

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

***Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas***

***Interview with Donald Davis
U.S. Marines, Iwo Jima***

Interview With Donald Davis

This is Ed Metzler and today is the thirteenth of September, 2006. I am interviewing Mr. Donald B. Davis by telephone. He is located in Denver, Colorado. I am in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, The Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mr. Metzler: Let me start out, Donald, by thanking you for spending the time with us on the phone today and filling us in on what your experiences were, and I'd like to start if I could by having you give us your full name, your date of birth, where you were born, a bit about your family.

Mr. Davis: I'm Donald B. Davis. I was born in Sioux City, Iowa, in December of twenty-two. I went to school there, and from there I went to the University of Iowa.

Mr. Metzler: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Davis: My father had a men's clothing store.

Mr. Metzler: And your mother?

Mr. Davis: My mother was a housewife.

Mr. Metzler: Homemaker. (Chuckles)

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: And what about brothers and sisters?

Mr. Davis: I had one brother.

Mr. Metzler: Was he older, younger?

Mr. Davis: He was younger.

Mr. Metzler: So you went to high school in Sioux City, correct?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: And did you graduate from high school before the war started?

Mr. Davis: I graduated from high school and I went to the University of Iowa. I spent the

freshman year, sophomore year, and in my junior year I belonged to fraternity, Phi Epsilon Pi, and one of my associates in the fraternity showed up one day in a Marine uniform. And I said, "Where did you get that uniform?" He said, "Well, I got the greatest thing. If you join the Marine Corps, you can finish your college education and you can go to officers training." And I said, "That's for me." I signed up.

Mr. Metzler: So the uniform did it, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. It didn't really turn out that way, as you will see in the future conversation.

Mr. Metzler: Right. I know things don't always go exactly according to plan. Now, what year was this? Give me a time frame here.

Mr. Davis: Oh my goodness. It was like forty-one or forty-two.

Mr. Metzler: Was it before the war had started for the U.S.?

Mr. Davis: No, the war had already started.

Mr. Metzler: All right, so we'd already experienced Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Do you remember where you were, what you were doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Davis: I was in the fraternity house in Iowa City.

Mr. Metzler: What was the reaction from everybody when that happened?

Mr. Davis: Well, we were all shocked, of course. And that took, of course, all the attention for the next, well, not only days, but days and months. And we couldn't believe it. A lot of people didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was, I understand. Yeah, I'm not sure when they said Pearl Harbor that I knew.

Mr. Metzler: But you soon found out.

Mr. Davis: Yes, I did.

Mr. Metzler: And so you went into the Marines then in early forty-two then, sometime. Is that correct? So you just went down and volunteered and that was it?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. I had to go to Des Moines, which is of course the capital of Iowa. And I wasn't twenty-one, so I had to take my mother there to sign for me.

Mr. Metzler: Oh my gosh. What was her feeling about this whole deal?

Mr. Davis: Well, she was, I never thought about that. She was really noncommittal, but she knew that there was a war on and I was going to be part of it.

Mr. Metzler: So maybe it's better to control a little bit how you're gonna be a part of it, rather than just get picked off the streets by the Draft.

Mr. Davis: Yes. And the idea was that if you joined the Reserves, you could—turned out it didn't work—that you could finish your college education.

Mr. Metzler: You could continue going to college and they wouldn't interrupt you, you'd just be in the Reserves unless you got called.

Mr. Davis: That changed about six months later.

Mr. Metzler: That lasted six months. Oh, I'm surprised. So anyhow, you went in and you're in the Reserves. Now, did you go to basic training?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Where'd you go?

Mr. Davis: Before I went to basic training, they kept part of their word. They formed, and I don't know if you're aware of this or not, V-12.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me more about that. I'm not familiar with it.

Mr. Davis: The V-12 unit was set up by the Navy. And that was for all the Navy officer recruits and also the Marine officer recruits. The idea was they could finish their college education, which they had originally promised. So therefore I had to leave the University of Iowa, and I went to the University of Purdue. And there they formed a Marine organization, also a separate Navy organization, so there were some of the sailors and some of the Marines. And we all went to school and what they did, they set up a program designed, unfortunately, for engineers. I was not

an engineer, I was in commerce school. So engineering was all new to me. Fortunately, I had a roommate who was an engineer. So he got me through . . .

Mr. Metzler: All that math and stuff.

Mr. Davis: All that math, calculus, and mechanical engineering. I got all through that.

Mr. Metzler: Well, congratulations. For a commerce major, that's pretty good.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. It didn't help me in commerce, but I guess it was time well spent.

Mr. Metzler: So here you are in Purdue. So you say this lasted for how long?

Mr. Davis: It lasted for two semesters. And then they packed us all up and sent us to boot camp.

Mr. Metzler: And was this unexpected, or expected by you at this point.

Mr. Davis: At this point we didn't know what to expect. We just knew that we were given two semesters of college, which of course didn't apply to our graduating. We had two semesters of college, and then they passed us up and said "Okay. Now you're going to boot camp."

Mr. Metzler: So where did you go to boot camp?

Mr. Davis: Parris Island.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, the famous Parris Island.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Davis: That's a something out of this world, because it was the first officer candidate group that ever went through boot camp at Parris Island, *per se*. So unlike all the recruits that they were bringing in off the street, and there were many. It was kind of interesting because we found out what they were doing, which the Marine Corps is doing right now, until they kinda quieted down. But they would go to high schools, they'd go to colleges, and recruit kids to join the Marine Corps, and they'd pack 'em up in a train, I remember distinctly, there was a train that came

in one day from New York. And they had recruited a whole group of, now, I'm saying Mexican, I don't know. Obviously Spanish-speaking young men—

Mr. Metzler: From New York City?

Mr. Davis: — who couldn't speak English.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, they were probably Puerto Rican back then.

Mr. Davis: That's right, it was probably was Puerto Rican. I wasn't thinking. Yeah, it was probably Puerto Rican. They couldn't speak English. So here they are at Marine boot camp, they can't speak English, they volunteered of course but they don't know what they volunteered for. but our group of course was separated because we had our own group, our own platoons and our own company. So we didn't see many of the other recruits. We went through just the basic Marine Corps training which was hard, of course a lot of people have seen it on TV, they run through it. They'd give you just about any bad thing they could give you, and if you don't, give up, you can leave.

Mr. Metzler: They try and break you.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that's the name of the game.

Mr. Metzler: Did you feel like you came close to being broken?

Mr. Davis: Nope. No, I don't think any of us did. You have to remember, I'm not saying this braggingly, but this is a group of college student, so we were pretty well acclimated to what was going on and smart enough we could keep our mouths shut, even though we didn't like it, we still could absorb it.

Mr. Metzler: And you were young, and strong.

Mr. Davis: Sure, sure.

Mr. Metzler: And we had this patriotism thing going back then too.

Mr. Davis: Oh sure. We were very proud.

Mr. Metzler: Driving everybody, sure.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. So we all made it. I don't think of any of the, as I look back on it, any of the

group, as tough as they made it for us, in Marine boot camp. Marine boot camp is pretty tough. There wasn't one person that didn't make it.

Mr. Metzler: Well, that's commendable to the group.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. It really was.

Mr. Metzler: So how long did this last?

Mr. Davis: Oh, I would say it probably lasted like two or three months. And then from there we went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Mr. Metzler: Man, you're doing the tour of all the well-known camps.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And there we went to officer training as opposed to just going through regular boot camp. Which was whatever Marine Corps went through. Didn't make any difference, everybody went to boot camp. Then we went to Camp Lejeune and started our officer training course.

Mr. Metzler: So what was that like?

Mr. Davis: Well, it was very controlled, very tough. The idea was that they put as much pressure on you as they could, and as I look back at it now, it's a good thing, because the idea, the philosophy of it was, if you could maintain your character and your decorum and put up with all that they gave you, you could become an officer in the Marine Corps. And there was this physical pressure, mental pressure, all of it. Physical, mental, there was everything. And it was a lot different than boot camp. Boot camp was just marching around and saluting the flag and that's about all. And of course, a lot of us had done that because, I had a background in ROTC in college.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, so you were in Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Iowa.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. So I knew how to march and it wasn't any big deal. And most of the young men who were with me also had gone to colleges that had ROTC. Some of 'em had even gone to military schools. So, it wasn't anything that we didn't know about. We didn't know it was gonna be that tough, but we did know what it was about.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you in Camp Lejeune?

Mr. Davis: Oh, I honestly don't know. It probably was, oh, I'm guessing now, it's been so long,

I think it was probably three or four months. And that involved giving us an idea of what it was like to be a recruit, to go through war, to know what all the weapons were, to know how to handle other men, everything that an officer should know when he graduates. It was very interesting, actually, and it was tough. Because, of course, you're not used to that. It's a whole different life.

Mr. Metzler: Absolutely. So when you got out of, when you graduated from the officers candidate school, then what happened?

Mr. Davis: They had a big ceremony for our group, and we all got our first, or second, lieutenant bars.

Mr. Metzler: When was this now. This was sometime in forty-two, mid- to late forty-two?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And then almost immediately they packed us up on a troop train and not all of us, and how they picked 'em I have no idea. They just took part of our group, put us on a troop train from Lejeune and sent us to California. From there we went to Camp Pendleton, and we regrouped at Camp Pendleton and then once again they picked, all of a sudden, you got a notice that you were now called to form a group that's gonna go overseas.

Mr. Metzler: Um-hum. That's when you found out what you probably knew all along.

Mr. Davis: Well, yeah, we knew it, but we just didn't know when or where. And so what they did, they formed, and I'm reaching back in my memory, they formed replacement drafts, they called, they called it replacement draft. So how they picked the people or who did it, I don't know. But I ended up on the list. And then they arranged transportation. One day they just said, "All right, now, we've got all these trucks and we're gonna take the 24th Replacement Draft to San Diego and you're gonna get aboard ship and away you're gonna go." They didn't tell us where.

Mr. Metzler: And so you weren't even assigned to a Marine Division at this point.

Mr. Davis: No. We were just a group. We weren't even in any particular capacity at all.

Mr. Metzler: How big a group did you have?

Mr. Davis: Well, I would say, probably, oh, forty or fifty officers. And of course, we didn't know where we were going, but that was our group.

Mr. Metzler: So they put you on a troop ship, or a transporter?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, they put us on a big transport and we found that the transport was full of Marines, 'cause we were just the officers, but it was also for other Marines who they had put together. They were all in that, it was a big, as I recall, and I've forgotten all the ships, the APA I think, and they were all in the ship together. And away we went and we ended up in Hawaii.

Mr. Metzler: They probably took you right into Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. That was kind of interesting.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, what did it look like?

Mr. Davis: Well, it was great. Everybody there was very cordial and it was, we were, we stayed aboard ship, we didn't really go anywhere, although we got to take liberty, the officers did, and some of the enlisted men. We could go ashore for certain hours. We got a little bit about Honolulu. And that was kind of interesting. And then they formed different groups and they put us on other ships and we went, our group that I was with, went to the island of Maui. That was the 4th Division. So we, at that time, we were just replacements. We joined the 4th Marine Division.

Mr. Metzler: What did you do in Maui?

Mr. Davis: The first thing we did was, they assigned us to tents in the hills where they had their camp. We acclimated to that for oh, maybe a week or two. And then they said "All right, now what we're going to do, we're going to assign you to permanent organizations." So we didn't know what that was all about, but they put us all in a big tent, and they had a couple of colonels and some captains and they explained what was going on. "We're gonna choose you for to fill out"—they made no bones about it. All the officers in our 4th Marine Division, we were assigned to the 23rd Regiment. We were replacing all the officers that had been killed in prior operations.

Mr. Metzler: Holy mackerel!

Mr. Davis: And then what they did, they would say "All right, now we need two infantry officers," and a couple of guys would raise their hand. They'd say "Okay. We'll pick you." And then they'd say "Well, we need a machine gun officer." And some guy would raise his hand. I just sort of sat back. I really didn't know what I wanted to or anything. And I guess they finally got down to the bottom. They said "And we need one officer to take the mortar company." So I said "Okay, I'll do it."

They said "Fine, do you know anything about mortars?" I said "Yes, I had mortars at officer training." They said "Okay, you take the mortar platoon."

So then we divided up and went and we were assigned to our regular company platoons, squads, and we made up units so that when we were ready to go into combat we were complete. And that was the idea. To have a complete battalion.

Mr. Metzler: So this is the 23rd?

Mr. Davis: No, that was the regiment, 23rd Regiment. So that's what we did. And we actually did a lot of training and trying to figure out what our, what the people that we had in our group could do, and who they were. We were really not very well acquainted with any of this. 'Cause we'd never had our own platoon.

Mr. Metzler: But you had men under your command then at this point.

Mr. Davis: Yes. We took over, each officer took over either a rifle platoon, or a mortar platoon, or whatever they were assigned to. And so therefore, then we spent, and I'm not sure exactly how many months we spent at that training. Of course, what we did, we trained, we went to rifle range, everybody took their weapons. We had to qualify on the rifle range again. And we did a lot of marching around, a lot of marching and a lot of exercises. There was just a lot of working to get ready. And then of course, at one point they said "Okay, we're leaving." And they, everybody was, of course, responsible for their own platoon, and their own company, and brigade. They were all organized, we marched once again down to the docks.

Mr. Metzler: Was this on the western side of Maui? Do you remember what the town was?

Mr. Davis: I think Kalua was one of the little towns. Anyway, I might be wrong, but it's the only thing that comes to my mind. And the funny part of it was that, like on weekends you could go into these little towns. The people in that little town, as I remember, was kind of astounding. Didn't speak English.

Mr. Metzler: Really! So were they . . .

Mr. Davis: They were mostly, most of 'em were oriental. And if you went in a store to get anything, you had to make 'em try to understand what you were saying. And that was kind of interesting.

Mr. Metzler: Definitely not Americanized.

Mr. Davis: You'd think coming from the United States, Hawaii is part of the United States, that everybody speaks English. But they didn't.

Mr. Metzler: So were they mostly what, I guess, Chinese? Or were there Japanese?

Mr. Davis: Most of 'em were Chinese, I think, as I recall. And of course, their kids went to school and they learned English. So if you went into a store, had little stores in this little town, if you went in a store if the mother and father were there, they wouldn't speak English. But if one of their kids, their son or their daughter was there, they spoke English.

Mr. Metzler: You could communicate.

Mr. Davis: Because they went to school.

Mr. Metzler: It always takes one generation to get the language thing straightened out.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. So it worked out.

Mr. Metzler: So they put you on ships again, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. Aboard a ship we went.

Mr. Metzler: Now, are we still in forty-two, or are we into forty-three? I'm just trying to keep a time thread here.

Mr. Davis: I just lost track of time. I think probably it was forty-three.

Mr. Metzler: That's probably right, because I mean, you went in in forty-two, and you've been training and training and training. And traveling and training and traveling. So yeah, I'd say sometime in forty-three.

Mr. Davis: At that point it even could have forty-four.

Mr. Metzler: Where'd they send you to?

Mr. Davis: Of course, we didn't know. We didn't know. So we got on this ship and we transferred to probably three or four different ships along the way. We didn't know where we were going.

Mr. Metzler: Would you transfer at sea?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, at sea.

Mr. Metzler: My goodness, how strange.

Mr. Davis: And they would take different groups and regroup them. And I don't know, I suppose they had a master plan but it was all in the dark. We never knew. We just, all of a sudden there we were and we were changing. I think, I'm thinking of time. I said forty-two. Probably forty-four.

Mr. Metzler: Now at this point, what are you and the other guys hearing about what's going on?

Mr. Davis: Actually, we didn't hear anything.

Mr. Metzler: You don't hear where things are going well, not going well, where the battles are?

Mr. Davis: Well, we knew something about the battles. We knew that the Marines, the Marines ahead of us had been in Saipan. And they had a bad time there. And so we knew that. We didn't know where the next operation was gonna be. So I was, uh, there was one operation, that was Guam, Tinian, and Saipan. A group of islands, Mariana Islands. And so we spent some time there.

Mr. Metzler: When you disembarked, where were you? I'm getting a little lost here.

Mr. Davis: We were on, at that point we were in the Mariana Islands.

Mr. Metzler: And so what's going on at this point?

Mr. Davis: All it was really was more training and regrouping. And then we got the word that we were going into an operation. At that point I don't think we even knew where, everything was so secretive. And we once again got aboard smaller ships, landing craft, and headed out and then they passed out maps and we started doing some intelligence on Iwo Jima.

Mr. Metzler: So you figured, ah ha!

Mr. Davis: And I think Iwo Jima was north of Saipan, probably about eight hundred miles north. So from the time we left Hawaiian Islands and had gone to Saipan and regrouped, we knew we were going, we didn't even know how long it was. I don't think somebody, if I knew, I don't remember how far it was.

Mr. Metzler: You were in command of a what, a squad?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, a mortar squad.

Mr. Metzler: And how many guys?

Mr. Davis: About thirty.

Mr. Metzler: How many mortars?

Mr. Davis: We probably had five or six because we had sixty mm. mortars and we had eighty mm. mortars. We had practiced and we supposedly knew what we were doing with mortars. And we were ready to go.

Mr. Metzler: That's pretty good sized group of guys.

Mr. Davis: Well, from there we just got on the, we were on landing craft now. And those were the ships that had the ramps that came down in front.

Mr. Metzler: Right. These would be LSTs, I guess.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, LSTs. And, well, I'll take you into Iwo Jima. We were off shore probably one day and a night, and the Navy and our Air Force had bombarded that island all night, all day, it was going on all the time. From our ship we could see the island, and we could see all the explosions and that's all we knew. And of course they assumed, wrongly, that they had prepared the island so there wouldn't be any problem. Well, we got in our little boats and . . .

Mr. Metzler: So these would be the, kind of the individual, like Higgins type boats or something, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. I've even forgotten what they were. They were the small boats.

Mr. Metzler: So did you get your whole group in one boat, or did you guys split up, or what?

Mr. Davis: You could get your platoon, your whole platoon, in these boats. The Infantry, of course, made up of three platoons so they had three infantry and they had one mortar, one machine gun, there were five, and away we went. The Navy was still bombarding so it was dark. I don't remember exactly how early in the morning it was. It was, maybe, four o'clock in the morning, five o'clock in the morning. It was still pitch dark when we got in these little boats.

Mr. Metzler: So what's going through your mind at this point? Here it is, four in the morning, and you can see where you're headed, and you can see what a mess it's gonna be.

Mr. Davis: Honestly, I don't remember what was in my mind. Apprehension, I think, would be the only word I can use. And of course I had my platoon with me, and had a sergeant, two corporals, and thirty men. So we, away we went, and . . .

Mr. Metzler: How'd you feel about your platoon? These guys look like they were gonna do pretty well? Are you worried about 'em, or what?

Mr. Davis: No, we felt, we could—one thing about the Marine Corps, whether it's true or not, they made you believe that you were invincible.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, that's part of it.

Mr. Davis: Yes. I mean, that's part of the training. And if you're invincible, there's nothing you can't do.

Mr. Metzler: Yep, that's so.

Mr. Davis: And so in my mind, I thought well, this is just a cinch. We're gonna go there, and the Navy assured us that they had bombed it, and there was nobody there, and we were gonna have no problems at all. It was just gonna be a piece of cake. And I think we got in these little boats, headed for the shore, and the Navy had quit bombing the island. Now, everything was very quiet, it was just starting to get breaking light, and we started in on the wave and all of a sudden the Japanese started with their artillery on the ships, and on the beach. And . . .

Mr. Metzler: So you're catching fire even before you get to the beach.

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, we were still in the water. And, uh, I don't mean this to be critical, but the, whoever the sailor was in charge of our little boat, he did not take it to the beach. He stopped and we got out in the water.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, he made it to the surf but not to the beach, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And I can't tell you how far out we were.

Mr. Metzler: How deep was the water?

Mr. Davis: Well, it was probably, as I recall it, waist high. And so the minute you jumped out

of this boat and you said to your men "Come on, let's go," and you tried to get up on the beach.

Mr. Metzler: And these guys were dragging along their mortars and those are not light weight items.

Mr. Davis: That's right. So we made it to the beach and it's, Iwo Jima's volcanic sand is black.

Mr. Metzler: Right. And fine.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And the whole beach is this black sand. And so we landed on the beach and I just told my sergeant, I said "You just get your men organized and lay here until we know what we're doing, and I'll let you know." And I had a phone, I can't remember what they called those, those little hand phones, it escapes me right now. I did get ahold of our company commander.

Mr. Metzler: Who was that? Who was he?

Mr. Davis: Captain Gus Gruestorf, who was one of my favorite men.

Mr. Metzler: So you had a lot of respect for him.

Mr. Davis: Oh, he was great. He and I were, well, we had a feeling among us. The two of us, from the time I joined that company, Gus and I were friends.

Mr. Metzler: How do you spell his last name?

Mr. Davis: Gruestorf, like C-R-U-E-S-T-O-R-F.

Mr. Metzler: Sounds like a good German name to me.

Mr. Davis: He was from Minneapolis, Minnesota. And I just regret that I never made contact with him again in later years. Anyway, I got on the phone and got contact with him, and he just said "Hey, just hang in, we're just gonna stay here until we, whatever." So we stayed on that beach.

Mr. Metzler: How far are you inland now? I mean, a few hundred yards?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, we're only a few hundred yards, right on, we're still right on the beach.

Mr. Metzler: And so was everybody else, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And if you have seen a picture of the island, it was sort of like a wishbone. A drumstick. We landed . . .

Mr. Metzler: It was kinda on the east side, wasn't it?

Mr. Davis: We landed all on the east side, on the narrow part of the island.

Mr. Metzler: And Suribachi was down to the left.

Mr. Davis: A large part of the island was to our right.

Mr. Metzler: Right, with the airfield.

Mr. Davis: And then right above the sand where we landed was their airfield. See, that's where the airplanes were that they were using to come back at the other islands, and attack the troops that were in other operations. But by this time they had put all those planes out of service, so there were no planes, fortunately. But we did not, the first two days we did not make the airfield. We were just in that black sand.

Mr. Metzler: So you're taking fire from what, the hills up ahead?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, we're taking fire from the hills up ahead, nothing really coming from our left, from Suribachi, there wasn't much going on there, although we knew about Suribachi, and as you probably know, at some time later, and I can't remember the time, the, well, let me rephrase that. There were, the 4th Marine Division and the 5th Marine Division, so we landed almost by the airfield and the 5th Division landed on the left of us at the Suribachi, and they didn't get much fire because we found out later that they had given up there. And also, they made a big deal out of Suribachi. They had left some people there, but they did not defend Suribachi, because if you've seen a picture of the island, it was round at the top and then Suribachi was at the bottom.

Mr. Metzler: It was kinda down on one end and had a kinda narrow stretch of land leading to it, so it was not really, you wouldn't think it was strategic to the island.

Mr. Davis: No. They didn't defend it. They had, as I recall, and of course that was the 5th Division that went there, so I didn't go there. They must have had maybe, oh, maybe a company there, maybe three or four platoons. They weren't really prepared to defend it. They had all gone to the other end of the island. And so after

a couple of days we went up on the, we finally got up on the airfield and they had abandoned the airfield, because they went to the higher ground.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you basically stuck on the beach there before you guys moved inland?

Mr. Davis: We were probably on the beach, probably two days.

Mr. Metzler: That long.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So it was kinda like establishing a beachhead then.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that's about all it was. And we didn't, there was no hand-to-hand fighting. All it was artillery. And you just lay there and if a bomb hit you, you were dead. If not, you made it.

Mr. Metzler: Were you returning the fire with mortar now at this point?

Mr. Davis: No.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. You haven't really clicked into action yet.

Mr. Davis: No, no. We didn't ever really see any, we hadn't seen any combat troops ahead of us. All the bombardment was coming from mostly artillery, from the northern side of the island. And so then the first night they, for some reason, quit bombing us. I don't know why, but they quit. And we just lay down and went to sleep.

And it's kind of a funny story that comes to my mind. Of course, I'm exhausted. I haven't done anything, but I'm exhausted. I've got my platoon right there, I'm laying on my back, I'm sound asleep, and all of a sudden I feel something on my chest. And I think, it's a Jap, and he's going to—whatever he's going to do. And I kept, I didn't know what to do, whether to jump up, grab him, and I just had a moment of nothing, but I thought, I'll just make a move. It's the only thing I can do, I can't let him kill me. I made a move, it was a land crab.

Mr. Metzler: (Laughs) Oh my gosh!

Mr. Davis: On my chest. 'Cause I could feel it. It felt like a hand. It was a land crab.

Mr. Metzler: Well, that beats having a Japanese on your chest. My gosh!

Mr. Davis: That was a pleasant surprise.

Mr. Metzler: So then did you go back again?

Mr. Davis: I don't think I went back to sleep, no. I think I was up for the night.

Mr. Metzler: For the duration, yeah. My gosh. So finally you started advancing then.

Mr. Davis: Then we moved up onto the airfield, and they had already abandoned the airfield. So even though, the only thing that we were, that we had to do up there, was stay out of the way of their artillery, because they were still, they still had artillery on us, so that's the only thing we could do, we could stay in on that. There wasn't much, they left no troops there. They didn't defend the airstrip at all.

Mr. Metzler: Was the airstrip pretty well torn up, or what?

Mr. Davis: Well, it was , it really wasn't. Although for some reason we had bombed it.

Mr. Metzler: I guess that's so they couldn't use it if they decided to.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. So they just, there were some aircraft that had been destroyed, they were still in the hangars, and they were all blown to bits. So that was, there wasn't any man-to-man fighting there. We stayed there for probably just one or two nights. Then we advanced to the northern part of the island, and they spread out and of course from there on it was all Infantry. We didn't really get very far before the, one of the lieutenants that had one of the Infantry platoons unfortunately was killed, and I left the mortar platoon and took over his platoon.

Mr. Metzler: So you were mortar platoon leader but then you ended up with the Infantry platoon.

Mr. Davis: Well, it was all Infantry but it was divided into different parts, depending on what weapon you had. There was the mortar weapon, machine gun weapon, and marching Infantry weapon.

Mr. Metzler: Like rifles, riflemen.

Mr. Davis: So I took over one of the Infantry.

Mr. Metzler: So who took your place?

Mr. Davis: The sergeant that was under me, because we had already lost two officers, so the sergeant took over that. He was well qualified, he could handle that.

Mr. Metzler: So you've taken casualties and this is from the artillery fire, is that correct?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. We hadn't really taken any casualties from small arms fire at this point.

Mr. Metzler: So this is a situation where you are there and all of a sudden there's incoming and it takes people out.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. So we just kept advancing, I guess, is the only way to explain it. We just kept advancing and going as far as we could go and suffering whatever casualties we had to suffer.

Mr. Metzler: Were you able, were you putting many mortar rounds out at this point, or was it still basically a rifle and machine gun operation.

Mr. Davis: Mostly rifle and machine gun, although there were times when we did find what we thought were targets that we could use mortars on, and we did try that because I remember one day there was, they had dug in. They were never on the ground, they were all dug in. And there was the side of a hill, and they had dug in an emplacement, and they had a machine gun unit up there. The captain said to me, he said "Davis, can your mortar group, can you?" I said "Yeah, we can." So I went back to my mortar group, I already had an Infantry group but I went back to my mortar group, and we set up our 60mm. mortars and we fired our mortars at this unit up there on the hill. And I guess we blasted it away, and we never did get up there, but there wasn't anybody left. They didn't shoot us anymore.

Mr. Metzler: Must have taken care of 'em.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, we took care of them. But that's about all we did, then we just going forward. Every night we'd make a little advancement, time after time.

Mr. Metzler: What'd you do, dig in at night?

Mr. Davis: Just dig in every night.

Mr. Metzler: I understand it wasn't easy to dig a hole in that volcanic . . .

Mr. Davis: No, it was pretty easy, because it was just, it was pretty soft dirt. It was volcanic, but there weren't big rocks that you couldn't dig in. Well, half the time, you'd just lay down and go to sleep. That's about all you could do. But that's what we did. And we just did that for I don't know how many days. We got toward the north end of the island.

Mr. Metzler: So you're heading up this Infantry group now, so that means you're right up on the front edge of things.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: You ever see any

**End of side one
Beginning side two**

Mr. Davis: Let me just call out there and just see if we can go down there or where we are. I don't have my carbine with me, I'm not armed, I'm on my belly, I crawl out on this ledge and I got aways out there, and I look down, there is a whole platoon of Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: Holy mackerel!

Mr. Davis: Well, fortunately they didn't see me.

Mr. Metzler: That was gonna be my next question.

Mr. Davis: So I inched my way back and I told my squad. I said, "Okay. Now right over here, don't just run over there because they're gonna be there, they're right down below us." 'Cause the north end of the island was more craigs and blocks, and so I said "Now, just get over there and we'll see if we can get rid of those people." Well, we inched over there and started firing and unfortunately, one of my men who was the pride of the platoon, had a—where he got it I don't know, I don't remember if he told me. He had a submachine gun he'd gotten somewhere.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, he just picked one up somewhere, huh?

Mr. Davis: And he'd been the pride of our group. And there he is standing on the ledge, firing this submachine gun down there, and they kill him. And of course, we all, he was

a very popular guy, and we all, it was one of those things. But anyway, we got rid of all those Japs down there and we proceeded to go further along.

To make a long story short, after a couple more days going to the north end of the island we never, I never did get to the far end. But almost short of it, they started with artillery and we lost some men and we had a lot of men wounded, and of course I'm running around trying to keep the thing organized, then I caught it with shrapnel in my back. But I want to tell you, because I was very friendly with our battalion doctors, and when the corpsman picked me up and put me on a stretcher, I was the happiest man on that island. I remember these corpsmen took me down to where there was an aid station, and I knew the Naval doctor down there. "Oh, Davis, how are you?" I said, "Hey, I'm great. I'm leaving." I laughed. I said, "I'm getting out of here, I'm not gonna die. I'm wounded, I'm gonna leave." And away they took me onto a hospital ship. I wish I could remember the name of it.

Mr. Metzler: Can you tell at this point how serious your shrapnel wound is?

Mr. Davis: No, I couldn't. I just knew that I had, it hit my left shoulder, and I knew that I was bleeding and I had, my whole shoulder and arm were numb. But I was all there.

Mr. Metzler: (Chuckles) You counted fingers and toes and everything was still there.

Mr. Davis: I was all there, and all I knew, the other thing along the line, the corpsmen carried, they can give you a shot to put you to sleep.

Mr. Metzler: Probably morphine or something.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. I'm sure it was morphine. So they gave me a shot, the doctors gave me a shot, by the time I got to the beach I was out of it. I was asleep. So the next thing I knew, and that was the next morning, I woke up on the hospital ship in a bunk, and a Navy nurse came over and said "How are you?" I said, "I'm fine."

That was, I got out, that was the happiest day of my life when I woke up in that hospital bed.

Mr. Metzler: Probably a feeling of security after what you went through.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: What's your estimate of the level of casualties that your group was taking there on the island?

Mr. Davis: I would say, probably, sixty, sixty-five percent were casualties.

Mr. Metzler: Dead or wounded.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And how many were, I don't know, I don't know what the statistics were as far as dead and wounded, I don't think I've ever seen that. But it was, it was bloody. It was just, I don't know, it's just something you can't foresee. And you only look at it like, I'm glad I'm out of it.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you on the hospital ship?

Mr. Davis: Probably just a couple days. And they took me to Guam, there was a hospital in Guam, and that was kind of interesting too. A little story with that. They took all the patients, there were Jap planes, there was an air raid warning. And so it was complete dark . . .

Mr. Metzler: Now this is when you're on Guam?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. They had, we got off the ship, we were in stretchers on the dock. Somewhere on Guam. And it was just dark. No one was there. There we layed. And maybe that went on for an hour, an hour or two, I don't remember. Then someone came and they picked up the stretcher I was on, they took me into a Quonset hut, put me in a bed, gave me a shot, I went to sleep. Next morning I woke up I'm in this Quonset hut, there's probably, oh, there's beds lined up on both sides of the Quonset hut. It's a big hut. It was probably fifty wounded people in that Quonset hut. And I'm awake, and I'm under sedation, I don't hurt.

I tried to get oriented, but of course, the doctor comes, looks at you, and says "Okay," changes th dressing r whatever he did.

Mr. Metzler: And give you another shot.

Mr. Davis: You get another shot and you go back to sleep. I can't tell you how many days I went to sleep. They just keep you sedated. And then all of a sudden they taper off, and I become more acquainted, and I start looking around, and there's some pretty bad wounds in different bunks, or beds, all along this Quonset hut. And I'm not, of course, I don't know any of these people, and I'm not talking to anybody, no one is talking to me. So this went on for a couple days, and I'm kind of out of it.

But finally, they don't think they need to give me any more sedation, so I finally can wake up and I'm trying to talk to people and find out where we are and we're in Guam, and they start telling me where we are, and I find out that this is, because of the air raids, they just picked up all the wounded and put 'em in this Quonset hut. Well, I was an officer, I'm not being above anybody, so I don't care, but they picked me up and I'm in a, not in an officer's ward. And I don't know how I found it out. Someone said "What are you doing here?" And I said "Why? What's the matter with that?" He said, "Well, these are all enlisted men, you're a lieutenant." And I said "So what?" He said, "Well, we'll transfer you." I said "No. You don't have to transfer me. I'll stay right where I am." So I stayed there.

Mr. Metzler: Well, the level of care should be the same.

Mr. Davis: Yes. So I stayed there. The Naval nurses didn't like me very well, or the corpsmen didn't like me very well.

Mr. Metzler: Why is that?

Mr. Davis: Because I didn't think they were doing their job. This is, I hate to talk against the Navy, but, they were not doing their job. The corpsmen were on, I give you an idea what was going on. The corpsmen that were on that Quonset hut, they'd make the rounds and do this and that, then they'd go, there's a back room back there, they'd go in there and play cards. Or shoot craps. And there was a Naval nurse who was in charge, and I'd complain to her. She said "Oh well, we can't do anything about that." I said, "You can do something. You just go down and tell those guys." I was next to a man who was in a bunk that was deadly, deadly wounded. And he needed help. And I said "Get someone over there."

So they didn't like me. I made a pest of myself. They said, "We'll transfer you to an officer's tent." I said "You can't transfer me. I know where the officers are. If I know anybody over there I'll go over there. But I'm wounded, I'm in a bed, doctor sees me, I'm fine."

So that went on for I don't know how many days, and they finally got another hospital ship and they took everybody out of there and put 'em on a hospital ship, and away we went. Then I went to Honolulu, and I was in the hospital in Honolulu.

Mr. Metzler: What was the care like on the hospital ships? What was that like?

Mr. Davis: It was very good. The Navy was very good. The Naval nurses were very good. The

only ones that were bad, like I say, was at that one unit they put me in overnight. But other than that I have no complaints. They were very excellent people and they did their jobs, and I was very pleased with the attention that not only I got, but everybody got. It was very good. I think the Navy did a very good job as far as the medical crews.

Mr. Metzler: So you ended up back in Honolulu.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Did they put you in another hospital?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. I was in the hospital for, oh, I really don't remember. Couple weeks, probably three weeks, I don't know. Until my wound healed up and you just waited around for orders.

Mr. Metzler: I guess at this time, Iwo Jima's all over with.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that was all over with, they had already gone to Okinawa.

Mr. Metzler: And so Okinawa was the next on and they were working on that, so that's June of forty-five.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. So they had gone to Okinawa.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, they took Okinawa in June. I think they started in the first of April. So are you hearing about how things are going at this point? You must have a lot of time on your hands, laying in that bed all the time.

Mr. Davis: Well yeah, you get up and go around and what happens is, you get in a poker game.

Mr. Metzler: (Laughs) Oh, really.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. 'Cause I remember getting in a poker game and there was a couple guys that played poker, I'm not a big card player, but I remember I got nothing to lose. I must have had some money to get started with, I don't know how. I don't remember how I got any money, 'cause they played for money. But I got in and I won a little money, and that's about all they did, just sit around. Some of 'em, well, you'd get, they had a library so you could read, so you'd get a book and read, or you'd get a newspaper.

Mr. Metzler: What about communication back home with family?

Mr. Davis: Yes, I'm glad you mentioned it. I got, the Red Cross said you can make one phone call. Unfortunately, I'm not defending myself, but, I was married and you could only make one call. Well, I have to tell you, that even though I love my wife, my mother was my mother.

Mr. Metzler: She's still number one. In a lot of ways.

Mr. Davis: So in a phone call I called my mother in Sioux City, Iowa. And I talked to her. And that was very good, she enjoyed that. My wife didn't enjoy that.

Mr. Metzler: I understand, but . . .

Mr. Davis: We had some family disagreements over that years later, but it was a choice. I made one call and I just said hey, my mother has been my mentor for so many years that I just can't, I know she's worried, probably worried sick.

Mr. Metzler: 'Cause she's probably been, does she know that you've been wounded?

Mr. Davis: No.

Mr. Metzler: When you call, that's the first she's heard of it then.

Mr. Davis: Of course, she didn't even know that I was on Iwo, 'cause there was no communication at all. So from the time that I left, we were in Honolulu, when we were in Maui, in camp, we could write. But when we left we could not tell them when we were leaving, there was no conversation in our letters at all. All of a sudden our correspondence stopped.

Mr. Metzler: So they figured you were probably in it up to your neck somewhere.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, they didn't know. And of course, the thing about, which I think about because I was the brunt of a little joke, every officer had to read all the mail of his platoon, and the idea was you couldn't give any information about training or where you were.

Mr. Metzler: So you were basically the, what's the word I'm looking for, the censor, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. You censored your platoon mail. So every night you had to sit down and read everybody's mail. Well, I can't tell you, imagine a platoon of thirty men, this

is not derogatory, but some of 'em had graduated high school, some of 'em hadn't. They'd been drafted, and they're writing home to their mother or their girlfriend or their wife, and you have to read all this. And so, in the evening, a couple times I bitched about it, to some of my officer friends. About reading, you know, I don't like to read that. I don't want to know about their love life.

Mr. Metzler: Personal life and stuff, yeah.

Mr. Davis: Personal life. All of a sudden one night, I get this letter that I'm reading. And in it he's got where we are, and how many men are in the platoon, and what the name of our company is. Now, anything that was in there that I didn't want I would cut out with a scissors. I started cutting away, I thought, who is this guy? I looked at the name, and I thought, this isn't even a guy in my platoon. Well, what it was, one of my fellow officers, because I had complained about reading the mail, stuck this in my mail box.

Mr. Metzler: With as much off-limits stuff as he could stick in there so you'd be there cutting away.

Mr. Davis: And what was in there was the name of our platoon. How many men were in the platoon. What weapons we had. I thought, my God, who is this guy?

Mr. Metzler: And you fell for it.

Mr. Davis: I fell for it. That was my censor. I said, I'm not a censor anymore. Someone else take over as censorship.

Mr. Metzler: So who took it over?

Mr. Davis: I don't remember. But I wouldn't do it any more. I said, "You guys think you're so funny," I said, "I don't want to sit there and read guys writing their mother and their girlfriend, I don't want to read that any more." So that was kind of a funny incident that everybody got a big joke out of.

Mr. Metzler: I always figured, and never actually heard the story like you just told, but I always assumed that there was just somebody there and that was their job, was to censor all the incoming and outgoing mail so that nothing, but it was the officers that did that, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it was the officer of each platoon. He gathered, they brought the mail to his, we lived in tents, and the sergeant would bring the mail in, in the evening, and

he'd say "Okay, Lieutenant Davis, here you are, here's your mail." And you'd have to sit there and read all these letters, personal letters. You know, it was just heartbreaking. I got carried away, I guess, at chow one night, and I over exaggerated how bad it was and so they, my fellow officers, took care of me.

Mr. Metzler: (Laughs) When you think back on that period, are there one or two or three guys that stand out in your mind that you were particularly close to, or respected?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, there were. Of course, my company commander.

Mr. Metzler: You'd mentioned him.

Mr. Davis: Captain Cruestorf and I were very good friends. We became very good friends and obviously he thought I was a good officer, because I know on the island he gave me a lot of assignments that he didn't give anybody else. It's , there was an assistant, a first lieutenant, he was assistant to the company commander, and he and I did not get along. And so he was on me all the time, which didn't bother me any, 'cause I didn't care. But, I just assumed that the reason that Gus, as I referred to him, Captain Gus, that Captain Gus befriended me because he couldn't get along with this other guy. 'Cause the other guy wasn't doing anything at all. He was the executive, whatever that means in the Marine Corps.

Mr. Metzler: What about others? Fellow offices, men in your platoon?

Mr. Davis: Well then I became very friendly with, of course, my first assignment was the mortar platoon. And there was a sergeant, Magnus, who was head of that. And he was an older man, he probably was, oh, I'm guessing, he could have been ten years older than me.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, so he was in his thirties.

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: A real pappy, huh.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. He was a very nice man and he and I got along very well, and he did me a lot of favors because I was green and he kept me up-to-date on what was going on and what I should do, that they don't teach you in officers training. You go by the manual and that's it. So I got a lot of extra work from the sergeant. But then of course, we went in the operation, he took over the—he was very capable of doing it. He took over the mortar platoon and I took over an Infantry platoon.

Mr. Metzler: Did you stay in contact with any of these guys after the war?

Mr. Davis: No, because, you know, after I left, after I was in the hospital in Honolulu, they sent me back to San Diego. I was at the Marine base in San Diego and I lost contact with everybody. These were all new people, all, a whole new war as far as I was concerned.

Mr. Metzler: Now, the 4th Marines didn't go on to Okinawa, did they?

Mr. Davis: No. The 5th Marines went to Okinawa. And so that was kind of the end of all the associates that I had made when we were in the 4th Marine Division, and I never saw any of those people again.

Mr. Metzler: Have you ever gone to any of the reunions after the war?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, we have a group. Our group is known as the SOCS, Special OCS. It's called the SOCS Four Hundred. That was a group of young college students who joined the Marine Corps and we went to boot camp together, went to OCS together, we were known as the Four Hundred, the SOCS Four Hundred. And we have a group that get together every year since then, and it's kind of broken up now, 'cause there's not many of us left.

Mr. Metzler: Well, I mean, that was a long time ago.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. There's a little group that's still in California that I'm not associated with because they weren't people that I knew. They formed their own little group out there. Every year they meet in San Francisco and have a gathering. But we have a gathering, we used to, we haven't had it now for about, oh, I'm thinking, probably about eight years now. We used to get together every year, the SOCS Four Hundred. And we would meet, we met at, the last one, we met at Quantico, as a matter of fact. And it was nice. That way I got to see a lot of people that I hadn't seen, talked to people that I hadn't seen. And I still have several of 'em that I correspond with.

Mr. Metzler: Have you had the opportunity at all to return to the Pacific since the war, like to Maui.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, I have.

Mr. Metzler: What about Iwo, you make it back to Iwo?

Mr. Davis: Oh, I can skip Iwo Jima. But I have been to the Hawaiian Islands. As a matter of

fact, two years ago my wife and I had a trip to Hawaii, and we spent some time over there, and it's beautiful, it's nice.

Mr. Metzler: A little bit different than it was back then.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. It's a little different.

Mr. Metzler: I mean, the whole western end of Maui is just one big tourist city now, with big hotels.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it was a beautiful, Maui is a beautiful island. It's really one of the prettiest of the islands. Honolulu is pretty, of course the beach and all that, but that's all commercial now. But Maui was a nice island to be on. It wasn't commercial. I remember going to, one of the other officers and myself, there was a high school football game that we went to one Sunday. And of course they were all Hawaiian kids, half of 'em didn't even speak English, I don't think. They played football barefooted.

Mr. Metzler: Oh my gosh! (Laughs)

Mr. Davis: Went in a couple of the shops, and this little Hawaiian, in this little town, can't remember the name of it on Maui, it was a little town. We went in, used to go in there and just kinda shop around. The storekeepers were all native, didn't speak English. Most of the island was all sugar cane.

Mr. Metzler: Let's go back. You said you were in San Diego at this point. You're out of the hospital, and so, what were your duties there towards the end?

Mr. Davis: I was assigned to the guard company. What the guard company does of course is secure the base and they're in charge of, of course, all the security, all the gates, the brig, all the parades, everything goes through that particular division.

Mr. Metzler: So is that where you were when you heard the war was over?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that's where I was, in San Diego.

Mr. Metzler: I guess there's a fair amount of celebrating at that point.

Mr. Davis: Oh, yes. They just went crazy. Absolutely crazy. And of course, part of the craziness amounted to a lot of alcohol. And that was a problem. The men weren't supposed to bring alcohol on the base, so being in guard company, our guards at

the San Diego base, had to frisk all these guys, and they would take all liquor off of them which they wanted to take on the base, they couldn't do that.

Mr. Metzler: Oh my gosh. So that made you popular.

Mr. Davis: Well, unfortunately, all that liquor, it's kind of an inside story. All that liquor that they confiscated ended up with the colonel.

Mr. Metzler: How interesting!

Mr. Davis: And he kept it in his closet, and every morning we had an officers' meeting, and the colonel said one morning, he was a little disturbed that some of the people had said that he was drinking up all that liquor. And so because of that, he brought out two or three, I don't remember, cases of bottles of various liquors into this room that we were holding our meeting in.

Mr. Metzler: To prove that he hadn't drunk it.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And he said, "Now, not only am I going to prove that I didn't drink it, I want one of you officers to take it and take it in the head and empty every jar in the head, and flush it." And that's what we did.

Mr. Metzler: I'll be darned. (Both chuckle) Well, I guess the sewage treatment system got a good purge. (Laughs)

Mr. Davis: Yes, I'm sure, I'm sure. And I'm sure it also didn't stop any of the guys from bringing in liquor. But at least if the guards were on the gate and they had it in their hand, or they could see it in their pocket or whatever, they could stop 'em, so they weren't supposed to bring it on board.

Mr. Metzler: So how long did you have to stay in after the war was over?

Mr. Davis: Oh, probably three or four months. Of course, they did it, I'm trying to think how they did that. They did it on points.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, they had a point system.

Mr. Davis: They had a point system, and what it was I don't remember.

Mr. Metzler: You got extra points you were in combat, and all that kinda stuff.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, and if you had an award you got extra points. I remember, I don't remember his name, but the commanding general at San Diego, I had a note in my box one morning, "Report to General So-and-So." I thought, Oh, my goodness, what did I do? Well, I went in and he was very nice and he said "Let's get your record, I think you'd be a good man to stay in." I said "General, I've had a lot of fun in this Marine Corps but I'm not gonna stay in. Thanks for offering to keep me." He said, "You could become a regular." I said "Yeah, I suppose I could, but I've got other plans, I don't think it's gonna be in the Marine Corps."

Mr. Metzler: Now, you were wounded in action, so this means you are a Purple Heart recipient. Tell me how that happened, what did they do, just send it to you in the mail?

Mr. Davis: Let's see. No, they present it to you.

Mr. Metzler: Well, where did that happen?

Mr. Davis: I'm trying to think. Whatever base it was, they give you a presentation.

Mr. Metzler: Tha was back Stateside, right?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that was Stateside.

Mr. Metzler: What about the Silver Star?

Mr. Davis: They present that to you in kind of a ceremony.

Mr. Metzler: Where did that happen, and what was that like?

Mr. Davis: That was in action in Iwo Jima.

Mr. Metzler: So that was there on site.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. Someone has to put that in for you, and I'm sure Captain Gus put it in for me because he and I were friends, and obviously he thought I did a good job.

Mr. Metzler: Well, sounds like you did.

Mr. Davis: Well, whatever it was, I did it and got out.

Mr. Metzler: So you still got the Silver Star and the Purple Heart?

Mr. Davis: Yeah. Matter of fact, I have another daughter that lives in Chicago, and she made a little shrine. I hate to call it that. A little shrine. And she has, I've given her all my medals and all my citations and some other things, I've forgotten what she has. She has a home that has three bedrooms, so one of her bedrooms, my two grandsons have already graduated and they're married and away. So one of those bedrooms she has decorated with all my stuff in it.

Mr. Metzler: So it's your shrine room, huh.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that's her shrine room.

Mr. Metzler: Her shrine room. So what other things are in there besides your medals.

Mr. Davis: Well, honestly, I don't even remember what else she had there. Whatever, I think she has one of the letters that I wrote home, and my medals, and . . .

Mr. Metzler: What's your fondest memory of that whole period out there in the Pacific? I'm getting ready to ask you the flip side of that, too, what's your most horrific memory. Let's start with the fond memory.

Mr. Davis: I think the fondest memory is getting wounded and get out.

Mr. Metzler: The exit strategy.

Mr. Davis: That's the best memory I've got. Because I just figured, oh, I knew, if I stayed there any more, I'd never get off alive. You just couldn't, it was that bad.

Mr. Metzler: It was that bad a meat grinder.

Mr. Davis: Yeah. And somewhere, I suppose, I've shouldered away some of the information of the wounded and dead, but it was quite a few.

Mr. Metzler: So the most horrific memory. Saddest point. Lowest point.

Mr. Davis: Probably just the idea of seeing all the young wounded and dying. It's what war is all about. It's, unless you've been in it, you just can't imagine what it's like. You know, people that have never been through it, and I hate to say this, I'll probably end up in jail for saying it, but the war we're going through right now, unless you have been a veteran in war you cannot in clear conscience send young men to fight in other places, unless, I'm not saying you can't ever, unless it's vital. I'm sticking my neck out now, and I may end up in jail for it.

Mr. Metzler: No, you won't be in jail.

Mr. Davis: The war we're fighting now is not vital.

Mr. Metzler: It's optional. I agree with you.

Mr. Davis: That's a good word.

Mr. Metzler: I know exactly what you're saying.

Mr. Davis: And people that get on television and talk about how wonderful the troops are, that's great, 'cause the boys are going great and it's wonderful, and I'm the first one to do anything I could do for them. But they shouldn't be there. They shouldn't be there. Nothing I can do about it.

Mr. Metzler: Thinking back to the Pacific, what's your feeling at this point about the Japanese? I mean, I've heard so many horror stories about . . .

Mr. Davis: I have found that the Japanese have really been, you know, the whole thing was the Emperor who decided that this was what they were going to do. It's like any war. It's like me or you, if you're drafted, you're going to be there, and you're going to be for it, you're not going to be against it.

Mr. Metzler: You do what you're told.

Mr. Davis: You do what you're told, and so . . .

Mr. Metzler: So you don't hold it against the Japanese as a people.

Mr. Davis: No, I really don't. I really don't. I think it was, there was a group in Japan at that time that I've read about since, that wanted to conquer the world, and that was their ambition, and they just said hey, that's what we're gonna do.

Mr. Metzler: Well, I think that's a good way to look at it.

Mr. Davis: Unfortunately, we took the brunt of it. There was nothing we could do about it. We had to, there's nothing, we had no choice. We had to go out in the Pacific and get back those islands.

Mr. Metzler: Right, right. That wasn't optional. Well, what else goes to mind, Donald, about that experience that you had over there?

Mr. Davis: Well, I think it was a very eventful, naturally. I think I learned a lot about life, I learned a lot about death, I learned a lot about war.

Mr. Metzler: Do you feel like it changed your outlook on life?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, I think it did.

Mr. Metzler: How.

Mr. Davis: Well, I think, after you've been through it, you, it opens your eyes to what can be done in this world, not that we're not doing things that aren't being done, but there's a lot of things that, if everybody would think the same things, there could be a better, we would have a better world. Living together. Associating with other people.

Mr. Metzler: Just getting along.

Mr. Davis: Yes, it's just a matter of getting along with people. This is a whole earth that God put people on and we can't go around killing one another for the rest of our lives. Unfortunately, there are times when we do this, I don't think we should. It's easy to say "Go get 'em." It's not easier to say "Let's work it out." I think in retrospect some of the things that we've done in the past, we should have sat down and said "Let's see what we can do," instead of going to war.

Mr. Metzler: Right. It does seem like it should be absolute last option.

Mr. Davis: And, I'm not criticizing people who are for war, all I'm saying is, that unless you've been through it, it's not parades going down the middle of the street. It's not bands playing the Star Spangled Banner. It's not waving the flag. It's a lot more than that. I think that some of the people in our trust have to think about that, think about what is it, what does it mean, going to war? It means a lot more than you think it means. There's gotta be some answer to it, and I don't know.

Mr. Metzler: No, it's not an easy question, but I definitely hear where you're coming from.

Mr. Davis: No, it's not an easy thing, and I'm sure people that are at fault know that it's not easy.

Mr. Metzler: Well, if it were easy we'd have handled it already, so that's one of the mysteries of life.

Mr. Davis: Unfortunately, it reigns on a lot of people that it shouldn't.

Mr. Metzler: Well, you got any other recollections you want to share with us on this tape before I shut her down, Donald?

Mr. Davis: No, I thank you. I thank you for calling and I think other than the fact that I was in the service and did my work that I could, and did the best I could, I'm not the only one. There was a whole bunch of other guys that did even more than I did, I know.

Mr. Metzler: Well, here's a lot of 'em that did a lot. In fact, gives me the opportunity to thank you for what you did for our country.

Mr. Davis: You're welcome.

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