

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Eugene “Gene” W. Davis
Date of Interview: April 16, 2008

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: Today is the 16th of April, 2008. I’m in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Nimitz Museum and I am interviewing Mr. Gene Davis. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Let me start out, Gene, by thanking you for spending the time today to share your experiences with us and to get things started let’s just have you introduce yourself and tell us when and where you were born and a little bit about your early years.

Mr. Davis: Okay, Gene W. Davis, and I was born in Fresno, California on April 20th, 1923. And my...my family moved quite often in those days; it was the Depression years, and so wherever my dad could find employment was where we went. Probably the place where we stayed the longest was in Sacramento, California, and we moved there about...they...they said that we moved every time the rent was due which was probably true, because I can name ten or fifteen different places we lived in Sacramento.

Ed Metzler: So you kept on the move, huh?

Mr. Davis: Right. (laughter) So then...

Ed Metzler: What about brothers and sisters?

Mr. Davis: Okay, I have three...I had three bro...there was three boys and there was four girls in my family, and the...the three girls passed away and one's still living, and then I had two brothers and they're both deceased. And...let's see...that leaves me, and the family and my...one sister.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Where did you go to high school? What...(unintelligible)...?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, I went to high school in Sacramento High School, and well before that I was in Sacramento Junior High for three...four years there. And then Sacramento High...let's see that was...what year would that be?

Ed Metzler: Well, you were born in '23, it must have been about '39 or '40...?

Mr. Davis: Oh, okay, right. I...I think the mid-part of '39 was when I went from the junior high school up to...to high school...Sacramento High School. And then after we got out there...then I...I started working at different employment; I worked for Hoff-Sneider (sp?) Electrical Company that made plates for the Sacramento Printing Office, and...

Ed Metzler: Now you were doing that full-time or just during...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Davis: I...I...well, I actually because of my age, and my mother had passed away, and so I was more or less on my own there. I was only about...seemed to me I was only about fifteen years old.

Ed Metzler: My word!

Mr. Davis: And...I went down...I went...I had been a...deliver for a postal telegraph company, and I went into this one electronic place and the fellow there asked

me if I would like to go to work full-time for him in his electric plating shelf...uh shop, and so I went to work there for him which was quite interesting. I used to have to get up about five in the morning and turn on all the boilers and everything in the plant and I just...just about blow myself out the door every morning (laughter) because the...the...you have to light a great big stack of papers; stick them way back in the boiler and turn the fuse on and away we'd go!

Ed Metzler: And you did all this when you were fifteen, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yes, I did that when I was fifteen.

Ed Metzler: By golly, you started early in life, didn't you?!

Mr. Davis: Yeah, so...

Ed Metzler: So did you finish high school?

Mr. Davis: Uh, no, I...I dropped out and went to a continuance high school the latter part of the years; I had to...in fact, the state had a...law that unless you were eighteen years old, you...you had to be going to school, so they caught me there not going to school, so they said that I had to go one day a week. So I...I think I went one day and then that was about it. From then on they...they didn't catch me; they left me alone, so...so I didn't finish high school.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so let's fast forward now to the start of the war. Where...what were you doing when the war started and where were you?

Mr. Davis: Okay, when the war started, I was goose hunting in Colusa, California, and...with...with my brother and brother-in-law. And then there was a lot of Japanese ranchers that lived there, so they were out hunting at the same time,

so that's...one of the fellows had a radio in his car when they announced that Pearl Harbor was bombed. So soon as I got home from there...I had been in the California State Guard.

Ed Metzler: Oh really?!

Mr. Davis: Right, I was in the California State Guard, and...

Ed Metzler: Is that like a Reserve...National Guard type thing?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it...what...what they do...when the federal National Guard is called to active duty, then the State Guard takes their place; they move into this... facilities that's occupied by the National Guard. So this is basically what we did. And then...then I was in the State Guard...we had to have guards on...on all the local bridges, so while still in the State Guard, I was a Guard on the...Antioch Bridge that goes over the San Joaquin River, so...

Ed Metzler: And the Guards were on the bridges for what reason?

Mr. Davis: They were on the bridge for what reason?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, why were...?

Mr. Davis: For sab...they...they were worried about...

Ed Metzler: Sabotaged?

Mr. Davis: Yes, they didn't know how much of the local Japanese population which was quite heavy in...in California because of the rural area; they...they had the farms and ranches all over, so they were afraid that a lot of them would be loyal to Japan, and want to do sabotage against our country.

Ed Metzler: Did you think they would?

Mr. Davis: Uh, I...I was too young to even give it a thought at that time, but later on as I...I knew...knew more about the Japanese Americans, I found out that...that really...I don't think would have happened because they were...they were quite loyal...the ones I...I met.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Davis: So...

Ed Metzler: In fact they formed some...(unintelligible)...

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, then...NISI...they went in and joined the NISI outfits...most of them. Most of them fought in the...in the European war.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible)...in Italy, yeah.

Mr. Davis: Right.

Ed Metzler: Did a fabulous job, too, from what I...(unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: Yes, they did; they did.

Ed Metzler: So, what was everybody's reaction then when this info...when this news came over the radio that...?

Mr. Davis: Oh, everyone was completely amazed at it; they didn't give it a thought about Japan, you know; hadn't even *thought* of Japan, and then all of a sudden here...Japan bombed us, so...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so did you decide to go in at that point or...did you get drafted or what?

Mr. Davis: Well, I was...I was married; I got married...I got married December 13th, 1941; got married *right* after Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Six days after!

Mr. Davis: So then, and I worked for the Pacific Telephone Company, and probably about five or six months after I got married, then kept hearing all the war news and everything so I just decided to join the service, and because I worked for the telephone company, I...got in touch with them and found...found out that I could get a direct commission in the Signal Corps.

Ed Metzler: Ah!

Mr. Davis: So, I went...I finally...I took a wartime leave with the telephone company; went down to the enlistment people and told them I was ready to go today...in...into the Signal Corps, and they said, "Well, oh, that's going to take about six or eight weeks to get you your commission and do all that paperwork." I said, "Well, I'm not going to wait that long; I...I've decided I want to go into the service to fight and I want to do it now; I don't want to wait six or eight months."

Ed Metzler: Impatient (unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: Right, so I...I then they said, "Well, we can't take care of you then." And I said, "Okay," and I walked down the hall and here was a big picture of a Marine says, "I want you!" So I went into the Marine Recruiting Office, and asked them, I said, "If...if I join the Marines today, can I leave for the training?" And they said, "Absolutely! You'll be on a train for San Diego." And so I said, "Okay!" So I went through all the recruiting there and then my wife and I...we...we went on a train down to San Diego then and...I...I went into boot camp.

Ed Metzler: So this is what...mid-'42?

Mr. Davis: That would have been '40...mid-'42.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Davis: Mid-'42, right.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Davis: So, went through boot camp and then as soon as boot camp was over, well, they sent everybody out on the parade ground; they...they told them what truck to get into to go into whatever units they were supposed be in. And they kept calling all the names till...they left me out in the middle of the field; nobody else was there...

Ed Metzler: You were the last one?!

Mr. Davis: ...I was the last one; so finally I went up to the man that was doing the...the directing and asked him where I was supposed to go, and he said, "Why I don't know, your name's not on my list." So here I was out in the middle of this great big parade ground, and so I...I walked over to the nearest building; went in there and I said, "Well, where...where should I go?" They said, "Well, if...if you weren't on our list to be sent to other units, you must be going to still stay here at San Diego, San Diego Marine Corps Base." And I said, "Well, what unit?" They said, "Well, you'll have go to this other building and they'll be able to tell you." So I went there and they said, "Well, you're going to be a Drill Instructor."

Ed Metzler: Uh hum!

Mr. Davis: I had...I had passed...

Ed Metzler: You must have been awfully good at boot camp!

Mr. Davis: Well, I...I'd been in, like I say, the State Guard, so I...I knew all the regulations and all the things and all the drills, so anyway they said, "You're now a D.I." So...I...I did that then...

Ed Metzler: So how long were you a Drill Instructor?

Mr. Davis: Well, all of...the rest of '42 and then it was in the fall of, I don't remember the exact month, it...it was in the fall of '43 then that I...decided to...get into combat.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, now when you were Drill Instructor were you living off base with (unintelligible)?

Mr. Davis: Yes, I didn't have to be, but because my wife was there...she got a job at the aircraft factory right next door to the Marine Corps Base, and so we went out to east San Diego and we were real fortunate to rent a little house, and so...

Ed Metzler: Because housing was tough!

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, really tough! We, in fact, we had to wait for months trying to talk to people to try to find out vacancies, you know? And...but so we finally found us one place, and the reason I got it...this old lady...her son had been in the Marine Corps, I think, and then I think he got killed in the Marine Corps...

Ed Metzler: Uhhh!

Mr. Davis: ...so she was partial to Marines.

Ed Metzler: That helps!

Mr. Davis: So...soon as she found out I was a Marine looking for a place, well, she rented it to me right away, so...(unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: What aircraft plant was that that Ann (sp?) was working in ?

Mr. Davis: It was Consolidated Vul... Vul...let's see...how...Consolidated Vultee, I think.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Davis: That was the big building right next to the Marine Corps Base.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so...so as a Drill Instructor...was that pretty...boring or...?

Mr. Davis: Well, it wasn't to me because of having been in the State Guard and knowing all the drill procedures and then always being a...a pretty strong person myself, and so...so it was pretty easy converting to be a D.I. so...I enjoyed bring the boots through boot camp. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: So...but you decided in '43 that you really did want to see some real combat, so tell me what you did.

Mr. Davis: That...okay, I...checked and I found out that the 5th Amphibious Corps was being formed and that they needed NCOs and everything so...that was in San Diego right out near Camp Elliott, California. So I went there and...and enlist, you know, enlisted in their unit. It was in the headquarters...5th Amphib Corps. So they were getting ready to go overseas, and right out in the middle...right near...right out in the middle between San Diego and Miramar Air Station there was lot...just a lot of...like sagebrush out there; there was just *nothing* out there. (cough) So we built a...we built Camp Linda Vista and put up tent cities and things like that and then started bringing the...recruits in there to...to train. So I...I did that...

Ed Metzler: So this was...this was their boot camp then?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: Yes, I was their...their boot camp.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Davis: So then...in the fall of '43 then...then the...they were forming that 5th Amphib Corps and getting all the equipment...we had to get all the equipment together and figure out square footage of everything to...to go aboard a Navy ship, and we had to find out how large a ship to get, so therefore we had to figure out all this cubic footage of everything. So that...that...was a pain the neck! (laughter) And it took a long time to do.

Ed Metzler: Math is a pain! (laughter)

Mr. Davis: So pretty soon we got the ship loaded...which, by the way, it ended up.

Ed Metzler: And so you're an NCO at this point, right?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: Yes, and I was an NCO and then I didn't have enough people to help do the work and finally they said, "Well, we'll take care of that for you." And they had...just received two hundred Navy Corpsmen that was going to be with...with the divisions...fighting in the Pacific. They were going to be these two hundred Corpsmen...they'd scatter them out...all the different units, so they said, "There's two hundred Corpsmen and we'll put those under your command to do all the work." So that's...I ended up...and commanding these two hundred Corpsmen.

Ed Metzler: Gene's army!

Mr. Davis: Two...right! (laughter) First, they didn't like it at all, the Navy didn't...they...

Ed Metzler: Well I guess not!

Mr. Davis: ...'cause some of them outranked me a little...by a little bit, but then they found out, and in fact, I became one of the best friends of one...one of the highest ranking Navy Corpsmen, and so we became great buddies after that. So we...then they loaded us aboard a ship and it was still a cruise ship for tourists, the [USS] Matsonia; put us aboard the Matsonia and...

Ed Metzler: Probably (unintelligible) from the Matson line.

Mr. Davis: Yes, and we thought we were going to be taken off for the Pacific, but it went north towards...and landed in San Francisco. So then I found out that, by the way, I had to send my wife home; she lived in a little town called Pittsburgh, California which was just south of San Francisco about forty miles. So soon as we got there...then I wanted to say...say goodbye to her before I went into combat. So I...I finally got in touch with her, and then...let's see...

Ed Metzler: So how long was the Matsonia in San Francisco, I mean, just a couple of days or what?

Mr. Davis: Uh, well, I found out...I went down in the hole of the ship and asked the fellas that was loading all the food and every...everything aboard...asked them how long we was going to be there, and they said, "Well, we're not positive, but it's going to be probably maximum of three days." So I said, "Well," I thought to myself, "if I'm gone about two days, well, I...I won't..."

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: Yeah, because I didn't want to be...missing the ship.

Ed Metzler: Probably not.

Mr. Davis: So anyway, I went into the bulkhead...underneath there, and where they were loading the food aboard, and I asked them to stop the conveyor belt, and they stopped the conveyor belt, and I crawled out the conveyor belt...the hole in the ship; got on the docks, and then there was MPs floating around and I was kind of hiding around these big stacks of merchandise and everything and...

Ed Metzler: Now, you're not supposed to be doing this , are you?

Mr. Davis: Oh no, because...see, I had to ask...I'd asked permission...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible) you decided to...

Mr. Davis: ...I'd asked for permission to leave ship...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Davis: ...and they said, "No, you...you can't because you'll tell them that we're going to...to Pearl Harbor and if...and they're liable then to get the word out and they'll sink our ship," you know, so that was their story. So that...after getting denied...to...permission to leave...well I stood on the top deck and...and a lot of the officers and everything were leaving and they were saying goodbye to their girlfriends and their wives down below on the...on the deck...uh, shore there saying, "Well, we'll...we'll wire you or call you when we get to Hawaii," and they were saying all this out loud.

Ed Metzler: That's when you knew the whole thing.

Mr. Davis: Yes, so I thought, “Well,” and I...so I tore my 5th Amphib Corps patch off my shoulder and that’s when I went down the hole of the ship and crawled out and left. And I went...I called up...

Ed Metzler: You’re running a real risk here, aren’t you?

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me why you’re doing this.

Mr. Davis: Because I...I loved my wife, but I...I wanted...I knew that I was going to be gone a long time, and so...

Ed Metzler: You didn’t know how long.

Mr. Davis: ...and so...so I wanted to say goodbye to her. And so, if they didn’t...weren’t going to give me permission, why, I was going to take it, you know? I was kind of stubborn person...as you can tell. (laughter) So anyway, I...that...that’s what I did; I called her up and...and her father had a car and it had enough gas and it was gas rationing...to come and pick me up...and took me there to their house and I stayed eighteen hours. I made sure that I wasn’t going to be missing the ship, you know, because that would be deserting ship in time of war, you know? That...

Ed Metzler: That’s serious!

Mr. Davis: Oh! That’s really serious! And so, got...went aboard the Matsonia and went...and then...right away they said, “Well, you...you’ve left the ship.”

Ed Metzler: So you...so they missed you, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, so they gave me a...a Deck Court...a Deck Court-martial which is the smallest court-martial in the Navy, and they said, "Okay, be twenty days in the brig, and a fine, and then reduction in rank to a Private."

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Davis: So they gave me all...all three things. Okay, well then...

Ed Metzler: How much fine, do you remember?

Mr. Davis: No I don't; there...there was...well, that was the least of the...I hate to...

Ed Metzler: Problems, huh? (laughter)

Mr. Davis: ...I hated to lose my...my rank and everything.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Davis: So I ended up a Buck Private.

Ed Metzler: So was it worth it?

Mr. Davis: And then...oh sure! I...it's all...I've always made things come out right later. So anyway they put me aboard and the Brig Sergeant...I happened to know him from before in...in the Marines, and so he said, "Davis, what are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I went to say goodbye to Ann," and I said, "they...I...I was gone eighteen hours." So he said, "Well, I'm supposed to keep you in the brig here, all the way to Hawaii, and then you've got a...a brig sentence of twenty days," and so I said...he said, "but I'm not going to keep you in the brig," he said. So he and I played cards in his...his room all the way to Hawaii.

Ed Metzler: So you stayed in his room; you...you bunked with him, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, yeah there was...he had two bunks in there anyway, so...and I bunked in there and playing cards...all...all the way to Hawaii.

Ed Metzler: Here you are on a cruise ship; playing cards; private room; not bad!

Mr. Davis: Right, right. So then when we got to Hawaii, they put us on a truck and drove out toward Hickam Field in Pearl Harbor and here was this big cane field and I thought, "Uh oh!" But they parked the truck and issued us all machetes, and I said, "What's going on?" They said, "Well, you've got to cut down all this cane field; we're going to build a tent city here." So we...we had to cut down the cane field and then put up all these tents and everything, and it became a Transit Center for the Marine Corps for the rest of the war.

Ed Metzler: So that's just right there next to Hickam Field they did this?

Mr. Davis: It...it's right...it's down the road toward Honolulu...just a short ways and then cross this service road...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: ...where this...where this big field was. And it was right below...there was a...a big hill right behind it that had this hospital, big Navy hospital up on top. So...

Ed Metzler: So they got the whole 5th Amphibious Corps doing this or just...?

Mr. Davis: They...units...units of the, right...mostly...mostly the headquarters company because they had sent some of the units already to join other divisions to fight; they needed the...the fighters real bad. So...so mostly headquarters people out of headquarters...5th Amphib were...

Ed Metzler: So when is this; this is late '43?

Mr. Davis: This would have been the fall of '43.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: I can't remember the exact month.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, sure.

Mr. Davis: I can find it at home.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: Fall...fall of '43.

Ed Metzler: So how long were you hacking cane down...?

Mr. Davis: Well, we did...we cut that down and built...put the tent city there and made it a Marine Transit Center which stayed there all through war actually. And I...I was a...they made me a Marine MP and I was on the gate...gate of that headquarters; I...I was a head...on the...let's see, yeah, I was an MP there. Then they needed MPs at the main gate of Pearl Harbor, so they transferred me to the main gate at Pearl Harbor and I was a...a guard there. So then I decided...

Ed Metzler: That sounds like pretty easy duty.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it...it was actually. But...and President Roosevelt came through in his big seat...and sitting in the back seat and I had to salute him as he came through...

Ed Metzler: Really, did you get a look at him?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, he was...right. He, yeah...so I...

Ed Metzler: So what he...he was just coming out to visit the troops and...?

Mr. Davis: He was coming out to...get with the...see, they had the headquarters of the Navy there and I don't know if the Marines had a headquarters there or not, but they did all the war planning really from...right out of Hawaii.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Davis: So...yeah, so anyway then an old buddy of mine that I'd been in the unit at San Diego with...a First Lieutenant, he had been my First Lieutenant boss and so he come driving through the main gate, and he said, "Gene, what...what are you doing?" And I said, "Well, it looks like I'm stuck for the war," and I said, "but I don't want to be." He said, "Well, I'm going into combat in two days; you want to go with me?" And I said, "I sure do!" So he put in for me and I put in for his unit, so two days later I was on a ship going to the Marshall Islands.

Ed Metzler: So what unit was that?

Mr. Davis: It...well it...the unit I was in was a...it...it was called the First Salvage Platoon; it sounded like you would go out and pick up mess kits and things, you know, like that but it wasn't. We were to pick up any Japanese weapons and...take them apart; put them in Cosmoline and then send them back to the States so that they could analyze them and to see whether the...the weapon was better than ours or not, you know.

Ed Metzler: Ahh!

Mr. Davis: So they did a lot of that kind of work. And then also I...there was a demolition and salvage, so demolition platoon...the...the other people that I joined the unit with they had already gone to a Bomb Disposal and

Demolition School at...at Pearl Harbor, but I didn't get a chance to go to school so I had to go out picking up duds and things...

Ed Metzler: At least you *hoped* they were duds!

Mr. Davis: Yeah, right. (laughter) So, then also picking up sixteen inch guns off of...of ship, you know...

Ed Metzler: The shells you mean?

Mr. Davis: They shelled the...they shelled the islands and then those shells weighed twenty-seven hundred pounds; great big things! And they didn't hit the block house direct, they would hit at an angle then they would go into the sand and bury about halfway up, so that...that was a lot of work getting those out of those; then we had to go destroy them.

Ed Metzler: So where did you go first? When you were...when you were on a ship headed out to, you know, the South Pacific, what was your first...?

Mr. Davis: Well, when we first landed we went to Hawaii. Hawaii; got off the ship and then we went...built that transit center then the cane field...

Ed Metzler: Right, and then you got with your guy and went to...

Mr. Davis: ...right, but I was an MP there at the...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Davis: ...at the main gates. And...and...whenever they...and I stayed there, let's see, I don't know how many...well, there'd been quite a few months...before I then...my...my buddy came through there...

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Davis: ...and I...got into his unit.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and when you went with your buddy on...in his unit, where did you go?

Mr. Davis: Right, we went to the Marshall Islands, Roi...Roi-Namur Island...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: ... Kwajalein Atoll...uh, Marshalls.

Ed Metzler: Now Roi-Namur had been secured when you got there?

Mr. Davis: Uh, no, we went in...we didn't go in the first wave with them because we...we weren't the first wave troops, but I don't know, maybe second or third wave probably we went in...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Davis: ...and did a...took our...all of our equipment landed there and then we...we operated then, and that was...that was the first part of February, '43...well, let's see...

Ed Metzler: '44?

Mr. Davis: ... no, '44.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Davis: '44.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Davis: And then, Lincoln's birthday, February 12th, the Japs came over and bombed the hell out of us. And I had a foxhole right next to the...runway, so that big explosion kind of wreaked my ears...pretty bad.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh, so they hit the ammunition dump, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, the ammo dump was right next to me, and they hit that and then...because I was in a demolition outfit, I had to get up; go into the...out of

the foxhole and... 'cause the ammo dump was blowing up... on fire... blowing up and the 20th Seabee Battalion was right next to us... bivouacked, and a lot of them are getting killed because of that exploding ammo. So all of our... my platoon, we had to go into the blazing ammunition and carry it out of there and put... put the fire out of the boxes to keep it from blowing up. So we did that...

Ed Metzler: That must have been fairly exciting.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it was... it was, yeah.

Ed Metzler: I mean you could have been gone in a min... in an instant!

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, oh yeah. In fact, even a couple of hours after the bombing was over and everything and things were quiet, a thousand pound delayed-action bomb went off and I thought that was going to get us. You know the Japs were good at that... they... they would... they knew that you would be getting... getting the disposal ones that they dropped right away, so they would always drop two or three of them that were delayed action...

Ed Metzler: Now that's...

Mr. Davis: ...and then they'd catch you up walking around and blow you up, you know.

Ed Metzler: Boy, they didn't miss a trick, did they?

Mr. Davis: No they didn't; they... they were smart; they were smart. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: But you survived that; were... any of your buddies...?

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...get... get killed or hurt during that?

Mr. Davis: So right after that then we...went back to Pearl Harbor and went back to...they put me back on...in the MPs there at...Navy base, Pearl Harbor. And, let's see, where did I go next? Oh, then...next was...I found out they were going to make the invasion of Saipan, so I went over and got aboard the ship leaving to Saipan...without permission. But...but when I was on the ship, I told them...the Marine officers, the Commanding Officer of the Marine Detachment, I told him that I didn't have permission there and everything but I wanted to go into combat. He said, "Don't worry about it; I...I'll let them know after we've departed, I'll then know and we'll just transfer you and put you in my unit." So they put me in...in his unit then, and so we landed on Saipan; I forget what month that was.

Ed Metzler: Gosh, they...it was fairly easy to get these things done, I mean...

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, if you wanted to do something, you...you know, you could do it, but they...they never...never complained when you were going to go into combat. If was trying to run and get away from combat, that would have been a different story!

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Davis: But...

Ed Metzler: So what outfit were you in when you got on this ship and they transferred you into that...?

Mr. Davis: Uh, well one of them was...it was a field depot...it was a field depot, and I...I think it was the 6th...6th Field Depot. It...it later...it later become the 7th

Service Regiment. I don't know exactly what month they changed their name, but they changed it to the 7th Service.

Ed Metzler: Okay, that came along...later. So off you went to Saipan.

Mr. Davis: Okay, after Saipan...

Ed Metzler: So what happened in Saipan?

Mr. Davis: Uh, I...I worked with the 7th...uh, 6th Depot...I...I wasn't...I didn't do any of the foot slogger and soldier duties, you know, I...

Ed Metzler: What were you doing?

Mr. Davis: Well, we were...we were taking care of supplies; unloading supplies from the ship; put them on trucks and take them where they were needed.

Ed Metzler: And you...what was your rank at this point?

Mr. Davis: Uh...

Ed Metzler: Because you've been busted down (unintelligible)...

Mr. Davis: Yeah, I've been busted down...okay, I...I'm still a Pfc.

Ed Metzler: Alright, so you're out there doing the...the dirty work.

Mr. Davis: Yes, yes, doing the dirty work. And then...

Ed Metzler: So what's Saipan like? Just another one of those flat, little islands or what?

Mr. Davis: Not flat; it...it was a lot of...lot of hills and a lot of caves...lot of caves back in there, and the Japs were...by the time we...we got there and...we were...the other combat Marines were securing the island, and we were doing our thing with the supplies. And then the Japs were pretty smart; they would hide in the caves and then they would come out at night and some of them would...they would get the Marine fatigues on, I guess from dead bodies,

dead Marine fatigues on and they'd try to get in the lines...chow lines of our place; they...they had a lot of nerve. And in fact, we even...

Ed Metzler: You're kidding!

Mr. Davis: ...we even caught some of them sitting in a rear row of seats at the movie theater at night.

Ed Metzler: *You are kidding!*

Mr. Davis: Yeah, they're pretty smart people. So, and they knew by that time what...we wouldn't hurt them being they were...being they were...

Ed Metzler: It had pretty well secured and everything.

Mr. Davis: Right, so...

Ed Metzler: Now that *does* take some...some guts to...to get in line and get some chow!
(laughter)

Mr. Davis: Yeah, oh yeah, they would sit back in there, yeah. So soon as we spotted them, and of course, we'd...a lot of them we'd pick them up, you know, right away. But, let's see, after Saipan, oh, okay, we could...got aboard ship and went to Okinawa, and...and that...that is...landed in Buckner Bay and that was just *thousands* of our ships there! You wouldn't think we had as ...that...had that many ships by that time, but...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I've heard of the stories of the size of the fleet that (unintelligible) in there.

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, I got up on the hill looking down over Buckner Bay and just...*thousands* of ships! And the Jap planes were...kamikazes, were coming in from Japan dive bombing down on the...on our ships.

Ed Metzler: So you got to see it...

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it was like watching a movie, you know.

Ed Metzler: ...just like it was a movie.

Mr. Davis: I...I...

Ed Metzler: So when did...how...how many days after the first landing did you land on Okinawa? I mean, were you several days after the first or were you early on going in or what?

Mr. Davis: Oh, uh, we were...the thing operated real...real fast, because first assault waves that we had...they weren't...the Japs weren't trying to secure the beach; they retreated; went back there and hid in their caves and different things because the Jap commander, he decided...well, that there'd be too much...if...if he put up an opposition on the beach, that they would be blown the hell out of them with the Navy's guns...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, (unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: ...so he was smart there. So anyway, our first waves went in unopposed; they...they weren't fired on at all there. They...they weren't fired on till...until they started going inland. Okinawa was about twenty miles wide by about eight miles long...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's a big island.

Mr. Davis: ...so, big island...so my outfit was in...was that 7th Service Regiment...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Davis: ...we landed just...just shortly after the assault waves landed and then we went north.

Ed Metzler: So what kind of vessel did you...did you come in on?

Mr. Davis: Uh...

Ed Metzler: A landing craft?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it was a landing craft, but...but they had two or three different kinds we came in...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right.

Mr. Davis: ...so...so I don't remember which type. Some of them they used the...the track outfits; they looked like a tank...there they had the treads on them, but they actually go in the water, too.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, is that what they call a Duck?

Mr. Davis: No,...

Ed Metzler: A Duck was something else?

Mr. Davis: No, a Duck was a great big, long deal...

Ed Metzler: Alright.

Mr. Davis: ...great, big high deal. Fact, on Okinawa...later on I...I used to...I drove one of those Ducks unloading the ships for awhile...I did that.

Ed Metzler: So when you landed on Okinawa, then you went north?

Mr. Davis: North.

Ed Metzler: Tell me where that took you and what you did.

Mr. Davis: North to...went north to...past a little town called Naga, and then there's a peninsula that juts out to the left of the island there, and then just offshore from that was a little island called Ie Shima; Ie Shima island and that's where Ernie Pyle was killed.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Davis: And...and then later on, after we were working there in Okinawa all this time...finally the war was over, and...

Ed Metzler: So what did you actually do on Okinawa?

Mr. Davis: I...was in a...in a...like I say, the 7th Service...we...we unloaded ships. But...the...fact, they had...they had the units that would actually take it off the ship and put it on the Ducks and everything to take it ashore, and then we would pick up the stuff that was right there on the...on the Ducks, and take it in...inland, and made a big supply dump up there.

Ed Metzler: Right, right...your own...yeah.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, big supply dump.

Ed Metzler: And so, you drove a Duck?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Tell me what that's like.

Mr. Davis: Well, it's interesting because you...it...you have to be very careful. They have these veins that stuck out from the front windshield; the...below the windshield of the Duck, and so they were quite long, too, the...the Duck was. So if you went to go into the water, of course, you had to go nose first, and if it didn't have this vein there, it would just keep going and it would sink. And a lot of the young drivers didn't know anything about that, and they sunk a lot of the Ducks not knowing anything about them, so...

Ed Metzler: So this is an adjustable vein...?

Mr. Davis: Yes,...

Ed Metzler: ...that you, as a driver, (unintelligible) controlled?

Mr. Davis: ...you...you pulled this little thing up; it was...it was like an additional windshield...like...only it...it wasn't glass; it was metal of some sort...

Ed Metzler: The wing, yeah.

Mr. Davis: ...that you'd just put it up like that, and so when they went in toward the water, the water hit that and lifted it up, so yeah.

Ed Metzler: But they didn't train everybody on how to use that!

Mr. Davis: No, no they didn't. Well, they just assumed that a lot of them, you know, would..., "Well, you go over and help out there," you know, and they'd go over...help out there and...they...they'd put them on a Duck and nobody told them how to do it, you know. So...didn't take them long to learn though!

(laughter)

Ed Metzler: Right, yeah, you only make that mistake once, probably!

Mr. Davis: Right, that's right.

Ed Metzler: I guess if you got fairly high surf there...that must get really exciting driving those things.

Mr. Davis: Yes, it was. Those Ducks were big things...*enormous*, you know, yeah!

Ed Metzler: During this period when you were out in the Pacific, are you in fairly close contact by letters or are you getting care packages from home; are you in contact with Ann; what's going on (unintelligible)?

Mr. Davis: Uh, Ann wrote me and I wrote her, but sometimes I...I wouldn't get anything for six months, and when I did, I'd get a whole stack of...of letters, you know, that she had written. In fact some of the mail that...that came from her...went

around through the...the Cape...let's see, where in the hell was that...over...over in Europe area, over there.

Ed Metzler: Oh, and come around...?

Mr. Davis: Came around the Horn, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Cape of Good Hope and around...across the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Davis: I'm trying to think of, I can't remember the...

Ed Metzler: It wasn't a direct shot...(unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: No, that's right, yeah, yeah. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: And so you were writing letters also?

Mr. Davis: Oh yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: And then...the letters they had in those days, you've probably heard, instead of having a heavy...sheets to write on; heavy envelopes and everything...they...they devised the...things special for the servicemen, and it was on...on real thin paper, yeah.

Ed Metzler: It's kind of like these airmail letters from, you know, thirty or forty years ago...(unintelligible)...

Mr. Davis: Right, right, they had a special name, but I can't remember.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Davis: Right.

Ed Metzler: And then they...then they...took and cut out a lot of the information...

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...because they were censoring it, right?

Mr. Davis: It was always censored; both...well, not both directions, but...right.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So what are you doing for food during all this time; are they feeding you well or are you eating rations or what?

Mr. Davis: Well, that was...one thing. The...the Marines that were working...the Marines...whenever they were to go into an island, well, they were take the...shore and a few miles inland, and then within a day or two they were supposed to be relieved by the Army and then they would leave. So, we didn't take our big mess halls in or anything, so...

Ed Metzler: Because you weren't going to stay.

Mr. Davis: Right, so they would issue us, they...what they called the K-rations, in those days. They were little cardboard box; about that deep and about that...long and everything, and it was always the same food in there, and after awhile, you...you just about starved because you...you'd eaten this stuff for so long, you know, like...they had little cans in there...porked egg yolk and, bacon and cheese. Well, of course, bacon and cheese tasted good, but pretty soon it would tie you up and you couldn't go to the bathroom, you know, so (laughter)...

Ed Metzler: Bind you up, huh! (laughter)

Mr. Davis: Right, oh god, it does!

Ed Metzler: Oh would it really?!

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, no problem with dysentery anyhow.

Mr. Davis: Right, so that's...that's mainly what the Marines ate...was just those little rations, K-rations and different kinds. But the...the Army, of course, they were going to be there to stay, and so the minute they went in, they...they put up big mess halls and things like that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, what's the relationship between the Marines and the Army? You know, you guys come in you do the...the tough works and then the Army guys come in and set up camp behind; what...what's the feelings?

Mr. Davis: Well, there was...there was no problem there. In fact, what helped us to was the Seabee battalions; they Seabee battalions go in and they would do the work like building the air fields and things like that. And they also set up big mess halls right away, and they had really good food. And so Marines always tried to get a couple of Navy Seabee buddies, you know, to...that...to invite them over there to eat with them.

Ed Metzler: Eat some real food, huh?

Mr. Davis: Right.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, my gosh. So how long were you on Okinawa then you would estimate?

Mr. Davis: I think about eight months.

Ed Metzler: That's a long time!

Mr. Davis: Yeah, I was there a long time.

Ed Metzler: So you were there after the war was over then?

Mr. Davis: Uh, I was over there till the war was over, and then...then they put us aboard ship and went up into North China.

Ed Metzler: So you remember when it was announced...the war was over; what...what went on?

Mr. Davis: Well, of course everybody went crazy shooting their rifles and things in the air and everything, and...

Ed Metzler: I wonder how many people that killed. (laughter)

Mr. Davis: Yeah, that's right. In fact, I think it was at night time when I heard. I...we were...in...in a tent and I think I was playing cards, and...pretty soon started hearing this rifle fire and everything and everybody was shooting, and all of a sudden somebody came in and they said, "Well, the Japanese surrendered," so then we went ape, and that's when we...just a few days after that we took off to go into North China.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so now you know you're not going to have to invade Japan, at least .

Mr. Davis: Right, well that's...that's another thing. While we were on Okinawa, we were training...we...they had our maps out there and we knew exactly where we were going to land on...in Japan. My unit was going to land on the southern top of Kyushu Island...

Ed Metzler: Boy, that's would have been tough!

Mr. Davis: ...on the main part of Japan.

Ed Metzler: That would have been tough going!

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it would have been.

Ed Metzler: Hmm!

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, while you were there on Okinawa, you mentioned in passing earlier the kamikaze attacks.

Mr. Davis: Oh right!

Ed Metzler: Tell me some more about what you observed and your experience with that whole thing.

Mr. Davis: Well, I...I seen an awful lot of them that were successful, you know; they would fly over and then they would just dive bomb...and...down...and hit...hit the superstructure of the ships, and then they would explode, and sometimes then they'll...it...it got down into the magazine of the ship, and that whole ship would blow up.

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Davis: So I saw a lot of that going on. And then, of course, there was...there was like...I think I told you it was like watching a movie because I was high up on this hill overlooking it with thousands of ships out there and then all these hundreds and hundreds of Jap planes flying over...was...so real...really like watching a movie, you know? And then they would just take off and then...dive...dive bomb down and...and kamikaze just ...

Ed Metzler: Sometimes they'd hit and sometimes they wouldn't.

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah. Sometimes they would hit a glancing blow, you know, and they'd blow up, but then they would...their plane would go into the water, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So they put you on a ship and off you go to China; tell me about that.

Mr. Davis: Okay, we got on the ships, and I...lot of the troops, 'cause we were...the whole...practically the whole 3rd Amphib Corps...some...some of them was

going into Japan to be...guard the Japanese, and then the rest of them were going into China, North China, because there was...over three hundred and fifty something thousand Japanese troops right in...by Tianjin and that's where...

(end of tape 1, side A)

Ed Metzler: Okay, Gene, go ahead.

Mr. Davis: Okay, so...7th Service Regiment...and we got on these ships and they got on line and going through the Yellow Sea toward China and then the Japanese had had all kinds of mine fields out there in the Yellow Sea and they cut them...when they...when we were going to take Okinawa and they knew that was coming about, well, they cut lose all these mines and let them just float aimlessly out there in the seas trying to blow up as many of our ships as they could. So we had to get, what I call, asshole appetite (laughter), the...one ship after another, you know, in a line, and then as the...as the mines would float up toward the ship...heading up toward the...well, a lot of the Marines, in fact I did that, too; I was a...good at rifle shot, and so I would shoot the...at the mines, and if I didn't blow them up the force of the bullet would keep forcing the mine away from the ship...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Davis: ...so we did that, so...a lot.

Ed Metzler: Man! Wow! So what kind of ships were these then? These are just kind of troop ships; supply ships; uh...

Mr. Davis: Yeah, all...all...

Ed Metzler: All those; a whole menagerie, yeah?

Mr. Davis: Right.

Ed Metzler: And so where did you and then when you went to China?

Mr. Davis: We went into what they called Kaku Bar, and that's Hi-ho (sp?)_ River coming out of China...comes down into Kaku...

Ed Metzler: Spell that.

Mr. Davis: K-a-k-u.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: Kat...Katu...somewhere in there.

Ed Metzler: That's close enough.

Mr. Davis: Right, and...fact, that...that area there is still there, but, and...and also the...the silk from that Hi-ho River kept piling up outside there and so the big ships and...kept being further out before they could come into the shore, and then you'd...so light tenders, those small boats, would...would unload everything and take it to the land. And then from the land there was a railroad line that went from Kaku to Tianjin, China, and also the same railroad line went all the way into what was Peking in those days; it's Beijing now...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right.

Mr. Davis: ...Beijing, and so...yeah, and like I say, the...the tenders had to go about ten miles out to be able to...because the big ships couldn't get any closer in...

Ed Metzler: Boy, that's a long haul!

Mr. Davis: ...so they had to take everything from the big ships into Kaku Bar and then they'd put it on the trains or trucks and go all the way then into Tianjin and Peking,...yeah.

Ed Metzler: So when you went onshore, what did they have you do; what was your task?

Mr. Davis: Well, uh, I didn't do much at all...that...to start with because they was just taking our unit there and they already had other units that were working at Kaku and so we got on a...at Kaku, we got on a train to Tianjin and then we got to Tianjin we all unloaded from the trains, and it was the first troops into Tianjin. So we marched up their main street, more, I guess, a show of force than anything else, and then...

Ed Metzler: Uh huh, let the Jap...remind the Japanese who had won the war.

Mr. Davis: Right, and then we dis...we disarmed the Japanese; they assigned our units to various Japanese units to disarm, and we threw all their big weapons into a big pile and what we couldn't have other use for, well we burned them all...burned all the weapons.

Ed Metzler: Hmm! (cough) What seemed to be attitude of the Japanese?

Mr. Davis: Well, they...they were very similarly...they...they were sneaky, you know, people; they're smart. (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, (unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: And, in fact, in Tianjin, well, I ended up running a big meat packing plant. They...they come to my unit and they said, "We have a big meat packing plant," and then also it handles...they...they get fresh eggs every day for all the Marines throughout the whole area, and there was over forty thousand

Marines scattered all around Tianjin, so each Marine got two eggs a day. So it was...in the thousands of eggs a day plus...then all of the vegetables and then plus...we...we had butchers that butchered all the...the beef...that (unintelligible) from Shandong Province...marched them all the way down to Tianjin...there at this meat packing plant. So anyway, I was in the...my regular unit and they said well they needed somebody to run that place, and of course, I was...I think I was still a...I don't know if I'd make Corporal back yet or not; I hadn't been made...I don't...I think I was still a Pfc (laughter), and they...they looking for somebody to run the plant, see? So I said, "Hell, I can run that god-damned thing!"

Ed Metzler: Hell, why...why not!

Mr. Davis: So...so, and the Marines did a lot of that, so they said, "Well, don't...don't wear your...any chevrons at all because we're going put...a lot of troops working for you that are going to out-rank you, and so they did. They...they sent me butchers, you know, to butcher all the meat and other...and other...other Marines to do other duties, and here I was at...with...with no stripes on at all running the whole place!

Ed Metzler: And how do you figure they picked you?

Mr. Davis: Well, force...forcefulness, and then looking at my record as a... Drill Sergeant.

Ed Metzler: I...I hadn't thought about that.

Mr. Davis: I think...I think that...that could have been the whole key; I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Figured you were good at organizing and encouraging people.

Mr. Davis: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter) Yeah, I just don't have a mental image of cattle drives in China; bringing the beef down from (unintelligible)...

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...but that's the way it was!

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, that's the way it was; came from Shan...Shandong Province all the way down. Then...well we...the...the Chinese...they're religious to a degree in their religion, you know, and so they had a priest that had to kill the cow...uh, steers. They...I don't know if...seemed to me they...they had to hit them on the back of the head with a big hammer thing; but...had to have a priest do it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's...

Mr. Davis: I had eighty Chinese girls that candled the eggs to candle the eggs that we issued out every day.

Ed Metzler: Until...when they're candling; they're just making sure that they're not fertilized eggs?

Mr. Davis: Right, well they...they put the egg up behind there with a light behind it, you know, looked through there...through...through the egg and see...

Ed Metzler: Because if it's a chicken, they don't use it?

Mr. Davis: Right.

Ed Metzler: If there's yolk, they do.

Mr. Davis: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: So I had Chinese, eighty Chinese girls do that...that.

Ed Metzler: Quite a management position.

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, and then...all the...we had...well, a couple of the...merchants there, Chinese merchants, that would do...sold us all these vegetables and everything...so I ran that whole damned place there. I...I bought the vegetables from them; the eggs from them...

Ed Metzler: What were the Chinese people like?

Mr. Davis: Well, the ones we were...associated with were smart as a whip, you know, because they...they ran a business. Of course, they tried to cheat the government, our...our government. This one guy that I had bought most of the things from he said, "Well, I want to take you out to dinner and drinks," so I went out with him. So while we were having our dinner, and we had our drinks and dinner and he said, "Well, now, down to business." And I said, "What...what do you want?" "Well," he says, "every day," he says, "all your girls there...you'll find at least four to five thousand eggs that are broken," so he says, "you always deduct that from the amount of money we...you...you owe us." So he says, "I want you to forget about those broken eggs," then he says, "I'll split the...the money difference with you. I'll give you half and I'll take half." And I said, "No, you're not going to do that with me." So I...I wouldn't do it.

Ed Metzler: They're always looking for an angle, aren't they?

Mr. Davis: Oh, you know, then...ended up that was...that was a big deal, you know? That was thousands of dollars.

Ed Metzler: Don't cover up your...your microphone there; I don't want to miss this!

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So how long were in China then?

Mr. Davis: Oh, I don't think I got on the ship to go home till...probably February of '46.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Davis: So, it probably wasn't as long as it felt like...and I said I got there...

Ed Metzler: After the war was over...

Mr. Davis: Right, after the war was over.

Ed Metzler: ...so that's a relief; that's September.

Mr. Davis: Right, right, so...

Ed Metzler: So you're almost six months!

Mr. Davis: Right, it was at least six months.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and you said it felt longer than that.

Mr. Davis: Well it seemed long, so...

Ed Metzler: Is that just because you're longing to get home or because it's miserable there or what?

Mr. Davis: Well, probably...probably longing to get home and everything, yeah. And then, of course, it's getting...start getting cold in North China.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Davis: And when we first got there, they put us in barracks that were...had no windows in or no heat and we just had our summer clothes on. Some were in fatigues and some were in khaki that was a bit on the lightweight...

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Davis: ...and so we...we...and then it was snowing and blizzards and then we didn't get any cold-weather gear for...seemed like a month or so till we got...proper clothing. And then...then when we left...in February of '46, we had to give our wet...uh, cold-weather clothing to the ones that were going to replace us. So then for quite a few days there, we just had our lightweight clothing again, and we were, same thing again, we were right in the middle of these blizzards. And they put us on an aircraft carrier to take us home, and we were standing up on the flight deck and I was...the Marines are always great for having formations and roll call, you know? And so you'd be standing up there for hours in these blizzard...waiting for them to call your name before they...you went down and they assigned you...your where your bunk was going to be.

Ed Metzler: What aircraft carrier was it, do you remember?

Mr. Davis: Well, I...I don't remember the one that I went there on, but the one I came home on was a converted aircraft carrier and it was going to be its last trip; it was the [USS] Matanikau...called the Matanikau; it was a converted aircraft carrier. And it...it...they...they took us to San Diego; dropped us off and then went north toward...what is it...Bremerton, Washington?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Davis: Anyway the ship...the place up there where it would get...dismantled it...

Ed Metzler: Right, right. Now tell me again about the Japanese that you disarmed; they...they seemed...when you were in China, were they reluctant or...?

Mr. Davis: No, they...they weren't. Well, fact, right next to where I was...ran this meat packing plant, they...they had a Japanese cavalry regiment; had a big

wall...just like a great big walled structure with a big gate, you know, and that's where the Jap cavalry regiment...and of course, our higher ups in the...told all the Japanese to say in their...their billets until we got around to them to disarm them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Davis: So our job then was to go to these units; take away their weapons and then arrange transportation for them to get back to Japan. So one of...units...that I...I was involved in with this Jap cavalry regiment...so I went up to the main gate of that place, and they had a guard there with a rifle and I...I knew that we allowed them to have one or two rifles to keep the Chinese from killing them (laughter)...

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Davis: ...so (unintelligible), see what they did...when the Japs first took over China, well they used to behead the Chinese. Anytime they...they could, they would behead them and kill them.

Ed Metzler: They were horrible to them.

Mr. Davis: So the Chinese were just waiting for that, and so as soon as the Japs surrendered, then the Chinese were starting to just...killing them.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Davis: Oh yes, they...they were cutting their heads off and everything. So they...they finally then...we...we told...we took all their weapons away from the Japanese and then one or two for their guards. So I went up to this one guard in front of this Jap cavalry regiment, and he came up on guard position,

and I smashed the...rifle, I was, you know being an old D.I., you know, I was...smashed that...

Ed Metzler: You were good at that! (laughter)

Mr. Davis: ...yeah, and I put the bolt back, but I...I thought we'd taken their ammo away from them, I...I thought we were just leaving them the rifles to scare the Chinese...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Davis: ...but anyway a bullet went right by my ear as...as I flipped out of the...out of the rifle, so that...kind of got my attention!

Ed Metzler: So...what...did...you...examine all the other firearms or what...after you discovered they were armed?

Mr. Davis: Well, well we did; we...we threw them all in a big pile and burned them.

Ed Metzler: And burned them.

Mr. Davis: Yeah, burned them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. And how long did the Japanese hang around before their transportation was arranged?

Mr. Davis: Well, sometimes it was...it was two or three months because there was so much activity going on, you know. And that Jap cavalry regiment, of course, they had all their horses, you know, and everything...

Ed Metzler: Still had the horses?

Mr. Davis: They still had their horses when...I...I went up to the Jap commander and I...

Ed Metzler: Did he speak English?

Mr. Davis: Huh, fluidly! They'd gone to university in California. In fact all these Jap officers, every one of them had gone to university in California...and they...fluid English...better than I talked! (laughter) So when I...when I got there and I said, "Well, I want you to get your horse out and I want to sit on that and I want you to march your...your troops in review in front of me," and so I made them do that. Here I was a little old Corporal, you know!

Ed Metzler: But they did it!

Mr. Davis: Oh, you bet!

Ed Metzler: And that was just to show who was in charge, huh?

Mr. Davis: Yes! Yeah,

Ed Metzler: I mean, do you think that was necessary to do?

Mr. Davis: Well, I didn't do it for that reason; I...I did it just out of orneriness because of fight...fighting in the Pacific for three and a half years...

Ed Metzler: And seeing your buddies killed and everything else.

Mr. Davis: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: I'm with you.

Mr. Davis: So, in fact, another buddy and I...he was with me and we...we both got on horses there and would...sat on there and reviewed their troops; we did it just out of orneriness; we didn't have any official duties to do it.

Ed Metzler: No orders to do it.

Mr. Davis: Oh no; absolutely not! (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Like...it may have not even been politically correct!

Mr. Davis: That's right.

Ed Metzler: But that's okay; you did it.

Mr. Davis: Right.

Ed Metzler: So...then you departed China and came back home?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And were you...so you're back in February, March of...?

Mr. Davis: It's about February of...'46.

Ed Metzler: Right, and you haven't seen Ann in a long time, huh?

Mr. Davis: Oh no, right. Well she came to...then she...I'd written to her and told her that...one trip I was going to be on and everything...and wasn't...wasn't sure how long it would take, and so it ended up taking about...well a...well a, little less than a month because we had a boiler blow out on the ship as we were going to...from Honolulu to...to San Diego, a boiler blew out, so it took us over three weeks to get to San Diego, and so she knew the day I was coming in and everything...just about, and so she came down and had a hotel room and then went out to the Marine Corps Base and was...was waiting for me...yeah.

Ed Metzler: So did you...muster out of the military or did you stay in?

Mr. Davis: I...I got out; they...they wanted me to stay in. In fact, they had Marine recruiters on the trains all the way from San Diego up toward Pittsburg, California, and they had a bar aboard there...

Ed Metzler: Working the crowd!

Mr. Davis: Work...working all the Marines trying to get them to...re-enlist, yeah.

Ed Metzler: But you resisted?

Mr. Davis: Well, I kind of would have liked to have stayed, but my wife wanted...she...put a stop to that right fast.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?! (laughter)

Mr. Davis: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Wow! So what did it feel like to be coming back into the U.S. after all that time away; how did that feel?

Mr. Davis: Oh, well, of course, you'd been waiting all those years to get back to the States, so we were just real excited about it, you know? And, of course, then to be able to see my wife, so that was very important.

Ed Metzler: How do you feel about the Japanese after all these years?

Mr. Davis: Well, for years I had a real hatred for them, but then in California, the Japanese Americans, you know, they're Americanized and so they're a different breed of cats than the ones from Japan. So I...I got...it took years to get over that attitude...

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, yeah. In fact I wouldn't buy a Jap...Jap car, you know, and I...I always told my friends not to buy Japanese car. Of course, they were all the...they...they were the best cars built in those days, the early days...unfortunately.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Davis: So...

Ed Metzler: Hmm! But you're over that now, huh?

Mr. Davis: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: When you were...before you went overseas, when...but after the war had started, did you observe any of the handling of the Japanese Americans? You know they had to sell their properties and go to the...internment, you know, the relocation camps. Did you experience or observe any of that?

Mr. Davis: Uh, the only part I got involved in was...my dad, of course, was quite older...but, you know, than...than me and...and he got a job of...administering to a lot of these ranches that the Japanese had to turn over to (unintelligible) and so I went with him to one of the ranches just south of Sacramento, between Sacramento and Lodi, California...there's a Jap ranch there. So I went there with him because he had to go out and inspect them every once in awhile; make sure that everything was intact and everything locked up, and nobody had broken into it...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Davis: ...everything, so...fact...he took me into this...one basement; unlocked the door and went in and there were Jap flags in there and...and communication equipment and things like that in there.

Ed Metzler: You're kidding?!

Mr. Davis: Yeah, so I don't know whether they ever used any of it at all.

Ed Metzler: But makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Mr. Davis: Yeah, it does. Yeah, they had a lot of...(unintelligible) equipment and Jap flags, and canteens and binoculars and things like that, yeah, so...

Ed Metzler: My word! (cough) Okay, well what other areas have we not covered? We've covered a lot of...lot of territory here, but I'm sure we've missed some things.

Mr. Davis: Well...

Ed Metzler: Anything come to your mind?

Mr. Davis: (Pause) So I guess that's really about...about all as far as World War II.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Let me ask you...if you have any recollections of what you would call humorous or funny events that occurred during the war? You know, I've heard some great stories from guys about humorous stuff and all, they thought it was funny anyhow; any of those stories come to your mind or...that you can repeat (laughter)?

Mr. Davis: Well, I...I really can't...can't think of it.

Ed Metzler: What would you figure was the...(voices too muffled to hear what is being said).

Mr. Davis: I think it got a little boring on Okinawa for awhile...just before any action took place because the Japs had...retreated back and...and given the (unintelligible) the landing and they went up north past the town called Naga, and went up north and then they...stayed up there and then they came down and they formed their defensive lines on the right side of Okinawa just above the town called Naha, and that's where they had...had their headquarters in the caves and...

Ed Metzler: That's where it got really ugly.

Mr. Davis: Right, so...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, when you...before you were actually in China, did you have any exposure to Japanese prisoners-of-war or anything like that other than that story about the...?

Mr. Davis: No, not before...not before I got into China...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum, yeah.

Mr. Davis: ...down there. Actually, like I say, they...they had surrendered and so their attitude, I don't know what it would have been before that, but...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Davis: ...they...they weren't there to make us mad, so they...they were very cooperative, you know?

Ed Metzler: Right. Okay, well, let's wrap it up then, Gene.

Mr. Davis: Okay.

Ed Metzler: Thanks for spending the time...

Mr. Davis: Okay.

Ed Metzler: ...and retelling those interesting experiences...

Mr. Davis: Sorry, sorry I talked so much.

Ed Metzler: Well, no, that's the whole idea is for you to talk...and not for...for us to listen; that's what this is all about and it also gives me the chance to thank you for what you and your generation did for...

Mr. Davis: Oh sure.

Ed Metzler: ...our country, and I want that on the tape as well, so I just want you to know...

Mr. Davis: I...was glad to do it!

Ed Metzler: ...we remember and we appreciate it.

Mr. Davis: Sure.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Davis: Okay, well, I'll see if I can get...

Ed Metzler: Thanks a lot!

(end of interview)

FINAL copy

CD – #OH02194 – Mr. Eugene “Gene” W. Davis

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