribbons. Then of course I've got the usual array of junk; Presidential Unit Citations, China Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Medal and National Defense Service Medal. That's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were wounded several times; what did you think of the medics?

Mr. Haggerty

Oh they were good. They do a fine job. I don't have any complaints about the medics; they are a good bunch of people.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right, they take a lot of risks don't they?

Mr. Haggerty

Yep, they sure do. I have the greatest admiration for them.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you saw one USO show on Pavuvu; did you see any other USO shows anytime?

Mr. Haggerty

That's the only one. But you know something; we did have a minor show, it wasn't USO, but do you remember Jack Paar? Well, he was in the Army you know?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, I didn't know that.

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, he was in the Special Services in the U.S. Army and he went around putting on little shows. He came from Guadalcanal or someplace down there with the Army to Peleliu and put on a little show for us. Of course he wasn't known by anybody then; he was just a Sergeant in the Army. His show was; the enlisted men loved the show because it was all joke making, sarcastic, a little bit of derogatory remarks about the officers you know; gang up on the officers; the enlisted me just loved it. But he was OK.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, I had a Japanese bayonet; a Japanese battle flag but I traveled around so much with the Marine Corps after the war that I actually lost them in transit. I don't know what happened to them. Somebody probably stole them from me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, we did. We had a fellow assigned to our battalion; a Red Cross man, a volunteer. He was a real nice guy but I can't remember his name. He kept us well supplied with cigarettes and tobacco and cigars. I don't know where he got them all. It's amazing that he did. He was a friendly fellow.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were overseas, could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Haggerty

I wouldn't say it was regular, but it wasn't too bad either. You know it's hard when the whole unit is going here and there. We would go to Peleliu, Pavuvu, Guadalcanal, Pavuvu and then Okinawa and on the ships. When you're on the ships; as long as you are on the ship you didn't get any mail. Then in battle on Okinawa we didn't get any mail there at all.

Mr. Misenhimer

So it was rather sporadic then?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes. When we were in camp it was pretty good. But you know when you're on the battlefield, you don't get mail.

Mr. Misenhimer

But it would catch up with you eventually, I guess.

Mr. Haggerty

Oh yes, sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died; do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were on Okinawa of course.

Mr. Haggerty

I tell you I know exactly where I was. I told you we had to withdraw from the southern front for a few days because we lost most of our platoon leaders. We had to replace some officers. That's where we were when I heard about Roosevelt dying.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have to his death?

Mr. Haggerty

These people; our position; I don't think none of us were particularly concerned. We were sorry that he died but there wasn't anything that we could do about it. We were more concerned about ourselves.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure, but as far as what effect it might have on the progress of the war, you all had no opinion on that then?

Mr. Haggerty

No, we figured that would be taken care of by others.

Mr. Misenhimer

In May of 1945 Germany surrendered. Did you all hear about that and what reaction?

Mr. Haggerty

We didn't hear much; there wasn't much reaction at all on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in pretty heavy fighting about that time there on Okinawa. Now, you stayed in the Marines is that correct?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you finally retire?

Mr. Haggerty

In 1963.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you get to?

Mr. Haggerty

Major.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get into Korea?

Mr. Haggerty

No. I was in Argentina, Newfoundland. I was sent to the CO Marine Barracks, Argentina, Newfoundland. It was a new operating base in Argentina. For 2 ½ years; I was sent up there in January 1950.

Mr. Misenhimer

The various officers that you had over you; what was your reaction to most of them?

Mr. Haggerty

All the way from great to lousy.

Mr. Misenhimer

On Okinawa; you were gone I guess when Buckner got killed there; General Buckner that was in charge of the Army, you were gone by then.

Mr. Haggerty

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions with your outfit?

Mr. Haggerty

No. I never did join the 1st Marine Division Association. Most of the fellows in those associations didn't stay in the service. It was kind of a way they maintained contact with the service I guess. Those of us on activity duty; most of us didn't join those associations. Before I retired I was in the 2nd Marine Division and I was in the 3rd Marine Division; all three divisions. The only one I was in combat with was the 1st Marine Division. But I've been in all three divisions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you make any use of your GI Bill?

Mr. Haggerty

Yes, I did when I retired. I made two uses of it. I bought a house on the GI Bill in California in 1956; then when I retired in 1963 I went back to Old Dominion University on the GI Bill. I didn't have a degree so I ended up getting a degree.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you get your degree in?

Mr. Haggerty

I went back and got my degree; do you want to hear this? Are you ready for this?

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure.

Mr. Haggerty

Bachelor of Arts degree, major in History, concentration in early American History with an educational supplement that qualified me for a Virginia State Teacher's certificate and with a minor in business.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you teach then?

Mr. Haggerty

No, I was hired by the University as the Assistant Director of Administration. I was over there; I got the degree in 1966 and I was over there for about 7 or 8 years. Then I taught school in a private business school for 2 years and then I was recruited to be President of Norfolk College in Norfolk; a two year degree, Associate's Degree business school. Then I retired from there; President Emeritus and have been working for myself ever since.

Mr. Misenhimer

What type of work do you do for yourself?

Mr. Haggerty

Mainly my financial matters.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in the Marines for what, 20 years then?

Mr. Haggerty

21.

Mr. Misenhimer

21; so you were about 43 when you retired, something like that.

Mr. Haggerty

That's right. People always ask me, "Why did you pick the Marine Corps? Was it for some great patriotic reason?" But no, I went into the Marine Corps. I knew something about the military and at the end of the war I didn't want anybody to say to me that I didn't do my part. That's the reason I went into the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

The total atmosphere in this country at that time was different than it is today.

Mr. Haggerty

I didn't want to be considered a draft dodger or not supporting the country to the maximum. I had one of the most dangerous jobs that there probably was. I don't think there was anything more dangerous than being a rifle platoon leader in the Marine Corps. I had many opportunities not to have to do that. Everyone did it for those reasons because I think most of your young Lieutenants did the same thing and an awful lot of your enlisted men.

Mr. Misenhimer

As I understand, the recruiting offices were just swamped on December 8, 1941.

Mr. Haggerty

I mentioned to you, I was in St. John's, Newfoundland and I had to go 90 miles by train to go to Argentia. I went to the Marine Barracks in Argentia and later became commanding officer of that after the war. I went over and tried to enlist there and they wouldn't let me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, you mentioned that, right.

Mr. Haggerty

Well, there's a few things that I wish kind of affected a state of mind; people always say this movie was realistic or that movie was realistic on war. I might as well get it down somewhere and if you want to use it fine. They ask, "What do you remember about the war?" It isn't what I remember; it's what I will never forget. A lot of people don't like to; and this is something that you don't get in any movie; no matter how realistic it is; but the things I remember are the following: pungent odor of decaying bodies; the stench of newly wounded and dead bodies; the constant clatter of automatic weapons; crack of rifles and pistols; suspenseful waiting; impact of whispering artillery shells; the surprise explosions of mortars and rockets; screams of the wounded and dying; the overwhelming smell of gunpowder. That's what I remember. You don't get any of that in a movie.

Mr. Misenhimer

You're right. None of that can be in a movie; well some of the screams maybe but they are not that realistic. You're right.

Mr. Haggerty

Some people will say, that have never been in the military, they will say, "Oh that was realistic. That movie was very realistic." How do they know? They don't know anything about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's right.

Mr. Haggerty

Oh well.

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm glad you did that because that's what we want to do. We want to preserve these types of memories that are fading away to give us that are not going to be here forever. I appreciate very much your sharing that with us. Anything else you recall?

Mr. Haggerty

It's been my pleasure.

(end of tape)

Transcribed by:

Oral History by:

Lesle W. Dial
Beeville, Texas
October 17, 2005

Richard Misenhimer
P. O. Box 3453
Alice, TX 78333
Home: 361-664-4071
Cell: 361-701-5848