

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Marshall E. Harris

Elk River, MN

March 23, 2010

Co. C 2nd Armored Amphibious Tank BN.

Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is March 23, 2010. I am interviewing Mr. Marshall E. Harris by telephone. His phone number is 763-565-2810 . His address is 8017 Pinnacle NE., Elk River, MN 55330. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Marshall, I want to thank you for taking time today to do this interview today and I want to thank you for service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Harris

Well, thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer

The first thing I like to do is read this agreement with the museum. When I do this in person, I hand the paper to them and let them read and sign it but since this is by telephone let me read it to you. "Agreement Read." Is that ok with you

Mr. Harris

Yeah, that is fine.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that several years down the road, we try to get in contact with a veteran and he has moved or something. So, do you have a son or daughter or someone we can contact if we needed to find you?

Mr. Harris

I have two daughters in Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is fine, either one of them. What is your daughters name?

Mr. Harris

Charlotte O'Brien, 2627 King Arthur Blvd, Lewisville, TX 75056. Her home phone is 972-899-1412.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birthdate?

Mr. Harris

June 3, 1925

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Harris

Kingbury, MN.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you born at a hospital or at home?

Mr. Harris

At home on a farm.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Harris

Yes, I had a brother and one sister. My brother was older by 2 ½ years and my sister was younger by 9 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

I believe your brother was in the Marines, is that right?

Mr. Harris

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me a little about his experiences.

Mr. Harris

Well he was working in a bank in Redwood Falls when Pearl Harbor happened and he and a whole group of guys drove to Minneapolis that next week, Tuesday or Wednesday or whatever it was, and they all enlisted in different branches and my brother ended up in the Marine Corps. He took his training in San Diego in the scouts and snipers at Green⁵ Farm, which was a sniper training base, I guess, at the time. I'm not really to sure of that. Then he was put in the first Marine division and he hit Guadalcanal August 7th, 1942. He got wounded and you know, it is not clear in my mind but I think it was Tulagi I believe is where he got hit. I guess that is all part of that chain down there. Yeah, I was a kid in high school at the time. But, he got hurt pretty bad and he was brought back to a hospital in Wellington, New Zealand for quite some time. And then was transported back to Oak Knoll hospital and I guess they did some recovery work there and then he stayed in the Marine Corps for the rest of the war but he was on stateside duty, mostly at the Boat basin in Camp Pendleton.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now your sister, was she involved in war work of any kind?

Mr. Harris

No, she was 9 years younger than I was, so she was a little girl at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

I believe your brother is no longer living, is that correct?

Mr. Harris

No, he died 2 ½ years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

You grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Harris

Well, it was not very pleasant. I can tell you that everybody was poor and they knew it and it was just one of those things that you put up with. But, I experienced that depression as a child and I experienced it as a high school student and I experienced it as a young man before I went into the Marine Corps. And that depression, a lot of people think it lasted for a few years after the stock market crashed and anybody that lived it will tell you that it lasted through 1936, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 1941. All the years and they had WPA and they had CCC camps to put some food on the table for a few people but it was a drop in the bucket. At the time of this, so called New Deal was doing exactly what Obama is trying to do right now. Let's throw money after a depression and we are never going to learn that you can't buy your way out of a depression. You can only spend your way out of it. And if that sounds political, than so be it. That happens to be the gospel truth.

And we just, the country was anxious but, you know, here's what happened. It helped

make us a total isolationist country and even war talk over in Germany, they didn't like any of it. Our country was just totally deaf to it. We were in denial and probably because of the depression but also because it only had been 20-25 years since the First World War and 50,000 American soldiers died over there. And 200,000 came home with gas in their lungs and they were dying in the 1930's. So, I can understand why, you know, our country was isolated. We didn't understand in school, we were studying current events and we were really wrapped up in what was happening in Europe and we couldn't understand the older people that didn't want to have anything to do with the war. But, we realized later on why because they didn't want to go through another one.

But the depression was tough, I kind of joke about it; I made a speech one day out there at McGregor and I said that the depression was so bad on the child that when you wanted an ice cream cone and you needed a nickel you caused a family conference. (laughing) But it was one of those things that every kid would find something to make a buck. Mow the lawn, throw wood in, usher and do whatever you could. Anything! Everybody, all the kids always found something to do to put a few pennies in their pockets.

Mr. Misenhimer

At a very early age.

Mr. Harris

At a very early age! You had too. You weren't going to go to your dad and ask for it, he didn't have it. So, then what happened we just learned to live with it and I went through my own childhood and it was poor but you know the thing of it is? You didn't feel poor because everybody was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Everybody was in the same boat.

Mr. Harris

Yep, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Harris

He was a farmer to begin with. When he came back from the First World War he went to a diesel school down in the southern part of Minnesota and he learned all about diesels and of course he had to take over the family farm. And of course he bought a diesel tractor and he was kind of the specialist of anybody that had any problem with diesel and if he was around he helped them out. But, he used that old tractor for plowing and for threshing and he kept that farm til I was about 11, I guess. So, in 1936, I think in '36 they had an auction and he sold it all and bought a hardware store. And he became a hardware man and he sold farm machinery, he sold cement and coal, and my God about anything you could imagine.

And then after a few years he went up north, he moved our family up to Floodwood, MN and built a cabin camp and a gas station. And during the depression Canadians were coming down into America, into United States and taking US 90, number 2 across northern part of the state and going to West Canada for vacations. There was no trans-Canada highway at that time. So, he was able to make a living for several years there with the little cabin camp and a restaurant and a gas station. Our trade was probably 80%

Canadians traveling back and forth across the country. And that went on for awhile and I guess he was pretty proud once in awhile when he could announce that we were making about \$100 a month to live on. And that's pretty good!

But, he sold that and bought 50% of a hardware store in Floodwood and then he took on John Deere Tractors and Minnesota Farm Machinery and it was quite a good business. And then the war came along and he got a telephone call from Kaiser Shipyards #4 in Richmond, Ca wanting to know if he was the Bob Harris that at one time took a diesel school, a class in diesel engines down in Austin, TX. And of course he was and he was surprised that they found out who he was and where he was and he said "well, after they talked to him for a few minutes, they offered him a job to go out to Richmond Shipyards and install diesel engines in the corvettes and the LST." Which he did all during the war.

So, that was his career; he stayed in that diesel engine business most of the rest of his life. He worked for Hall Scott Motor Company and then he went up to Feather Falls, CA and worked for Georgia Pacific company. He was the service manager for all their Peterbuilt trucks. So, that was kind of a career path that sort of had very little planning to it, it just happened.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, you lived on a farm during the first part of the depression, is that right?

Mr. Harris

Yes, I did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all have a garden and that sort of thing?

Mr. Harris

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have chickens and pigs?

Mr. Harris

Oh yeah, chickens and you name it. We had chickens and hogs and sheep and goats and you name it. We had an apple orchard and together with all the necessary chores.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a milk cow?

Mr. Harris

(laughing) I learned how to milk when I was very, very young. We had a power generator that would run a milking machine, we had a Marlow milker and we didn't have electricity, of course, on the farm but he had a little string of light-bulbs and when that machine would run and the light-bulbs would get bright, then they would get dull, they'd get bright and get dull again. Kind of a makeshift thing but when I learned how to milk, my job was to strip the cows after the milking machine got through. I would go down to the end of the row about 20 ~~or 25~~ cows and if I had a full pail of milk I thought "man, I was king of the hill!"

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of cows did you have?

Mr. Harris

We had Jerseys, and some Guernsey's. We like Guernsey's and Jerseys because in those days the money was in cream and there was kind of a joke with our neighbors had Holsteins and my dad would always tease them a little bit about the amount of cream that a Jersey put out versus... He say " I need a pail full of your milk." And Evan Bowen next door would say "what do you need that for?" And he would say "Well, I need to wash out my cream separator."

We got pretty good at hitting those cats with milk, squirting at them. That was kind of a fun thing you do on a farm. And just like you said, we had cats all over the place because you got to have them in the barn to keep the rats and mice out. So, that was some interesting days.

Mr. Misenhimer

As you say in Tom Brokaw's book 'The Greatest Generation', I think that depression toughened your generation and my generation up.

Mr. Harris

Oh, absolutely.

Mr. Misenhimer

It made us independent.

Mr. Harris

You learned to accept life as it is and, you know, you don't mind squeezing cow crap through your toes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Harris

I went to high school in the little town of Floodwood, MN up until I was a senior. I was going to be a senior and then when the war broke out and my dad went to Richmond, CA I didn't want to go but he did move our family back to New Ulm, MN, near where our old farm was. So, I finished high school in New Ulm, MN because that is where my dad wanted to put the family back while he went to CA and worked in the shipyard. And then my mother decided to go out there and my sister once he found living quarters. So, I was just a little boy that rebelled. I had switched high schools once already and I was not about to go out to CA and start into another high school out there. So, I stayed in our family home during my senior year myself. So, I finished up in New Ulm and it was amazing. I think it shows up in one of those articles that you read that I lived there in New Ulm by myself. I even had the family car and I can't believe how, amazing good I was. We had a bicycle, I had a bicycle and that was my transportation. I very seldom used that car. Well, kids in those days didn't drive cars to school anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, what year did you finish high school?

Mr. Harris

It was 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Harris

Well that was 1943. What happened is, originally, well I guess that is one of those things wrote in one of those articles, I was in the V-5 program. Do you remember the V-5 and V-12 program? It was an Army Air Corps or also Navy. And I was taking the necessary Trig and in math and all the things we had to take in order to qualify and I was anxious to go into the Navy for I wanted to fly ever since I was a kid, a little kid knee-high to a grasshopper I would see an airplane in the air and I would watch that thing until it was across the sky. I had made up my mind that I didn't want to be a fireman, I didn't want to be a cowboy, I didn't want to be a policeman, I wanted to fly.

Well, that was my desire and what happened was that my brother got hit in August of 1942 and that made me a little bit mad. So I took that thing down to the Marine Corps recruiting officer in New Ulm and I said that I want to switch to Marine Corps. And he said "you are only 17 years old." And I said "I know, but I mean when I graduate from high school." So he said that I was crazy to do that and that you could go into the Navy and fly airplanes during the war. I was not to sure that was going to happen anyway. Anyway, he said "what do you want to do that for?" and I said "well, my brother got hit pretty bad. He was in Guadalcanal and he is in the hospital in New Zeland and he got shot up from his ankle up to his hip in the cross fire. It made me mad enough I want to go into the Marine Corps." He said "sit right down there Marine and let's talk!" That is where the conversation ended. So he had me finish high school and he made arrangements so that I could go to the National Guard down there on Friday nights and I could practice marching, do some rifle drills and things like that. So I had a little of a

head start when I went into the Marine Corps and it helped quite a bit when I went into boot camp that I didn't have anywhere near the trouble that a lot of the guys had. But, it gave me a little basics but that is how I got into the Marine Corp anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the date when you actually went in?

Mr. Harris

I went in July of 1943, I don't know exactly what date, but I went in at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Soon as high school was over, I played a little football, and we had 3 of us that were on the football team; 3 other guys and myself and we got in my family car and we drove it to California and we all joined the service from there. But we used my folks place as sort of a headquarters for a day or two and two of them went into the Navy, another guy went into the Army and I went into the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the drive out there, gasoline was rationed. How did you get enough gasoline to drive out there?

Mr. Harris

We had B rating and I had put in an application during school time to get enough stamps to get gas and I had enough gas I could have gone to California and back twice. And of course, fortunately, there was no rationing on oil because we had a 1936 Terra-plane and it went through a quart of oil about every 200 miles. (laughing) We made it out there alright and it was quite a trip.

Mr. Misenhimer

With the gasoline rationing I wasn't sure how that worked.

Mr. Harris

Yeah, I had my folks gave me guidance from that and how to do it and what to see.

During the war time there, you could if you had an emergency or some particular very good reason they would grant you extra stamps. We had a good reason.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go for boot camp?

Mr. Harris

San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel down there?

Mr. Harris

They picked us up at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco and, oh what did we do? Go in a bus? No, I guess they took us to the train depot. Yeah, and we went down along the coast, I guess to San Diego. I had forgotten how we got there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your boot camp, what all happened there?

Mr. Harris

Well, it wasn't bad. As a matter of fact I had a pretty good jump on it because I knew left flank, right flank and rear march and all that good stuff. I also practiced the manual arms and I was 6 feet and ½ so I was up in the first part of the platoon. My brother tipped me off pretty well of what not to say and what to say and the main tip he gave me was to don't say anything. So I made out pretty well in boot camp and I ended up when the DI needed a break I was the guy to take them and march around. At that time, I think it was

the top 10 percent; you got a PFC out of boot camp. It was six or seven guys out of the 63 guys or 55 I guess, in platoon 603, I don't know. Anyway, I got a PFC out of boot camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was boot camp?

Mr. Harris

Oh gosh, I don't remember. Uh....

Mr. Misenhimer

A couple months?

Mr. Harris

I don't think it was, no it wasn't that long. I think, at that time, they run them through pretty fast. I think it was only just a few weeks. And then I went to radio school. I had taken international Morse code the last year in high school as a part credit, so I had gotten my speed up to 12 or 14 words per minute. Uh, I didn't want to say anything to the guys because you start to tell them what you can do and what you can't do and pretty soon they tell you "don't tell me, I'll tell you." So, anyway, this aptitude test that they gave us, it showed up that I had an aptitude to learn international Morse code so that is where I was sent, to radio school. And that was 14 weeks.

When we finished up the radio school in San Diego, after boot camp, I mean after rifle school and all that stuff, there was a bulletin on the board, that they were looking for volunteers, radiomen, for armored amphibian tank battalion that would be used in the Pacific Island campaign and in all caps it said "YOU WILL SEE COMBAT." Well, that

interested us all and almost to the man, I think we volunteered. We laughed when we first saw the thing; it said amphibious tanks and we said “oh, tanks can’t float!” What did we know? (Laughing) And, uh, we thought maybe it was another thing like when they asked “who can drive?” and five guys raised their hands. Well, he ended up driving a wheelbarrow. So, anyway, we all went up to Camp Pendleton to the boat basin and that is where we found out that we were definitely in a armored amphibious tank battalion and that they did float.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me what an armored amphibious tank is?

Mr. Harris

Well, the nomenclature in those days, the tanks that we used were called LVT-A4. Landing vehicle tank armored 4. That was the 4th generation, I guess, of the one that they designed. And what it was for, it was built like a tank that had a 75 MM howitzer and a turret and bristle of machine guns. Uh, BOW machine gun, a 50 in the turret and so forth and it was designed with pontoons built inside the tracks and it floated it. Fully loaded it weighed around 20 ton. But it was a light tank, a Sherman tank weighed 60-65 tons or whatever they weighed, I know they were very heavy. But this was a very light tank and only had about a ½ inch amor and another ½ inch on the bow. So you couldn’t put much armor on it because it would sink, it wouldn’t float.

Well anyway, the purpose of it they would let us out, like, four thousand yards out from the beach landing area and then with the 75 MM and the cannon and all the machine guns firing forward we would provide fire power all the way to the beach. And the rules of

engagement actually called for us to hit the beach and go in a hundred yards and hold.

That wasn't always possible. As a matter of fact it was almost impossible. That was the plan, but see what happened in other invasions is that the Navy had to stop firing before the Higgins boats got ashore and the Higgins boats had no fire power.

So, they were under fire from the beach for probably two or three thousand yards and the idea of having a armored amphibian tank battalion; we had 76 tanks in our battalion and, uh, that would provide some fire power on the way to the beach and then the first, second and third wave could, theoretically at least, come in with a little bit of protection. That is what we did during Saipan, Tinian, and of course, Iwo Jima.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many men in a crew in those tanks?

Mr. Harris

Seven men.

Mr. Misenhimer

You did not carry in troops or anything like that?

Mr. Harris

No, we didn't carry troops. It was the same kind of vehicle, however, that carried troops.

The ones that carried troops, of course, didn't have a turret and didn't have all the stuff on it and they had a big cavity there in the center and they could twenty or twenty-five riflemen in there.

You know, there was a problem on Saipan. Uh, they were faster than we were because they were lighter and a lot of times they had to be careful not to get ahead of us because we had to cease fire in that case. So, there was some confusion and so forth. The battle plan didn't always work out exactly and rules of engagement would change quite often because there was some confusion. A lot of time we landed on the wrong beach or whatever.

Mr. Misenhimer

What propelled these things?

Mr. Harris

It was an airplane engine. I think it was a Pratt-Whitney, I'm not sure. Uh, and I'm told it had its propeller shaft from a P-39 or there of. A design similar to that; that rode all through the tank underneath the turret where they stand right to the transmission which was between the driver and myself. I was a bow machine gunner on the right side and the driver was on the left and there was a big hot transmission right between us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the screws on the back or what?

Mr. Harris

It was the tracks themselves that propelled it. The tracks were shaped; they had cleats on them that looked like a hawk's wing and so they would grab the water. And, then those same tracks propelled us on the land.

Mr. Misenhimer

How fast would this thing go in the water?

Mr. Harris

Not much more than about 7 knots. (laughing) It was almost wide open.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, if you were two thousand or 4 thousand yards out, that is over 2 miles, it would take you almost 2 hours to get in.

Mr. Harris

No, they let us out at 4000 yards and then we came in. When we really started to fire was after we passed under the battleship guns and that was closer to the beach and from 4,000 yards out we couldn't hit anything anyway. We were, by that time, we were oh gosh, I don't know, a thousand yards or 1500 yards away and then we would open up and we didn't use our little 30 caliber machine gun until we got pretty close. We didn't have any range but 4,000 yards out is where they launched us because that was out beyond the artillery range of the shore batteries that weren't going to fire that far out. The LST's were pretty well protected, they didn't want to come any closer.

Mr. Misenhimer

That clarifies that point, ok. Now, back to your training; where did you take your training for that?

Mr. Harris

At the boat basin in Oceanside, CA and then we finished up the training when we got to Maui and the Hawaiian Islands. Our base was Maalaea, in a little bay there and, I think it was Kihikihi was the nearest little town. We would go from there out to sea and go north up to Lahaina and there was a practice area where we would make our landings. And we would go back and forth on a daily basis.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you assigned to a unit at this point?

Mr. Harris

No, we were one of these outfits that were attached to whatever division needed us, Amd we kind of joked about it but we were in the second Marine division to invade Saipan and then we were attached to the fourth Marine division when we went into Tinian, and then when we went to Iwo Jima we were attached to the 5th Marine division. We always joked that we couldn't keep a job. We were wherever they needed us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you battalion have a number or something?

Mr. Harris

Second Armored Amphibian Tank Battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you went to Hawaii, how did you travel over there?

Mr. Harris

We traveled over there on a troop transport and then they brought the tanks over on, I don't know, some other kind of; I don't know how they got there. But, our battalion traveled over on a regular troop transport.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness on the way over?

Mr. Harris

I guess there was but not, I guess I am one of the lucky guys I never got seasick and I often felt so darn sorry for these guys and I didn't dare tease or razz them or anything like

that or I would be in trouble. Of course I learned to be a pilot after I got back from the service and I flew for over 4200 hours in all kinds of aircraft; I never got airsick or seasick but I guess that is just a stroke of luck. No, I never experienced it and I'm not sure that I want to because I have seen plenty of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, you went out of San Diego, right?

Mr. Harris

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else did you do in Hawaii?

Mr. Harris

Well, we trained and we played a lot of baseball. We had a great baseball team and uh, have you ever heard of a guy by the name of Wayne Terwiliger?

Mr. Misenhimer

Nope.

Mr. Harris

He was a first base coach-man for the Minneapolis Twins when they won the World Series 20m years ago. Terwiliger was one of our best players and we were winning a lot of games and it was really fun. So, there was a little enjoyment along with it but then we went to Saipan and Tinian and Iwo Jima and nothing happened with baseball until we got back to Maui and by that time I had a bum leg so I couldn't do anything but handle the bats and the balls.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in Hawaii, were you in Maui the whole time or were you in Oahu part of the time?

Mr. Harris

When we were Maui we would go to Oahu but, I mean not officially. Just on liberty we could go over there once in awhile to go to the movies or something like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was liberty in Hawaii and Honolulu?

Mr. Harris

Well, it was ok. It was very, very crowded and I kind of preferred Maui. I liked that little island of Maui. I brought my family back there a couple times since the War and we always enjoyed it. The Hawaii I knew, Waikiki was the only place to stay and now you go over there and it is wall to wall buildings.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in Oahu, was there still much damage from the Dec. 7th attack?

Mr. Harris

Oh yeah, there were still a lot. I landed at Ford Island there a couple times as a passenger in a TBM and they would take us up once in awhile if we wanted to go. It was, oh my gosh, quite a mess.

Mr. Misenhimer

Still ships there and things, yeah.

Mr. Harris

But, uh, of course in civilian life years later, I took the family out there and we took the

little boat across and saw, oh my God.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Arizona?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, it was a sight to see 1500 guys down there still buried. At Saipan it took a direct hit and the tank blew up and sank before we were past them.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was his name again?

Mr. Harris

They were all dead except Lt. Michaels, I think he was the only one that survived and I understand that he lost a leg.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what was your friends name on that tank?

Mr. Harris

Bob Lewis. And then one of the other tanks in our platoons got hung up on the coral rock and it is our understanding that they bailed out, they got out and then later on I guess just before we even landed, and this is hearsay, the Japs blew that tank up. I don't know why because it was stuck on that coral reef and it wasn't going to go anywhere. But we ended up, out of 5 tanks we had three left when we got to the beach. And we lost, I can't remember, about 13 tanks going in. By the end of the first day, there is an article in our book by Lt. Colonel Fawell and he had reported that we had eighty percent of our tanks were out of commission by the end of the first day. And then the maintenance crew came in and they performed miracles and, uh, we have a book that is about 500 page book that

we all wrote, all the history of the second armored amphibian battalion and Lt. Colonel Fawell has written quite a bit in there and I learned more about our casualty losses from that book than I knew.

Mr. Misenhimer

So the fighting on Saipan started, I think on June 15th of 1944, is that right?

Mr. Harris

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go on a LST from Hawaii to there?

Mr. Harris

Yes, we went on a LST. I was on LST 450 from Hawaii to Saipan and that was the one we launched from, the one that made the invasion.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went in before the first wave actually?

Mr. Harris

Yes, we had to be the first wave because we were providing fire power all the way to the beach. We had to make sure that these LVT's, the troop carriers, weren't getting in ahead of us because they were a faster machine and they had to be careful because if they got ahead of us we had to stop firing. So we were always on the lookout even though we had nobody in front of us and we could fire at anything that was out there but if one of our troop carriers, LVT's, happened to be out there in front of us we had to hold up.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were going into Saipan were there actual targets that you could see to fire at?

Mr. Harris

No, not really. Uh, the gunner Orvic Whittaker was a sharp 75 MM gunner and he was, I always considered him one of the best in the battalion. He fired at a radio station many times on the way in and it was later a Marine Corps emergency hospital. As a matter of fact it was the hospital after Tinian that I spent 33 days in.

But, anyway, that was a target and there were other targets but you know it is almost impossible to hit a target when you're in the waves and your tank is flopping up and down and you don't have gyro stabilizers. But the gunners did have targets that they could shoot at.

I was a bow machine gunner and I would just do well to see the shore and all that we were doing is laying down a battery of fire; went through several boxes of ammunition with 250 rounds per box going in on Saipan and I burnt out a barrel and had to yank it out and put in a new barrel on the way in. And the same thing happened on Iwo Jima on the way in. The barrel gets white hot and then the projectiles go everywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

This is an air cooled machine gun, right?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, but we were trained to do that. We could take that out and put it back and have that thing running again in a minute.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had asbestos gloves for that, right?

Mr. Harris

You bet! (laughing) What we did though on Iwo so that we didn't have to change the barrel, the ammunition specialist in the back; we had two ammunition passers back there that would control, set the timing on the fuse for the 75 or whatever the gunner want, but also we got it so that I had two extra 30 caliber machine guns within my reach and on Iwo instead of changing the barrel I just pulled the pin and yanked the machine gun out and threw it in back and grabbed a new one and put it in there and I was back in operation in less than a minute. That was the smart thing to do, but I guess we didn't think about those things earlier.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about what happened in Saipan when you hit the shore?

Mr. Harris

Well, we were in a little problem because our clutch was not working and that is one of the bad things about these tanks, the clutch a lot of times would overheat. And you would try to make a climb and nothing would happen and you had to let it cool off, it took about 20-30 minutes to cool off. So, this is the story on that, I even wrote it up and we put it in our bulletin. There was a bunker right where we were, we landed on the wrong beach because the Navy guys were leading us a little bit off to the left and that is one of the things that when I was talking to Bob Lewis, the lead tank, we were talking about the fact that they were getting to far to the left and there was smoke on the beach, they had laid down smoke. What happened was that the Navy guide boats couldn't know exactly where to bring us into. We did land on the wring beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then the smoke did what?

Mr. Harris

The beach was smoked, they had laid down smoke and so the guide boats didn't quite know where to bring us in. So we did land on the wrong beach and we landed in an area that hadn't been occupied yet. So we were catching some fire from the pillbox and ,uh, they had, we don't know how many Japs were actually in there but when we got out of the tank and McDaniel, who was one of the ammunition handlers and I were on either side of this bunker and we took out two of them as we could see them. I had a little carbine and he had a Tommy gun and then the tank commander had the loader and we are all out of the tank and we are trying to get that transmission to cool down, I mean the clutch and, uh, we knew this bunker was were the fire was coming from.

Well, what happened is my tank commander had Outen throw me a grenade, and he threw me more later, but he hollered at me and said "Take the pin out and let the spoon fly off and count to two." And it had a 3 or 4 second fuse in it, so I had it in my hands and I turned around and all of the sudden that spoon flew off and I was like 1, 2 and about as fast as I could I threw it in there and it went off and then we threw several more grenades in. And this is where I think it gets a little funny, McDaniel and I were looking at each other and we kind of messed up their daily schedule and Pappy says "I need a body count." And I looked at McDaniel and he looked at me and he said "fourteen?" And I said "that's all that I could remember." (laughing) and I tell you at that particular time neither of us were overly enthusiastic about climbing in there and seeing how many

were dead. I think that is what happened to a lot of body counts, I am not sure if they ever got a good number.

But anyway, that was our first encounter and as far as I am concerned it was my first kill and I told that to this guy at the American Legion, the guy we were setting here talking about, that article that you were referring to. And I said "I'm eighteen years old and I couldn't understand how easy it was and how quick it was." So, I don't know, it was just kind of a real confusing day. But that was about all we did that first day, not the first day but I mean the first period; the first hour or two.

Then finally when Gammel got sick, something happened to him. He was the driver. And I am trying to put it together in my head exactly what the scene was, but we were going inland but we were in the wrong place and the tank commander said "We need to get that tank down to headquarters; down to the command post." So, Gammel was not feeling good, I guess he had just gotten terribly sick or something but anyway the bow machine gunner is automatically the assistant driver and that is really what it is. It is kind of a goofy story but I will tell you the way it was.

I had to drive the tank down the beach and the rest of the crew was, of course, was from infantry and we didn't want the whole crew in the beach because they were shelling the beach. So, I'm in there and I kind of joke about it later on and said "the reason that I drove the tank down there is that I am the least valuable member of the crew." (laughing)
It seems to me that everybody just agrees with that. But, uh, so I drove the tank down

the beach for a hundred yards or so or whatever and there was a burning Amtrak there and I went out into the water to go around it and when I came back on shore a shell had gone off not very far in front of me and it jostled the tank. The tank went up and came back down and of course I went forward and I hit my nose and lip on one of those handles that you use to keep the hatch closed and I got a heck of a gash in my lip and of course I was bleeding all over the place but I didn't realize it. So then we got down near the CP and they hollered at me to have me come in and I had the hatch open because I didn't know any better, if you had the hatch closed you can't see where you are going anyway in that thing so I had my head sticking out. But they hollered at me and I pulled the tank up into the CP and when I poked my head out they came over and wanted to know where I was hit and I said "I am not hit anywhere" and then I looked down and I have blood all over me. Well my lip had bled profusely and they realized that ok, this guy is alright.

But anyway, uh, when our crew got there and we all got together and Major Beavans was inquiring to our tank commander "who drove the tank down?" And of course he said "Marshall Harris did it" and I heard him say "Make that man a corporal!" (laughing) and I am thinking that you are eighteen years old and you made it ashore when 13 tanks didn't and you are the assistant driver and its your job to take over if the driver isn't capable. You do what you are supposed to do and the enemy is doing everything they can do to make sure that you never reach nineteen. And your lip is gushing blood and your about to join K-Company 8th Marines for the battle of your life and you hear "make

that man a corporal!" And I added my comments to the bottom "not one of the highlight of my life." (laughing) But anyway I became a Corporal, so it was a big deal.

Anyway, then we joined the K company 8th Marines and we went inland with them and we spent three weeks with K company 8th Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were not in your tank?

Mr. Harris

No, we were in the tank. Yeah, we helped, we spearheaded some attacks.

We would set up artillery or we would fire into bunkers, machine gun nests, then shoot snipers out of palm trees. There weren't many good palm trees there but there were trees with a lot of snipers there and I had a 30 caliber machine gun at a 45 degree angle. So I could reach up and get them. If we shot a sniper out of a tree then the lieutenant of K Company Marines would say that "every time you take a sniper out of a tree you save 10 Marines." It was kind of a pat on the back but that was the way that we did it. I'm not so sure that was any of the rules or campaign method or anything like that but that is what we did.

We usually carried a lot of water and a lot of food because we had room in our bottom compartment and we could put c-rations, k-rations and all kind of stuff in there. So the infantry didn't always carry enough food with them and if we were stuck many times after we pulled back and settle in for the night, gosh we were handing out food and water like crazy. But, uh, it was funny but there was a love hate relationship between an

infantry platoon and a tank. If we were called out to take out a bunker or a pillbox or something like that and we threw a bunch of H.E.'s and phosphorous in there and then we would get it all done and they would say "now get that tank out of here. You're drawing fire." So, it was a love hate relationship.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened there on Saipan?

Mr. Harris

Well, gosh, I don't really remember; trying to remember all these things from so many years ago. We just kind of went along with K company 8th Marines with just about everything that they wanted. The one thing that I needed to point out is that we were so careful because in an armored amphibian tank, uh, like I said our job was to spearhead drives, to blow up bunkers and pillboxes and machine gun nests or whatever the target they give us; a sniper out of a tree or whatever and carry those c-rations. But one thing that we were always careful, we passed up a lot of shots. We had to pass up because the visibility that you got in the smoke was terrible and the thought of sending a Marine home in a body bag due to some stupid thing was beyond bearable. So we were effective but only to the point where we could define our target. These tanks were not, you didn't have good visibility.

At night we had some banzai charges and of course there is something that bothered me a little bit. It didn't bother me a little bit it, it bothered me a whole lot. A banzai is not a fire fight; it is just a plain suicide. Its suicide for the enemy troops, uh, but sometimes some of them get through but the infantry pretty well handles them but from the ban

machine gunner position on a armored amphibious tank it just seems like totally senseless because I would fire my machine gun into the mass of these Japs coming down the hill and they are shouting, yelling, screaming "Banzai! Banzai!" and they would yell "American Marines you die! American Marines you die!" They didn't pronounce the r's and they were kind of funny and you could almost hear it, you could! If they get close enough you could hear them screaming.

But you are firing at that and you know that your bullets are finding the target and you know that they are falling down, and you see them fall and you see come and good Lord, uh, the barrel on your machine gun turns white and you have little control of the trajectory if it gets that hot. You pull the pin and yank the machine gum out and you put another one in and you are back in business in a minute or two and you never dare stop to think about why you are doing this and what is going on. That's not in your mind and in Saipan we had a lot of banzais, Tinian we had it but not to often. A lot of people had a lot of banzai attacks on Iwo Jima towards the tail end. But most of them on Iwo, they were fighting out of the caves and out concealments and they were down underneath the ground and they would come up and go back in. You didn't really have until the very last part of Iwo, and I wasn't involved in that because our tank couldn't even get up there for the last part, but they were pulling banzai attacks there. It seems so senseless, we were eighteen and nineteen year old kids at that time and we just couldn't comprehend why anybody would run into a mass of fire like that knowing that they were going to die.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's hard to fathom. Did you get wounded on your arm in Saipan?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, well I didn't get wounded but I got hit with a piece of shrapnel and what it did is that it broke that ulna and, uh, I got back in the tank and I didn't know that it was bleeding that bad and I made a hell of a mess in the tank. And, uh, my driver said "you're bleeding all over the place!" And I didn't even feel it, I felt like somebody had hit me in the arm with a baseball bat. So I went over to aid station and they patched me up but you know what they did? They figured that the ulna was broken, or fractured I guess because it was pretty sensitive when anybody touched it. Well, he wanted to put a splint on it and he didn't have any splints so he took the scabbard off my little carbine and he used that for a splint. He put it on the arm and it was on there for about 2 or 3 weeks, or a couple weeks I guess it was and it started to smell pretty bad.

So they finally got me to go to an aid station and there was a Navy doctor, I guess off of one of the hospital ships that was working on people, and he took this splint off and he said "what is that?" and I said "it's a scabbard off my bayonet." And everyone was laughing, and the corpsman were all looking at it and he was teasing me "we are going to write you up for misuse of military equipment." Or something to that effect but anyway they all joked about it. The bone was apparently just a fracture but I always joke about it because I still have a spot on my arm that never gets suntanned; my souvenir from Saipan.

But, uh, that is no Purple Heart. We went right back to the tank and stayed with it. A guy asked me one time "did you ever get a Purple Heart for the time on Saipan and the

one on Tinian?" and I said "no, that is the one thing you don't ask for." Either you get it or you don't get it and it's not a big deal. You know we had about 20,000 wounded on Saipan and there were about 7,000 Purple Hearts issued so there is the story. It was almost like, you know, you hurt yourself worse on the farm sometimes and I didn't consider that anything serious. It was just one of those things you put up with everybody getting burned, getting banged or whatever. Burns are bad on a tank. Everything is hot and the transmission oil and everything. That was just the way it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay on the frontlines at night or did you go back to the rear?

Mr. Harris

We would usually back up a little bit but a lot of time we would kind of joke about it but we would advance to the rear. In my memory on how exactly we handled every night is so vague that I a lot of time I am sitting here sometimes thinking "well now I know that we would back off and we would dig in and..." We never slept in the tank ever. We got out and dug a foxhole and I was questioning McDaniel, who died, but he was like one of our ammunition passers and he was the guy who helped me with the bunker that first morning, and he got hit in the shoulder and it almost took a great big hunk of meat off this shoulder and the arm was kind of hanging there and I always said that it was the first night and my crew corrected me when we wrote that book that it was like the 5th or 6th night or something. That is how your memory works, you don't remember exactly.

But I remember the night because we were all in the foxhole and he didn't want to go in the foxhole because he was scared and there was an old tree trunk or something and he

leaned up against it and he was going to stay there all night. The tank commander was trying to get him to dig in and a shell went off and a piece of shrapnel took his whole shoulder off.

So, we had to give him morphine and the problem is that he come to and he starts to scream and he couldn't do that, we just couldn't give away our position. So we used quite a few morphine shots that night because we couldn't take him anywhere. The next day the lieutenant that was in charge of us told us to get him back the aid station so we put him in the back of the tank and Gammel drove us back to where the aid station was.

He wasn't there, gosh I don't know we were probably a couple 200 or 300 yards away going back to the front where K-company was, and an artillery barrage came in and blew that whole thing all to pieces. He lived through that but then he was transferred out to a hospital ship and that is where he died and he was buried at sea. I didn't know that until after Saipan was secured and we were getting ready to go to Tinian, then we found out that he had; well I guess our tank commander knew but he wouldn't tell us. That is what happened to him anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

These banzai charges, were most of them at night or during the daytime?

Mr. Harris

Oh, this was at night.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean the banzai charges.

Mr. Harris

Oh, they were at night. Of course what would happen we would throw up flares and you would see them, during the day sometimes, toward the end. Believe it or not, some of them go through that ^{area} ~~area~~ the next day and they would have sticks with bayonets fastened to them and that would be their weapon. So, it got towards the end of Saipan they didn't have enough rifle. We kind of suspected that they hopped them all up on opium and I guess that what it takes to get them to do that; just to sit there with a machine gun and just fire point blank into a mass of guys on a hill. It was just; I will never forget it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did Saipan last?

Mr. Harris

Oh boy, we hit there on June 15th and I think it was about a week or two before we hit Tinian that it was considered secured. I'm guessing about 3 weeks at least. June 15th we hit Saipan and July 24th is when we hit Tinian. It was July 24th when we hit Tinian, I wasn't sure about Guam. You said it was the 21st?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Harris

Yeah, that figures. They all had to be taken out at one time.

Mr. Misenhimer

They delayed the Guam attack because it took so long on Saipan.

Mr. Harris

I suppose that is what happened, but I don't know. On Tinian, that was an interesting bit

of strategy. Our leaders determined by the underwater demolition team reports that the Tinian Town was totally mined, totally mined and I guess they had railroad things driven into the beach and whatever. It would have been a perfect beach to land on and the invasion would have been perfect because it was wide and large and so forth and I suppose that the Japanese thought that is where we were going to land. So, they sent about 4 o'clock in the morning a couple of gun boats down there, in don't know if it was a destroyer or where, and they started firing at length down at a blanket of fire at Tinian Town.

In the meantime we were way up there at the other end of the island, uh, we were going to land on white beach one and white beach two. This time we didn't go in as an assault wave, we went in firing but we firing off to the left while the right column was firing off to the right. But we didn't dare land on white beach one or white beach two because if any one of our tanks had got knocked out on one of those narrow beaches we could have screwed up the whole operation. And so we were warned not to land and so we went in, in our particular situation, we went in on the left column and as soon as we got within a hundred yards or so or whatever the distance was we branched off to the left and we were actually on coral rock. We were in three feet of water, four feet perhaps but the tank wasn't floating because it was rock. And we extended the beach head to the left and the right column extended to the right. Well that gave us, gave the troops a little more protection from fire onshore but there wasn't any to speak of at that time because the entire defense mechanism of the Japanese had us landing at Tinian town.

So, we didn't get any fire at all except at about two o'clock in the morning we got a banzai attack on white beach one and white beach two and that is the night that I got knocked off the tank. What I did was that I fell onto some coral rock and I got cut from one end to the other and they dug the coral off whatever was there that night. Norm Slowe, our loader, some rifle fire fragmented off the turret and a piece went into his eye and so our loader lost his left eye and he was taken to the Higgins boat the next morning and sent back to a hospital ship.

I was ok, I had a whole bunch of cuts on my leg and we put Sulfa powder on it and wrapped it up and everything was ok. But, when I fell in to the coral rock I didn't realize how sharp that stuff was. It is just like a knife. And, uh, for eight days we went on drives on Tinian and it was about the 7th night, I guess it was, I didn't want to get out of the tank. I was sick, so I stayed in the tank that night and I told Outen, our tank commander, I said "I don't even want to get out of here. I don't care if they blow this tank up or not, I don't want to get out." So I stayed in there and the next morning my right leg was almost swelled up like a football and the tank commander come in and cut my trousers down and I had big red streaks going up my leg. So they knew that it was blood poisoning and they took me in a jeep back to the beach and they weren't evacuating by boat anymore. After Saipan they were flying them over; they had converted a, I guess a A-26 bomber to a litter carrier. So, they flew us just two miles over to Saipan, but the plane was full of guys who were wounded. We landed at the Aslito airport in Saipan and then we were transported to the same building I told you that

we were shooting at when we were going in and I spent 30 some days there, 31 or 32 days.

The interesting thing with that is that I had blood poisoning so bad that they thought that they might have to take the bottom part of the leg off. I was kind of out of it most of the time and what happened was that they, I think induced me into a coma or something. I was out for 24 hours or so and they said when you wake up, we are going to try something and it was called penicillin and that was apparently; penicillin was pretty new at that time. So, I remember about every three hours they would come and poke me in the rear end with a needle and give me some penicillin and in about a week or two those red streaks started to go away. As a matter of fact it was feeling better and of course in the meantime I hadn't eaten anything and I had lost a tremendous amount of weight. But anyway, they fixed me up and everything was fine. When I woke up; he had told me before that we are going to put you to sleep and when you wake up you are either going to have 2 feet or you're going to have one. Well, I woke up and I could wiggle two toes and that was pretty good.

I almost think I owe my life to the fact that penicillin was out about that time.

Apparently that is what did it. I,uh, I never even told my folks about that ever and so, gosh, I was married and at one time I was at home and I told my folks about it. But it was something that I was just shocked to find out that it was healing. I got back to my outfit and I noticed in the article there that he put that I went back to Tinian but I didn't go to Tinian but they were on Saipan too. All I had to do was go back to outfit and I wanted to

go back to them because we were sending replacements in and they were coming in from the rear echelon and I didn't want somebody to be taking my place on the crew and so I made my way back to the crew and they were all suntanned. They were as dark as they could be and I was like a white ghost. I am not sure that they wanted me there.

(laughing) but anyway I rejoined the crew and stayed with them and we trained and went to Iwo Jima.

Mr. Misenhimer

You stayed on Saipan, right?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, I stayed right on Saipan. Some of them went back to Maui after Tinian was secured but I was in the hospital and they figured that was the best place to stay.

Mr. Misenhimer

But your tank stayed there too?

Mr. Harris

Yeah the tanks all stayed on Saipan and of course what happened is that we got brand new tanks brought in and I think we were up to full strength by the time we went to Iwo Jima. We only had enough for two companies on Tinian. It was C and D Company and they found 18 tanks, each one had 18 or I can't remember the exact number but it was half a battalion strength on Tinian because we just didn't have any tanks left.

Harold J. Goldberg puts in his book, he wrote a whole article about that in our book that they scrounged around and they robbed parts and they finally got two complete companies. I was in C Company and of course I went over with.

Mr. Misenhimer

But your crew stayed in Saipan before Iwo?

Mr. Harris

Our crew stayed in Saipan and I don't exactly know what led to that but I know that some of them, some companies or some of them went back to Maui.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Harris

Well, of course we trained. We were training going up on the hill Topotchuu and firing practice; just regular training. We were like occupation forces on Saipan for awhile. We got ready for Iwo Jima and of course we boarded on a LST, I don't remember the number of that was, but we boarded the LST off of Saipan and we had 5 tanks on each LST and the rest of them were infantry bearing tanks and we were always loaded in the very front of the bow. So you could get 5 tanks off of each LST and it took awhile to form up and so forth but we did the same thing. They put us out around 4,000 yards off and we went in a line abreast, side by side as best as we could. You probably have seen aerial pictures of a whole bunch of tanks followed by a whole bunch of infantry carrying tanks and they seem to be pretty close to our line abreast. That was the best plan but it didn't always work.

But, we hit Iwo Jima on that part of volcanic sand was back up there 15, 16, 18 feet high and at a very steep angle, 30-35 degrees and there is no way in the world that we could get up there. And the fact is here we were down below that thing and we couldn't even

use our weapons because there is nothing to fire at. We were just on that island not even minutes and we got the order to get off the island and back into the water and we all knew that there was a plan if we had to get back off the island we would circle Suribachi and fire at targets of opportunity. We knew that it might be an option but we kind of discounted that, we figured we were getting in on the island. So we stayed out in the water and we were a couple hundred yards out or whatever and we couldn't see much to fire at until night and then we would see muzzle blasts. That is when we would try to hit some targets up there.

What I would do is that I had a 30 caliber machine gun in the bow and if we could get the driver to get the tank to face Suribachi and hold it as best as he can in that floppy water and we were bobbing around, I had a tracer every third round and I see a muzzle blast and I fired as close as I could to it until Whitaker could spot it and he could have an idea where the muzzle blast was. We were using phosphorous and fire phosphorous shells up there because it would light the area up. I swear we must have wasted 10 out of 11 shots trying to hit something on Suribachi that night. And I don't even know what good we did except that some of the gun emplacements could get knocked out and whether we did any of them or not, who knows. But we went through a hundred ninety rounds of 75MM ammunition on the way in and that night. By morning we were out of 75MM and we were almost out of gas and we got the ok to come in. At that time the C.P. was right at the base of Suribachi, so we did get ashore and at that time we had a driver at that time was named Harold "Shorty" Holt, he was 5 feet 7, we didn't have Gammel anymore, he complained he couldn't control it because during the night they had to shot off a good

hunk of those, oh what do you call it the cleats on the tracks and it was hard to control it because as the track would go around you would have forward motion at a time and then you would have no motion at a time because some of those cleats were gone. So it was almost impossible to drive that thing and steer it but we got ashore and we wanted to get more fuel and more ammunition and of course our Major Beavans was there and he said "not in that tank" because the tank was all shot up and just about everything wasn't armor plate was full of holes. So, we had to abandon that tank and we got one of the reserves. There were 76 tanks in our battalion and 68 of them went in and doing the math, I think there were 8 reserves and we got one of those reserves and then we were with the 5th Marine Division all the rest of the time until about the 27th day and our job there was to fire into bunkers and aid and so forth and it was almost a fruitless effort because we think we knocked out a bunker and the next day they are firing out of it. On Iwo, we didn't know it at the time, but there were three or four levels in these caves. You think that you are firing into a hole and you think that is all there is but that is just the beginning of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

They had these tunnels everywhere?

Mr. Harris

Oh, everywhere! The whole island and we didn't know that ourselves until almost near the end of the operation. We were just called in to do this and the other thing that we did was that we worried about their battles because we heard that there were a bunch of tanks on that island and we aren't in the position to fight with a Jap tank. They had an electric traversing on their turret, they could swing a turret around in 15-16 seconds. It would

take us a minute to go around 360 degrees and we had handles like an old artillery piece. That is all it was; we had a 75MM howitzer cannon.

Well, fortunately for us they had bulldozed up and put most of their tanks down as gun emplacements and we took a lot of those out. But you know some of the ones we took out had no crew in it. They would just abandon them. They were there and they became a target so we would fire at them and a lot of those, within a few days in the operation, I don't know what happened but there must have been 150 or maybe more of them, I don't know, on the island buried as gun emplacements.

But we never had to battle a tank, they had a lot of Shermans on the islands by that time. So they really didn't use us much after we got established and when they needed a tank or flame thrower they would usually call the Sherman Tank.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Harris

Well, not much else; we weren't doing a whole lot towards the tail end. We were lucky, we never hit a mine. We did lose a lot of our tanks to mines. I put on a presentation one night here at the adult education and I had some slides showing several of our tanks, I circled them, that had made it to shore and that had gotten blown up either by mines or by fire. And we did have a lot of casualties and fortunately for us, our tank never hit a mine. We lost our tank, our left track in the night about the 27th day but we weren't anywhere near the tank, we were in foxholes and we usually took refuge in a bomb crater or

something like that at night. But the next day we noticed that the track was gone so we had to go back to the beach.

We got a ride back on a weasel, those are the little tracked vehicle that we use to use to carry ammunition back and forth and they got us back to our CP and we reported that our tank was immobilized and that we wanted another tank and of course our leader said "you look around you, there aren't any tanks." I think we had about 10 or 11 operational at that time. And at that time he said "the war is over for us" Within a day or two we were out, we were gone.

And you know it was strange leaving Iwo Jima. We knew there were a tremendous amount of casualties but we didn't know how much. But, uh, it was pretty sad when you finally found out. We went over to the cemetery, there wasn't a cemetery at that time but the burial group was working on putting up crosses and they were going to be building a little fence, a picket fence around, but they hadn't finished it yet. We were at a ceremony.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were having a ceremony and then what?

Mr. Harris

Well, we joined a ceremony that was over by the area where the Graves division was building the picket fence that would enclose those white crosses that would mark the locations where temporary graves of these Marines that were killed in action and of course all that we saw were just thousands, but we didn't know how many thousands.

But they were in body bags sealed in wooden coffins and they were lying in wait, we presumed, for a time and the war would be over and they would be brought home.

But, uh, I wrote this for an article one time and I will repeat it to you: “They came from all corners of America and they were Hispanic, Jewish and Italian, Indian, colored and white, rich and poor and together as one unit they fought. They fought to make a difference.” And I closed this one by saying “Ladies and gentleman that is the purest and highest form of democracy in action.”

I’ll never forget the words of that minister, I’m not so sure if I am repeating exactly what he said but its close to it but we all stood at attention and he said “any man amongst us living, survivors of this carnage, this massacre, this unthinkable display of death and destruction who fails to understand the sacred obligation and duty to keep their memory alive will thereby betray those who lie here dead.” Then he added these words “Whoever lifts a hand against his brother in hate makes of their bloody sacrifices an empty hollow mockery.” I’m not sure that is exactly what he said but I tell you we got shiver’s. We just pledged right then and there that we were going to do everything we could do the rest of our life to try to live their lives for them and raise their families as the Lord would dictate and to keep their memory alive.

I wrote a poem and it has been published in the *Leatherneck Magazine* in 2005 and they just published it again just a month ago in February, the new version about Iwo Jima and I don’t know if you want that poem, if you want me to recite it or not but it’s a short one.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure, go ahead and recite it please.

Mr. Harris

Well, I guess I will have to find it. Originally I called it 60 years have come and gone because it was 2005 and they printed it in a lot of newspapers around here, Minneapolis and so forth but then the *Leatherneck* put it in their magazine and then I changed it because now were celebrating the 65th anniversary and I call it “Three score years plus five”

Before the dawning of each new day

As we slowly begin to awake,

Our minds flash back to those turbulent days

On a volcanic island we had to take.

Three score years plus five have passed

Since we stormed a distant beach.

We were young, we were strong, and we were ready to fight

We were trained to use all our leaders could teach.

The slaughter that took place on that bloody volcanic shore

Became a supreme test for weapons and man forevermore

Those of us that survived live on for those that gave it all,

Wondering why and how we came through unscathed and standing tall.

History will probably treat us well,

And memorials will forever stand
To remember those that died
And were buried in this hot volcanic sand
The brutality of battle that burns in our minds after all these years
Reflecting back on those who died
Still brings out our manly tears

Along with Valley Forge and Belleau Woods
The savage battle for Iwo is now in the history books
Our nation's flag flies over the land of the free
Because of the actions our country took
Yes, my friends we remember those thousands we left on Iwo
As we awake at the approach of dawn
Even though three score years plus five have come and gone
Mr. Misenhimer

Very good sentiments there.

Mr. Harris

I read it a number of times, at different places and reunions and so forth. Its not good poetry but I didn't care too much about that. It's a heartfelt feeling that you are never going to forget looking over those white crosses and just seeing nothing but; the only sign of color in the whole land there. Everything else was dark, and grey and black and dirty and filthy and here are those crosses. We didn't leave there with a real feeling of victory and yet we knew we won something. At first we didn't because the thought of saving

25,000 airmen didn't cross our mind. All we knew is that we had thousands and thousands of dead Marines that stayed on that island while we were leaving.

But, then all of a sudden, we said we didn't think we believed in anything but one day a shot up, crippled up B-29 called Dynamite came in and rumbled around the sky there and made three or four passes, I think it was eighth or ninth day or something like that. The unfinished runway, the runway wasn't even completed, and they landed in an emergency because they had a bomb bay door that was stuck open because of anti-aircraft apparently and he was never going to make it to Tinian. They would have crashed into the Pacific and at that particular time, even before we took Iwo Jima, reportedly there were over a thousand airmen lost coming back from Japan, anti-aircraft hits and so forth and where they had crashed into the Pacific.

I don't know the exact numbers, but it was well over 2100 B-29's landed on Iwo Jima in an emergency in the 5 or 6 months after we left there and doing the math that is 25,000 airmen whose lives would have been lost because they couldn't survive in that cold water in the Pacific up there in that area anyway. They had these big Dumbo seaplanes that would pick them up if they were not far from Tinian or Saipan but they couldn't come up that far. So, they would have been lost.

You know it is interesting, one time we were at a reunion in Wichita Falls, TX; I was there this year and a couple years ago and we had the guys from the Air Force were there.

A lot of them came to our reunion to thank us for taking Iwo Jima, of all things, but they were so glad that they were able to.

Those were survivors that had used Iwo as an emergency landing and you know I thought right then and there that if the bond had never been established; the bond was established at that point between US Airman and the Marines, that will probably outlive us all.

Because, can you imagine that before the dropping of the Atomic bomb having lost 25,000 airmen in a bombing attack and bombing attacks of Japan it would have been unthinkable. You know when we ask ourselves did we win anything; I guess the answer is yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date did you leave Iwo Jima?

Mr. Harris

I think it was, I always thought that it was; well I know it was the 27th day that we lost out tank and so I think it was within just a day or two, or a couple days right after that; that they got us off the island. We left before it was secured.

Mr. Misenhimer

Somewhere around March 19th then?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, that could be.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you see either one of the flags raised?

Mr. Harris

Yes, I saw them both raised. No, I didn't see them raised, I saw the first flag. We were coming back for some ammunition and we needed gas and we were going back to C.P. to get refueled and we knew we were out of sniper territory so we opened the hatch and we had our heads sticking out and we were also looking for dead Marines, we didn't want to run over one and they were all over the island. My God, it was unbelievable! And so we had to keep our eyes open and all of a sudden I looked up at Mt. Suribachi and I got on the intercom and said "hey guys, there is a flag up there."

The gunner had already seen it and the tank commander and they were whooping and hollering and then all of the sudden the ships started to whistle out there and it was a little flag and we stopped over and parked the tank and our Major got us into an area and told us to get out of their hair and let load the tank. We were two or three hours getting reloaded and when we were on the way back, of course we saw the big flag up there. But we didn't see it go up and they had no idea that the most famous picture of the Second World War had just been taken. But, really nobody whooped or hollowed or did anything about that big flag up there. It was the little one that created all the excitement on the island.

So, it was just one of those things and there has been a lot of things said about that flag and I think there is probably, I don't want to say overrated, but I think that it became the center point of the seventh bond drive and it happened to be the most famous picture of the Second World War and that sort of thing, Iwo Jima seems to be kind of the Marine

Corps trademark at this point. And, it is probably as one General said “it will probably guarantee a Marine Corps for 500 years.” But, uh, there were flags raised everywhere and all over the Pacific. I am not trying to put it down, but it is what it is. It was a fantastic thing to have happen at so early in the combat because it cheered everybody up. It was just fantastic. You know, Admiral Nimitz, he said “Uncommon valor was common virtue.” And of course, obviously, it was well received by the American public and the military took it, of course, as a compliment for a job well done.

But, uh, any combative action requires a behavior above and beyond the norm and, I don't know, if you don't conduct yourself above and beyond the norm you die. That is one of the things, Iwo Jima was a miserable, horrible place to fight and I know that there is this thing to think about, the enemy is trying to kill you even if he knows he is going to die and that kind of puts us at a disadvantage because we are not suicide troops. And in that manner we have to function in a manner that completely negates any form of rationale human behavior and that is something that the American housewife with their 18-19 year old sons over there fighting, didn't know anything about. That is probably one of the reasons we came home and didn't say much to anybody.

I know in my case, uh, I never thought it was good conversation. We wanted to be like everybody else and we knew that we weren't. Something was burning in our innermost souls and consequently most of us just stuck to Veterans clubs and American Legions, VFW's and Disabled Veterans, we stuck to ourselves. And not many knew, it took many years to feel that you were part of society again and I think that had a lot to do with the

guys in Korea and Vietnam, the same thing. I really believe that they didn't feel that it was worth talking about.

Mr. Misenhimer

In your article you mentioned Charles Lindberg raising the first flag?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, he's from Minneapolis and he lives here, or lived here; he died about four years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

No, I believe it was January of 2009. (editors note: He died June 2007)

Mr. Harris

2009? Yeah, well good heavens, I tell you when I am 85 years old everything was five years ago. (laughing) Yeah, it was 2009. We had a meeting at the Elks club, right here in Minneapolis someplace, anyway, and in had the opportunity to meet him and visit with him for just a few minutes and he seemed like a great person and I never knew who he was but I was fortunate enough to go that Veterans dinner and he was there as a guest.

You said it was 2009 when he died?

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm pretty sure it was 2009.

Mr. Harris

Yeah, well it had to be more than a couple years ago then. But, anyways, he got his just award because he was called a liar for many, many years. People didn't believe him that he was up there raising that first flag. But, there was finally a controversy in Washington when they wanted to do this 7th bond drive and I don't think that they wanted to say much

about the first flag because the picture that Rosenfeld took was so dramatic and it captured the imagination of America. I think that they felt that it would be a deterrent to even talk much about a different flag and that was so successful on the 7th bond drive that it really help pay for the end of the war, I guess. But that is the picture everyone was raving about, was that picture about a whole bunch guys down there.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was the staged picture and that is how the rumor got started and that was part of that thing with that 7th bond drive because that rumor was still going around.

Mr. Harris

Yeah, that is interesting. I know that up in Canada they make these memorials of raising the flag and I am trying to think of the name of the company, but anyway I ordered one and it was \$120 or something like that and I got it and I called them back because I wanted another one and you could only buy one. So I told them that I really need two because if I die one of these days my daughters will think that will look awful funny if they have to cut that in half. So this lady from London, Ontario called me back and said we are going to send you a second one. I sent them, also, a bunch of stuff on Iwo and she called me back and said "we are going to send you one and there won't be a bill." She said "do you mind if we use your material that you sent us for advertising and promotion?" and I said "no, not at all." So I signed a piece of paper and mailed it up to them but it was so funny that it was, and I can't even think of the name of the company that makes that thing but it was strange. So I have two of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up and ask a question, on Saipan I understand that a lot of the locals

committed suicide, is that right?

Mr. Harris

Oh absolutely. There was a place up at Marpi point where there was a steep cliff and they would throw their kids off and then jump off after them. It's something I never witnessed but we couldn't help but know about it because everybody was talking about it and some of our tank crew were dispatched, our amphibious tanks were dispatched up to that area to see if they could discourage this from happening but I wasn't one of those tanks. I was in the hospital, I guess, at that time. Not quite I guess, but I don't remember what I was doing but I wasn't sent up there. Uh, and they said that they would jump off that cliff and smash against the rocks and they claimed that they were told that we were going to run them over with a steamroller and whatever we were going to do and it was terrible. We did go out and get some with our tanks afterwards, after the island was secure we brought some back out of the caves

Now that was an interesting thing, we had learned how to say a few words in Japanese and we would be able to get them out and then we could say "it is safe, you can come out. Drop your weapons." I don't know if I can say it (speaking Japanese) was its safe, you can come out. And then to drop your weapons we would say "(Japanese)" and that was sort of a -----and they would drop their weapons and some in the military had taken refuge in those caves and we think that they were deserters. You know, they just avoided fighting and when they came out they were dirty, filthy, crying out loud they were terrible. Bedraggled, starving and everything else so we didn't think they were much of a threat. We watched them like a hawk because we knew they were military and then we

take them back to the stockade. And a couple of occasions we went in first gear and we felt like pied piper, we had quite a group, natives, walking behind us and the ones that couldn't walk we would put them up on the tank and pretty soon they had these LVTs going out after them and they would bring them back in.

Mr. Misenhimer

These are the civilians?

Mr. Harris

These were civilians but some of them were actually Japanese soldiers that didn't want to fight.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that the Japanese told those civilians that if they were captured by the Marines that they would be tortured and all kind of horrible things happen to them.

Mr. Harris

Oh, they were told a lot of things. Yeah, I guess so, I don't know we could communicate to a certain degree because we had been taught all these different words but then I remember once (Japanese) you have to say those things sharp and mean like you're mad. You can't recite them nice and gently and like "hurry up" was (Japanese) if you said that way. One occasion when we got back to the stockade, ah, one Chamoran lady came to me and said "I speak English, so I understood what you were saying." (laughing) I laugh because I had the speaker, you know the loudspeaker that I could use in the tank and it was so funny because she was explaining to me that she wanted me to know that she could speak English. (laughing) So, what an experience especially when you're nineteen years old.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened at any of those islands?

Mr. Harris

Oh gosh, I cant think, oh, a myriad of things. There are some parts of it----- I talked to a fellow named Griggsby from the Texas coast. Uh, he died just about a year ago, uh a year and half ago and he was going to come to our reunion and he got hit by a car, a head on accident, Thurlow T. Grigsby, he lived in Corpus Christi and he and I talked on the phone a lot and I'd say "Do you remember what we did on such and such a day" and so forth and we would agree that there were periods of time we couldn't even remember what we did. And I would say that over and over and I'd say "Well, I know that we were in battle many times" but I said "I know a lot of times we weren't doing anything except waiting for orders." And he said "I had absolute blackouts on some of those things that happened" and he said "I couldn't tell you what we did on certain days" and we talked about this a lot because he was one of our crewman and we were in the same tank in Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

Mr. Misenhimer

How do you compare the fighting in those three islands?

Mr. Harris

Well, personally for our sake, we had more action, saw more action and destroyed more things, uh, blew up more gun emplacements, took out more machine gun nests and shot more snipers out of trees on Saipan then we ever did on Iwo. There weren't any trees on Iwo and, uh, so I don't know; now our contribution on Iwo I don't think was all that much. We made the assault wave and we raised some fracas the first night by firing up at

these gun blasts and so forth and we shot into a lot of these holes but sometimes they were all wasted shots because the enemy was way down in the second or third layer below. But, uh, on Saipan right off the bat we got entangled with them.

Mr. Misenhimer

One thing that I forgot to ask earlier, on December 7th, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Harris

Yes, I sure do.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you and how did you hear it?

Mr. Harris

I was in Duluth, MN with my dad's 1936 Terraplane. My folks had given me permission to go see Byron Lemman who was a former resident of Floodwood but he went to Duluth with his family and he was going to Central High School there in Duluth and there was a basketball game and he was a good basketball player. So, I spent Friday night and Saturday night at his house.

Sunday, I had breakfast in the morning and said goodbye to his mother and dad and I was driving back, I was sixteen years old, and my dad had let me use the car to go. I was driving back and it was about noontime or one o'clock or something like that and I had the radio on and it was interrupted that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and I thought it was another one of those, oh, radio shows like the Martians were attacking or something like that. And I kept listening to it and all of the sudden it dawned on me that this was

real! And I'm driving home and I was, I guess a half hour or so, I'm in Floodwood, and I go into the house and of course everyone is glued to the radio and that is when I realized that we were in a war. But it was strange because my dad had given me the permission to go to Duluth and back and I was on the road when I heard it on the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Harris

No, I got an old Japanese ammunition box in my garage and a few little trinkets and so forth but I would say that I had a couple flags and I happen to meet a couple sailors that had a lot of money on their hands so we traded the money for the flags and (laughing) at that particular time it seemed my advantage to put the money in my pocket. I was not a real souvenir hunter anyway. I never really thought that was part of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Harris

Well, I suppose the first invasion in and when I saw Bob Lewis' tank blow up. That was, uh, just a terrible shock and adventure turned to serious business at that point. I think I aged a few years just going in that island because we were all brand new, we were young, we were 18n years old and really didn't know what combat was like other than the fact that we had been trained but, uh, it was a shock. And to find out that everywhere you look you are loosing tank, we lost two out of our five going in and then found out later that we had lost close to 13, I think it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Harris

No, we never got friendly fire from anybody. On Iwo Jima they tell me that the 10th Marines had gotten issued some wrong targets and that there were some friendly fire problems but, uh, we were never involved in it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the medics?

Mr. Harris

Oh my God, those poor guys! How many had we lost? We lost 300 or something, 400 medics on Iwo Jima. It was horrible and the problem is that the Japanese were targeting them. They were targeted as much as they target a flame thrower guy or a BAR man and there were no question about it, if they were out helping somebody, uh, they were under fire just like anybody else. Uh, a guy by the name of Stewart, one of our heating and air conditioning contractors, dealers wrote a book called Pictures on the Piano and, uh, his brother was a corpsman on Iwo Jima and he died there. And we lost some of the corpsman out of our outfit and I thought it was just pathetic, well even Bradley's father got wounded and taken out the island like the 4th day wasn't it or something like that?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, I think so.

Mr. Harris

Yeah, and the problem is, they didn't dare wear the cross, they didn't dare wear any indication that they were a corpsman or they were really were a target. We were fighting

an absolute ruthless, totally different.... You know they talk about, you know we had to take on a personality that completely negated any rationale form of human behavior but they were well ahead of us on that game. And that was just unbelievable.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, I did. One funny thing happened on Saipan (laughing), I was in the hospital after I was evacuated from Tinian and I had a toothbrush and in those days these toothbrushes were made with wooden handles, they didn't have a lot of plastic, I think, in those days. Anyway, I had broken the handle off and I had it in my combat jacket and that is where I kept my toothbrush in there because it fit. And I brushed my teeth through Saipan with that thing, I brushed my teeth on Tinian with it and I had it in my jacket pocket so when I was evacuated to the hospital I still had that thing in my pocket and the strands went every direction. It looked horrible, but it was a toothbrush.

So, I had my canteen gear close to me and I poured a little water in it and I was brushing my teeth one day when the Red Cross worker came by and he was watching things and he said "Marine, that looks bad. Let me look at that thing that your brushing with." So, I showed it to him and he said "that's a toothbrush?" and I said "It use to be." (laughing) He said "I'll be back in a few minutes." Well he came back with a brand new toothbrush and then he jokingly said "What are you going to with that one?" and I said "Well, I guess I am going to throw it away." He said "Can I have it?" and I said "What are you going to do with it?" and he said "I'm going to mount it!" (laughing)

Of course the guys around me were laughing about it and I'm laying there and recovering from blood poisoning and the guy next to me had a chest wound and he was all wrapped up and the guy on the other side had been hit with a, he had been shoveling a fox hole and a shell hit the shovel and went up his pinkie and he was laying there with his hand hanging there and it ripped his skin off his little finger or something like that and of course everyone was teasing him that he should get a Purple Heart for that and joking and so forth. And this guy, when he came and said "I'm going to mount that toothbrush!" everybody laughed about it. So, I don't know what ever happened to my toothbrush but that was funny.

I'll tell you another thing that happened, this guy next to me in the hospital had something went in his stomach and came out his chest and it punched a hole in his lung. And, uh, he would pull his bandage down and he would say "Hey guys, I have something to show you." And he would take a drag of a cigarette, inhale it and smoke would come out his chest. And he would do this occasionally until he was very disappointed after a week or so that he started to heal and he couldn't do that anymore. (laughing)

You will find, in any kind of a combat situation, I think, that people will try to make humor out of everything, anything. I think that is true. When you're in a foxhole you would hear somebody hollering a joke back and forth. I think that is part of American heritage, I think we are that way. We are just a bunch of nuts. But, I'll never forget that thing that happened in the hospital that the guy next to me with his pinky hanging in the

air, and the guy on the other side with a hole in his chest. That was a weird experience that I will never forget.

Mr. Misenhimer

You could brush your teeth when you were in combat and some ways or other, right?

Mr. Harris

Well, I had to have that little tiny toothbrush. I carried that everywhere. No toothpaste but whenever we got a chance we(laughing)....we had to have something to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

Speaking of sanitation, when you were in combat what did you have to do when your bowels had to move?

Mr. Harris

Well, wherever you were, whenever you were, whenever you can, anywhere, it didn't make any difference, it.....I don't know, I can't remember all the different occasions but I mean when you just went off to the side wherever you can. And when people tell me that they should have women in combat, they are the people that have never been in combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

I would think with that many men around, too, that would become quite a mess.

Mr. Harris

Well, I'm sure that it did but you know everybody has to do it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Harris

Yeah, uh, Betty Hutton came to Saipan and we even had air raids after she left. Maybe

she was there before Christmas and, uh, 1944, yeah, and she was there with a whole troop of people. The only one I ever saw out there. I never saw Bob Hope or anybody. But, Betty Hutton, she wowed the troops.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Harris

It was always pretty good. You know, I think of course we never had to worry about rotation. We knew going into the War that we were there for the duration and if we got hurt or cut and you went back to your outfit that was fine. No matter what happened to you, if you got patched up and go back to your tank, or back to your platoon that was the normal procedure. And, uh, as long as you were physically fit, uh....

I had this thing in my arm and was still festering and bothering me when we went to Tinian but I had to be careful that when I went to inspection that I wore a long sleeve coat. That way they wouldn't see the bandage or they wouldn't let me go to Tinian. So, you just don't want to leave your crew, that's all. Once your attached to your crew you do anything in the world to stay with them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Harris

Oh heavens yes! We had Navy PCS on our tanks going in on Saipan, which I could get any frequency; I could dial all over the place. And we would tune into Tokyo Rose quite often and she just boosted our morale. Honest to God she was suppose to shatter us, we

were suppose to throw our weapons down and run for the beach and all that sort of thing, but, uh, it was a great thrill when she mentioned our outfit or somebody's outfit that you knew, or a name of an officer that you knew was in the operation. But, uh, it had the reverse effect of what I am sure the Japanese intended.

When we were through with Saipan they discontinued the use of these PCS radios because building an antenna load took minutes to get a transmitter to work and so it was a bad radio. So, they threw those out and then we took the Army punch-button, we had 11 channels I think it was and you just pushed a button. So, they didn't need a radio operator anymore. As a matter of fact we had a choice when they decided to do that I was rated as a PCER or communication personnel and my rating corporal was a communication personnel and they gave us a choice that we could either take a transfer to continue being in radio, or whatever, or change to line rating. Of course I, to the man, I think we all changed to line rating so that we could stay with our outfit. So, we didn't have so called radiomen anymore because all I had to do was push a button.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever in any typhoons out there?

Mr. Harris

There was a pretty good windstorm when I was in the hospital. I don't remember too much about it but I know that they had a good one and everyone was talking about the waves came up and moved some tanks around. But I was in that big brick building there for quite some time and that was after Tinian. But we didn't have any tsunami's or anything like that, that I knew of.

Mr. Misenhimer

After Iwo Jima, did you come back to the states then or where did you go?

Mr. Harris

Uh, after Iwo Jima I went to Maui and we were based in Maui. As a matter of fact our baseball team won 18 straight games playing ball. I didn't play ball because I had a bad knee at that time, I couldn't do anything. But, we had a lot of fun there. We relaxed and so forth and then we were training for Operation Coronet, which was the invasion of Japan. They had brought whole brand new tanks in, Borg Warner transmissions, two engines in them, different tanks entirely. 105 MM instead of 75 MM and it was great stuff and that was going to be our machines and when the Atomic Bombs were dropped, uh, within days those tanks disappeared. We don't know, we never knew what happened to them. Now, I was typing in the office during that early period and we never had anything to type up about, I don't think they were ever assigned.

Mr. Misenhimer

You don't know if those tanks were actually assigned to you or whatever happened to them?

Mr. Harris

They were going to be for us but we never really got them. They were down on Mali on the docks parked in a line down there and what I think they did as soon as that Atomic Bomb went off and the second one went off and the War was pretty much over, I think they put them back on a ship and took them somewhere. We never got a chance to use them. And, so of course we were told that now were just waiting for transportation back to the states.

They didn't get a ship to come back, they didn't have any. And finally a little baby aircraft carrier named *Kitkun Bay* came over and, uh, we all got on that and we went back to, where did we go to, uh, Los Angeles or San Diego? We got into San Diego and it had German Swastikas on the conning tower. They had come over to carry troops home.

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12th of 1945, President Roosevelt died; do you remember hearing about that?

Mr. Harris

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you on Maui by then or where were you?

Mr. Harris

Uh, lets me see 1945 we were on Maui.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have when they heard about it?

Mr. Harris

Well, it was pretty sad. It was a real shock, uh, butuh, Jan, Feb, March, April, yes, by that time we were in Maui. We just had gotten there and I was in the theater one time, that was when the bomb was dropped. When they dropped the Atomic bombs they called and interrupted the theater and told everybody to go back to the base. And, uh, so we all had to leave and get into our vehicles and trucks and whatever and go back to our base. But, when Roosevelt died, I believe we were in tents, in our camping tents.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, on May the 8th Germany surrendered, did you hear about that? Did you have any celebrations or anything?

Mr. Harris

Well, not a whole lot but of course we were happy. We knew then that we were going to get a lot of help, uh, going into Japan because we figured at that time we were going to be, uh, there were no question that we were going to Japan. And we even had a little song about it, we talked about seeing the Golden Gate in 48.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you heard about the Atomic Bomb being dropped, did you know what it was? Or what did they tell you?

Mr. Harris

No, I don't believe they indicated what it was. It was just a big weapon, I don't know. Did they call it the Atomic Bomb, I'm not sure?

Mr. Misenhimer

I don't know what they called it, I'm not sure either.

Mr. Harris

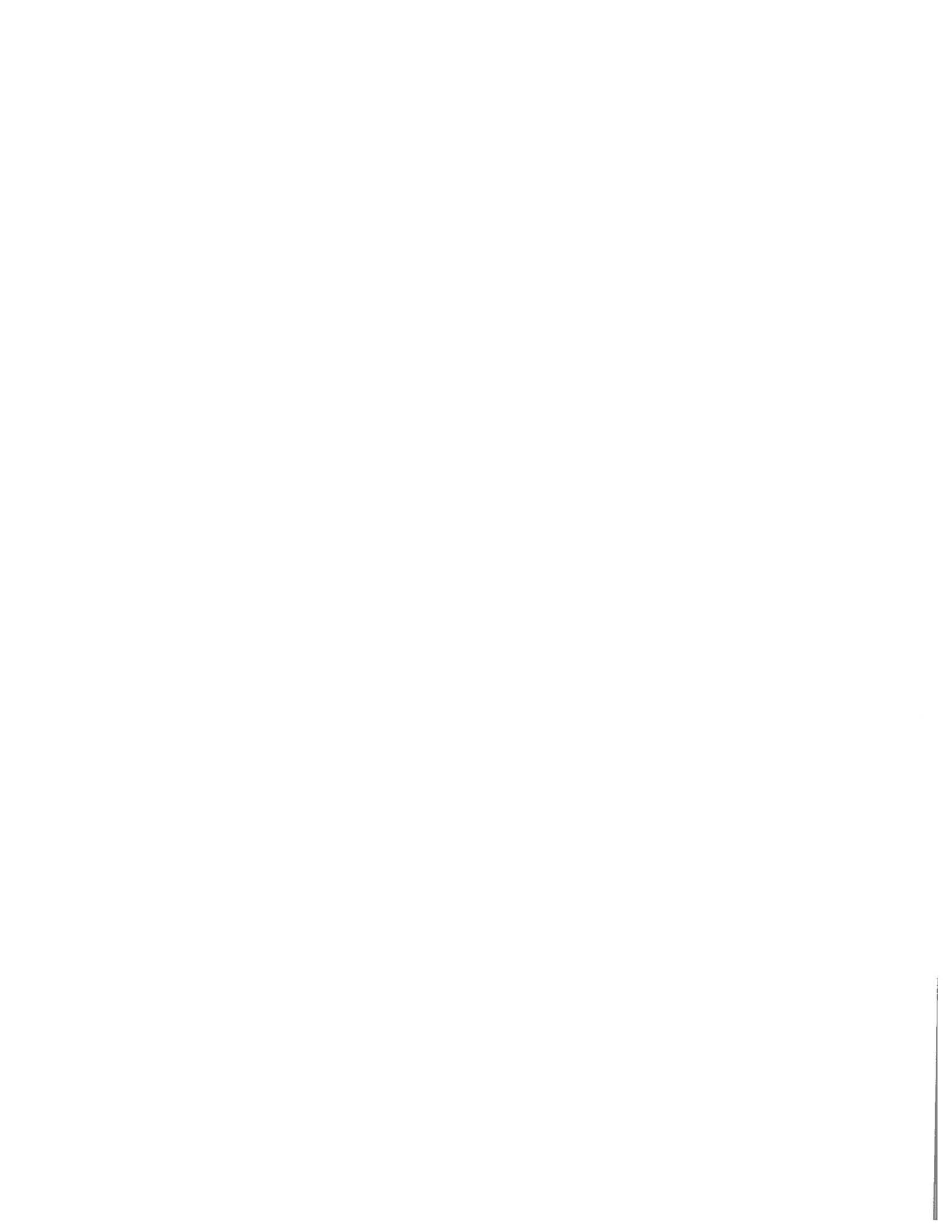
We just knew that there had been a gigantic explosion of the bigger weapon that had gone off to some degree and, uh, I don't think the general public were told what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then on August 15th when Japan did surrender, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Harris

Well, yeah that was, of course, we knew that after they dropped those two bombs that it



had to be over. But of course we didn't really know that the War was going to be over until the surrendering came. Then of course we learned an awful lot about it later. But, that was a bigger celebration for us, we were on liberty and we just had a great time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When were you discharged?

Mr. Harris

I was discharged on November 24th, 1945. I went in on the 26th day of July is when I was brought in.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you discharged at?

Mr. Harris

I was discharged in San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Harris

Oh, a little bit. I wandered around a little bit. My folks had moved back to a little town of Sleepy Eye, MN and I knew that was where I was headed but I hung around San Francisco for awhile, stayed at the Palace Hotel and I just, I guess I wasn't.....I took a ferry over to Point Richmond and walked around the area that my folks had lived when I went into the Marine Corp even though I knew that it was all boarded up. And I wandered around there for a long time, I had no good reason, uh, just wasn't ready to get on a bus or plane, train or anything like that. They didn't have to many airplanes in those days anyway, but finally I took a train with a friend of mine as far as Ogden, Utah; he

lived in Ogden so I spent the night with him and his folks and it was sort of a get together and a great homecoming for him and it made me a little excited to get home.

And then I didn't take a train, I took a bus from Ogden to MN. All the trains were terrible because they had put into service every kind of a beat up old car, wooden seats and everything else; even some gaslights cars. They had everything on those rails and they were crowded and packed. You couldn't walk up the aisle so when I left Ogden I decided to go to the bus depot and take a bus home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Harris

Oh yes, I went to, uh, first I started at St. Olaf college in Northfield, MN. But my wife to be, the one that I had been practically engaged to during the war, I guess we wrote about 150 letters back and forth, and she was in Duluth and I thought what am I doing in St. Olaf when in should be in Duluth. So, I went up to Duluth and I went to Duluth Business University and then I also registered at the Duluth State Teachers College. At that time it was a state teachers college, now it is a branch of the University of Minnesota.

But, uh, so I went and I couldn't get a dorm or any kind of a facility like college kids could in those days because they didn't let GI's into the dorms, there weren't enough of them. So, I got a chance to get a corner room at a YMCA in Duluth if I had a partner and a guy by the name of Pete Leverage was there and he was in the 4th Marine Division on Roi Namur and he was also on the 4th Marine Division on Saipan and he had been hit

pretty bad with a piece of airburst, it had caught him in the throat and cut his esophagus in half and lodged part in his backbone. They could never get that piece of shrapnel out but they put a steel esophagus in him or a metal esophagus or some kind and we got along famously.

We went fishing, and hunting, and deer hunting and everything else together and I had this bum leg and he had this throat that was made of steel, so we weren't really to athletic but I tell you we went canoeing up in the boundary waters in MN and just had a lot of things that we did together. Once in awhile we go down to Zelda Bar in Duluth and we would have a few beers and then he get enough beer in him and he would have people hit him in the throat and of course it would clunk, clunk, clunk, you know and pretty soon I would consider that he had to many beers so I'd have to forcibly get him out and get him back to the YMCA. Otherwise he would be there all night bragging about his steel esophagus.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you graduate from college?

Mr. Harris

I graduated from Duluth Business University but that was not a full degree because that was not a sanctioned university but I got my certificate in general accounting and advertising and promotion. And then I didn't attend the state teachers college long enough to get a degree there either.

So, many years later I was a 40 year old student at University of Southern California and I wanted marketing and business law because I had just bought a company. And I became a CEO of a natural gas equipment company up there, it was a takeover situation and I needed a lot of help so I went to the University of Southern California and I spent three years there. But that was a great experience, I was a 40-45 year old student among all these kids.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Harris

In the Marine Corp I was a corporal. It was a joke because I was put into the commanding officers office typing for awhile and they called us tech sergeants in there because they liked all NCO's in there. So, we were acting first sergeants (laughing) but none of that was official. So, this man was quite a operator and he went through the ranks trying to find people who could type. Well, he found one or two and so we were up there and we were the only corporals in the whole place?

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay in the reserves?

Mr. Harris

Uh, inactive reserves for 10 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Never went to meetings?

Mr. Harris

No, I was involved in the Legion and the VFW and that was it. We didn't have to attend

anything. To stay in inactive reserve, my name was called in for Korea and I went down and of course they wouldn't take me because my knee was so bad anyway. I went to Ft. Snelling and we stayed overnight and the examination the doctor told me that crawling up and down those stairs he put the stethoscope on my knee and he said "We don't need you crawling around on those hills in Korea, you can go on home." And I didn't have to go to Korea.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Harris

Not a whole lot. Just got the Presidential Unified Citation three times because we were in the second Marine division in Saipan and they got it and we kind of wallowed in there on their coat tails. And then when the 4th Marine division got it over on Tinian and we were attached to the 4th and low and behold we were attached to the 5th Marine Division on Iwo Jima and they got this Presidential Citation. Sort of a tail wagging the dog, we kind of dragged in along with them. But, people wonder how you get three Presidential Unit Citations, and we always said because we couldn't keep a job. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

What other medals did you get?

Mr. Harris

The only thing, the only thing I got was the regular Asiatic-Pacific, and the World War II medal. No hero stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about battle stars?

Mr. Harris

Well, we got three. We were pretty close to getting four, weren't we? (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

You have had reunions?

Mr. Harris

I've been to quite a few reunions but, gosh now they are all disappearing.

Mr. Misenhimer

These reunions were for what? The second amphibious armored battalion?

Mr. Harris

It was the second armored amphibian battalion and we use to have them in Shreveport, LA and we had them different places and the last two or three years they've had them in Pampa, TX. You know I have a letter here; I was very, very proud of it because the fellow who pretty much manages our reunions wrote a whole article on it and a letter to our commandment of the Marine Corp, James Conway, and it was unbelievable. He sent a letter back with our names on it, individual names and I got it framed and on my wall and I am so real pleased and proud of it. It says "On behalf of all Marines I extend a greeting to the second armored amphibious battalion as you celebrate your reunion in Pampa, TX" and so forth and the battle of Iwo Jima is one of the more storied and iconic battles in Corps history. As part of the first wave to storm the beaches, you truly shaped history. It said "our Corps tradition of war fighting excellence and uncommon valor. Few people ever truly understand the sacrifices our warriors make" and so forth. It was a really good letter.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who was that from?

Mr. Harris

It was from our commandant, the Marine Corps commandant James T. Conway. In a little side note, he signed it and on the side note down below it says "Marshall E. Harris, September 26, 2009" and then it says "Hope all enjoy the reunion." I couldn't believe that he did that. Well, I mean he didn't do it but he had people do it and so it looks good on my wall. I'm very proud of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you recall from your time in WWII?

Mr. Harris

No, I don't. I think you pretty well, no I think I just kind spilled it all. So many things that I will probably think of tonight that I probably should have told you. But, uh, that always happens. I accepted the fact that the reason we were involved is because we happened to be born. Somewhere in 1922, 23, 24 and 25 and it wasn't the fact that we chose that, it just happened.

You know, Tom Brokaw and his great book *The Greatest Generation*, I know that my picture is hanging on the wall down here at Denny's Café, they took one of the articles that Minneapolis paper printed and they took the 2 pictures and made 8x10's out of them and put one of my articles in the middle of it and its hanging on that wall. Well, I feel funny and I told them, I said "I can't come in here anymore."

But they got them hanging on the wall, framed and I get an awful lot of people that want to talk about the Second World War now, so what we have been doing is putting on seminars and, uh, I just got through with speaking at one at the Elk River Adult Education but this Denny's Café, he is very favorable of veterans, he would do anything to help a veteran and, uh, so he has a room dedicated to lectures where two or three of us at different times will.... I've already done one and Guy Roe did one here Monday night and I am on again for April 19th and we will have about 40 people in there having dinner. And while we are eating dinner we are talking and then we have a slide presentation of Saipan, Tinian or Iwo Jima and then open it up for questions. And at that time we will wear our little red jackets and our ribbons and whatever so that we look official.

And, I never thought in all the years that; I would never have done this 40 years ago. I wouldn't have done it 30 years ago. Right now at 85 I'm thinking that I really don't care whether I impress anyone or not. I'm just there telling a little bit of history and it is just unbelievable the reception we get. And they are all 30-35 or 40, maybe 45 or 50 years old. Guys my age don't come, they aren't interested but there is a generation, 2 or 3 generations of people here that are just starving for information.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, thanks again, I appreciate it.

Mr. Harris

I hope you didn't wear your tape machine out. Is that what you were looking for?

Mr. Misenhimer

It was exactly what I was looking for.

Mr. Harris

I appreciate your call.

Mr. Misenhimer

Thank you. Bye now.

Mr. Harris

Bye.

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