

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Zedic Colbert

Russellville, Arkansas

May 16, 2007

7th Cavalry Regiment, Special Weapons Platoon

Bismark Islands, Leyte, Luzon

Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman's Badge

First Cavalry Division, 4th Cavalry Regiment

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is May 16, 2007. I am interviewing Mr. Zedic Colbert at my brother's home in Russellville, Arkansas. His address is 1314 East L Street, Russellville, Arkansas 72801. His phone number is area code 479-890-6257. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Zedic, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II. Let me ask you first, a lot of the time we find out down the road when we try to get back in touch with a veteran, something has happened and he has moved or something. Is there someone we could use as an alternative contact. Do you have a son or daughter or someone that would know where you are in case you have moved or something?

Mr. Colbert

My daughter would.

Mr. Misenhimer

What's her name?

Mr. Colbert

Tammy Pease.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you happen to have a phone number or address?

Mr. Colbert

No I don't. She's living in Atkins.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is she in the phone directory?

Mr. Colbert

No I don't think she is.

Mr. Misenhimer

We'll find her. Now let me ask you first, what is your birth date?

Mr. Colbert

April 5, 1922.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Colbert

I was born in Whitesboro, Oklahoma.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. I had one sister. She lived in Phoenix. She was younger than I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean, how many were there in your family?

Mr. Colbert

There was four counting me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were either of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were the only one?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you grew up during the Depression, how did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Colbert

It didn't bother us too much. What I mean is that we had plenty to eat. We worked and lived on a farm. Of course we didn't have a whole lot of money but we had plenty to eat. We did a lot of trading and things. If we wanted something at the store we would take chickens up to trade for it or eggs; whatever. I'll just put it this way. I never went hungry.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about growing up. How was it when you were growing up?

Mr. Colbert

It was just kind of a normal life.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Colbert

I went to school at Messer, Oklahoma. I left there and I went to Goodland, Oklahoma.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Colbert

I didn't go to high school?

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your last grade?

Mr. Colbert

Eighth.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you quit going to school?

Mr. Colbert

I worked on one of those little farms. Those little farms are still going. I would work a day or two here and a day or two there and a week here and a week there, just for room and board. Just for a place to sleep and eat.

Mr. Misenhimer

At that point it was around 1936. You were what, about 13 or 14 years old?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Colbert

I really don't know. He wasn't around.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were on your own then?

Mr. Colbert

Yes I was on my own. After that I went to work for another guy down there at Messer named Willie Tom Guthrie. I guess I stayed there a couple of years. He worked in town at a store and drove a school bus. He asked me one time if I wanted to work for him. I came home with him from town. At the supper table he asked me if I wanted to work for him. He had about 20 acres. He said, "You just run this farm like you want to." Of course he was driving a school bus and working in town and he didn't have time to farm. So I just took over that little farm worked it for a couple of years. Then I went to a CC Camp in 1940.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Civilian Conservation Corps?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Some people call it the Tree Army; is that the same?

Mr. Colbert

I guess, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do with them?

Mr. Colbert

I worked on road construction and building construction and fighting forest fires. I went

on a forest fire, I believe it was in July, and I was on that thing for about three weeks. Then they brought us back to the camp for a rest. There was a Staff Sergeant there from the Army and he was looking for recruits. Boy, we had just come back from fighting that fire and everybody wanted to join. He took me and I think three other guys. He just had a small van. He took four of us up to Grand Junction, Colorado. We spent the night and the next day we went through the procedures to get into the Army; a physical and everything else that was involved. Two of us passed and two of us didn't. I got assigned to Fort Bliss, Texas. That Sergeant, I asked him what he had. He run off a long line there. He said, "I've got an organized Cavalry there in Fort Bliss, Texas." I said, "That's what I want." I got to Fort Bliss, Texas and I never saw so many horses in my life. That was Cavalry. I got into that and I really enjoyed those horses. I had a lot of fun with them. After the war broke out then they got rid of the horses and made Infantrymen out of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up and ask you a few questions.

Mr. Misenhimer

According to this, the date that you went in was August 20, 1940, is that right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went to Fort Bliss?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of basic training did you take there?

Mr. Colbert

Horse Cavalry.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any rifle training or anything like that?

Mr. Colbert

No, nothing but the horses. After the war broke out that's when they took the horses away from us and they started Infantry training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about working with the horses. What all did you do with the horses?

Mr. Colbert

We went on what they called a problem. We would go out in the boonies and stay for a week, two or three days or a week. They called it problems, going on a problem. We would camp just like a bunch of Boy Scouts. We would stay out there for two or three days or a week; whatever they wanted us to stay. Then we would come back in.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a problem was this? What did you do on the problem?

Mr. Colbert

They would fire artillery at us; first one thing and then another. We would turn out and there were tanks and trucks and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What weapon did you carry at that point?

Mr. Colbert

50 caliber machine guns and 81mm mortars.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these on a wagon that you were pulling or what were they on?

Mr. Colbert

No, they were on horseback.

Mr. Misenhimer

They were on horseback. You mounted them up on the back of the horse?

Mr. Colbert

Yes on pack horses. Those pack horses were smart.

Mr. Misenhimer

Pack horses or mules?

Mr. Colbert

Horses. They were smart. There at Fort Bliss they had these sand dunes and they had greasewood but they also had this other brush that I don't know what it was, but it had thorns on it. Those horses could tell the difference between the ones that had thorns on it and they would go around those. Instead of jumping over them, they would go around them.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you rode a horse, right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you rode a horse before you got into the Army?

Mr. Colbert

Not very much. Just a little when I was working but not like the way the Army wanted you to ride them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they pretty good horses?

Mr. Colbert

They were. Boy they had some good horse flesh in there. They had one guy and all he did was work in the stable crew. As we drove the manure wagon we cleaned the stalls out in the morning, he would come down with his wagon and we would put that manure on his wagon. He was the guy that they would send to El Reno, Oklahoma to the Remount Stables to pick out the horses. Boy he picked some good ones. He didn't get no deadheads or something like that. He got some that had some spirit in them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever get thrown off of your horse?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes, I got thrown off, kicked at, stepped on. (laugh) They had one horse there they called Baron. He was a tall horse. I don't think you could put an ounce of fat on him if you fed 24 hours a day. But boy he was really lively and smart. They made a pack horse out of him one day and he didn't like it. There was this guy that was leading him; he was in front of me. I was watching old Baron. We were going at a charge at those sand dunes and we came up on those little patches of brush and he could have jumped them. They

weren't any wider than this table. He could have jumped it but he went around it and he pulled that guy out of that saddle just slicker than a whistle. (laugh) Then he just stood there and looked at him. (laugh) When we came in the first thing we would do is take the saddles off. Tie them up at the picket line and unsaddle them and then groom them. When you finished grooming them you would take them up to the water trough and then you would put them in their stall. This guy with Baron took him up there and that horse deliberately stepped on that guy's foot. I mean he was standing there and he couldn't wait to get to that water trough, just dying of thirst. He got up there and he didn't even drink but he stepped on that guy's foot. (laugh) That was one horse that I don't think anybody would ever forget that had anything to do with him. He was some horse. He was just ornery that way; he wasn't mean; he was just ornery. We had another one they called Chico. He was mouse colored. When you would walk through the stables a lot of time you would turn them loose off of the picket line; you would just turn them loose and they would run into the corral. He would follow behind you. He would come up behind you and nudge you. If he was close to that oat cart he would push you over towards that oat trough. He wanted you to give him a handful of oats. If you would give him a handful of oats he would leave you alone and go on until the next guy came through and he would want some more. They are something else those horses.

Mr. Misenhimer

Horses are smart.

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes they are smart. We had another one in there; he belonged to Sergeant Gurgue. He was a pretty little thing. He called him Fox. He was coal black and had a bald face and

his tail dragged the ground. He had little bitty feet. He wouldn't let anybody ride him but Sergeant Gurgue. You could saddle him up. He would let you do that, but you had better not get on him; you were going to have a rodeo. He wouldn't let anybody ride him except Sergeant Gurgue. When we would take him out on a problem he didn't want to go. He would get out there about a mile to a mile and a half; maybe two miles and man that horse would get so lame he couldn't walk. He would just really limp. He would go up to the First Sergeant and say, "Sergeant Gurgue, your horse is lame." He would send the horse back to stables. We would lead that horse back and that horse would perk right up. He really didn't want to go.

Mr. Misenhimer

He knew how to get out of it, huh?

Mr. Colbert

He knew how to get out of it. Sergeant Gurgue came down there one time. He was one of these guys that would go on a bender once in a while. He would take his booze and put it in his room. He would stay in that room until he got through drinking. He'd pull a good one maybe three or four days in a week. We would go and check on him once in a while. When he could get up and go on, he would come out of there. He was going to take the horse for exercise one time. We had horse exercise in the mornings. He was going to take him out to ride and he put the saddle on him. He didn't tighten that cinch tight enough. He put his foot in that stirrup and put his weight in it and that saddle just turned over. That horse never made a move. If it had been anybody else, he would have stomped them to death; but he never made a move.

Mr. Misenhimer

The horse can swell himself up so that you can't tighten the girth, right?

Mr. Colbert

They will do it. That was the deal. The horse would swell himself up when you tightened it. Then when he relaxed it was loose and when he stepped on it, it just turned over on him.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ride the same horse all the time?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. That was my horse.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was his name?

Mr. Colbert

I think I called him Virgil. He was a little mouse colored horse.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were all the horses about the same size or were they different sizes?

Mr. Colbert

They were different sizes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And different colors?

Mr. Colbert

Yes but they all had about the same get-up-and-go. He didn't pick any horses that wasn't kind of high spirited. Some of them really had a little too much spirit. You would get on

some of them and after awhile they would be going on a trot and they would hear the word "Charge" and that's when you just opened them up. (laugh) You would see packs flying through the air. (laugh) The guys that were leading those pack horses would be coming off their saddles. I tell you what, it was fun to be there. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

But you didn't carry a rifle or any kind of arms?

Mr. Colbert

No. We carried a side arm. A .45. We didn't have any rifle right then except maybe a dozen or so in the supply room that guys used for walking guard.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you would go on these problems with the machine guns and mortars; would you take them off and fire them from time to time?

Mr. Colbert

We took them off but we never did fire them.

Mr. Misenhimer

What caliber of machine gun was it?

Mr. Colbert

These were 30 calibers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Water cooled or air cooled?

Mr. Colbert

Water cooled.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you had to break it down to put it on the horse, right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could one horse carry the whole machine gun?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

It didn't take several horses to carry a machine gun?

Mr. Colbert

One horse would carry the tripod on one side and the barrel and receiver on the other side.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the water? How did you carry the water?

Mr. Colbert

It came in a keg or can about like this, about a foot square. We put them on a flat; it was about that deep. It was enough to fill up the machine gun though. I guess it was made for that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What size mortar was it?

Mr. Colbert

81mm.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever fire it?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. I didn't stay that in that mortar platoon very long. They put me in a 50 caliber platoon. After they converted us over to Infantry we got all kinds of rifles then. Then we had to study the nomenclature of them. We had to learn how to take them apart and put them together. We learned enough until we could put them together in the dark, blindfolded; mix the parts up. The machine parts, put in there and put them together. Some guys could do it and some guys couldn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now back to the horses. When you were there, were you in a particular unit? A certain cavalry unit?

Mr. Colbert

The 7th Cavalry.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now that was the Regiment; 7th Cavalry Regiment. What company?

Mr. Colbert

Special Weapons Troop.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long were you with them?

Mr. Colbert

I was with that outfit until even after we went to the Infantry; I was still in the same outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there at Fort Bliss?

Mr. Colbert

We lived in the barracks. They had big stucco barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

What part of Fort Bliss was that on?

Mr. Colbert

It was close to Biggs Field. Fort Bliss sets like this and there was a parade ground about a mile and a half to two miles; about a mile wide and about three miles long and it was as flat as this table. Biggs Field was past that, the airport. These big stucco barracks, I think they would have held 80 men. Those big stucco barracks out in front, there used to be a polo ground. I saw the troop commander out there playing polo one time.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how many men were in your outfit there?

Mr. Colbert

In the 7th Cavalry?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes

Mr. Colbert

There was F Troop, A Troop; maybe about 600.

Mr. Misenhimer

What troop were you in?

Mr. Colbert

Special Weapons.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh yeah, that's right. You told me that. I'm sorry. Now on December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor; where were you and how did you hear about it?

Mr. Colbert

I was a saddler for the troop. I was in the saddle shop and I had the radio on. Right next door was the blacksmith shop where we shod the horses. I was working on a saddle and the news came out that President Roosevelt had declared war on Japan. I went next door and told Earl Cox who was the horseshoer. Him and Kelly and Bill Leighty were the three horse shoers over there. I went over there and told Earl. I said, "Hey, Roosevelt just declared war on Japan." He said, "Huh." I said, "Roosevelt just declared war on Japan. Come on over and listen to it." He quit shoeing the horses and came over and listened to the radio. I was in that saddle shop.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was on a Sunday afternoon, right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Colbert

I didn't have any idea but I didn't like it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you all expecting to go to war? Did you all think there was going to be a war?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't, huh?

Mr. Colbert

No. The very idea. War was just as far away then as it was last week.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they put you all on any kind of special alert at that point or anything?

Mr. Colbert

Well, yes. They tightened down everything; security and everything. We had a lot of lectures about saboteurs and watch what you say in these honky tonks and just be on the alert. Peacetime was over and we were at war. They wanted everybody to keep their mouths shut and watch what they do. We got more lectures on the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did they change you over to the Infantry.

Mr. Colbert

I don't know if that was in December. I think it was around February or March. There weren't any horses left. That's when we started getting Infantry gear; packs, rifles and everything that goes with Infantry. We had to turn in all of our saddle equipment to the Supply Sergeant. Everything that concerned a horse went back to supplies.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they do with the horses do you know?

Mr. Colbert

No I don't but they got rid of them. You could buy your horse if you wanted him. I wanted mine but I didn't have a place to keep him. Some of them guys did; they bought them and they shipped them home at their own expense. If you bought one you had to have a place to keep him; a good place; pasture and stuff like that. You couldn't just buy it and put it in a corral somewhere and forget him.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about what all you did when you got to the Infantry. Did you go on the rifle range and shoot a rifle or anything?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes. We were continuously on that rifle range. And we were taking hand to hand combat; practicing bayonet.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rifle did you have?

Mr. Colbert

We started out with the Springfield. The Enfield.

Mr. Misenhimer

The '03 bolt action?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. Later on we got the M-1's when we went overseas

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you still live in the same place, or did you move to a different place?

Mr. Colbert

We still lived in the same place?

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned tanks; did they give you tanks or something?

Mr. Colbert

No we didn't have any tanks then. I've forgot when we got the tanks. I think the reconnaissance had the tanks. They had a lot of those half-tracks but we didn't have any.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know that they made some of the cavalry units into reconnaissance units, some of them.

Mr. Colbert

Right. That's where some of the tanks came from.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you all didn't; you went to Infantry?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. Later on in the war I tried to stay away from those tanks. (laugh) They would get you killed. I remember one time in the South Pacific, this tank, I forget but we were up in front and they called this tank, there was a pill box up there. They called this tank and sure enough we got up there pretty close. First we went to blast him off but before we did, the pill box had a machine gun and that Jap opened that machine gun up and hit that tank. Those bullets started ricocheting off that tank and one of our guys I remember he got about 3 or 4 of them. It wounded him; it didn't kill him but it wounded him. I stayed

away from that thing. It would get you hurt.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did the tank get that pill box then?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes it got the pill box and blew it all up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Lets go back to your training there. Did you have the infiltration course where you had to crawl and they shot the live ammunition over you?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that?

Mr. Colbert

Well I'll tell you it was plum scary because if that guy didn't know what he was doing and he happened to tip that gun a little bit it would get you. I crawled through that. I was a little bit nervous about it. I imagine everybody that crawled through there was. I learned later that that machine gun was fixed. They had it set at a certain height and they had it buckled to where they couldn't pull it up or down but I didn't know it at the time. I just taken it as if we were sitting up there on the front lines where it was flexible. I would have felt better crawling under that wire and I guess everybody else would have but they didn't want you to feel good. They wanted you to feel like you were getting shot at.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else from your training that you recall?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished the training, then where did you go?

Mr. Colbert

Some more training. We trained for three years at Fort Bliss before we ever left. We trained there and when we left there we were going overseas and we went to Pittsburgh, California. We stayed there for I think it was about a week to ten days. It wasn't very long. Then we went to San Francisco and got aboard a troop ship, the USS *Monterrey*. I don't know whether it was or not, but they said it was a converted luxury liner. I will say one thing, it could sure travel. There were 10,000 men on there plus the ship's company, which was 3,500. That's 13,500 men. We left San Francisco and was in Brisbane, Australia two weeks later. We zigzagged during the daytime but at time they would open that thing up and go straight. We got into Brisbane, Australia the first week of July, 1943. We got there and there were trucks to pick us up. They took us out to Strasdine. I didn't get to see Strasdine because this place was kind of far; but you weren't in town. That's the way that was. We were in Strasdine but we were way out in the country. They already had the tents and everything set up for us. We moved in and they let us have about three or four days off after we got into camp to get straightened out. Get our tents straightened out and who was going to be where and all of this, that and the other. Then we had some more training. I mean to tell you, night problems, day problems. They would get us up at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and tell us to get up. One night we had a 15 or 20 mile problem, a walk. Boy I'll tell you, we stayed there for it must have been about six

months. While we were there we took some more training and we went to a place they called Terrible Point there in Australia. We took landing craft and went out on a boat, got on a ship, LCI. They took us around and then we came back and put us on the barge and took us to the beach. We did that for a while. They trained us so much that the men were getting tired of training. Whenever it came time for us to go to combat, those guys were gung ho, they were ready. You should have heard some of the remarks that they made. They trained us so much that we were getting so tired of it that we wanted to go to combat. I did. I was just fed up with training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back and ask you a few questions. When you all left Fort Bliss to go to California, how did you travel?

Mr. Colbert

Train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Colbert

It was good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you feed you on the train?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes. I have forgot how many days trip it was. It was a troop train. They fed us on there. We had a kitchen car. Of course you could walk through.

Mr. Misenhimer

And slap the food on your tray?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. They had another car we could eat in. You had to eat and get out because there were a lot of people coming through there. There was no hanging around in there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a place to sleep on the train or did you just sit up in a chair?

Mr. Colbert

We just sat up in a chair. Some of those fellows had Pullmans. Some of them had day cars. It was a just a train. They weren't too particular how they got it together except for the kitchen car and the dining car. The rest of it, the day cars and the Pullmans. They didn't care too much where they put them. If you got in a Pullman you were lucky. If you got into a day car that was hard luck.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got on that ship going over, was it pretty crowded with that many people?

Mr. Colbert

Oh gosh.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many bunks high?

Mr. Colbert

Three.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much room between each bunk?

Mr. Colbert

About 18 inches. The first one was right on the floor. It was probably about that high off the floor and about that high until the next one and the third one was up. That ship fed all those men. It took them about two hours to feed about 10,000 troops. You would go down the line and wham, wham, wham. They had those trays. You were eating below the waterline. The mess hall was way down below the water line. You would go down those stairs and of course they had elevators on it too. The GI's couldn't use that elevator; just the big wheels.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have then?

Mr. Colbert

I think it was a T-Corporal. I had two stripes with a T under it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, a Technical Corporal?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness on that boat going over?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get seasick?

Mr. Colbert

I did one time. I came up the stairs and I think I came up them too fast. I didn't really get sick, I just got sick at my stomach for about two minutes, maybe five minutes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you throw up?

Mr. Colbert

No. I never did throw up I just kind of got dizzy.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your M - 1 rifle?

Mr. Colbert

We got that before we left Fort Bliss. That was while we trained.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you take your rifle with you when you went overseas?

Mr. Colbert

Yes, you bet. You had better hang on to that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you remember your rifle serial number?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your own serial number?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. 18018153.

Mr. Misenhimer

Nobody forgets that, do they?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about when you got to Australia. You went through a lot of training there then?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you first go into combat?

Mr. Colbert

We went to New Guinea first for more training. (laugh) We made a lot of beach landings. They had just secured that island. I guess it had been secured maybe a month before we got there. We took some more training there for about two or three months. Then Major Finnegan, he was a big fat guy, he got all the troops together. Of course they had a PA system and he got all the troops together. He blew into the mike and then he said, "Men, I know you are anxious to go."

(Tape side ended.)

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay now then the Major blew into the mike and then what did he say.

Mr. Colbert

He said, "Men, I know you are anxious to go. After we leave here it is going to be the Real McCoy". Everybody just roared. They threw up their hats just like they do on a

West Point graduation; they throw their hats up high; that's the way this was. We went from there to Los Negros. Manus is the biggest island and the only thing that divides Los Negros from Manus is a river that runs between them. We got there around 4:00 in the afternoon; we made that beachhead. Out in front of us was a landing strip for fighter planes. Behind that airstrip was a jungle. That thing was just as clean as this table. There was nothing. You couldn't dig in. It was just like trying to dig in that asphalt out there; that coral rock. It was awful. I went down to the beach to see what I could find. I found a little coconut log. I brought that thing up and it was about 7 or 8 inches around. It was about 7 or 8 feet long but it was water soaked and heavy. I finally tugged that thing up where I wanted it and I said, "Well it beats nothing." And I lay down behind it. I stayed right there. During that night, we really caught it, but we were ready for them. We had 50 calibers and 30 calibers on each end. A couple in the middle and everybody fired crossfire. I forgot what all. I don't know how many got killed but there were close to a thousand of them. Pulled a Banzai, came all hollering and screaming. Of course they got as far as from here to that pine tree down there and that water strip was that wide. They started to cross it, hollering and screaming. We had all that area to clean them out in. I'm telling you we did. We cleaned them out.

Mr. Misenhimer

What weapon did you have at that point?

Mr. Colbert

I just had my M - 1 rifle.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have plenty of ammunition for it?

Mr. Colbert

Gosh yes. I took ammunition. I wasn't going to get caught short. I got short one time and that was when I was in the Philippines. I was down to my last 50 rounds. What it was, I was on a patrol and guarding some Filipinos. They were carrying rations. That was the only way they could get rations was to carry them up there. They hired these Filipinos. I don't know if they hired them or not, but anyway they had these Filipinos carrying these rations and ammunition up to the front line there. This was in the mountains. There were no roads. A jeep couldn't get through there, not a tank or nothing. It was just like that, up and down. They were Jap infested. We ran into them once in a while. Coming out of there, we made it up to the front line alright without any trouble, but coming back we ran into some. We fought around there for about an hour and a half to two hours. Of course in those jungles you couldn't see anything, anyhow. I ran out of ammunition, or just about. I was down to my last 50 rounds. We had a guy with a radio and he was on the same frequency as that little observation plane. That little plane just happened to fly over and this guy contacted it and told him that we were out of ammunition, or just about and that little plane flew back and got some ammunition and flew it in there and dropped it with a parachute. They dropped it about 100 yards from where we were at. We got that ammunition. I said, "Man, I'm not going to do this again." From then on I carried enough ammunition for two guys.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to this island. Now island were you on?

Mr. Colbert

Manus.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went in on a landing craft? How did you go in there?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

An LCVP or what?

Mr. Colbert

A Higgins boat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, that's an LCVP; it had a ramp that dropped down in the front?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. That was on Los Negros. After we got to Los Negros we didn't have to make any more landings. Of course there was a bridge that went from Los Negros over to Manus. We secured that island and they sent me and I think it was 16 men on a patrol the length of Manus. Manus was 80 miles long and 16 miles wide at the widest place. It took us three weeks to get from where we started to the end of it. But in the meanwhile we ran into a few Japs; I imagine about all together 40 or 50. There wasn't very many on there; or there wasn't very many left. After we got off of there they declared that island secured. We got to the end of it and there was an LCI waiting to pick us up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you mentioned that one Banzai charge. Did you have any more Banzai charges on that island?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was the only one?

Mr. Colbert

That was the only one. I think we just about wiped them out. Of course there were more killed even after that but I think we got the majority of them that first night. I mean to tell you it was hot and heavy there. The bawling and screaming and the machine guns going. We had two guys, one guy fired his pistol, his .45 and I don't know how in the world it happened but this one guy poked his head out there just right and that bullet hit that helmet in front and it was coming crossways and it went all the way around his head but between the helmet and the liner and it never touched his head. It just went around and left a crease on that helmet. That was unbelievable. It didn't hurt him. He was a German and he was always talking about the commandoes. He wanted to get into the commandoes. He talked about it so much that they just nicknamed him Commando. He was something else.

Mr. Misenhimer

In that Banzai charge were any of your people killed or wounded?

Mr. Colbert

There were a few of them that got wounded, but none of them were killed. The reason so few of them got wounded was because those Japs, I'll bet there weren't more than about 100 rifles in the whole camp and the rest of them just had bamboo sticks and hand

grenades. The ones that got wounded were mostly from hand grenade shrapnel from those hand grenades they had. I don't think any of those guys hardly even fired a rifle. They claim they were on dope. They had to be or something to charge a machine gun nest.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where did you go from there? Was that the Bismarck Archipelago?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. From there we went to the Philippines. We went there in an LST. That thing was so slow. I was standing up there on the deck and it was so slow I could see the town and the Jap planes. I said to the guy sitting next to me, "I don't think I want to get off here. I want to go on down to the next island." (laugh) We just kept going on. He said, "We'll be there in two weeks." I said, "Yes." Well, it got to where it wanted to go and then it stopped. Word came over the PA System. "Everybody get in your water buffalo. A water buffalo was the tank that swims over the water.

Mr. Misenhimer

It has tracks on it?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. We called them water buffaloes. They said to get in your water buffalo. So everybody got on them and off we went. Those things started out and when they hit the water and started out. Those things opened from the back. We hit the beach. That driver had no more than got on that beach about 25 yards; not even that. He almost stopped right in front of the other. He put the ramp down and I took off and I saw some sand jumping up in front of me. I jumped back. I got behind that thing for a minute. One guy,

he wasn't about to come off. We had to drag him off. He finally came off. In the meanwhile somebody knocked that machine gun out and then it was safe to get away from there. I started out through there. We were on Leyte Island. I think the name of the town was Leyte, I don't know. Anyway, we went on to town and I guess that was about 10 miles. We had one guy on there and he was an Indian and he liked his booze. He found where the Japs had stored their booze. He got one of those big old bottles (about two feet high) and he got him a rope or something and tied the top of that bottle and slung that thing on his shoulder and took off. That thing was full of booze. He threw his pack down. He sure did like that stuff. I think he got killed later on. He probably did; he probably got drunk and got killed. That was a poor place to be drinking.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in the first wave; or what one were you in?

Mr. Colbert

I was in the first wave.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much opposition?

Mr. Colbert

Not a lot to start with but after we got in there a little ways there was more.

Mr. Misenhimer

But there wasn't a lot when you landed on the beach?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

They had that machine gun and others I'm assuming.

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did any artillery hit the beach or mortars?

Mr. Colbert

No. There was a little bit of mortar fire but they didn't try to drown us with it. It was just every now and then.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were any of our ships bombarding them?

Mr. Colbert

No. They were bombarding the town but there where we made the landing there wasn't anything around to bombard. That LST; I don't think they had anything on there but 20mm.

Mr. Misenhimer

But I mean were there cruisers or battleships sitting out there bombarding?

Mr. Colbert

No, there wasn't anything like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you went up from New Guinea to the Philippines in this LST, were you in a big convoy with a lot of ships?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes but man it was slow. I think 5 or 6 knots is top speed on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

And the whole convoy couldn't go any faster than the slowest ship.

Mr. Colbert

Oh man.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me more about your experiences there. What else happened on that island, on Leyte?

Mr. Colbert

After we got to Leyte we had a little bit of a battle. There were a few Japs in town. We got rid of them. We just stayed there that night. The next day we were still doing a little fighting. The Japanese fighters came over and they did a little strafing. We had ships in the harbors, LST's and LCI's and stuff like that. We boarded an LCI and went from there to another little town, it was still on Leyte Island but that little town was named Sinalvone. We went up there and secured that place. Then from there after we got that secured we were there for about a month. I wasn't in town, I was out on a little bridge and after they got that little town secured we left there and went on to Omar Valley up in the mountains. That's when I got on this detail to guard those Filipinos that was carrying those rations up into the mountains. That's when I about ran out of ammunition. All of us men that were fighting kept plenty of ammunition but then I forgot to resupply. I didn't have a chance to. Then when I went on that guard detail I was low to start with. I was down to about 44 boxes. When I got down to one box, that was too low.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you had your M - 1 at that point?

Mr. Colbert

No I had a carbine. A carbine is more handy out in the jungle than the M - 1. I tried to carry between 600 to 800 rounds of ammunition. They came in little boxes of 50 to a box. I loaded that pack down of mine. I carried three things; instant coffee, cigarettes and ammunition. To heck with the rest of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on that carbine did you have to reload the clip before you could use it, is that right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did it take to reload a clip>

Mr. Colbert

You learned to do it pretty fast. It would take you about a half a minute to reload a clip.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many rounds was in a clip?

Mr. Colbert

16.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many clips did you have?

Mr. Colbert

I think I had five extra besides the one I carried in my gun.

Mr. Misenhimer

So six total.

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And of course they were full when you started out?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes and I kept them full whenever I could.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you could reload a clip in about a half a minute?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's pretty quick.

Mr. Colbert

You learned to be fast. When we went up to that island, I forget who it was that was in front of us, but it was some artillery people giving us some overhead fire. We were going up this little road, not much wider than a camp trail and we heard a gun off. Then we heard this whistle, (sounds of a twirling whistle) and I saw that it was going end over end instead of going straight, it was going end over end. About 100 yards up that road was a big old tree about as big around as this table and that thing went flat against that tree. It buried that thing. There was a little bit sticking out and it just didn't blow up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that an American round or a Japanese round?

Mr. Colbert

It was from American artillery that was going end over end. I had never seen anything like that before.

Mr. Misenhimer

And it didn't explode when it hit?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened after that?

Mr. Colbert

We went down the road a little ways and I don't know who that was, or what company it was in front of us, but at any rate they had a cook tent right alongside the road. I saw this guy pour something out of a box. He just poured it out. I went over to see what he was pouring out. It was coffee. He poured out those little blister packs that had a cup of coffee in it. They were square and had coffee in the middle. He poured out a whole box of that. I just pulled my pack off and unzipped it and started scooping that stuff up I said, "There's something wrong with you pouring out coffee." I couldn't see that. I always kept coffee.

That was just extra. I just got some more.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rations did you have to eat over there?

Mr. Colbert

K-rations and C-rations but we had more K-rations than we did C-rations. That 10 in 1 came in a box about like that. That was supposed to last one man 10 days or 10 men one day. They were good rations. They had canned chicken in there. The chicken was already cooked. It was in a can about that big and about that long. The chicken was already cooked, all you had to do was open it and eat. Put in your mess kit and it was right there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you get any hot meals?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes we got hot meals. As long as we were with F-Troop we got hot meals. We had one guy; we were in this place and we had been there for I don't know it seems like a week or two and the cook tent was about a half mile away. We had a guy that drove the weapon's carrier. He would drive right up there and he was going across a rice paddy. You had to go slow and a couple of Japs jumped on there and killed him. We didn't know it because he had fed us. He was going to the Mortar Platoon. Between us and the Mortar Platoon there was a bamboo thicket. He went behind that bamboo thicket and had to go across this rice paddy and he had to go across it slow on account it was rough and while he was slowed down these couple of Japs jumped up and stabbed him. They didn't shoot him, they stabbed him. The guy at the Mortar Platoon called on the two way radio to see if he had been here. We said, "Yes." They said, "He hasn't been here." They started looking and they found his weapons carrier and he was dead. We went looking for those Japs but we never did find them. If we would have found them, it would have been too bad, but we didn't find them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they take any of the food?

Mr. Colbert

No, they just killed him.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened.

Mr. Colbert

We left there and went someplace else; I forget where. About a week later we came back to the same place. I found that slit trench that I had dug. I was going to use it. I looked in there and there was a Jap in it. I just killed him. I sent somebody else to cover him up. I don't know where he came from but I imagine he was lost. But he could still kill.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did he try to shoot your or anything?

Mr. Colbert

No. I just killed him while he was asleep.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you hear of a town called Tacloban there?

Mr. Colbert

That's the town that they went to. The first one that we went to.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's on Leyte there.

Mr. Colbert

That's the town that we went to. I just couldn't think of the name.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you landed there among the first wave, right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now I understand that about the second or third day the Japs made a parachute landing on the airport there. Do you know anything about that?

Mr. Colbert

No I don't know anything about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

It may have been the third or fourth day but the Japanese dropped a bunch of paratroopers on the airport which was about two miles inland from the beach.

Mr. Colbert

If they did I don't know. But like I say the next day we got on this LCI and went up to another little town called Sinalvone. We just spent one night and a half a day at Tacloban. So if they tried that it was after I was gone.

Mr. Misenhimer

It could be, because that was two or three days after the initial invasion. They had quite a firefight but then they wiped them all out because there was an airport about a mile or so up from the beach, right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened?

Mr. Colbert

After I came back from guarding those Filipinos that was just about one of our last days up there. I came back to camp and I cut my foot, my ankle with a machete. It wasn't real bad just enough to make it bleed a little bit but that thing never did heal. It just kept getting worse and worse. After a while I went to the dispensary with it and the doctor there took me to the hospital. I was in the hospital for about three days with a bandage around my foot. You just don't heal up over there like you do here. I was laying there on that bunk and it was 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon and a Mess Sergeant came over there in a jeep. He said, "You are going home." I said, "You had better not be lying or I am going to shoot you." He said, "I'm not lying to you." Sure enough they got me out of there in a hurry and the next day they took me down to someplace and I got on a little tanker. It took 33 days to get from Manila to San Francisco. I got out on the point system. I had 118 points.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now back up, okay. There at Manila, you went into Luzon, right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When was that? January of 1945 was when they invaded Luzon and the Lingayen Gulf.

Mr. Colbert

It was either January or February when I went in there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When these Filipinos were taking that stuff up there, was that on Luzon or on Leyte?

Mr. Colbert

That was on Luzon.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, I thought that was.

Mr. Colbert

That was Luzon.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, that's on Luzon. You had mentioned that and I was pretty sure that was Luzon. Now when you were on Luzon, you didn't go in on the first wave there, right?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went up on kind of the north part of the island, is that right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that's where you cut your ankle, on Luzon?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you help to take back Manila?

Mr. Colbert

I don't remember really. Of course we were pretty close to Manila you know. I don't know if that hospital was in Manila. We were close to the center of a town; some town. I do remember that I did leave out of Manila.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up to Leyte. On October 23rd and 24th of 1944 they had a big sea battle there at Leyte called the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Did you hear anything about that at the time or see any of that?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was a very big sea battle and the Japanese almost came in and took our ships there.

Mr. Colbert

I know one thing, they were sure fighting when we went to make our landing on Tacloban. I tell you what, there was black smoke coming up everywhere. I saw planes get knocked down. It was sure a battle.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you see MacArthur wade ashore on Leyte?

Mr. Colbert

No. I didn't see that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you see many dogfights between our planes and Japanese planes?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that to watch those?

Mr. Colbert

I used to like to watch them P-38's in action. I watched a few of them that were way out in the distance. We could see them every once in a while.

Mr. Misenhimer

Up on Luzon, what else happened up there besides taking those supplies up?

Mr. Colbert

After I got back, that's when I went home. I never did get to finish there. I wasn't there long enough to finish the campaign there on Luzon.

Mr. Misenhimer

Coming back on that tanker, how crowded was it?

Mr. Colbert

Pretty crowded.

Mr. Misenhimer

Quite a few of the people coming back.

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your accommodations there? What did you have to sleep in?

Mr. Colbert

I believe we just slept on the floor.

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot of them slept up on the deck I know.

Mr. Colbert

Yes if there wasn't a storm or something like that. Come a shower we had a big canvas to spread out and also to have shade. There came a shower there one afternoon and boy I'll tell you what, that was a shower. I didn't like that salt water shower so I went up there in the rain and stood under one corner of that canvas and took me a shower with the water coming off of there. Boy, that was good.

Mr. Misenhimer

It says here that you were wounded on Luzon on February 9, 1945. Were you wounded or was this when you cut yourself there?

Mr. Colbert

I caught a piece of shrapnel.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that; what happened?

Mr. Colbert

We were up there on the front line and there was artillery or a mortar and there was a piece of flak that had already died. I mean it didn't have any force behind it, it was just falling. I had on one of those little old caps and it came down and nicked me. If I would have had my helmet on, it wouldn't even have bothered me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Why didn't you have your helmet on?

Mr. Colbert

I don't know; just didn't wear it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you wear it most of the time?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Why not?

Mr. Colbert

It seems like it deadened my ears and I couldn't hear well. You know how that gets. And with a little bit of wind blowing you couldn't hear so I wore my cap most of the time in combat. I kept my helmet to shave in and cook in, to boil water or something. But I wore that little cap most of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When that shrapnel hit your head did you go to the medic or somebody?

Mr. Colbert

Yes. It was bleeding pretty good and I wanted to get it stopped. It was bleeding down into my face. They recommended for a Purple Heart so I didn't turn them down on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now since you got a Purple Heart do you get some kind of payment every month for that?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back to the States you came into San Francisco?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do there?

Mr. Colbert

I got on a bus or a train; I really don't know. I came down to San Pedro to Fort MacArthur and got discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer

It says here that you left the Philippines on July 6, 1945 and arrived in the United States on August 9, 1945; so a month and three days to get back. 33 days you said, right. Then you were discharged at Fort MacArthur on the 13th of August, 1945. So just a few days after you got back they discharge you; you had enough points.

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

After you got out what did you do? Did you come back to Texas or Oklahoma or where?

Mr. Colbert

I went to California for about a month. Then I went to Detroit, Michigan. This horseshoer that I told about before the war, he wrote to me and told me to come up there to Michigan

because I could get into a machinist school on the GI Bill. So when I got up there the steel workers went on strike and I didn't go to school. I got a job in a brickyard; Haggerty Brick Company. I worked there until the next spring. I about froze to death up there. Then the next spring I came back down to El Paso. Then I went back out to California.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back and ask you some questions. What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Colbert

When we first hit Manus Island, Los Negros. I was scared after that, but that was the worst one. We knew they were out there and we knew we couldn't dig in. We were just like sitting ducks. All that was behind us was the ocean. We couldn't dig in or anything like that. You just had to get something to lay in front of you to protect you.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's when you got that log, right?

Mr. Colbert

Right. Some of those guys found themselves something too; a stump or a log or something. A lot of people of didn't have anything. When we got a little bit further down they dug into the sand on the beach. But I didn't have that much sense. I was going to stay where I was at instead of backing up.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers that you had over you?

Mr. Colbert

We had some pretty good officers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have some that weren't quite so good?

Mr. Colbert

No, they were all pretty good.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in Australia, you were there for quite a while right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any contact with the local Australian people, the civilians?

Mr. Colbert

Yes they were real good to us. All of their men were over in North Africa. The Australian people were just as nice as they could be. They would invite you to their house.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard that the girls were pretty friendly too, is that right?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes, you could find them anywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

It says here that you were born on January 20, 1921. You told me April 5, 1922. Which is right?

Mr. Colbert

April 5, 1922. I found out after that the people that raised me when I was a kid, that's what they said my birthday was. But I found out later on, years later, that April 5, 1922

was the right date.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Colbert

I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Here it says, Good Conduct Medal, American Service Defense Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal with two Bronze Stars, that's two battle stars, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, the Purple Heart and it says you were in the First Cavalry Division, 4th Cavalry Regiment.

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were down there in New Guinea did you have any trouble with malaria?

Mr. Colbert

No because they gave us Atabrine tablets. There were 500 of them in that bottle. I always kept three bottles. I took two a day for 27 months.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they make you turn yellow?

Mr. Colbert

No. I might have been a little bit yellow but it wasn't that bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard people say that Atabrine would make you turn yellow, but I didn't know. Did

many people get malaria around there?

Mr. Colbert

Yes there were quite a few of them but that's because they didn't take that tablet.

Mr. Misenhimer

It says here that you had foreign service two years, one month and fourteen days and service in this country two year, ten months and ten days. So you were in for four years and eleven months; quite a while. And your highest rank was Sergeant?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went through cavalry school for 12 weeks as a saddler?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you first went in, what was your pay, do you recall?

Mr. Colbert

\$21.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it at the highest you got?

Mr. Colbert

I don't know; \$45 I think. I was getting more as a CC Camp than \$21 a month.

Mr. Misenhimer

I see here that you've got several discharges here. What is this Navy discharge? Were

you in the Navy then?

Mr. Colbert

Yes I got into the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's see what it says here. You went into the Navy on November 26, 1946 and then you were discharged on December 16, 1948. What did you do in the Navy?

Mr. Colbert

I chipped paint and painted and worked in the engine room.

Mr. Misenhimer

It says engine room fireman. What kind of ship were you on?

Mr. Colbert

A tanker.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where all did you go?

Mr. Colbert

Seattle to Kodiak, Alaska.

Mr. Misenhimer

It says that you were on the USS *Mamakagon* AAG-53. And you were also on the USS *Dipper*?

Mr. Colbert

Yes but it was in mothballs.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was something about the aborigines on one of the islands. What was that? Was that

at New Guinea, the local people?

Mr. Colbert

You didn't want anything to do with them.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they do?

Mr. Colbert

They would kill you for almost anything. Of course in the area where we were at, they were half-way civilized but that's about all. The Australians had a lot to do with that. If you got up north, west of Buna, you didn't want to fool with them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this in Australia or in New Guinea?

Mr. Colbert

This was in New Guinea. You talk about something primitive; those islands were really primitive. Of course I wouldn't imagine it's improved a whole lot since the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

I don't think so.

Mr. Colbert

When we were over there, Major Findley, he didn't want us to go barefooted. "Don't sit on the ground. Don't drink this river water. Don't go swimming in it. Don't go to the lake to go swimming." Everything was contaminated. There was a guy, I guess he sent home and got some tomato seed one time when he was over there. He planted those tomato seeds and they came up and he grew some tomatoes and they wouldn't let him eat them.

That was how bad it was. Dust; man in summertime during the dry season, those trucks go down through there. If you think these roads are dusty, that stuff was just like it was coming out of a pipe, just thick. You couldn't see. When the rainy season was on and you walked on through the woods; you didn't have to walk. You could just stand at the edge and you could smell it; the trees and stuff decaying. It got hot and sticky. It would get up to 103 or 104 or more. It wasn't a place you wanted to be, I'll tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any combat on New Guinea?

Mr. Colbert

No. We got there just after it was secured. We had training there. I had my fill of that place.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Colbert

No. I didn't look for any.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Bob Hope or nobody came around?

Mr. Colbert

He came around but I didn't go to it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Good or bad?

Mr. Colbert

Bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it?

Mr. Colbert

They would steal when they got a chance. They stole our cigarettes and would sell them to us at 50 cents a carton. They stole the Coca Cola and sold that to us for a shilling a cup. I've had no use for them since.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the Salvation Army?

Mr. Colbert

I don't think they were even over there. That Red Cross, it was a joke. The Red Cross stole a bunch of money from people. People would donate money and nobody could account for it. If you gave to the Red Cross, where did it go? I think somebody padded their bank account. I wouldn't trust the Red Cross out of my sight even today and even back then. I wouldn't give them any money.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Colbert

Pretty regular. I got that V-mail.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Colbert

Oh yes. I never did hear her, but I heard of her. She didn't bother me. I knew what she was but I didn't pay any attention to her.

Mr. Misenhimer

I heard that she played good music.

Mr. Colbert

She did play good music but that was just propaganda to make you homesick.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you crossed the Equator did you have any kind of a ceremony then?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

On a troop ship you probably didn't. Now on May 8, 1945 Germany surrendered. Did you all hear about that over there?

Mr. Colbert

I think we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any kind of a celebration or anything?

Mr. Colbert

No. We had one guy that went around and started a rumor. One guy would believe it. Somebody said, "War is over" and paused and then said, "all over the world."

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Colbert

Yes we heard about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any reaction to it?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were home when Japan surrendered. Was there any celebration then?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, you were discharged two days before they surrendered. Did you ever use your GI

Bill?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life when you got home?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Colbert

No. Some of those natives, I don't know how they did that but they got their teeth sharpened to points. They chewed up betel nuts. It must be dope.

Mr. Misenhimer

It is, a little. It turns their teeth and gums all red, is that right?

Mr. Colbert

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever try chewing a beetle nut?

Mr. Colbert

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back home after your two years overseas. Did you see much change in this country?

Mr. Colbert

I didn't even notice. There were a few changes but I didn't take the time to notice. A few changes, but nothing close to the heart. Nothing's going to stay the same. When I got

back from Michigan, I went down to El Paso and I went to Fort Bliss. I knew that was going to be changed. But nothing was. Just a little bit. The two years I was gone a lot had changed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you thought of anything else about your time in the service?

Mr. Colbert

Not right now.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well again, I want to thank you for your time today and I want to thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Colbert

I was glad to serve it.

Mr. Misenhimer

He also got the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

End of Interview

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