

**National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas**

Interview with William Garbo

Tapes #1250a and #1250b

Transcriber: Nancy Cason
Proofreader: Bob Cason
March 25, 2010

National Museum of the Pacific War

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with William Garbo

...and in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to site.

Mr. Morris: Thanks, Mr. Garbo, for taking the time to talk to us.

Mr. Garbo: You're welcome.

Mr. Morris: I usually like to start with a little background, where and when you were born, and we'll just start there.

Mr. Garbo: All right. I am a native Mississippian, I was born November 10, 1924, in a small town in south Mississippi named Laurel – sawmill town. I grew up in Laurel, and when I was seventeen, the Japanese invaded Pearl Harbor, Sunday. I remember it well. I couldn't wait to be eighteen so I could be drafted, or could join the service. I'm sure my mother and dad would never have signed papers for me to go in before that. So when I was eighteen...when I was seventeen, I was a junior in high school, so when I became eighteen, I was a senior, and I went to the draft board, signed in, and was drafted before I finished high school. They allowed me to finish high school. They gave me a date to report to Camp Shelby which is in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. So I reported there, and became just a regular soldier ready for basic training. We took a troop train out of Camp Shelby up to Camp Lee, Virginia, where I don't remember the company, but I joined a basic training company of other men from all over the country. After fourteen weeks of basic training, which I enjoyed tremendously. It was physical exercise – I was an athlete in school, I was a track runner, and was not a real large person. But I ran track and played basketball and football a little bit. I am in basic training in Camp

Lee, Virginia, and that lasted fourteen weeks. My hobby was taking pictures – my mother sent me a box camera – a little Brownie box camera. And she and my dad kept sending me film, and I would write a letter and send the film home and they would develop it, and I never saw the pictures. But one of the things they did say to me was that they wanted me to let them see what I was doing. So I did that. My hobby was taking pictures and writing letters, staying in touch with the family. I joined the boxing club when I was at Camp Lee, Virginia to try to get out of some of the marches that we had, cause one of the boys said, “Oh, Bill, we can get out of some of this the other guys are doing if we join the boxing club.” And I thought, “Well,” and I’m not a boxer, but anyway I joined, and one weekend Joe Louis came to the camp. This little skinny guy in the boxing club to get out of some of this other stuff – they volunteered me along with two others to get in the ring with Joe Louis. So we got in the ring, and all the recruits are there scattered all around watching all this – I don’t know how many thousands. And Joe Louis got in the ring, we shook hands, and they blindfolded us, and said, “Tear him up!” And they didn’t tell us Joe was going to play with us – we didn’t know what to expect, really. But he had more fun! He would put his arm out like that, and we would just...but after a little bit of that and a lot of fun, that was over. So anyway, I basic training is over, and one morning we fell out for breakfast, and they asked if anyone liked dogs and like to work with dogs and had hunting dogs at home and so forth. I raised my hand, I volunteered, which is something you shouldn’t do. Well, I did. I’ve always lived dangerously, I guess. Anyway, the next thing I know there were about fourteen of us on a troop train headed west to a camp where dog training took place. So we went to San Carlos, California. We had a camp of two hundred and fifty soldiers with a cadre slightly larger – of less than a hundred. And five hundred canines. Now the canines were volunteered for the Army in those days. You would take your dog to a recruiting station and say, “I’d like my dog Teddy to be a member of the K-9 Corps. And they would register him – he would have a serial number tattooed, he would be shipped off and you were promised that at the end of the war you would have a chance to get your dog back if he survived the war. Well, I didn’t know this, but

here I am in this camp with all these canines and these men and we started a training. Now the training took place from November of '43 to the last week of December in '43. And we successfully – each man successfully trained about six dogs.

Mr. Morris: All different species?

Mr. Garbo: All different types. We had German Shepherds, we had mixed breeds. We even tried bird dogs and setters, later finding out that they did not make good war dogs, because they wanted to hunt birds, and they wanted to point birds and snakes, and that wouldn't work. We trained the dogs not to bark, we had a German instructor who was a World War I canine handler very expert, and he expected excellence from all of us. We were up on a high hill above San Carlos, California, which is in the bay area south of San Francisco about thirty miles. We were up on this hill and nobody could come up there and we couldn't leave the hill except for special occasions like if they gave you a pass. I suppose our work was secret, or at least we were told not to talk about any of this when we got down town away from camp. I finished that training, and I was placed in a platoon of war dogs which is thirty men and sixty dogs. Two dogs for each handler. The name of my platoon was the 26th War Dog Platoon. We had a lieutenant, in our case Lieutenant Head was the platoon commander. We shipped out on a liberty ship out of Fort Morgan on May 14, 1944, for parts unknown. We went under the Golden Gate Bridge. May 14 was Mother's Day, I'll never forget that. Went under the Golden Gate Bridge and into the fog bank just west of the Golden Gate, and disappeared from sight. Our ship took thirty-one days to get to New Guinea where we were going to join up with all of the outfits that were fighting down there. We landed at Melody Bay. We went to New Guinea in the uncharted routes out of the normal path of travel. Our liberty ship was very vulnerable for being sunk and we saw no land at all from Golden Gate Bridge to Melody Bay, New Guinea. We unloaded there and within two weeks or maybe a little less, we were told to pack up, take our dogs and we were going to fly in a C-47 up to North New Guinea. We didn't know where. So we loaded up and our flight took off – we were loaded heavy – we just managed to get over the Owen Stanley Mountains which are snow-

covered mountains in New Guinea. From the plane, it was a moonlight night, you could look down and it looked like we were going to land on this rolling snow in a pass through the mountains. At just about daybreak we landed at a place called Nabzab, New Guinea, to refuel and to get some food and rest a minute. Then we proceeded and landed at Aitape, New Guinea. It's in Papua, New Guinea. We called it "pawpaw", New Guinea. Today I hear it pronounced Papua. We land there, and when we landed our C-47 landed on these corrugated metal strips that the Seabees put down. The jungle was right up to the very edge of the strip. We had to come in on that. The Seabees had just built this – had just put it there. We landed there – we could hear artillery going off close by – actually our artillery going off. And we didn't hear any small arms fire. We got out of the aircraft – we got in small trucks, went down winding dirt roads not that far to the beach where we set up in tents. A long sloping sandy beach. We were attached to a Australian outfit for meals and mail and other supplies. We were there about a week just a few days really, and they said pack your packs with three days' K-rations, and we carried two canteens filled with water. Two quarts of water, one on each hip. Because you couldn't survive in the jungles we were told, and we found it to be true, without two quarts a water in a day's time in New Guinea. You perspire like you wouldn't believe. And your body is throwing off salt all the time. Your fatigue jackets were white with salt all over your arms and around your neck and waist and the middle of your back. An eerie sight – you looked pretty raunchy – you looked like a bum going down the street. I loaded my two dogs and my pack and all my provisions along with five other men who were going to a river called the Driniumor River – it's referred to in books on history of the battles in New Guinea. Now we're in June – we're in the early part of June, 1944. We got in an Army Duck on the edge of the beach, and our Duck driver had some other supplies in the Duck along with us. He took off down the beach, and there were times when he would actually have to go out in the water to get around a fallen palm tree or something like that. We passed several dead Japanese floating in the surf. You know, all of a sudden my Boy Scout camp turned into a real war because I was thinking – we were all pretty quiet, we didn't

talk a lot – we were all realizing we were going into a very serious situation. We had carbines, brand new carbines that had been issued to us in the States, and we had brand new jungle hammocks to string between the palm trees and sleep with a mosquito net on the side. We eventually made our way to the river. By then, to the mouth of the Driniumor River flowing north into the – can't remember the name of that sea just north above New Guinea. But anyway, we found the mouth of the river – the water in it was muddy. As it flowed into the sea, I could see the seawater turn deep purple. Dark green and purple. We got out of the Duck, and there was an artillery howitzer battalion set up on the beach with their howitzers going up. You couldn't use a regular long artillery piece in the jungle we found, because you had to go up and down to go in between those huge trees and hit a target. There were a few infantry troops guarding the artillery. It's late in the day – we put our hammocks between the trees and prepared for the night. And the Duck is still there. We had just unloaded, and were getting ready for instructions to go further. A group of twelve natives, four of them each carrying a stretcher up over their heads like this between them. Two men on the front, two on the back with a poncho-covered American KIA, killed in action, and we could see the boots - same boots that we were wearing, shaking on these men. The situation, realizing that we were getting into something serious, became more evident at this point. One of the artillery men came over and said, "Are you sure you're going to sleep in those hammocks tonight?" We said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, I wouldn't advise that too long, because the Japanese are very good with their sabers and they love to fight at night." Well, we ignored that, crawled in the hammocks, zipped up the mosquito nets, and I'm thinking, "You know, if I need to get out of this thing in a fire fight, what am I going to do? I've got to unzip the thing..." Well, needless to say, nothing happened to us that night, but we left the hammocks hanging between those two trees and they are still there, I am sure, today.

Mr. Morris: What did you do with the dogs?

Mr. Garbo: The dogs slept on the outside of the...

Mr. Morris: Like right under your...

Mr. Garbo: Yeah, they slept right there with us. The dogs, by this time, they were personally yours. You gave them commands – no one else gave them commands, no one else fed them, no one else touched them.

Mr. Morris: Did you have to carry their rations and water, too?

Mr. Garbo: We carried their rations as well. And we had some hard tack rations that we could give them. Like dog food. And of course they would get water. So the next morning now, we had seen these seven Americans come out, I think it was seven. When they came out that evening before, the Duck had waited for them and had put the dead Americans in the Duck and he turned around and went back, and in my mind I'm thinking, "Six of us come down and seven (or five or six) dead are going out," and my calculator is starting to work, and you know it's all coming to me. But this was my first time to experience anything like this. So, the native guides turned and took us back up the jungle trail up the river, which is south from our beach position. After traveling about five or six miles on a real muddy trail between Cunai (?) grass, like corn or sugar cane growing above your head, we came out – it was like a meandering trail – we came out to an open sandy and gravel beach. Water was flowing in the Driniumor River, which was crystal clear, beautiful water. Troops were dug in to our right. We had passed some dug-in troops along the way before we got there. Every few yards, pockets. We'd come into a little opening and see that. That was to be our destination. So they dropped two teams of us off there. And then they went on up the river to drop off some others. So eventually the six of us were teamed off and we had a scout dog team – that was one person. We had a messenger dog team – that's two people.

Mr. Morris: Explain to me a little about just exactly what the function of these various teams are.

Mr. Garbo: All right. The scout dog goes at the head of a patrol in the jungle. He leads the patrol – the dog alerts – his ears may come up – every dog has a different way of doing it. He may freeze and point, he may turn his head this way, but he tells you something is out there. You can't see it, he can smell it. He senses it. And a dog has this sense that I tell you is very keen and very reliable. There was a dog

named Mark that went on my first patrol. We were assigned to a unit on the river and I cannot remember the name of it. I believe it was a battalion – a regiment of the thirty-second division. It was a Mississippi National Guard outfit as a matter of fact. I'm from Mississippi, so I met fellows from my home town in that unit. Anyway, the very next morning, they wanted to get us working immediately. They sent us out on patrol. We'd go in a seven-man patrol, one dog and the handler at the front, and I was the messenger dog, I would be about third man from the back, or second man from the back with my dog. And these dogs were trained not to bark. That's hard for anybody to believe, but it's true.

Mr. Morris: What was the messenger dog?

Mr. Garbo: Okay, we had a leather pouch, waterproof pouch, a bit waterproof. You could put a message and roll it up and put it in the pouch, and the dog would take it back to the other messenger dog handler. There were two men on each messenger dog team. So we trained the dogs at the same ? to go from one man to the other. At first it was like going across the room. Later when they mastered that, on a little clothesline wire about this high off the ground, we'd go further. Then we'd go over the hill out of sight, and then eventually we'd get rid of the wire and just pet him on the rear and just tell him and he'd take it. He'd just automatically take the message. When he got to the other end, he got a scratch behind the ear, and a little praising and rubbing. That was the only reward we gave. And I didn't tell you, before we left the States, they made every one of us pass a physical test along with the dogs. Along with give a demonstration in the open arena that our dogs could perform properly. And it all had to be done silently with hand signals and motions. The dog was crawling, he would come, stop, he would get down, up, and if we passed that before a fairly good cadre, we were approved. And we all made it. We really enjoyed the training, and the dogs responded real well. The only thing we did have to do, we had to get rid of the bird dogs and the dogs like beagles would be no good. They were wonderful for hunting rabbits and birds, but not for this. As I recall, we didn't have a single Doberman. You think Dobermans were the best. They are wonderful guard dogs, and I know they were used a lot, but the best dog that we found was a mixture of a German Shepherd

and maybe another Shepherd-type dog. I had a black Shepherd that I took into combat – his name was Teddy. Anyway, we are on the River, we're assigned to this outfit, and we go out on patrol. And Mark – the first patrol I was on – am I giving too much detail?

Mr. Morris: No, this is good.

Mr. Garbo: So Mark spotted or smelled something, so the platoon stopped. Everybody stopped. And in a little while, a pretty good distance away, you could see movement. You can always see movement, but you can't see people. Through a leaf, you know? And a whole large group of Japanese – maybe company strength, I'm not sure – moved before us. Crossed our path. And so we counted and numbered that. We gave coordinates and we sent a message back with Teddy to the command post across the river. He had to swim across the river. The river was about knee-deep in water unless it was raining in the mountains. And the river then would go from knee-deep to four feet. Brown, dirty water with boulders and logs with it, just flowing down into the sea. And then when the rains would stop in the mountains, when the clouds would come over the mountains and empty the rain and it would come down and then stop. The sun would come out and steam would rise off of everybody. Once I remember our platoon was standing there and we'd all been wet, and steam was rising. And I said, "I wish I had a camera, to take a picture of that." So Teddy went back, when he got to the river I found out later he jumped in the water – it was raging from rain in the mountains – and the river just took him away. He disappeared. And my other handler said that in a very short time, he managed to get across the river and come back up the river to the origin, and he gave the message, and we did get artillery in on that position. By then, we had turned and slowly moved out. And so I'm getting my first experience in combat, and I'm like everybody else – I'm frightened. But I amazed myself by standing fast – I stayed with it. On the way back from this first patrol, I was now in the lead, cause we didn't need – I don't know why we didn't use Mark. But we were going to backtrack exactly like we came in. So I was more or less in the lead. I was moving along at a pretty good clip. No dog. I parted some foliage, and when I did, I came face to face with five

Japanese with their rifles like this. They were well-dressed, looked like fresh troops. They were leaning back against the brush and their eyes were staring, and they were dead. There was a artillery hole in the ground with a little puddle of water. We had not come by this particular spot coming in. We were back-tracking, but apparently I missed that. But anyway, it scared the you-know-what out of me. I will never forget that. I can see that scene now. I couldn't believe it. Anyway, we moved past that, and got on to the river, and the river was still swollen a bit, but it had gone down and we waded across. The bottom of the river was covered with rocks and boulders – it was navigable and you could walk across it anytime. It was not a deep river like we have in the South. It had sandbars and little deep pockets, so that's the way our action was for about three weeks on the river. I worked with that outfit and then we had a breakthrough on the river. The Japanese broke through our lines just south of us. They got in behind us. The troops that they broke through that were wounded or could walk, they came up and jumped in our foxholes. This usually happened at night. Japanese were tremendous night-fighters. I want to tell you – we thought you could hunker down at night and hold out until morning. In our foxholes, our dogs were in the hole with us, and usually we had at least two men in a foxhole. That means one dog, myself, and another trooper. My other handler was in another hole with another of our messenger dogs. We switched off. (Garbled) Around two o'clock in the morning, or sometime after midnight, if you heard something you'd call for a flare and the sixty – sixteen – millimeter mortar, whatever, sixty millimeter mortars. They were sixty, I guess, were behind us, and they would shoot up a flare and the flare would open and a parachute would open and it would float down slowly. The jungle takes on a real eerie effect, appearance, when one of those things goes off. So they would float down and nothing would be out there. The trees would dance around, the rocks would move and all, but then one night, I think it was like the 23rd of June – sometime around the 1st of July. When the flare went off, Japanese were in the river. They were this way, middle, and that way. There were like this you know. They were crouched, and had their weapons drawn. Well, the minute they saw the flare, they started

shouting and running toward us. We started firing. That's when the term went off, these old boys I was with said, "That's when the shit hit the fan, and that's when it went like a war." The mortars would continue firing up, and keeping the flares up. The flares stayed up as long as people were there. So we turned on our lights – it was as bright as daylight. You could read a newspaper by it. But we rescued some of the boys where they had broken through. This went on – we had two major breakthroughs while I was on the river. One at this time, and then another one like a week later. Activity became more active south of us, so they decided that they would send the canines down to work with the next outfit. I can't remember who that was. It was either the 112th Cavalry, or the unit next to it. While I was there, they had bunkers. It was logs built with an opening about twelve inches wide – top log with dirt on top of it, because the Japanese were throwing mortars. They had what you call knee mortars and regular mortars and mountain guns. They were pretty hazardous. So they would throw those mortars in there and I took my dog Teddy – I remember Teddy and I were in one of those bunkers one night and we had some tin cans on barbed wire out in front of our position to try to give us a little warning if somebody was sneaking up. Cause after dark you can't see your hand – it's black. You touch the other guy – you don't do a lot of talking. You touch the other trooper in your hole when you want him to go on guard. You held guard two hours. After two hours, you'd punch him, be sure he's up, and he would hold guard. And then he would punch you in a couple of hours and wake you, and this went on all night long. Two on, two off, two on, two off. When morning came, the daylight was wonderful. Then you knew that you could at least visually protect yourself. Anyway, a Japanese crawled over and got to the wire and we heard the jingle, and Teddy was pushing me and pushing me. I knew something was out there. So we took some hand grenades and just as we threw the hand grenades, this Jap threw a bundle of dynamite in our bunker. Now the only way to get out of that bunker – it was dirt-walled, with one little opening at the very back. I didn't think of that opening, all I could think of was getting a hand grenade out there. So we threw hand grenades. Some other men heard the commotion and were putting small arms fire

into that area. But the dynamite did not go off. But the cap went off. He had gotten everything wet coming across the river. So the dynamite fuse didn't work. The cap went off, and it was so loud we were deaf for seem like forever. The next morning, we crawled out of that bunker, everybody laughed at us, because we were covered with powder. Dynamite powder, or whatever they put in a parcel like that. We found bits and pieces of the Jap uniform – there were several in the group. They usually pull their wounded and dead away – they don't leave them there unless they're all killed. We couldn't see. Now, this is contrary to today's military training. We were told by everybody who was there experiencing this, "Don't fire your gun at night unless you have a target." Because once you fire your gun in that darkness, he's sees you from across the river, and he puts up two sticks. He looks across those two sticks, if your eyes are adjusted, you can do that. And he can say, "Now, I'll shoot right there, and I'll get that person." Or drop a mortar on that person. So we learned the hard way. I was taught by the boys that were in those units that if you look at something at night after looking all day long, you look above it and you can see it. Try it. If after dark, go out of your house and spot something and look above it in the dark and you'll see it. It's got to be blanked out, but the eyes, the retina, the nerves on your eye on that screen back there are more sensitive above and below for some reason. So we learned a few tricks to stay alive. I was assigned in a few days with my dogs to the 112th Cavalry. I liked that outfit very much. It was a Texas National Guard outfit which I think I've already said, I'm not sure. I was assigned to G Troop. G Troop was from Abilene, Texas. The boys – they were a fine bunch of men. You knew you weren't going to be left behind if you were out on patrol or whatever. They were going to get you. It caused some of them to lose their lives because of having that feeling and that attitude, but it had to be. We had to live under some assurance that dead or alive we were going to be picked up and gotten out of there. I may be giving you too much detail, but I'll continue if you want.

Mr. Morris: Sure – go right ahead.

Mr. Garbo: The Battle of the Driniumor River lasted forty-five days. The 112th Cavalry which is the unit I'm now attached to, decided they needed to replace – they lost

560 casualties out of about fifteen hundred men on New Guinea. And they had already lost a number close to that on New Britain. If you lost five men, you may get two replacements, or three, or four, but never five. So we were going two steps forward, and going back one. Now we needed to rest. So we pulled away from the Driniumor River, and we pulled back to the beach, and we go to work driving bulldozers and tractors, and just doing crazy jobs. They made sure we were staying busy, or they figured we'd go nuts. That does happen to someone who has been under that stress for so long. That type of fatigue and stress. We learned a lesson on the Driniumor River – we used pigeons for messengers, we used messenger dogs from the platoon to the command post, we used pigeons for the command post to the artillery barrage, they would fly to, and we would give them coordinates, and walkie-talkies couldn't do that. And the telephone didn't always work because Japanese cut the lines every time we strung the line. So then our Colonel Hooper decided he would go back to the airport and fly in a small Piper Cub and string the telephone line in the top of the trees. Now these jungle trees are 120 or 130 feet high and the telephone wires up in there and the Japs couldn't cut them. And they didn't cut them. So we had telephone lines. So we got down to the very basic combat between one army and another one. I think of that often when I think of the technology and all the things we are doing now. You know, eventually you get down to the basics in a defensive operation. Another thing before I go on, I have to tell you that at Aitape in New Guinea, MacArthur made a decision that the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul and Wewak would have to come to us, rather than us going to them. So rather than invading and putting in our landing craft and charging the beaches at Wewak and Buna, we went in ahead of them. A hundred and twenty miles up on the coast, and they had to come through the jungles and through the swamps with all their ammunition, all their equipment, and they did. And they were very resourceful. I mean, there was no question about their tenacity. If we ever – I said at the time, and I'll say it again – if we ever get in another war, I hope that the Japanese will be on our side, because you can count on them. So now we have a break, and we board a couple of vessels, and we practice landings. They keep us busy. One day they said,

“Okay, throw all your trophies away, and you know, young boys, I was nineteen, and everybody’s young except the 21 and 22 year old boys they are the old men. Our Colonels were – I don’t know how old Colonel Hooper was. I doubt if they were more than 40 – 35, 40. They were grown married people. Colonel Miller, Colonel Hooper, Colonel Grant, Colonel McMains. All wonderful people. I saw them after the war in reunions. Never did any close visiting with them at all during the war. But after the war, we became very close personal friends. Anyway, I think I was about to tell you something important and it slipped my mind. We got on board the Frederick Funstan troop ship. We had been practicing beach landings. Everybody said the rumor was that we’re going to invade the Philippine Islands. Troop ship took off and ended up at Borneo and we stopped and anchored at a place called Halmahera. There were only about six ships in that convoy. Troop ships along with some Navy escorts to protect us. We spent two days there, and it was hot and humid all the time. You never could get comfortable from the heat in the South Pacific. It was hot, steamy – and I grew up in the South in Mississippi, and it was nothing like this. In fact, I grew up in the Pascagoula swamps. I’ve been fishing down in the jungles of south Mississippi, right there off the coast, and nothing was like this. Nothing in the world. In New Guinea for instance it rains like six and a half or seven feet a year. It’s just raining all the time. If it’s not raining, the sun’s out and you’re steaming. And then the rain comes. It might rain two or three times a day. So we’re on board the Frederick Funstan, and I don’t know the number of that troop ship. We were on there several days, and I discovered that every ship has a library. So I’d get in my bunk, and I’d leave my bunk and go to the library and check out a book and read about Alaska, about anything that would take my mind away from where I was, and I enjoyed it tremendously. I read all of Ernest Haycock’s books on Canada, Alaska... Jack London – I read his stories. I think I read Robinson Crusoe a couple of times. So now we’re on the Frederick Funstan, and we stop a Halmahera. While we were there, in the bay, the Japanese bombers would come over and bomb the airfield which was just off the beach there. They hit an oil refinery one night and we were afraid they were going to spot our troop ship. But

they never spotted our troop ships and never dropped anything on us. That's a piece of luck. The second day we were there, everybody got off the ships in Higgins boats and went ashore. We made a trek up into the mountains, the jungles of Halmahera. I don't know why we did that. Never have understood it other than to give us exercise, unless it was to try to make the Japanese think that we were going to stay there. What we were doing, I found out later, was waiting for the rest of the convoy to get made up for the Battle of Leyte. We got back on the ship, didn't engage in any combat there other than witnessing the bombing by the Japanese Betty bomber. We headed out into the Marianas Straits and the water was almost like a pond. Flat, glassy, smooth. Before nightfall, we were joined by maybe a hundred other ships. Thirty, forty ships. You could see ships fourteen miles to the horizon on all directions. Front, back, everywhere. It seemed like we were in the middle. That's what I felt like. The next night, now we are on our way, and the rumor is that we are headed for Leyte. The rumor is that we are going to make a landing. I did not know at the time that we were reserve troops. We were not going to make the initial landing on the 20th of October. We were going to in a week or two later. I don't know those dates. You lose track of time – I could look it up, and I probably should, because I'm trying to write as much of this down to record it. The first night out, our convoy's moving. Everything's black – nobody can smoke on deck – I didn't smoke at the time. Nobody could smoke, no lights. The ship is blacked out. We're moving along, and you don't see – if it's moonlight, a little moonlight, a little light, you can see maybe the ship on each side of you, then they all disappear. We see something that looks like a Christmas tree way up ahead coming across the ocean, it turned out to be a hospital ship painted white with a big red cross on the side. It came straight into our convoy, moved all the way through our convoy silently, and disappeared to our rear. I'm sure it was probably some of the first casualties from the landing at Leyte.

Mr. Morris: We'll stop here for a minute.
End of side one.

Mr. Garbo: I don't know how long we sailed. New Guinea is about two thousand miles away from Leyte. One morning before daylight, we stopped and everyone is thinking that this is the day we are going to land on Leyte. And to have a good hearty breakfast and to pack your packs with three days of K-rations, be sure you have two quarts of water, you have your ammunition, your pistol. Every man in the 112th Cavalry carried a 45 pistol.

Mr. Morris: You still have your dog, right?

Mr. Garbo: No. I have left the dogs, because I volunteered to become a permanent member of the 112th Cavalry. And that was not a big deal. We all suffered so many casualties, and truthfully, I didn't like the head of our platoon. He didn't keep us informed, and he was just not a good leader, in my opinion. I'm sure he was a good man, but I didn't see the leadership there. And I didn't do anything wrong as far as I know. When I asked for a transfer, he said, "We can arrange it." He took the platoon all the way up to the Philippines and functioned with the unit. I followed the history of that later. So now I'm a bonafide member of the 112th Cavalry. I'm an assistant gunner of a machine gun squad. I'm about to lose my machine gunner on Leyte, which makes me the machine gun squad leader. So that would qualify me to be a sergeant. But I never thought about that, but they made me an acting sergeant when that happened. So we landed, we went into the coconut grove, and from Higgins boats we landed. We had Kamikazes that tried to hit our troop ship when daylight came. We landed at ten o'clock in the morning. We boarded the Higgins boats and were dispatched by megaphone – they used a megaphone to tell us, "Okay, now boarding party, etc." And we went to white beach. We landed at white beach. But Kamikazes came down and tried to hit our troop ship. And the gunners while we were loading on the Higgins boats were firing away, "Ka-chung, ka-chung." That's exactly what they sound like on those troop ships. Boy, they were sending up those shells and hitting everywhere but where that plane was. One Kamikaze did get through almost to us, and they shot the wing off, and he went down at our fantail. We unloaded – you just keep doing what you are doing.

Mr. Morris: Did you understand what those Kamikaze planes were? Did you understand them as Kamikaze planes at that point?

Mr. Garbo: Yeah, we were told about them. The word had been out that they were now – we called them suicide bombers. I met this Japanese pilot who is here at the symposium and we shook hands and visited, and he explained to me and I explained to him I had seen this, and I don't hate the Japanese today at all. I think they're an admirable people. I don't understand why it was necessary to have a war with these people. But that doesn't matter – it happened and we had to defend our country. So we landed after getting a very close call with a Kamikaze off the Frederick Funstan. Now we are in the coconut grove. There is no firing going on. Takloban had been freed, MacArthur had set up his headquarters there. So we move in trucks up through the Leyte Valley, to a large rice paddy with a road going up to the foothills of the big mountain range that goes like a spinal cord down this long odd-shaped island. Looks like a dragon or something. These long mountain ridges were dividing the western part of the island from the eastern part. Where the Leyte Valley was, it was dividing it from the Ormoc Valley. So we didn't know a lot about this, other than we went down the road through the paddies after spending a couple of nights there. We received replacements that day. I got a new assistant gunner, and the next day I lost my squad sergeant. So I took his place. We started getting artillery from the Japanese. They were in the mountains – they could see us. We made a serpentine muddy trail up a very steep grade. It was slow going – every yard was a well-deserved piece of energy. They would give us a ten-minute break when we came to a fire in the hole where they found a booby trap, and they would send up someone to dismantle the booby trap. In a little while, they'd say, "Up and at 'em," or "Move out." And you'd get up and move out. Oh, and while this is going on, it is raining. After we left the rice paddies to go up, and we're being hit by artillery just about every move we made, the rain started. The clouds hung real low down over the ground which means you couldn't see somebody forty feet away. You could see their knees and their legs, but you couldn't see the top part. The clouds just hung there. Very eerie feeling. It was in a picture like that one afternoon late. We were digging in. We

reached the foothills now and we are digging in on the slopes on either side of the trail. That's when Willie Sunday got his points to go home. He was my machine gunner squad leader. He didn't get killed – he got points to go home. He and I were digging a foxhole, and we were digging away, and this runner came out, and our troop commander came over and said, "Willie, head in." So Willie turned, he looked at me, and I can still see him looking at me, didn't say a word, and I just kind of let him know that "Willie, you've got to go." He didn't want to go. I mean, I wouldn't have wanted to leave that group, either. You really had a keen sense of wanting to stay with your friends. He left, and I never saw Willie again. I talked to him – we corresponded after the war, and he sent me some pictures that he had made that I had never seen – forty or fifty years after the war. Willie is dead now – he died of a stroke one day. Willie left, and now I am acting sergeant. I had a machine gun squad of two machine guns – I was missing two men, which means the assistant gunner had to be an ammo bearer as well as assistant gunner. Whereas a machine gun squad should have a gunner, assistant gunner, and maybe one or two ammo bearers. You can't carry that many boxes - two hundred and fifty rounds of thirty caliber ammunition on a belt is pretty heavy. We're climbing mountains, that's what we're doing. The next four days, we're climbing that mountain. We're stopping for booby traps, and we're not being shot at other than by artillery. We finally come to a little stream – the path kind of went over a little knoll, and there's a little stream, and then it started back up again. And this stream couldn't have been more than eighteen feet wide, and it was about fifteen inches deep – beautiful water. So we waded through this stream and continued moving, and leaches got all over us. The stream was full of leaches. We were wearing combat boots at this time, not leggings. It wouldn't have made any difference. We were wearing combat boots, and our fatigue trousers were just hung down over it. We didn't try to tuck it in or anything. The leaches got all over our legs – we had to stop on the other side, take off our boots and take the leaches off – they made a red spot like a cigarette burn everywhere they hit. Don't dry your feet off – just take a wet sock and wring it out and dab it and put the sock back on, put on your boots and you're ready to go. So this was fairly

fast. We got on the other side, and we heard firing. B troop was trying to assault a hill, and they got run off this hill. They reached a first barrier of the Japanese dug in on this hill. So G troop was supporting, right behind B troop. So we went back across the stream because they pulled back, and we had to make room for them, instead of being all together. So now we had to get the leaches off again on this side. Then they went back to make another assault on the hill, and we went back across the stream. We took leaches – we crossed that stream no less than four times. In the process, B troop lost a lot of men. Wounded and killed. So they said for B troop to withdraw and let G troop take the hill. So this is Sunday, I believe December 22nd. No, it was Sunday, the 23rd of November. So we went up, and we got to the slopes approaching B hill – Baker hill – B troop had just tried to take it. We got to the slopes just about four o'clock in the afternoon. We were losing light, so they said to settle down for the night. A heavy rain came up, we couldn't dig foxholes, so we just rolled up in our ponchos and leaned against the grass – it was very steep – and tried to sleep. It rained all night long, and we sweated in those ponchos. That was a miserable, miserable, time. Next morning, they said we were going to take Baker hill. Lieutenant Meeks who lives in Abilene today was my platoon leader. Second platoon. Meeks said, "We're going to take this hill – we've got orders to take the hill." He said we were going to have an artillery barrage for maybe twenty minutes, then he said to fix bayonets and there could be some hand-to-hand. Passed the basket around with hand grenades and some of us took some and clipped them on our harnesses. I didn't fix a bayonet, because I was carrying a machine gun. The men who were in G troop ahead of me had bayonets. They had their trench knives ready. We never used those trench knives much. The next morning we conquered against the hill, and got between roots of trees – those big jungle trees have buttress roots. The buttress roots are like four inches thick and they're like a little partition that comes out from the tree. You can get in there and you've got a wall where the tree is on either side. In a way, you're protected. If the enemy is on that side. I got up in one of those, and we all hunkered down, and the artillery came. And boy, that sounded so great. And when they exploded, the smoke, the cordite

would just drift down and you'd smell it. I can smell that today. That was frightening. That whole scene would come back if I could smell that. The smell of that dirt, believe it or not, would evoke memories of those times. So the artillery stopped. And man, I hated to hear that. While the artillery was going on, I thought about home. Thought about Sunday... what would I be doing, and I'd probably be at church, and I thought about that. Boy, I wish I was there now. Just about the time the preacher gave the benediction, the artillery stopped. So then my brain got back to where I was, and my mind got back there, and Meeks blew the whistle, and we all headed out. And we went up that hill, man, we were hollering and screaming, we were determined to take that hill. And I truthfully tell you, my mind can't recall those memories. But we did take it, and we ended up about maybe fifty yards, a hundred yards up on the ridge. The Japanese were well dug in. We used hand grenades, and they appeared. After we passed them, they would come out of the holes – they had holes that were dug, and they were real geniuses at digging those holes. So we had fighting all around us. And I personally did not engage in any hand-to-hand. I used hand grenades. I never set the machine gun up because we were moving. I couldn't...

Mr. Morris: That was going to be one of my questions. How do you set one up going up a hill?

Mr. Garbo: If you use a machine gun, it's when you're in a position, and the gunner sets down the tripod, and I carried the tripod and the receiver at different times. We didn't worry about whose job you had. Everybody made coffee, and everybody Xeroxed and copied, and we did every job. If you put the tripod down and put the receiver on the tripod, and the gunner puts the belt in the breech, closed it and all that happens just like that. (Snaps fingers.) But we never stopped, until we got to the very end. It was raining, and it was silent. That cordite was drifting across which still smelled the hand grenades. Everybody was like, "Whew," you know. We stood there in the rain and met up with our squad leader, Colonel McMeans, who had taken part of the squadron and come back the opposite direction. We did a pincer movement and we met up and we just stood there. I made a sketch of that that's in my memoirs. I sent a copy of that on a CD to the Museum. If you

go into those memoirs and see the sketch, have notes on that sketch stating when and where this was. It's a sketch of us standing there and I felt like the day I drove down through the countryside in my home state and I saw a bunch of cattle standing in the rain out in this field, and they were just standing there. We were just standing there, and we were up about four thousand feet in this mountain ridge from a jungle setting. Now we're up on the top of a mountain. We got chilly, with the rain. The rain made us get chilly. So one of the boys in my group pulled a blanket – a wool army blanket out of his pack and he cut it down the middle and gave me half and I put it around my shoulders like a shawl. He did the same thing, because it was too chilly. We moved a few yards, and we'd go down – now we're on a razor-back ridge – and either side is a deep ravine. Trees were just as tall as those in New Guinea going out of the ridge and down the slopes. If you went too far and stepped over, you could actually tumble maybe – and you'd hit trees – so you were confined if you want to move to that razor-back ridge. And the ridge itself was no more than twelve feet across with a muddy trail in the middle. Trees everywhere.

Mr. Morris: Was this an exposed thing? But I guess you didn't have much choice.

Mr. Garbo: Nobody could see you.

Mr. Morris: Because of the trees.

Mr. Garbo: You are totally covered with a canopy, but the Japanese were so clever, they had every inch of that zeroed in with their artillery. They calculated we had to come down that ridge. That was the way to travel to get to Ormoc. This ridge trail went all the way down this razor-back ridge – trees covered everywhere. I'm sure the ridge is still there, and it's still covered with trees. You'll never see the trail. You've got to be there to see the trail. So they hit us with artillery every hour as we moved down the ridge. We had wounded, we had some men – artillery came in on us the next day after we had taken Baker and we rested and dug in for the night. I made a sketch of that foxhole that night – we covered it with a poncho, and the two of us in there. I did set my machine gun up that night, and I protected the right side and I had a machine gun on the left side. And we had rifle men all around us.

Mr. Morris: Were you sketching this while you were there?

Mr. Garbo: I made some sketches there, and I put them in my letters. But my letters were so censored, and I couldn't say where it was. I wouldn't put anything with it, other than "How's the weather there, the weather here's fine. How are you, mom and dad? Everybody here's fine. There's nothing much happening here." That's about it. Every letter you couldn't say it. In a way that was a waste, but we didn't know that much. They should have let us say anything we wanted to. But hey look, this is war. You've got to take all the caution you can. Anyway, so that's in my CD here at the Museum. That picture, that sketch. I have sketches all through that. I made them the years following the war after I got my discharge, I started making sketches from memory. Today maybe I have a photographic memory, I can see everything I'm describing to you, I can see it here.

Mr. Morris: Probably good and bad.

Mr. Garbo: Yeah, that's good and bad. I mean, it's good – I'm a landscape architect, it's good for the work I do, but the way I got these memories out of my mind, I came home and forgot about it. I'll pause here for a minute and say that when I got discharged, I turned my back on the war and didn't think about it for thirty or forty years. Then one Saturday – I'm married, I have four children, they're all up and married, they're out, so my wife and I are there. So I said, "I want to talk to somebody I served in the Army with." She said, "You ought to get that off your mind and forget about it." Well, you can't do that. You have to talk about it. So anyway, I picked up the phone and did everything I could think of. Everybody had a nickname so you couldn't find anybody's name in the telephone directory with their nickname – Red this and Big-foot Thomas, Red Holdom, and Pug Jones. Pug White – Whitey. Anyway, I picked up the phone and called an old boy down in McAllen, Texas named Jake Whitten. He was a mortar man – he was the man who set up the mortars, flares when we needed them. So Jake said, "Yeah, Bill, man, it's sure good to hear from you. I want to see you, man. Look, we're going to have a reunion in Dallas next year, why don't you come?" I said, "I'll be there." So I went the next year, and it was like opening up a wonderful, wonderful time to see loved ones you haven't seen in a long time. It was

emotional, it was very rewarding, and I've been going ever since. We held one reunion in Abilene. The home town of G troop. And everybody came. G troop, F troop, B troop, all of them came. Now let's go back to the mountains of Leyte.

Mr. Morris: Sitting on that razor-back ridge.

Mr. Garbo: Yes. In the rain, light rain, heavy rain, no rain. Steam rising. Smell. Artillery hit us pretty hard, because the Japanese had a way of crawling up – they had some sub-trails, because they would come in behind us. They'd climb up those steep trails – like climbing a ladder. Superhuman strength. We're talking mountain climbing – with trees. It wasn't like climbing an open-face mountain. They would come up on one side, then the other. They'd spot us, and they'd send word back. They hit us the next morning with artillery, and one of our men lost a leg, had a leg blown off immediately. We had four or five wounded, then one man next to me got hit by a large chunk of shrapnel in the muscle right here right behind the shoulder and he was scared to death. He said, "Am I going to die?" I looked at his fatigue jacket, I pulled him in between the roots of a huge tree, and the artillery is going off, and I ripped that off and took his pressure pack with sulfa powder in it and first I took my trench knife and pulled the steel out – it had been red hot. It had annealed (?) the skin which means it kept it from bleeding.

Mr. Morris: Oh, cauterized it?

Mr. Garbo: I meant cauterized it. I plucked that out. I didn't give to him, I wish I had. I poured it full of sulfa powder and put a pressure bandage on it, and tied it around him, and said, "You're going to be fine – you're gonna be going home." This happened – he did go home. I met him about fifty years after the war at one of our reunions, and I was talking to him, and I said, "Where were you wounded?" He said, "On Leyte." "Where were you when it happened?" He told me. I said, "Just a minute." I reached behind his back and I felt that hole in his back – oh, man, we hugged each other and we laughed and we cried. It was a great experience. He lives in Texas somewhere and I don't see him a lot, but I talk to him on the phone, I know where he is. Have his address. He's a man that doesn't come to a lot of reunions – some of the men want to try to get as far away from it as possible, and it's understandable. I can't get too far away from it, simply

because I can see it in my mind. Where are we? We're in Leyte. You want me to proceed, or do you want to hold off?

Mr. Morris: No, if you've got the energy, I've got it.

Mr. Garbo: This is the way it went. The next two days we moved just a few yards. The Japs came in on us one night. Pitch dark up there – you can't see. One of the Japs crawled in the hole with one of my machine gunners – he cut the throat of the man in the hole. He either killed both of them or one of them. He got the machine gun, and took it away with the ammo. Stole the machine gun. The next day, we of course went over, and these men were dead. No machine gun. And he opened up on us. So this went on day in and day out. So G troop moved along slowly, casualties along the way. We came to a place – G troop had a squad of machine guns at the rear and a squad of machine guns at the front. And they decided that my squad would be the rear guard. So now we're strung out and it's not possible to guard that whole ridge. The 24th Infantry Division was way north of us on that ridge and there was a big gap in there that was anybody's territory. At the rear, we found the Japs were coming in on us. One, and two, and three at a time. Patrolling. So Dale White was my assistant gunner, and he was good. So he would take that – he would watch that machine – he was so quick. He jumped over my lap one day and grabbed the machine gun and opened up and just wiped out some Japs that were coming in on us. One of the Japs jumped off the edge of the hill and as far as we know he disappeared down in the jungle down in the trees on that slope, so I went over to check, and I saw him down there. So I backed off real quick, and pulled the pin and threw a hand grenade. When the hand grenade went off, it got him, then I went down and searched him. Didn't find any maps or anything. But he was well dressed, well fed and I remember he was young, because I touched him as I searched him he kind of fell back in the brush and slid away. That's how steep that embankment was. We eventually closed up with the main unit, now we're at the place I call the cul de sac. This was a place at the end of the trail maybe a little large than this room, almost like a cul de sac. We were dug in all along here, just before it sloped down in all directions. Straight ahead was an opening that went down a trail down to Ormoc on the west coast of Leyte.

So we could climb in the trees with binoculars and see the Japanese artillery down there, and we saw ships landing. We saw 77th Division make a landing there. But the Japanese wouldn't let us go any further, they really hit us pretty hard. We sent a patrol out every day – we sent patrols out in all directions, which meant they had to go down those steep slopes, and disappear and try to find out what was down there, and then come back. Go down, come back on the trail – backtrack. I took a patrol down the trail toward Ormoc, and I got down probably... as a machine gunner, you still were called on to take patrols out. If so, you took a tommy gun or whatever – you chose your weapon. No weapons belonged to anybody. Anybody could use anything. Anyway, I went on a four-man patrol down this hill, and I'll never forget. We had attempted to do this several days before, and the patrols would run into fire, so they'd back off. You didn't have much of a choice – if you ran into fire going down, it was awfully hard to try to go around or anything like that. So my turn came to go down, and I took a patrol down, and my lead man, my BAR man got killed. It took him all day to die – he was shot in the stomach, internally, and I'm sure he was shot from below. I pulled him up, and we finally got him back up the hill – we moved enough footage backwards to get out of the light of the Japanese. We got back up to the cul de sac and a medic worked on him, but it was too late. By now we're exhausted. We've been in combat for days and days and days. In those days, like on the Driniumor River, forty-five days you didn't pull out. You stayed for the duration. We didn't realize how exhausted we were. But now the 77th Division had landed, the Japanese were still very strong between them – between the Ormoc Valley and our point. They were fiercely fighting to hold on to something. We had an earthquake during this time. It was raining, and my foxhole had water in it – we had two types of foxholes – we had some that were sort of square and boxy like a dishwasher. Two men could sit down in there. This foxhole was long, cause you ducked down and hit rock, so this foxhole was long like lying in a coffin, and had walls on it about twenty-four inches deep. So it filled up full of water. I was trying to get the water out of it, so I tried to make a little place so the water could go out. I laid down in it that night, and there was another man beside

me, and he stood guard, then I stood guard, then I went back to sleep. It rained and the water came up on me, tickled my ears, and I woke up. So the rest of the night it was too dark – you didn't get out of your foxhole at night. If you got out of your foxhole, you were dead. Your own men would shoot you. We killed our own men accidentally, cause they were moving above ground after dark. So we had an earthquake when daylight came, and I'd sit there in that hole sloshing back and forth, back and forth. I remember the trees doing this, and it quit. Then we had an aftershock, and nobody said a word. It was almost like "What is this? What's going on?" The earthquake was almost friendly compared to the artillery and all that we had been through. It was a gesture, I don't know whether it was a reminder that God was still in charge or what. I have no idea. But I remember that earthquake. The word came for the 112th to pull back down – a second squadron of the 112th to pull back down to the beginning point of that ridge. There was no way out of there. I remember going up and down and carrying that machine gun, the receiver was twenty-two pounds. You carry two quarts of water, your pack was fifty or sixty pounds. By the time I got that in, I could hardly make it. I reached up to grab a root, and some fresh troops had just landed. I don't know what outfit it was, they had fresh fatigues on, clean socks and everything, and boy they were coming up. They saw us coming out of there, and I'm sure they thought, "Boy, this is a raunchy bunch." But they reached and helped us get up some of the bad slopes. We pulled down to the beach, the Salvation Army met us and gave us hot Coca Cola and cookies. No ice of course. It was a wonderful thing to have that. They took us in trucks down Highway One over to some tents with cots in them, they doctored on us, medicated us, and let us rest. We slept like babies. We emptied our rifles and pistols, and put on clean fatigues and pulled back to Takloban by truck. I didn't realize it, but I had gotten an infected foot because we hadn't taken our shoes off, so my feet swelled and I couldn't get my shoes back on, and I got a swelling, so my leg was swollen this size went all the way down to my ankle. So they said, "This man's got to be evacuated." We were on a dirt road, so they sent an ambulance down there to pick me up. On the way back to the beach – now I only tell you this because this

is the reality of war – on the way back to the beach we got stopped by an M.P. who said we were speeding. This driver of this truck – I learned some choice words that I had never heard before – and that M.P. stepped back. He had probably never been in combat and didn't realize the essence of what combat is all about. You've got to get your wounded – your sick men out. He evacuated me, and the driver said, "I've got to get this man to the Takloban airport. We've got to fly him to a hospital quick or else they will amputate a leg." They evacuated me by C-47 along with a lot of other men who were wounded and injured. I was not wounded, it was a matter of an ailment. Flew me down to Biak – that's another couple of thousand miles down the ocean. We landed, put me in the general hospital, and the C-47 flew so high in the cold atmosphere and it was not heated in the back. That coldness did a lot for this leg. When I landed, it was still in bad shape, but it had ceased to hurt. It was rapidly deteriorating, and I don't think I could have made it. So I was in the hospital about a month. Maybe three weeks, I don't remember. They released me, and I hitchhiked back to my outfit. I wanted to get back to my mail and my friends. They released me and I went to a force replacement depot, and I said, "How long will I be here?" They said, "Well, we don't know. We have to get a group of you and try to get..." And I said, "I can't do that, I've got to get my mail, I want to get back." I said, "Can I go on my own?" "Sure." They handed me my papers, and the boys in the replacement depot wished me luck and I told them bye. I went down to the P. T. boat landing and I said, "Are you going to the Philippines?" They said, "Yeah." I said, "Can I ride?" They said, "Yes." I said, "When are you leaving?" They said, "We're leaving first thing in the morning." But they said, "But we won't go straight to the Philippines. We have to go here, there, and yonder. Wherever we go to do our work. You may not get there for awhile." I said, "Well, I'm going to try one more thing before I – don't write me off, because I'd like to go with you." They said they could use me as a gunner. So anyway, I went to the airfield, they were loading up – Airport Transport Command – ATC's – looks just like a C-47 but a little fatter, bigger. The pilot said they were leaving at 2:30 in the morning. I said, "I'll be here." He said, "I'll be glad to have you." So I went back to the

force replacement depot and they threw a party for me, and I had some of the first beer I ever had overseas. And we just had a great time. The Japs bombed the island that night and after the party I didn't sleep, went to Air Transport Command, got on board. All I had was a ditty bag, just a little small bag like the kids wear to school today, but it was a single bag over the shoulder. I took that, had a change of underwear and a few personal items in it. I got on the plane, and we flew off the next morning and we landed at Peleliu to refuel, and then we flew up to Mindanao and landed there at daylight and we had breakfast. I was in a fighting outfit, and you did not fraternize with your officers. The commander of the aircraft was a captain, or maybe he was a first lieutenant, I'm not sure. But he said, "Come with me, we're going to have breakfast." And I couldn't get over the fact that I was eating breakfast in the officer's mess, which we didn't do in fighting units. Anyway, I had a great breakfast, and he took off – he was fully loaded, and he just got up off the jungle trees at the other end of the runway. This is Mindanao, and we landed at Clark Field on Luzon. I got out of the plane, thanked him, and went up the highway going to Manila. Fighting was going on all along that highway, refugees were coming down the highway. I stuck my thumb up and an Army truck, a six-by, driven by a black driver who was the happiest guy in the world. Very dangerous – he flew down that street – that highway was the only paved highway I'd seen since I left the States. He said, "Hop in." So I hopped in there, man, me and my ditty bag, and we took off. Through that windshield I saw Filipinos fleeing down the highway going in all directions. They got out of the way of that crazy driver! We got to Manila, Manila's under siege, fires are burning here there and yon, artillery's going off. He dropped me off – he almost slowed down and said, "Get out of here," and I got out at a bank. So I'm standing at the bank, money is all over the floor, Filipino pesos are scattered all inside the bank, and I went in there. The doors were open and I went in and looked on the floor, and I said, "Goodness gracious." I put some of the money in my pocket, and I felt bad about it, so I took it out of my pocket, threw it back in, left it on the floor. I was standing there in the front wondering where my outfit is. I was waiting for someone coming through with a

jeep or something, so I could ask where the 112th Cavalry was. A jeep came flying down through there, and they passed me just so fast I couldn't stop them. And then they backed up and said, "Garbo." And it was from my troop. Now that's a piece of luck. I mean, this is less than twenty four hours after I left the hospital. No, excuse me, the second day after I left the hospital.

Mr. Morris: How did you know they were in Manila?

Mr. Garbo: Because we were told we were preparing to make the invasion of Luzon. I wasn't sure they were in Manila. And they weren't in Manila – they were west of Manila and north at a place called Marongko Village – it was a barrio called Marongko. They were there to protect the Epo (sp) Dam – the water source for Manila. So they said, "Garbo, hop in, boy." So I hopped in and they picked up something – the commander had sent them in to pick up supplies of some kind – batteries or something. So out we went, and we went out to this barrio, and I had my mail before sundown, I had packages from home from my present wife. She sent me a package. We talked about that today. Everything was ruined – it had been wet. I had eighty five letters waiting for me. I got back to my duffle bag – nobody stole anything from you in this outfit. Now that's not true with a lot of these Army and military outfits. I had a brother in the Marines had everything personal stolen from him when he was captured by the Chinese Communists and put into prison in China during the war. When he finally got out, everything was gone. His own fellow soldiers – the Marines. But that's one reason I wanted to be in the 112th. I promise you – it was a unique outfit. Good old small town boys from West Texas – the best kind. I mean, loyalty you wouldn't believe. You helped each other like you wouldn't believe. It was the same way in Mississippi. Good old country boys. I'm not talking about all Mississippi, or all Texas. I'm talking about that special group that's out there, that silent group that you see in the hinterlands that you don't always talk to. Anyway, got back and they welcomed me back, and oh man, I got my squad – my machine guns – everything is just lovely. Next morning I go out on patrol. Luzon was another harsh experience. We were in seemingly civilized country.

End of side two.

Mr. Morris: This is tape number two, side A.

Mr. Garbo: We were talking about getting back from the hospital and making my way back to Luzon, and now I ran into my buddies that were driving the jeep in Manila. Tony Frangella from Chicago was part of the 112th Cavalry – he was in G troop. He was the jeep driver. He grabbed me and we drove out to the village of Morongko where I rejoined my fellow troopers. I got my mail, got everything set up. They were living in foxholes in the back yard of a fairly large house in the center of this barrio. Adjacent to this house and south across the road was a large rice field that led to another large rice field, and another large rice field, and even further south of that was the city of Manila. North of Morongko was the Angot River. The Angot River had a rock base and the water was probably chest deep when it ran normally. So you could wade across the river on a fairly level rock base gravel base, and when you got to the other side - you hold your rifle and other equipment above your head - you were wet but otherwise your equipment was dry. And so our patrols went across that river every day and we went deep into enemy territory. We were a small unit now, and we sent patrols north, south, east, and west from the village. We had a wonderful cook who told us one day that he would cook us some fried chicken if we'd gather up all the chickens in the barrio. There were no civilians there, nothing but a few kids. The Filipino kids loved to be around American troops. They wanted to go out on patrol, and everything. We wouldn't let them. We had a young boy that was with us, we called him "Superman," but we did have Filipino guerillas who guided us through the mountains and kept us from getting lost. Cause if you don't know a territory, once you get off the road, you're gone. I saw action there, we'd go on patrols and spend like a three-day patrol. We would engage the enemy – we would kill a few Japanese – they would wound a few of our men. One night we were dug in on a one of these three-day patrols, and the Japs came up and threw a hand grenade into my foxhole, and it didn't fall in my foxhole, it hit the dirt to the right of it where the dirt was mounded up. And it rolled into Arthur Jones's foxhole on my right. And Arthur Jones is from Pennsylvania. He's living today. But he got wounded real bad that night. I could hear the Japanese but I couldn't see them.

So I violated my rule – I started firing my machine gun where I could hear the sound. And when I did, one of the tracers – every fifth bullet being a tracer – caught the grass hut in the middle of the rice paddy on fire. And it started blazing – now we had a flare. And we had Japanese all over the place, and it went like a war. They fired at us, and we fired at them. They did not attempt to overrun our position. There were only a few of them. These were daredevils that decided they would do something to these crazy guys that put a perimeter in the middle of a rice paddy. Full view. It wasn't the smartest thing in the world. But we had attempted to put our perimeter on high ground on the edge of some trees, and we dug down two inches and found solid rock, so even after dark, in the twilight, we dug these. So we engaged that kind of action off and on. We were successful, we were run off of several of our positions by mortar fire and artillery fire. One patrol that I went on I had to go up in the mountains to try to locate the Japanese guns, because our artillery couldn't triangulate in on their guns because every night the Japanese would start brush fires. And the brush fire on the horizon would give a bright light, and therefore when they flashed their artillery you couldn't zero exactly. We had too much conflicting information. So I took a three-man patrol on this. I was going down a trail in cover, and we'd go up a ridge and look carefully, and go down and start up, and just as we started up a ridge the Filipino guide who was with us – there were three of us, myself, another tommy gun man, and the Filipino guide. He did like this, and we stopped, and a B-24 came over – they may have been a reconnaissance to take pictures, I'm not sure. But they flew over this hill that was before us, covered with trees. When he got over the hill - they were fairly low - the small arms fire went off like crazy. The hill sounded like a beehive. So we couldn't see them, but we heard them. So we stopped, and we backed off, got off the trail, got up in some brush, and a Japanese patrol, a few men, came down, and we didn't engage them, and they went back. The Caribou, if you ever saw Caribou on a patrol, you had to be careful, because they would give you away. They'll snort.

Mr. Morris: Caribou like the deer Caribou?

Mr. Garbo: The Caribou with the horns that go back like this. They use them for plowing – they're very docile animals. They use them for plowing in rice fields. They look a lot like the animal in Africa that's very dangerous. The Cape Buffalo I think they call it. But they're not...they're very docile and they're trained domestically. We dug in for the night, and we heard a boom boom, and it was two rounds of mortar fire. In a little while they landed, boom boom, and then they adjusted their sights, and it came a little closer, so now they're almost on our hill. The last boom boom they hit our hill – I remember the date – it was April 14, I think, because that very day we got a radio message that FDR had died. So whatever date that was, that was the date we were dug in. Well, the last boom boom went off on our hill, and it didn't kill any of our men, but it busted the stock on a rifle of one of the men from my squad. Didn't touch me and no one got any shrapnel out of it. Lieutenant Meeks said, "We're evacuating the hill." So we pulled down on the back side of the hill, assuming they were sighting us from the other side. The Filipino took us down into a ravine gorge-like thing, and it got pitch dark. When it dark, it got dark. And one man put his hand on the man in front of him, and we made our way in the blackness to one of our outposts. We finally got there – it took us a while. We were wringing wet with sweat – it was hot and humid. We made our way then – we had to call, and they said, "Who is this?" "Lieutenant Meeks. Babe Meeks, G Troop." "Who are the teams in the World Series?" I'm not really a baseball fan. I'm glad they didn't ask me, because I wouldn't have been able to give that. Anyway, Babe Meeks and one of the sergeants answered back. They said, "Come on in." So they took us in to their perimeter of this First Squadron forward outpost, and they said to get comfortable back there and get some rest. We were tired, totally wore out. To be forced off that hill after traveling all day, we were just fatigued. This is the way it went at Marongko. Then we're all back at the village, Marongko Village, and the Japanese artillery is still harassing that village, and they sent trucks up and they relieved us with another infantry company. I don't know the name of the infantry. I want to say 45th Division. But anyway, Epo Dam is being protected because we and other troops are around taking care of it. They put us in trucks and drove us

through Manila, down south of Manila, and east to a place called Antipolo (sp?). This is a village – we passed through Antipolo and went out on a dirt road up to the mountains. The road ran out, and we stopped at the end of the road. They got out, and they took us up to some positions where we relieved a group of infantry that were on this hill. It was called Horseshoe Hill. (I'm going to finish this interview, because I don't think we'll get another chance to go...if we're not going to interfere with anything else.)

Mr. Morris: No, he's just stacking his stuff up.

Mr. Garbo: Are you all right?

Mr. Morris: I'm fine.

Mr. Garbo: On Horseshoe Hill, we sent patrols out. The Japanese pulled their famous dynamite satcho (?) charges. They'd crawl up and they'd throw them in the hole. They'd try to find a mortar or a machine gun or something of significance in your hardware, and wipe it out. And they had men that were brave and daredevils that would do that. We did, too, of course, but it was in a different way. We tried to be a little more cost-efficient in lives. We had some men that were blown out of their foxholes – they died because they couldn't get to them at night, and they would bleed to death. They had an artery broken or something like that. It was sad – we had a man in my squad that got a letter from home, and they brought letters out to the site, and he got a Dear John letter from his wife, and he couldn't handle it. He said, "I've got to go home. I can't handle this." So instead of going home, he got up and started walking down the trail in front of us, right into our booby trap. We had what we called bouncing Betties, and booby traps around our position. Dale White, I remember, saw him do this. He's the one that told me he got a Dear John. He jumped up and tackled him. He fussed at him and knocked some sense into him, and said, "Look, we need you. Just tear the letter up and burn it." So anyway he stayed. He ratted around, he mumbled and grumbled. He became his old usual self. We spent probably three weeks there on that hill. Very small action, except for the night skirmishes by the Japanese, and we sent patrols out every day in all directions. It was an open hill like you find in West Texas, rolling hills. From our hill we could take a pair of binoculars and look over here

and watch the action of another group on another hill dug in. We saw the Japanese crawling up slowly to their positions and we'd radio up and try to tell them about it. Things like that. They brought out a snooper scope for my machine gun, and a snooper scope is a night vision scope made just like the night vision things we have for our armies today. It was a large black lens scope – the whole thing was flat black – it ran off a battery about half the size of an automobile battery, and had a little switch you would turn on and it went “Ooo.” Made a little low hum. I said, “Man, I don't like this.” I tried it – I had a single lens scope I could look out, and I could see green. If a person was walking out there, we tested it out in the dark – had a man walk right out in front of us, and he was a green silhouette. Just like the infrared night vision stuff that we have today, but I'll be honest with you, that noise worried me to death. I tried it one night, and I gave my analysis report. We were doing a lot of things to try to improve our ability to survive and get through the war. So the day came that we pulled off of Horseshoe Hill, we were replaced by a new outfit that had just arrived in Luzon. We pulled back to the end of the road – place where we had originally been dumped out of the truck. We weren't dumped out – where we arrived and got out. They gave us water – they had Lister bags – they gave us water. They gave us fresh supplies – we took on fresh K-rations, and we made sure everybody's equipment was okay, and the next day we took off two single-files toward the Santa Maria Mountains. They said we were going in behind the Japanese lines to see what's going on. So we marched to the mountains up steep trails. We got off the trails after we managed the foothills and got up far enough, we got up on the dry hills where we could look down and see everything below us. We were without water for three days. I still had some water, and I carried two canteens and I rationed myself. So when I finally ran out after the third day, I put my steel helmet in a pig track so that the rim of the helmet was just even with the top of the ground. I didn't worry about the mud. And overnight it had about two-thirds full of muddy water. Boy, we were just desperate. So we took that water and we boiled it in my steel helmet and had coffee. It was a great treat. Next day we decided that we'd gone far enough. Cause I mean we were the only

ones that had water. G troop was at the end of the line, we were ready. McMains said – he was our commander at that time, second squadron, he said, “We’re going down.” So they sent a boy from Pennsylvania, Red Holden, down with a B.A.R. and he slid down this hill. The hill was dry, and it was cracked and hard. Dry grass that high, looked like wheat. And you couldn’t negotiate. You started walking, you’d slip. So he sat on his butt, put his M-1 across his lap, and down he went. So we all went down that slide after he got down there and waved and told us to come on. We all took the slide down. I put the machine gun receiver on my lap, and down I went. So now we’re all down in the valley, and there’s water over there. Boy, that water looked so good. You could see it shining and running from the hilltop. Went over there, and like a bunch of kids we lay down and rolled in it, put water all over us, filled our canteens. We heard a firefight, and some of the men were smart enough, wise enough to be on guard. We filled up our canteens, made some water tanks out of some large bamboo, punched holes in it. The Filipinos did that, they took probably two gallons each – they slung them over their shoulders. Up we went on the hill and dug in. So now we have plenty of water, we feel good, we’re refreshed, and we’re now in the Santa Maria Mountains. We’re just above the Linitin River, which is our destination. Go up the Linitin River which is the supply route for General Yamashta’s (?) army, and stop it. And also be the eyes and ears of the 38th Infantry, which is a full division coming in from the west. So we went in from the east, up the Linitin River. The next morning, I set up an ambush on the river just down from our tepee and along a large column of Japanese were making their way out of Manila, and getting back the best way they could. They were filtering back to join the main group. I had my machine gun set up, and as soon as they got before me – I either shoot now or don’t – I opened up and caught them by surprise and wiped everybody out except about three or four. They happened to run and get away. So one of the men in the Japanese group turned and looked me straight in the eyes. We were about as far as here to the main street up here in front of the school. So I looked at him, and as I did, I was firing that machine gun. A tracer hit him right in the face. I can always remember seeing that. Now I’m telling you, I’m not a person

that loves violence or blood or any of that stuff, but I've never lost any sleep over that. They killed so many of our men, personal friends, that at this point we were all hardened to the fact that it was either kill or be killed. Get this war over with. Anyway, we stayed down there a little while after doing this action, oh, and one of the men in this group was wounded. And I wasn't going to shoot him any more, but I could see he was moving. He reached and got a hand grenade and put it under his belly and blew himself up. He committed Hari-Kari. I captured one Jap that day – he came up the river from the opposite direction holding a surrender leaflet, and I brought him back up to the command post. There was just Dale White, myself, the lieutenant who was in charge of the ambush, and two riflemen. We captured the prisoner and were going to send him back to the main command post, but see, we're so far in the mountains up these trails, logistically – we couldn't helicopter him out – we didn't have that. So he's there, and the Filipinos were sitting around him in a circle on this hillside, we're dug in, it's getting late in the day. A rainstorm came up. And we didn't know it – now, I was through with my part – I brought him back to the command post, and the Colonel in charge of our squadron was there – Colonel McMannis or he might have been a Captain, I'm not sure, may have been a Major. But at any rate, the Filipinos kept doing this (sound) and laughing. And I'm sure this guy thought, "They're going to cut my throat the minute it gets dark. I'm sitting in a bad place." Rainstorm came up, and the Filipinos – they were wonderful people, but they did stupid things, some of them – they went under trees, someplace to keep the rain from coming on them.

Mr. Morris: ???

Mr. Garbo: He's sitting there by himself, and we're dug in out here now. He came running through and jumped right over our machine gun and rolled down the hill. We fired at him, but he got away. I told Dale, I said, "Well, good luck." I mean, the guy got away, but he knows who's here, what we've got – we could be in bigger trouble. At this place, we received what's called a two-second or three-second grenade, I can't remember. Do you recall – do you personally know anything about hand grenades?

Mr. Morris: I think there were five standard.

Mr. Garbo: That was too long. If you threw a five-second, or four-second, they would throw it back. So they finally said, "Let's give these boys a three-second. Somebody had studied the issue. So we got these three-second grenades, and Dale pulled the pin on this thing and threw it, and it was perfect. The minute it got out of sight, over the edge, it went off. I said, "That's more like it." So we used them from then on. We didn't have a choice, that's what they were sending us. So we started up the river the next day.

Mr. Morris: I hope they told you that these were not five-second grenades.

Mr. Garbo: They did. In fact, we got a good lecture on it. Eyeball to eyeball. The survivors had to learn to listen and to follow instructions. So we were developing a kinship and a love for each other at this time that has lasted the years. Didn't know it, never thought of it, but it's a kinmanship, or whatever you want to call it. But we started up that Linitin River the next day, and every inch of the way our B.A.R.'s were in the lead, and we lost a B. A. R. man one day. His sidekick with a tommy gun was hit one day and killed, but these men wanted to lead the column. I mean, if you took a B.A.R. man and said, "You're going to have to go to the back of the column and be the rear guard," he didn't want it. They were just dedicated to be in harm's way. But they led us, single column, went all the way up. I was far back in troop, because I was carrying a machine gun and tripod and ammunition. With a sixty-pound pack, we were fully loaded. Dale White got a blister on his heel one day, and I relieved him, and didn't realize it, but when I took the machine gun receiver, all I had was a forty-five. I always carried it on my right shoulder. And I'm right handed. So a Jap came out of the cunai grass (?) on the edge of the river between me and Dale White, and I looked at my machine gun, and I forgot about the forty-five, and just as I did, Dale wheeled, and he lowered the boom, wiped him out. And whoever was with him took off. Had some close calls. We moved along the river, and American P-38's covered every action – they were our cover force on all these actions. We called for them to come out, and it's beautiful watching them strafe and drop bombs. And there were always two of them. They were wonderful, and they got into dogfights above us with

Japanese aircraft and I always said, "I don't know who you are, but we're glad you're there." They may have done the same thing with us. So we made our way up the river and we got to a place where the trail on the river split – it went this way across the – the river ran between two mountain gorges, very narrow down in here. We got to the point where it kinda flattened out more comfortably. It had some little folds and mounds. So we pulled up on the right side and dug in the command post setup here. We went up the trail and put an outpost up there. We all took turns going over to that outpost. We had thirty men over there. So patrols were being sent out from all these outposts, and we sent patrols up to liaison with the 38th Infantry. The Japanese in the meantime are up in front of us, and around us, really. They were still sending supplies up, because they controlled the river. We're above the river at the command post. We still have patrols coming up the river. I went on several patrols from the outposts, we were successful in those patrols in catching stragglers. They shot at us, sniped at us every day. But we were up on this high hill, and the bullets would hit below us. It's crazy to think we exposed ourselves – you could see us wide open. We were around on top of that hill. Like sitting ducks. It was almost like, "We know you can't hit us." But they were good. They had snipers with telescopes - they were very good. My duty on the outpost was done, I went back over to the main force, and they decided we were going to move further up and get closer to the Japanese headquarters. So we sent out a patrol one morning, and we walked right into the biggest ambush – well planned – we were all trapped. We lay there all day from first light to almost no light at all. We had a new troop commander, a new troop officer – I don't know what rank he was. He was higher than anyone else in the company. He froze up – he wouldn't make a decision. We lay there – what do we do? Our first sergeant of G troop was Fish (?) said, "Tell us what to do – we've got to withdraw, or do something." And we had three men killed, and two men wounded at this other juncture. So he froze up and never answered. So finally the first sergeant said, "I'm going to have to make a decision. We can't stay here tonight." All day had passed and snipers had made their way around us. So now they were shooting down on us, and they had us trapped in the ambush.

He blew the whistle, and we passed the word. We whispered, "This is what we're going to do. When the whistle blows, we're all getting out. Take our wounded, anybody you can bring out." I grabbed a man that was shot through the knee – I was one of the last ones out. I took off my pack and left it there, because I wanted to have enough room to carry somebody. And Dale had the machine gun receiver with the machine gun, and I grabbed a man that was shot through the knee, and we all got out of there except the men that were killed. All the men that were wounded came out. We left our B.A.R. man in there – we didn't know if he was dead or not. As it turned out, he was not. He was not hit – when he hit the ground, he hit right behind a large rock. His head was by the rock, and his body was down the way. The machine gun bullets were hitting his pack, and everything around him, but never hit him. His name was Trout, boy from Kentucky. So we got out, pulled up on the hill, and it's almost where you can't see now. We heard a couple of "Ba-booms" and some small arms fire. We saw a black figure coming out running and it was Trout – he got out. What he had done – he took the pin out of his B.A.R. and after we were gone, the Japs came out and they kicked over the men who were killed and rolled them over, laughing and talking. And he waited till they came to him and he jumped up and scared them to death – this dead man, they thought, jumped up. He threw his B.A.R. at them, and in that moment he pulled two hand grenades and tossed them. They hit the ground – he took off. By the time they got away from the hand grenades and finally rallied, he was "out of Dodge." So he came on up on the hill – he was laughing, we were laughing, we were all happy. We pulled back, spent a miserable night dug in. One man was killed during the night because he got up to go to the bathroom in front of his foxhole, which is what we did, and he woke his buddy up and told him not to shoot him. He got up, whispered to me in the foxhole next door, and the one on that side, and we knew what to expect. When he headed back to his foxhole, I heard the gun go off. The other guy probably went to sleep, and he woke up and saw this silhouette in front of him, and shot him. So that was so sad. So our spirits are low, and we pull back to our original command post sitting on the hillside. I set up a crossfire with my two machine

guns, dug in for the night, and that night the Japanese threw artillery in on us. Started dueling with our artillery. I was on guard duty the first two hours. There were three of us on this machine gun – one man on guard duty, and two men resting. That gave us four hours of sleep each. So it made it good. Cling (?) was on the phone, and Carroll and I were in the foxhole asleep. One of the artillery shells that the Japanese were throwing – they were trying their best to hit our ridge, our mountainside – hit a tree above our foxhole, and we had a tree burst. It blew Carroll and me out of the foxhole down into the grass, and it hit the man on the machine gun and tore up the machine gun and scattered ammunition everywhere. But it didn't kill any of us. I woke up in the grass – it was a moonlight night – I stood up, didn't feel anything, and Carroll was lying over there, and I said, "Are you all right?" He said, "Yeah, I'm all right." Now this was not an assault by Japanese soldiers, it was artillery. They would shoot one or two rounds, and then they'd quit. Fifteen minutes later – they didn't want you to sleep – no rest. And they wanted to kill you if they could. I felt my combat boots filling up with water, or something. I was bleeding to death and didn't know it. So I wondered, "What is that squishy stuff in my boots?" I didn't have any pain. I managed to crawl back to a large boulder and the medic was there treating the boy that was on guard, Cling and Carroll and I went back and got there. The medic looked at me and he saw my fatigues had some pretty good sized holes in them, he said, "Let me look." So he cut my fatigue pants down both sides, and he saw an artery was broken in this leg. I was bleeding to death. Never felt any pain. He stopped working on Cling, and another medic came and helped. He put a tourniquet on this leg, filled it full of sulfa powder, put a pressure bandage on it, and gave me a shot of morphine. I went sound asleep. The soundest sleep I've ever had in my life. I was ready for some rest. Next morning, a pilot that flew a helicopter off a liberty ship shuttling spare parts to the airfield like Clark Field, etc., volunteered. He heard that we were in the mountains and he heard about all our wounded – he volunteered to come out and rescue some of us. He and two other pilots – pilot's name was James Brown – he flew out in a Sikorsky R4B helicopter. 175 horsepower. He took the doors off of it – it's cloth covered, the

first helicopters ever brought into combat, Sikorsky designed it and built it, sold the Army on it, the Navy wouldn't buy it, Marines wouldn't buy it, Army did. He volunteered along with these other two pilots, and they received the Air Medal for rescuing seventy of us from the mountains. I was flown out in this helicopter, glad to do it next morning, landed at this general hospital at Antipolo, treated the flesh wound, no bones broken, miraculously the skin just worked its way back up, and in a matter of a month, I still wore a little bandage to keep that tender skin from being cracked, and I went back to my unit. Took my squad, got replacements, new equipment, getting ready to invade Japan. The atomic bomb is dropped within a matter of weeks. So they said we're going to Japan as occupation troops instead of invading. Oh, we were a happy bunch! We loaded aboard the APA Lavaca 180 (?) troop ship. We were full strength – two thousand men. We had never been full strength after the 112th left New Britain. We had over 500 casualties there, over 500 in New Guinea, and over 500 at Leyte. All of them were casualties – not dead – wounded. Then Luzon had another 560 casualties. Now we are headed to Japan. We reached Tokyo Bay on September 2, MacArthur honored us by allowing us to anchor just off the starboard side of the USS Missouri, we witnessed the signing of the peace agreement, hundreds of airplanes came over just above our ships as the signing went on, and they turned and came back – I was so proud! We were all just so proud. So after the signing ceremony we weighed our anchor – weighing anchor means they pull it up, doesn't it? I'm not a Navy man, I hope that's right. We sailed to Tokyo and Yokohama, didn't get off, and turned and went across the bay to the peninsula to a town called Tateyama – and it's the equivalent of Pensacola, Florida naval base in Japan. In fact, this pilot who is here from the Japanese air kamikaze group was trained at Tateyama. I talked to him yesterday. So now the war's over, we're at Tateyama, and we're picking up weapons and sending patrols through the mountain caves, and we're confiscating anything in the way of a weapon, a bomb or anything, and we're loading it aboard barges and they're taking it out to sea, I guess. Disposing of it. We had warehouses full of all types of equipment that we guarded. The Navy came in one night when I was officer of the guard – I was

only a sergeant. They came in after dark and I was guarding the warehouse with my men. I had men on guard. They came up in the dark and they said, "Can we go in the warehouse and get a souvenir to take home?" (Whispering) These Navy guys were in this little motor launch they got off their cruiser or whatever, and I said, "Go in and have at it." Man, they went in, they brought out machine guns, rifles, sabers, you name it. They took them home. That's great. That's a lot better than throwing them in the ocean as far as I'm concerned. So somewhere out there these old Navy veterans will tell the same story. All that's ? is my squad from Tateyama down to a radar point on Tokyo Peninsula across the bay from Tokyo to a town called Tamasaki. It's a fishing village of about twenty-five or thirty thousand people. So I arrived, and this is the first American troops that they have seen, and I set up on the radar station in a little building where they had a radar station, and I had my rations and I had my men, so I set up there. All they had seen was these trucks come through the village with American soldiers on them. I sent one of the men down to the well – there was a well about halfway up there where they had water. So we had 10-in-1 rations. Are you familiar with 10-in-1 rations? Ten men can eat out of one ration box. It had canned bacon, it had powdered eggs, oh, man, it was like the best you could get! K-rations didn't have that kind of thing. We felt like this was a gravy train! When he went down to get water, he dropped the bucket in the well, and it went "Kerlunk." So I took a flashlight down and looked, and the well had logs in it. They didn't like us, and they denied us having water. So we spent the night, and the next morning at daylight I told the men – I left some men on guard there at the radar station – there were fourteen of us – and I said, "Let's go." There were eight of us that went down to the village. Helmets, sidearms, everything loaded, rifles, and we marched down to the head – I had the name of the Japanese who was in charge of the village. He was a silk merchant, but he was supposed to be – they didn't call him a mayor, but whatever he was, he was the top banana. I went down to his house – we knew where it was. We stopped – we made ourselves visible as we went through the village. Marched our way down there. I sent one of the men up on the rock and stones and little deck and sliding shoji screen. He went up and

knocked on the wall, on the wood, and in a little while the Japanese lady came, and she bowed real low, and he said, "We want..." I can't remember this part, but I think it was a silk merchant, I may have had a name. But he was a silk merchant, and the very top man in this town. He may have been in uniform a week before this happened. You couldn't find anybody in uniform once we landed in Japan. So he came there, and I said... and I put him in the middle of the group. Now here we are, and I don't remember whether we had bayonets on our rifles or not. I wanted to look as intimidating as possible. We marched with him through the village, down the main street, walked up to our little place, took him over to the well, shined a flashlight...

End of side one.

...I used probably a little stronger voice, and I said, "I'm don't want to put up with that. We're not here to do harm, but we want that done now." He kept saying, "Ah so, ah so." Anyway, the well was cleaned out, and we became friends with the village. We gave them access to the food that was in the caves that the Japanese Army had stored there. They loved us. We left there in December to go back to the main base, and they were on the streets waving to us.

Mr. Morris: This is tape number two, side B.

Mr. Garbo: I returned to Tateyama where the G troop was set up, and now we're sending men home. My points came up and I got my message to go home. So I boarded the train – they took me by jeep along with several other men with our duffel bags, probably a six-by, and we got on the train at another village a little bigger, a little larger village near the middle of the bay. Got on a train, went to Yokohama, went through the port's replacement depot, and I got orders to board the troop ship Admiral Kuntz, which I did late in the evening. I had a fever – I had malaria, because we quit taking Atabrin tablets that last week in Tateyama. All of us had malaria lurking in our veins, but we didn't know it. We didn't think about it. But, anyway, I quit taking Atabrin tablets, so now I have a high fever, but I didn't say a word. Cause I knew if I turned myself in to sick bay, I'd never get out of Japan. I'd go to the hospital for awhile. We took our duffel bags and made it on

board the Admiral Kuntz, and I reported immediately to sick bay, the doctor put me in the hospital on the ship. Top deck. Cotton mattress. White sheets. Pillows. We sailed to Seattle, Washington, I don't remember how long it took. The ocean was beautiful. We saw whales swimming alongside the ship, landed on Christmas Eve, and when the first glimpse of the United States appeared in the fog, we couldn't believe it. It was the most exciting, most beautiful sight we had seen, and we were very happy. Now the ship was loaded with about four thousand troops from all different units. So I only had a few men around me that was with me. I am away from my 112th family, so to speak. That evening, Christmas Eve, it snowed, and we were on board that ship. Big flakes fell on the docks there in Seattle. Next morning we were all invited to spend the day, Christmas Day, have lunch, dinner, in the home of a Seattle family, which I did with two of my buddies. Called home, wonderful experience. Went back to the ship. We left our ship in big trucks, went to the replacement depot there, we got checked in there, they assigned us a troop train. We took a troop train from Seattle in December the 27th or 28th, and we ended up in Camp Shelby, Mississippi after coming across the country. I was there a few days, discharged, back at home January 10th.

Mr. Morris: That sounds like the full circle. Left in the ?, came back in the ?.

Mr. Garbo: Yeah, Christmas Day. Left on Mother's Day, got back on Christmas. Now, that doesn't mean anything, but you know, to me it was a beautiful experience. I'm so happy I had a chance to take part in that war, I really am. Wouldn't have missed it for anything in the world. Wouldn't have missed it! I would have felt awful! However, I didn't realize I was going to have a big shock when I saw that first combat. I was a Boy Scout growing up, and I always loved going out camping, dreamed of being in the military. I wanted to go to West Point, but I never had that chance, because I was drafted too quick. I could have probably gone to West Point, and I think I would have liked a military career. Anyway, I got out, turned my back on the war, and went to college. You almost see the rest of the story. It was a pleasure, Mr. Morris, you are a very patient person. You must have an interest in this, to take this much time and listen to it.

Mr. Morris: I do – I have a great interest in it. It amazes me what you fellows put yourself through, went through.

Mr. Garbo: Could we do it now? Are we capable of doing that now?

Mr. Morris: Sure.

Mr. Garbo: I think we are. I'm an optimist. There was a saying we had in the Army – "If three men are going out on patrol, the commanding officer said that only two of you are going to come back." Well, each one of those three men is going to look at the other two and feel sorry for them. That's the optimism of a teenager or a young man. I'm an optimist anyway. I try to see the good side. I've had a good life, I'm a landscape architect after college. I raised four children, my wife and I, they had a good education, and they're out doing their thing and enjoying life, so I feel very fortunate.

Mr. Morris: I appreciate you taking the time and talking to me. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Mr. Garbo: That's a compliment. Thank you so much.

Mr. Morris: You're very welcome.

PROOF

Nancy Cason, Transcriber

Bob Cason, Proofreader

Cork Morris, Interviewer

National Museum of the Pacific War

March 25, 2010

Tapes #1250a and #1250b