

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. James H. Starling

Date of Interview: February 18, 2005

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Interview in progress.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, today is February the 18th, [s/b 2005] in Fredericksburg, Texas. This is Scott Atkinson and I'm interviewing Mr. James H. Starling. And...first in order to (unintelligible) before we get started what we would like to know is, you know, give us your full name and...and then tell us a little bit about your parents.

Mr. Starling: Okay, I'm James H. Starling. My parents were Albert Houston Starling and Annabelle Starling. And I was raised in the Flower Mound community between Grapevine and Lewisville, Texas. I went to the Presbyterian Church there; it was established in 1862.

Scott Atkinson: Okay and when were you born?

Mr. Starling: I was born in...May 12th, 1925.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, and during your upbringing were you principally living in that area?

Mr. Starling: Yes, I lived there till I was thirteen years old and then I moved just north of there...just a...a few miles...about three or four miles north of Flower Mound.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, and you went through the school system there?

Mr. Starling: Went through the schools...I went to a country school till I was in seventh grade called Donald (sp?) school out in Flower Mound community, and then I went to Lewisville and I graduated at Carrollton in...in 1942.

Scott Atkinson: 1942, okay. And what sort of, you know, life did you have that sort of opened you up to getting interested or be willing to go into the military?

Mr. Starling: Well, my dad was a...of course I graduated in...in June of '42 and it was right after Pearl Harbor and...and all the young men were very patriotic, I guess you could say. They...they wanted to go serve their country. And my dad had been in the service in World War I and he was in artillery...(unintelligible) in artillery.

Scott Atkinson: So you were already familiar with the military...?

Mr. Starling: Yes, my dad...my dad had a history...he was in the 82nd Division...in France, and so I was familiar with that. He had a history of it...I read a lot. I joined in November of '42, uh, October of '42 I joined the Navy. I was seventeen and my dad would not sign the papers. So what happened...I had had pneumonia in...in June of '41; I graduated in May of '42. And I had coughed up some blood and so I went to Dallas to join the Navy they asked me if I'd ever spit up blood, and I said, "Yes." So they turned me down. So the next day I went to Fort Worth and I had not had any problems (unintelligible) Fort Worth...and I got...I got miraculously cured!

Scott Atkinson: You got miraculously cured!

Mr. Starling: And I got...I got my papers; brought them home for Dad to sign and he looked at me and he said, "You lied, and I will not sign these papers." And I

said, "If you don't, I'm going to (unintelligible) that I signed." He said, "You can't take it." I said, (Unintelligible)." So probably three months later I went to the Marine Corps recruiting office and told them my situation, I said...I told them that I had joined the Navy and my dad wouldn't sign the papers and I wanted to join the Marine Corps; I said, "I...I...how do I get into the Marine Corps without him having to sign?" He said, "Well, today you're eighteen and (unintelligible) draft board...(unintelligible) Marine Corps...and that's what I did.

Scott Atkinson: And the date that you actually entered the Marine Corps was...was...?

Mr. Starling: Actually I...I signed up on the 10th of June and I went...I left on 21st of June of '42 for San Diego, and took my basic training; went to Camp Pendleton; went into the artillery. I found I wanted to be a forward observer, so I took the forward observer training where we had to (unintelligible) so forth, lay out targets and then from there went to Camp Linda Vista and then went...caught...caught a...boarded a ship in San Diego that was docked that I came back to...in 1945. But we...we got on HMS Welderby (sp?) which is a Dutch ship. And there was like...two thousand Marines on it and we were top side and bottom side, you know, sleeping on the deck. And there was a...Navy...Navy gun crew on it and they asked for volunteers...and...for gun watches. So I volunteered for a gun watch from nine to twelve in the morning and nine to twelve at night on the fantail. And by doing that I could get three meals a day...otherwise I got two. (laughter) And we...we sailed from San Diego to New Caledonia and took some more training there. And then sailed

from there and went to...went by New Hebrides; stopped for just a few hours and then sailed on to Guadalcanal. And I joined the Third Marine Division at Guadalcanal; they had just got back from Bougainville.

Scott Atkinson: Let me back track a little bit; I'd like to hear a little bit more about the train that you (unintelligible).

Mr. Starling: Well at Camp Pendleton we...took basic train...we took training with the aiming circles which was completely different from...they had thirty-six hundred mills in...in a degree, but we learned to lay out targets with a short base method where your target may be out there two miles or three miles and you...you'd lay out...you'd calculate the distance by taking a reading here...that you could measure like two hundred yards maybe...six hundred feet. And you'd take a measuring circle say here and flat targets and calculate the angles and then you'd calculate the angle on...on this...from...from this...and where those lines intersected...then you could calculate the distance...by using little trees; and I enjoyed that...because I liked math.

Scott Atkinson: How did the troops kind of all get along? Remember your sergeants...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Starling: Oh yeah, in boot camp...had a Corporal Kennedy and a Corporal Daurety (sp?) and they were Sir, you addressed them as Sir. And if you didn't, you were in deep trouble! The day that we graduated from boot camp they both came around and shook my hand and said, (unintelligible). But we got along great, the sergeant...and I had a real good sergeant when I got there at Camp Pendleton.

Scott Atkinson: Was there anything unusual in terms of incidents or anything like that (unintelligible)? You remember?

Mr. Starling: No, no, just...just...pretty vanilla training! They...they wanted you...

Scott Atkinson: Up in the mornings or...?

Mr. Starling: We...I...I was in a movie; I was in a movie called Gung-ho with Randolph Scott.

Scott Atkinson: Oh, okay, that's...(unintelligible).

Mr. Starling: I...I was in a Marine Base (unintelligible)...jobs and then when we got to Pendleton we had (unintelligible). My outfit...my (unintelligible sentence).

Scott Atkinson: And that, of course, is why you were in (unintelligible).

Mr. Starling: Yeah, that was why I was in the (unintelligible).

Scott Atkinson: And when you graduated from training you were a Private?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, I was a Private.

Scott Atkinson: Still a Private?

Mr. Starling: I was still a Private.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, and then you got on the ship...okay from there?

Mr. Starling: Okay, well after we got to New Caledonia we had about six weeks of real tough training; marches and...and so forth and we...we also went through a hurricane. Well they called it a typhoon; we went through a typhoon there and blew our tents down. It...my tent split right down the middle; it just fell over. But then after we left there then we went on to Guadalcanal and I joined the Third Marine Division, Twelfth Marines. And we had extensive training

there. Occasionally we would see a Japanese...stragglers would come up and...get in the chow lines with us wanting some food.

Scott Atkinson: But at that time Guadalcanal was (unintelligible)?

Mr. Starling: Secured...it was already...yeah, it was secured. There was still a few incidences that happened, but for all practical purposes it was secured. And...and from there in April of '43...let's see, April of '44 we were going to invade (unintelligible) which is up by Rabaul and we got our gear sent to us and we loaded aboard ship and they called it off. We had to unload; unpack all of our stuff and everything. And we came back and then we were in...on invasion...before Guam...we were floating reserves, the Third Marine Division was floating reserves to Saipan. And when they didn't need us we pulled back into the Marshalls and sat there for oh, about three weeks. And then from there we went to the invasion of Guam (unintelligible). At Guam I was just...forward observer and I served...I served with an infantry regiment is what I did. I served with the Ninth, L Company of the Ninth Marines there. In fact I just met a guy here this morning that was with the Ninth Marines. (Unintelligible sentence). But I served with L Company there.

Scott Atkinson: What was...what was the (unintelligible)?

Mr. Starling: Uh, it was pretty fierce because it was...the Japanese would do a lot of...of charges. They'd charge your outfit.

Scott Atkinson: Did you...did you actually go by an LST (unintelligible) on the beach?

Mr. Starling: Yes, we had...we landed on uh...we landed on a reef out from the beach and then it was about a hundred yards of water between us and...and the sand

dunes...because the LSTs...LCDPs could not go in past that. And when we...and the Japanese were up on the hill looking at us...and they would drop mortars along that thing. And as we came up they dropped a mortar up there about three hundred yards; they dropped another one about two hundred yards; they dropped another one about a hundred yards...and that coxswain that was driving that boat had left the front...the front gate down and we was piling out off of it.

Scott Atkinson: And how deep was the water?

Mr. Starling: Well it was...it was only about knee deep there on the reef, but when he backed up he said, "Get out of here!" And he backed up and I fell off in water about this deep. (laughter)

Scott Atkinson: So you fell outside the reef?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, I fell out...just...just off of it, yeah, and...and because he had backed up; he was getting out of there because of the...

Scott Atkinson: Getting too close to the mortars?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, getting too close on the mortars. And we had...our Captain got...hit on the beach. Actually he got...a mortar hit and it blew the coral into his back and went through his jacket (unintelligible), and...but...

Scott Atkinson: What was his name?

Mr. Starling: Captain Candy (sp?).

Scott Atkinson: And did he survive this?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, he survived. And in fact I went out...aboard one of the ships after it was over and he was still on the hospital ship; I went out there and saw him.

But...the landing area we had had pretty high mountains in front of it and it was a little bit tough. And we had...we had some caves along the side that...where the Japanese were and the Japanese would not give up! They...they would...you...you could have an interpreter and tell them that we're going to blow the cave up if you won't come out and they wouldn't. But...

Scott Atkinson: They were not charging out there (unintelligible)?

Mr. Starling: No, no, they...they would banzai. One night I was with the Ninth Marines; they pulled a banzai on us...on a ridge right out of (unintelligible) and they...they...I guess they get high on sake and they...they charged us one night (unintelligible)...we stopped them; the infantry stopped them...the fighters.

Scott Atkinson: Uh, I mean...was there hundreds or...?

Mr. Starling: Oh, there was probably seventy-five or eighty...a hundred; it was a small company, but they just banzai...and here they came. And...and this happened several times during the campaign.

Scott Atkinson: How long did it take to secure the island?

Mr. Starling: Uh, about two and a half or three weeks; I can't remember for sure, but about two and a half or three weeks. And they secured it and then about three months later we made another sweep of the island. We started at the very tip of it and went through to the other tip...picking up stragglers. And...which was down quite a few because they would...they would also come and get in

our chow line, too; they were so hungry. And every once in awhile you'd turn around and there'd be a Japanese right behind you!

Scott Atkinson: But he wasn't armed?

Mr. Starling: He wasn't armed, no. He was just there trying to get food. And usually we'd feed them and then put them in the stockades. (laughter) Yeah.

Scott Atkinson: Yeah. Okay...

Mr. Starling: From Guam then we went to Iwo and went on a big Army transport ship. I...I forget the name of it, but then we were...they didn't take us in right...right; they held us out for a couple of three days, I think...three or four days and then we finally went in and the Third Marine Division went right up the middle of those islands.

Scott Atkinson: (Unintelligible)...I mean the whole invasion force stood off for three days?

Mr. Starling: No, the...the Fourth and Fifth Divisions went ahead and landed and part of the Third...of the Third Division landed about a couple of days after D-Day. Now with...Guam, we landed on D-Day; I was on the beach in about eighth hour, plus two...plus two hours. Because...they...they brought the infantry in first and then they'd bring the artillery in and artillery came in on ducks (boats)...the big...big floating trucks.

Scott Atkinson: Right.

Mr. Starling: Yeah. And...but I...I came in...usually I came with the infantry because I...whatever outfit I was going to serve with that's the one I would...

Scott Atkinson: Got attached to?

Mr. Starling: ...I'd attach to.

Scott Atkinson: Now do the...you're the...the...artillery that you used...you just basically spotted for the artillery?

Mr. Starling: Right, I called in...

Scott Atkinson: ...as a forward observer?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, I'd call in targets.

Scott Atkinson: Okay.

Mr. Starling: Give them coordinates on the targets.

Scott Atkinson: You...you had binoculars and...

Mr. Starling: Had binoculars and...yeah and (unintelligible) circles and also had maps with coordinates on it. And...and the Infantry Commander would say, "Forward observer, I need you fire on...see...see that hill over there?" And I'd have to figure out what it was on the map and call in fires on it. And...

Scott Atkinson: What sort of weapons were they using that you, you know, were...targeting for?

Mr. Starling: The...the...well, what it was it would be a lot infantry...uh, Japanese infantry there.

Scott Atkinson: I know but what weapon...you were...you know,...

Mr. Starling: I was 105 howitzer.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, 105s?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, uh-huh, we had 105s, yeah.

Scott Atkinson: Pretty effective weapons?

Mr. Starling: Pretty effective weapons.

Scott Atkinson: How far would those go?

Mr. Starling: Well, I don't know; I'd shoot from one end of the island to the other there, so.
(laughter)

Scott Atkinson: Eight miles, huh?

Mr. Starling: Well it was five miles...five and half miles, but well...probably four miles.
We were probably firing about four miles.

Scott Atkinson: And you could put them pretty much right on target?

Mr. Starling: Yeah you could; you...you'd say...you'd say...you'd call in a fire and they'd...and say, "Fire one round." And then you'd watch it and where it landed then you'd say, "Up one hundred; go back one hundred." And they knew...how to crank it. They...they'd put it in their...well they had guys that fired direct of center...they're back at the back that this information would come to and then they'd relay it to the guns.

Scott Atkinson: Did you use walkie-talkies or did you have telephone lines or...?

Mr. Starling: No, we...we had telephone lines.

Scott Atkinson: You had telephone lines.

Mr. Starling: We had...our forward observing party consisted of a lieutenant; an enlisted man, a...that was forward observers. Because if the lieutenant got shot or hurt it was up to the enlisted man then to carry it on. And then the...you had a CP...communications personnel that was stringing lines and had a...had a telephone with him and usually you'd have one or two armed guards with you that came (unintelligible) like sometimes our cook would go with us. The guy that cooked back on Guadalcanal went...went to the front with us, so...

Scott Atkinson: Yeah. Okay, what...what was the living conditions...?

Mr. Starling: Well...the ground! (laughter) At Guadalcanal...at Guam, I mean, at Iwo Jima...there was a lot of sulfuric acid...sulfuric...one of them...shells would hit...it would...the ground would steam from sulfur. And there was...very barren; it was very rough terrain, but it was very barren...it was...no growth on it to speak of. And the night that I got...was wounded...we were...we had gone up about two hundred yards and we pulled...pulled back because of the...terrain didn't give us any protection...we pulled back into a little pass and...and myself and...and two of the infantry guys dug us...dug us a foxhole. I guess you could call it a foxhole; we mounded up dirt around it and we were sitting in that pass guarding that pass. And I had just gone off of watch; we had each taken an hour watch at a time and we'd wake the other guy up...let him sleep; let him rest because rest was something you didn't get much of. And I had just gone off of watch about ten minutes and I had...I had got to sleep and I heard *BOW!*...and he fired...fired the gun. And I heard the Japanese laying there groaning, and I told this guy, I said, "If you can see him, get him because he's going to bury a grenade in the hole with us." And he said, "Yeah, I know." And about that time I heard *ping, ping, ping*...where they...they tapped the grenades on their helmet to activate them and it came in the hole...and it's much like when you were a kid you'd thump a firecracker at night...and you could see that spark...well that's the way the grenade was; you could see the spark. And I yelled...I saw it and...and I yelled, "Grenade!" Well those two infantry boys were out of that hole before you

could turn around! I mean they...and I got up to the top of the hole before it went of and I got shrapnel in the leg.

Scott Atkinson: Did that put you out of action?

Mr. Starling: No, no; well, you know, it...you've been hit; you know you've been hit but I was...I got out of the hole and...and went to another one.

Scott Atkinson: Did a medic come and...?

Mr. Starling: No, not that night...next...next morning I looked at it and I said it's not that bad and it was in the fleshy part of the leg and I could feel a piece of shrapnel in it, so when I got back they...they finally...we had...started out with like a hundred and fifty-five men and we had fourteen left.

Scott Atkinson: Oh!

Mr. Starling: And so they brought up...relief for us; they brought up another bunch to take our place and we started back and we got on a one-ton...six of us got on a one-ton truck and backed out over a land mine and (explosive sound) blew us out of that truck! (laughter) But I didn't have my helmet buttoned; it blew my helmet off, and the other guys had their helmets buttoned and it ruptured their eardrums.

Scott Atkinson: Oh, did anybody get killed in that thing?

Mr. Starling: No, luckily it blew us all out...every one of us. And when I...when I got...I guess it stunned me...because when I finally came to they were calling, "Over here, over here!" (Unintelligible)...because they had really thought at the time that it was mortars, but it wasn't. But...it was kind of crazy. I went to a hospital. They wouldn't...(unintelligible)...and I really wanted a tetanus shot;

I...I felt like I probably needed one. And the guy...and I didn't know whether he wanted to take the shrapnel out or not and so I...I asked him and he said, "Well I can take it out, but it'll make a lot better hole going out than it did coming in." I said, "Well, what would you do?" He said, "I'd just leave it in there." And I said, "Alright; that'll do it." Gave me a tetanus shot and he said, "We'll put you in a bed right away," and I said, "No you're not." I looked around and there were so many guys in there so much worse than I was that...that I said, "Uh-uh, I'm going back to my outfit." So I went back; I stayed with the battery about two days and then I went back to the front, and a truck carried me up to Motoyama Airstrip #2 and let us out because they still were getting a lot of fire from caves and so forth. And...when...when I got out he said, "Watch the land mines!" (unintelligible) (laughter) I said, "You could have said anything but that!" (laughter) Oh gosh, but that...that's about it and I came back to...I came back to...on...I got hit on March 4th and March 20th I came back to...Guam.

Scott Atkinson: March 4th, 19...?

Mr. Starling: '45.

Scott Atkinson: '45, okay.

Mr. Starling: And...then...about the 20th we left...they brought the guys that had been wounded and some more of us back to...back to Guam and from there I had the points and...and I got on an LST from Guam to Pearl Harbor (laughter).

Scott Atkinson: That's kind of a long haul in an LST!

Mr. Starling: We...yeah, we started out...took us thirty-three days to make it. We run out of everything but cabbage and I learned to *like* cabbage! (laughter)

Scott Atkinson: That's one of the questions...is what sort of meals, you know...you encountered?

Mr. Starling: Well, we...yeah, on Iwo they brought in some 10-in-1 rations which is the first time I'd ever seen those... 'cause we had K-rations and C-rations. But they brought in a 10-in-1 ration that had some of the best bacon you'd ever eat! It was Wilson bacon in a can and...and of course, man, you could...you scouted with all that that you could find! (laughter) We had...at Guadalcanal we had mutton and...I'd say I had a real good friend that was a cook that got killed at Iwo...I mean at Guam...and his name was...I called him Chin (sp?), his name was Jack Cantrell and I said, "Jack, what we having for supper?" And he said, "Mutton!" (laughter) We had a lot of mutton!

Scott Atkinson: Did you have anybody that you were really close to like a buddy that you, you know, met maybe early on and you sort of tracked each other as...as you experienced the...you know, advance...

Mr. Starling: Yeah, you did that!

Scott Atkinson: Yeah.

Mr. Starling: Uh, Jack Cantrell is a real good friend of mine and he got killed at Guam, but...I...I never did know how he got killed. I nev...I never did...and I had another good friend that his...I talked to him about seven or eight years ago...he...I was up in San Francisco and he lives at Oakland and I talked to him there.

Scott Atkinson: His name was?

Mr. Starling: His name was Bill Bescatchi (sp?).

Scott Atkinson: Bill Bescatchi.

Mr. Starling: And I had another good friend named Stan Varner from Iowa that came down in '47...'48; we visited and then we kind of lost...I got busy and he got busy and we kind of lost contact with each other.

Scott Atkinson: What were your immediate superiors like?

Mr. Starling: Very, very nice guys. Very, very...I had one that was...and of course I'm an Aggie now; I went to A&M, but he was a class of '43at A&M and...and his name was Coarsey (sp?). He is now in Arizona as...and I guess he's still living; according to the Aggie records he is and...and just a real fine guy. I had...talk about that bacon...I had some of that bacon and he came...when I came back...I got a can of that from the front lines...I got a can of that bacon. And he came over and absconded with it. (laughter) And he turned and walked off and I said, "You can't take that!" And he said, "Yeah I can," he said, "I'm a Captain!" (laughter) And I said, "Well, that's the only way you can take it...because you're a captain!"

Scott Atkinson: Was he your commander or...?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, he was our commander.

Scott Atkinson: He was a company commander?

Mr. Starling: He was a company commander. And he turned around and, "Starling," says, "what do you think of me?" And I said, "Well since you asked..." but we

became real good friends, yeah. He brought...he brought the bacon back.
(laughter). He was a nice guy.

Scott Atkinson: You come back with any souvenirs...from those experiences?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, I...I have on my mantle right now; I have a Japanese bugle. I...I had a sword; I traded it for a forty-five caliber. I had...at Guam, at...at Iwo, my...I had a...we carried carbines instead of M-1 rifles and I fired one round with it and it jammed on me. And my dad had sent me a...I'd asked him to send me a forty-five to carry...and he'd sent me an old six shooter...that I had to take chicken wire and make...make a...kind of a half-moon and flatten it out and slip it on these cartridges so that the cartridges wouldn't slide through the cylinder...but I did that and it worked like a champ! (laughter) But I did trade it for a forty-five automatic.

Scott Atkinson: And you actually used the forty-five in combat?

Mr. Starling: Yeah. Well...

Scott Atkinson: Did you get good mail service, you know, you know...to and from home or...?

Mr. Starling: Yeah...fairly good. You know we'd get...especially when we'd move we'd...it would be thirty, forty days before you'd see any mail and then...then we'd get a slew of letters. But I got a lot of letters at home.

Scott Atkinson: Were you able to stay pretty much in contact with your family...?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, yeah.

Scott Atkinson: ...while you were gone?

Mr. Starling: Yeah.

Scott Atkinson: Okay. You get any...get any interesting packages from your family or friends while you were away?

Mr. Starling: No, not particularly.

Scott Atkinson: Anything that you missed the most while you were in service?

Mr. Starling: Oh, I guess a girlfriend. (laughter) Oh...

Scott Atkinson: So you were not married...going into the service?

Mr. Starling: No, I wasn't. Eighteen years old...and...

Scott Atkinson: Yeah, yeah...you went...you went in at eighteen...

Mr. Starling: Came out at twenty.

Scott Atkinson: Came out at twenty.

Mr. Starling: I was...I was twenty...twenty-one in May and I came out in December. I got out December the 24th.

Scott Atkinson: Did you get any promotions?

Mr. Starling: I was a Corporal.

Scott Atkinson: Got up to Corporal?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, I was...that was...I was chief of section...we called the instrument section which was the forward observers. When I came back from Guam...uh, Guadalcanal...I mean Iwo Jima, I was promoted to a Corporal and made...chief of instruments...and I was over the instruments section in the forward observing section...and we got some new commanders in. And I was supposed to be up to Sergeant; I was...I was doing the work of a sergeant...staff sergeant and they said, "Well, we'll make you a sergeant." And the big commander says, "We're not...we're not going to promote any

old...anybody that's been over here eighteen to twenty-four months. And they would not give us our promotions.

Scott Atkinson: Why...why did they do that, do you know?

Mr. Starling: Well because he wanted to save it for the new people coming in, I guess; that's the only thing I could figure out. (laughter) But he wouldn't...so I went...ended up as Corporal. I said, "That's fine with me; just let me go home." (laughter)

Scott Atkinson: What sort of weather did you encounter...in the Pacific?

Mr. Starling: Oh, it...it...at Guadalcanal it rained every day...

Scott Atkinson: Every day.

Mr. Starling: every night. Uh, at Iwo Jima it was cold like it is here; it was about the same latitude as this. So that was the first cold weather we'd seen in a long, long time. 'Cause Guam was very, very warm.

Scott Atkinson: But otherwise for most of the time you were in the Pacific it was pretty warm?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, yeah, especially in the middle and south Pacific. When we...see...Iwo Jima was six hundred and sixty miles from Tokyo, and that's the reason we actually took...were there on that island to...get secured because it had three airstrips on it, and they needed those airstrips for the planes coming back from bombing Japan. And a big 29 came in there and they hadn't widened the runway enough and one of its wings hit...hit the bank on the...on the right-hand side and spun him nose end into that bank. But it...it did save a lot of lives...lot of airmen lives.

Scott Atkinson: And this was on...but...this was on Iwo?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, this was on Iwo, yeah.

Scott Atkinson: How long would you say you were actually, you know, total on...on Iwo?

Mr. Starling: On Iwo? From the 27th...I...I landed on the 27th of February and they were...they had just taken airstrip #1 and my outfit advanced up to...we took airstrip...Motoyama airstrip #2 and #3 and then after I crossed #3 about half a mile past it...I...that's when I got hit...and...and went to the back. I'll tell you another interesting story. I belong to a square dance club in Dallas and we have after parties after the square dancing...we were sitting around this house...people would give parties...we were sitting around and I got to talking to one of the guys in...in the square dance and I was very new into it. He said, "I heard you were in the Marines." And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, I was, too." And I said,...we...we kept talking and I finally told him I was...served with the Third Marine...A Company, Third Marines at Iwo, and I said...we talked some more and I said, "Well I...on March 4th I got hit and got evacuated." He said, "On March 4th, I relieved your outfit." I said, "You're kidding!" He said, "No, my outfit relieved the A Company of the...of the Third Marine Regiment...on March 4th." I said, "My lord!" I probably walked right by him. Who knows?!

Scott Atkinson: Yeah, any specific contact with POWs?

Mr. Starling: No.

Scott Atkinson: No.

Mr. Starling: Had...we had some at...at Guam. We...captured a few Japanese there, but I didn't really have...I walked by them and saw them and...didn't have any contact with them as such.

Scott Atkinson: Did you have any...sort of humorous incidences that you can recall?

Mr. Starling: Oh, a bunch, but I don't know what I could recall or not. (laughter)

Scott Atkinson: Just any that you can recall?

Mr. Starling: Well, I'm...no, not really.

Scott Atkinson: Did...did they ever have any USO shows for you?

Mr. Starling: Yes, saw...saw Gene Autry; I saw Betty Hutton; saw Fay...Fay (unintelligible) at Guam...all three of those came to Guam. Got Gene Autry's signature and I asked him, I said, "Where is Frog?" He said, "Well he's back in the States taking care of all the girls that ya'll can't take care of!" (laughter)
Oh lordy!

Scott Atkinson: What...what'd you find the most difficult in your, you know, service experience?

Mr. Starling: Oh, I...I...you got take it all...I guess some of the excessive training that we had was probably the most difficult; long marches because...they liked to hike you. But it was...it was good training I'm sure.

Scott Atkinson: Everybody was in great physical shape...as a result of that?

Mr. Starling: Yeah, right, yeah...that's right. And that's really what it took.

Scott Atkinson: How...how did you hear that the war was over?

Mr. Starling: I...oh, I was on Guam and I had gone on up to take a shower...and you know...and a bunch of us had gone up to take a shower that night...and we all just

wrapped a towel us and went up and we heard the...they come out and hollered, "The war is over!" And it was a road right there close, so it was about, oh, about nine o'clock at night and we run out in the road and waved our towels at...cars slowing down...and this one guy come by...this Colonel and he had a nurse in the car with him and he said, "Boys, go put some clothes on!" (laughter) I said, "Oh!" Oh lordy!

Scott Atkinson: One...one question; I want to make sure I ask...

Mr. Starling: Alright.

Scott Atkinson: ...just because it's kind of very historic. Did you see the...the flag raising on Iwo?

Mr. Starling: No, I did not.

Scott Atkinson: Did you know that this happened at all?

Mr. Starling: No...

Scott Atkinson: Any...at any time?

Mr. Starling: Nuh, huh.

Scott Atkinson: You didn't...weren't even aware of it?

Mr. Starling: No was...was not aware of it...was not.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, when was...when did you become aware of it?

Mr. Starling: I guess when I got back to Guam and then we heard some reports on it.

Scott Atkinson: Yeah. Did...what...what...do you remember what they particularly said or...?

Mr. Starling: No I don't; I really don't.

Scott Atkinson: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Starling: To me...it was just a flag raising. (laughter) And then I heard how...how they...the guys that came back to the States and did the war bond tours and so forth, but I did not get up on Suribachi.

Scott Atkinson: Yeah.

Mr. Starling: We land...we landed...the fighting was still going on on Suribachi when we landed and...but we went up the island...we...our Third Marine Division went right up the middle.

Scott Atkinson: Yeah, from where you were, could you see it?

Mr. Starling: Oh yes!

Scott Atkinson: I mean...it's pretty prominent.

Mr. Starling: Oh yes, very prominent. In fact when I landed on the beach I could look up and there it was; we were about two hundred yards from it...from the base of it. It was very...

Scott Atkinson: Did ya'll receive shelling from...?

Mr. Starling: Oh yes, oh yes.

Scott Atkinson: ...from the Japanese? Yeah.

Mr. Starling: Yeah.

Scott Atkinson: Okay.

Mr. Starling: They were so entrenched in caves and so forth that...

Scott Atkinson: Okay, any...any additional thoughts or information you can...?

Mr. Starling: No, I don't know of anything.

Scott Atkinson: ...put on the record here?

Mr. Starling: No, I don't...I think that's about it.

Scott Atkinson: Okay, well...

Mr. Starling: Appreciate you.

Scott Atkinson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Starling: Thank you for doing this...I thought...I know ya'll spend a lot of time; it's very time consuming.

Scott Atkinson: Well, we...we find it very interesting.

Mr. Starling: Well I guess you do.

Scott Atkinson: ...these interviews; we...we learn so much history...by doing them and...

Mr. Starling: Yeah. Well, of course, they don't teach it in school anymore.

Scott Atkinson: Yeah, and we're very much appreciative of the time you spent defending our country...

Mr. Starling: Okay, oh thank you, yeah.

Scott Atkinson: ...making it a safe place for us to grow up and the next generation.

Mr. Starling: Well, yeah.

Scott Atkinson: So I came along at the...just at the end of the...World War II.

Mr. Starling: Right.

Scott Atkinson: So I vaguely remember some celebrations...

Mr. Starling: Yeah, right.

Scott Atkinson: ...on the end of the war...

Mr. Starling: Yeah.

Scott Atkinson: ...(unintelligible).

Mr. Starling: Well, the folks at home had it pretty tough, too.

Scott Atkinson: I can remember the rationing...

Mr. Starling: Yeah, you bet, you bet!

Scott Atkinson: ...and things like that, but...

Mr. Starling: Yeah, we didn't have rationing, we...we ran out and get a lot but we didn't had...it wasn't rationed. It was C-rations and K-rations. (laughter)

Scott Atkinson: Okay, well we'll conclude the interview.

Mr. Starling: Alright, well listen I appreciate it.

Scott Atkinson: I appreciate it very, very much.

Mr. Starling: Thank you, Scott.

Scott Atkinson: Okay.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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