

## Albert Skiles Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler. And today is May the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. I'm in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the Nimitz Museum, and I'm interviewing Mr. Al Skiles. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, and is for the preservation of historical information related to this site. So let me start off, Al, by thanking you for coming all the way from California to spend some time here with us. And let's just get you started by having you introduce yourself; give us your full name, date of birth, and where you were born, and we'll take it from there?

ALBERT SKILES: OK. I'm Clarence Albert Skiles. I was born on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1924, in Orange, California. In those days it was orange groves and citrus, and the little town of Orange was about 9,000 people. So I knew most of them in one way or another.

EM: It was agricultural?

AS: It was agricultural. Yeah.

EM: That was then. So did you have any brothers and sisters?

AS: Two brothers, one three years younger -- he ended up in the Navy and -- that's Paul. He's still living in Kansas City. And Richard is down in Point Loma -- he was a lab technician. Both are already retired now. Actually, Paul is suffering from Alzheimer's and he's in a care house now -- not too good. But it's nice to talk to him, and he can remember old days growing up in that little town.

EM: Now, what did your dad do for a living?

AS: Dad was a -- that's kind of a fill-in there. I didn't get -- he was going to be a farmer. His ancestors -- my grandfather was born -- the whole Skiles tribe -- and lived in Nebraska. A whole bunch of -- 360 acres of farmland and they had their families there. In fact, they had their children, but my grandpa had arthritis at about 26 years old. And he already had so many children and my dad was the oldest. But he got arthritis so bad, his hands were crippled, he couldn't farm. And it's a good thing he had eight kids because, dad being the oldest, he farmed -- helped him. And with the others, they -- then in about 1900, all three families decided California would be good place to get better weather that would be less aggravating to his arthritis because he never walked after that. Just kind of pushed a chair and on crutches. But dad decided --

and this probably affected me -- even the (inaudible) days because what they did, dad didn't want to be a farmer if arthritis would be hereditary -- carried on -- and he took courses in high school, typing, bookkeeping -- whatever fits a job in the office. But the nice thing was he never got arthritis.

EM: Thank God.

AS: Right. Right. It was fine. And the first job he got was in the Sunkist Growers Association. And he of course rose to manager and managed the Orange County Fruit Growers Exchange at Sunkist for 54 years after that. But he kind of influenced me the same way. And I took commercial courses, typing, shorthand, bookkeeping -- not because I might -- what if I had arthritis?

EM: You still don't know, it could skip a generation.

AS: Yeah. It could. And that influenced my assignments in every place I was sent by the Army from then on. I was like Radar in *MASH*, but not as photogenic. But it did put me in a place where I could -- I was always in company headquarters, one way or another, and doing things like that.

EM: Beats being a foxhole.

AS: Right. I still had to dig foxholes, but I definitely -- because (inaudible), but that was kind of -- oh, and I was very, very musical. My family was musical, and I played in the USA Band. And my brother played trombone, I played baritone, I played piano.

EM: That comes in families, too. It seems to run in the genes.

AS: The whole family. Mother was a pianist and guitar. And I kind of take after the piano, and not surprisingly, that landed me some Army jobs, too.

EM: This is going to be an interesting Army story, I'm thinking here. That's good. Well, now, did you stay in Orange Grove through your childhood?

AS: Oh, yes. In fact, I worked in the orange grove. We were -- growing up until -- well, during high school, and we'd work on whatever the oranges need, the irrigation, (inaudible) dig up the ends when the tractors run two ways, I got to dig up the (inaudible). And we wouldn't pick -- well, I did pick one summer. And the worst part of, it must have been '41. I did pick oranges, and I worked in the packing house.

EM: Now, when did you graduate from high school?

AS: Forty-two.

EM: OK. So the war started when you were a senior?

AS: Yeah. I was a senior. Yeah. And some of the fellows joined right away. I didn't join. I waited for the draft.

EM: Well, what was the impact on society there, and your family, and you when the war started. I mean, I know that was a big deal when Pearl Harbor was...

AS: Yeah, like I said, some of the fellows ended up -- signed up right away. I remember Carl, one of my friends -- my running mate in track, and the relays -- I did the 100-yard dash and the 2,200-yard dash. I could run most of the time. And he was in the relay, the 440 relay. We'd get medals -- I still have them hanging in the (inaudible).

EM: Good for you.

AS: That's some of the track (inaudible).

EM: So he went in?

AS: They went in. Some of them --

EM: He went and volunteered?

AS: Yeah.

EM: Did he go into the Army or?

AS: He went into the Army and he got killed, too. (inaudible)

EM: Was he in the European theater or...

AS: I don't remember. I think it was the Pacific. Yeah.

EM: That's bad news. That really brings it home to you when that happens.

AS: From high school, but we graduated -- I graduated before he was killed.

EM: And so you decided to work and then take care your luck when the draft calls?

AS: Right. Well, because I was -- I had an interesting thing that -- I thought of the other day. It probably changed my whole career. My principal recommended me as an FBI clerical job. And I went from Orange, took the [red car?] up to LA and did an interview and got to typing and shorthand work and they said, "Fine." Then I got my draft notice.

EM: You would think having a change to work at the FBI that that would have gotten you off the hook.

AS: I did. I didn't even think about that until the other day, "Why didn't I request a deferment or something?" But I didn't think of it then. I just reported for the draft.

EM: Well, a lot of people back then were thinking, "Hey, I don't want to miss this fight for my country." And I don't know whether that was going through your mind or not --

AS: Yeah.

EM: -- but it certainly was going through a lot of peoples' minds.

AS: I tried one semester of college and dropped out because of the [death?] of (inaudible).

EM: So when did you actually get drafted?

AS: March 8<sup>th</sup>, '43.

EM: OK. So yeah, you got like a semester or two --

AS: I got one semester.

EM: -- and (inaudible). So you got the "Dear Patriot" letter in the mail from "To Whom It May Concern"?

AS: Exactly.

EM: "Dear Clarence..."

AS: Right. "Please report..."

EM: And so where did you report?

AS: Los Angeles, of course, in the headquarters there. And then I was sent to Camp Haan, which is right across the street from March Air Force Base. It was then, of course, basic training. But --

EM: Was that H-A-H-N, Hahn or was that how...

AS: H-A-A-N.

EM: H-A-A-N? OK. Camp Haan.

AS: It's right across the street from March Air Force Base. Of course, all I could do is look over there, "Boy, I wish I was over there." It was B-17s and B-38s.

EM: It was pretty exciting after you were there doing push-ups and digging those foxholes?

AS: Right. Getting the basic. And I got assigned to an anti-aircraft -- I don't remember (inaudible) no. It was just a basic training -- anti-aircraft, 20-millimeter cannon, but I never got, because I was, again, I was in the headquarters, I never got to truly shoot the bigger guns. But I did do the course in (inaudible) one gear and rifle training instructions. I got the badge, and so forth, and then I did shoot the .50-caliber [water pool?] machine guns that they did with the plane. And we went out on a (inaudible) run out in the desert for the summer, and then we did shooting -- I didn't do any -- shooting the target behind the plane. They went by and -- out there in 140-degree temperature.

EM: I don't think I'd want to be one of the pilots in those planes pulling a target.

AS: No. Did you ever (inaudible) shoot that little thing behind the plane?

EM: No. I just hope it's far enough behind the plane.

AS: Right. That would have been -- well, then we went up to Fort [Duess?] and Fort --

EM: The Fort --



AS: Fort [Horde?].

AS: Fort Horde, yeah. And where is that?

AS: That's near San Francisco.

EM: OK. So upstate?

AS: Yeah.

EM: In the Bay Area? So was that just, what, further --

AS: Further training and just to do basic stuff with anti-aircraft.

EM: So they were starting to specialize you in anti-aircraft training?

AS: Right. It would have been, but then they decided, "Well, we don't need so many anti-aircraft units," And that's when they decided, "Well, let's throw away those things. You don't need anti-aircraft anymore. We need replacements for the guys overseas." So that was the end of it.

EM: Fresh meat?

AS: Yeah. And I left for New Caledonia, way down by Australia.

EM: So let's see, if you went in in March of '43, this must be, what, August, September?

AS: Yeah. About that. (inaudible) October.

EM: October?

AS: October. I landed down there and the first thing they do is gave me a job as chaplain's assistant. He had a little pipe organ and I typed his letters.

EM: So that's a connection not only on your office training, but your musical.

AS: Both. I said, "Oh, man, that's perfect."

EM: What a fit?

AS: Yeah. I could do this some more. But one Saturday night, the guy got drunk, broke his leg, and canceled my job completely.

EM: The chaplain did?

AS: The chaplain did.

EM: The chaplain got drunk and broke his leg?

AS: Yeah. He got in a fight.

EM: This seems so un-chaplain-like.

AS: Right. Oh, dear. So that left me in the, "Well, I did some typing with the (inaudible) general's office. I remember there was about 25 of us in one big room typing out orders all over the Pacific and that area down there.

EM: Now, when you went down there, what did you do, go on a troop ship?

AS: Yeah.

EM: Was it a fleet of ships or was it a solo run or do you remember?

AS: Yes. Oh, there were a bunch of them, troop ships full of recruits from down there and replacements.

EM: So they did the old zigzag and (inaudible) to avoid the --

AS: Yeah.

EM: Did they make a big fuss over the first time you went over the equator? I've heard stories about that.

AS: There were so many of us out, it must have been -- I have no idea how many. So some of them had to do the jump on the water or (inaudible). But I stood on the side and watched them.

EM: And they missed you?

AS: They missed me. It was a big celebration, I know. I remember it.

EM: So have you been assigned to a unit at this point?

AS: No.

EM: So you're just kind of a general purpose fill-in, don't know where you're going to go?

AS: Right. Especially after this happened, I was hoping I would last. It was a cushy job.

EM: Well, what did you think going down on the troop ship, were you concerned about your future?

AS: I kept thinking, "I don't like this. I hope I don't have to come back this day. Maybe I won't come back." And that's it. That's it. "If I don't come back, that means something else. That means I won't make it." And that went through my mind several times. I said, "I don't want to think that way. I'm going to -- I'll come back one way or another."

EM: So I guess the conditions were really crowded on that trip?

AS: Oh, terrible. Terrible.

EM: You were lucky if you were only on the fifth level probably?

AS: Right. And it got worse when we left -- when MacArthur decided to go back [five or ten?] and they needed replacements up in --

EM: [Busan?]

AS: Yeah. Right there is where we landed first.

EM: That was just first [showboat?] relanding, I think, was in Leyte.

AS: Yeah. And I remember going by New Guinea below, and they were still fighting in New Guinea. Well, (inaudible) cleared out everything there, and I watched as we went by and --

EM: Well, tell me about it when you first got there to New Caledonia? They put you into this good fit of a job?

AS: Yeah.

EM: But I mean, we're talking in the tropics or in -- I'm assuming, not really great living conditions.

AS: No.

EM: What's it like for a boy from southern California?

AS: Yeah. It was dreadful. It was hot and sultry. We had -- we were in tents. We were in those -- with the cots in them. We sure didn't need much sleeping bag to keep warm. We were roasting all night. I remember that, just a miserable, miserable --

EM: Mosquitoes?

AS: Yes. Everything.

EM: Did they give you mosquito netting to keep the...

AS: No.

EM: (inaudible)

AS: No. No.

EM: Was there much disease as a result of that?

AS: Not until I got on up to Leyte? That's when I got the -- New Caledonia was not really as bad, temperature-wise. It was decent. As for comparing to what I had been in California. Wasn't that good, not that good.

EM: Nothing's that good.

AS: But when it got to -- later on, I could have stayed there.

EM: So New Caledonia, were you inland, up in the middle?

AS: Noumea.

EM: Noumea? Yeah.

AS: Noumea is -- I can't tell you where Noumea is on --

EM: I've heard of it, but I wouldn't know that I'd be able to pick it out either.

AS: It's French. I remember that. And I even picked up some French money, whatever that --

EM: My guess there were natives there that --

AS: Oh, yeah. We didn't have much contact with the natives.

EM: Did you have any contact with other allied soldiers, you know, the Australians?

AS: No.

EM: Just American then?

AS: We combined the -- we were confined basically to the camp.

EM: So roughly how long were you on New Caledonia?

AS: Oh, it was -- I don't remember. Maybe only a couple of months. It wasn't a long time there. We would get a little time into town and look around. There wasn't much there. Just us soldiers.

EM: Yeah. A lot more (inaudible) just like you, huh?

AS: Yeah. But I do remember a little weekend pass or something that we could go and see if there's anything in town and there wasn't.

EM: And there wasn't?

AS: Yeah. That was a fun time. But really, basically, we weren't fighting, wasn't doing anything but resting.

EM: And were you assigned at that point to the 96<sup>th</sup>?

AS: From there, yes. I was on the 96<sup>th</sup> when we went to Leyte.

EM: OK. So did you go from New Caledonia straight to Leyte?

AS: Yeah.

EM: Or was there some steps in between?

AS: No. That's where we went. That's how I mentioned I got to -- I looked past New Guinea where they were still fighting and then on up to Leyte. We landed in Leyte, and there I got -- that's where General Macarthur had landed about two weeks ahead of when I got there, about the middle of October, it seems like. So that wasn't very long in New -- well, it was about a month in New Caledonia, and then on up. And then there, I got interesting jobs again, in the headquarters of the 96<sup>th</sup> Division, 3A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. And I would do -- oh, fun. I would do the switchboard, a phone switchboard. But what happened, I also had to climb the palm trees to put up the wires to the different companies.

And palm trees have slits down the side. So the spike we had to put on our legs to grab the palm tree were about six or eight inches long to go into, otherwise you'd slide all the way down.

EM: That sounds painful.

AS: It was. And I'd put up the wires to each company and go back and work on the switchboard. I remember plugging in to places where, you know, different companies and artillery or whatever they needed. And they also taught me there, first thing, how to run a movie projector, which later on I did, after we got to the Japs cleaned out. And the weekend we'd show a movie, Bing Crosby's "Going My Way". Sometimes the Filipinos would be alongside the soldiers. And there was a bombed out...

EM: No where was this on the island of Leyte?

AS: OK. Leyte, a little town up there, Burauen.

EM: Can you spell that?

AS: I think so. B-U-R-A-U-E-N. And I, of course, company clerk, I'd give out the mail and the packages that came, and I'd type out letters if it was necessary to do so, and send it to the survivors back home. And the job, at first, since the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division had gone in, we did more -- two weeks later, after they had already landed. But that's



when they needed some replacements real quick. And I got into the replacements headquarter, the 382<sup>nd</sup>, and got the switchboard job, and telephone, mail delivery. But then -- oh, that was the best. I got there about the middle of November and we were guarding an airfield. We got the turkey dressing, everything that goes with it, for Thanksgiving. It was the Air Force food.

EM: A lot of people there weren't getting...

AS: No, they didn't.

EM: Darn it.

AS: So it was really -- I thought, "This is going be all right." After Thanksgiving weekend, it turned back to C-rations.

EM: (inaudible)

AS: No. We got to the airfield and that's where somebody else the duty nearby of guarding that. But we'd do regular patrol during the day. I would go out with (inaudible) the patrol unit. And that's where I first met a Japanese. And we found one, or he found us, walked into there. And I pulled the trigger and shot but nothing happened. I hadn't put a round in the chamber.

EM: You forgot to load.

AS: Right. Never again did that happen. Well, there were enough guys with me in patrol.

EM: So you were just out on a patrol and this guy was kind of a lone sniper?

AS: Yeah. He walked up to...

EM: Oh, he did?

AS: Yeah. He thought it was a Japanese unit, I supposed. And he was just walking up, and we took care of him. And it was -- I learned my lesson, never again was there not a round in the rifle. It's a good thing because I needed it later on. Yeah, Leyte was interested, but it was...

EM: Well, what was Leyte like? Was this tropical?

AS: Yes. It was very tropical. And it rained and poured out. First we were in little pup tents (inaudible) stuff. But then, since we were going -- they figured out we would have to be there quite a while, and we were, we could, individually, I got in a little town, like I said, of Buraen. And that's where, right in the center of town, about four or five of us, dug the most beautiful -- about 12-foot -- it was bigger than this room -- about maybe a 15-foot long and 14-foot across, and 4-foot deep -- we put cots in there. We had sleeping bags and we were right in the middle of town. Right across the street were the

little houses on stilts and native Filipinos. In fact, it was very interesting because we could watch the community. And then we'd go up to the hills and patrol, like I said.

EM: But when it rained, didn't --

AS: No, we had a tarp over. It was completely over the top of the big hole and it didn't -- ripped off the sides. And it rained constantly there, it really did. And we were there at least three months. Oh, more than that, November, December, January, February -- four months. And it was interesting because we could almost -- well, the women came and got our fatigues every week, washed them in the river, brought them back. I don't know how they kept track of who they belonged to. They took the whole companies wash and did it and brought it back to you, same thing, exactly. And it was kind of, almost we were part of the little town.

EM: Almost became part of the community?

AS: Yeah.

EM: Is that what they mean they said "going native"?

AS: Yeah. It was interesting. I remember one night there was some -- in the house right across the street, there was some sad, sad singing. And we kind of figured out somebody had died. And in the morning they brought a little, tiny coffin out. It was a little box, took it down where they

buried them, a little baby or a little child. I felt sorry for them. But there in that place, of course, it was -- that's where I reached up one morning and brushed a scorpion.

EM: Out of your hair?

AS: Out of my hair, and he bit me right there?

EM: Right on the thumb, huh?

AS: He was right between...

EM: Right between the thumb and the forefinger?

AS: I threw it on the ground and smashed it.

EM: So did that smart where he bit you?

AS: About like three, four, or five bee stings. Oh, God. And I got dengue fever. What do they call it -- bone-breaker or something? Boy, that -- shaky.

EM: Tell me what dengue fever is like?

AS: You ache all over in the joints and it hurts. And I can't remember how long it was, but they said, "Dengue fever."

EM: Did they have any sort of a treatment for it at that time, or did you just have to sweat it out?

AS: I don't remember. I might have taken aspirin or something. It really is like everything is broken in your bones. I guess that's why it's called bone-breaker.

EM: Oh, you were incapacitated then?

AS: Oh, yeah. I was out of action.

EM: So where did they...

AS: No. I just laid in the tent, in the old room-size foxhole. I guess it's called a foxhole. It was almost a room.

EM: It was fox room.

AS: Yeah. It was five of us. We got well acquainted with each other in that thing for four months.

EM: So how long did it take you to recover from the dengue fever?

AS: Well, probably 10 days. I remember laying around for about a least a week and maybe longer, 10 days. Then I went right back in.

EM: Did anyone else get dengue fever around there?

AS: Not that I knew. It's a mosquito bite, I think, just like malaria.

EM: Was there any malaria around?

AS: Not that I know of. Of course we got shots. We would take Attaran. That was what we took to keep -- I think it was. And you kind of turn yellow.

EM: Yeah. I've heard those stories. I think it affects the liver function or something and you get kind of yellow.

AS: But we might have been bitten by those kinds of mosquitoes and the Attaran took care of it.

EM: Wards it off, yeah.

AS: Wards it off.

EM: Did you get pretty close to your buddies that you were with there in the fox room?

AS: Well, I can't remember any of their names except probably E.J. Phillips and Baker. Those are probably were with me. Both of them got killed later in Okinawa.

EM: My gosh.

AS: I kind of stayed with that same group with the 96<sup>th</sup> Division the rest of the time. So we went on from there.

EM: So did you have much contact with home while you were overseas, letters, or...

AS: Oh, yeah. Of course, I was the company clerk, even there, for most of the time too. Anyways, I would receive from my folks, my dad and momma back in Orange. And I'd get a letter every week. And most of the soldiers did.

EM: Did that make a difference?

AS: Oh, my goodness, yes. Yeah. I could keep contact with them. And their prayers were going with me and I needed them.

EM: And they knew you were all right when they would get a letter back?

AS: Yeah. And I wrote them back every mail trip [free?] mail in.

EM: Who did the censuring of those?

AS: I didn't.

EM: It wasn't you, huh?

AS: It wasn't mean. There was probably an officer.

EM: What were your officers like, were they good guys or?

AS: Most them I had no problem. And then were very cordial and treated you like a human. Yeah, the ones I had, I don't remember any of their names. Oh, no.

EM: You almost had one?

AS: I almost had one coming but it went away about that quickly. Yeah. You don't get too acquainted with them. I mean, they're still the boss.

EM: Well, they distance themselves. They're not one of the guys.

AS: Right.

EM: But I head a lot of stories about the 90-day wonders, you know, the guys that got made into officers, you know, just really quickly, and some of them were great and some of them weren't so great.

AS: Yes. But they didn't last long either. They didn't (inaudible). That's what happened. I remember.

EM: So did you almost kind of avoid getting into a real close relationship with any of your peers?

AS: Yeah.

EM: What was going through your mind?

AS: Well, I didn't know how to (inaudible) for either one of us and I didn't bother. I had friends and we'd talked to my buddies.

EM: Buddies?

AS: But no...

EM: No band of brothers?

AS: No.

EM: Like you see on TV and the movies?

AS: No way. Not at all. And I was afraid to. I know I was.

EM: Do you think others were as well?

AS: Yes. Oh, we'd die for them, yeah, and get -- sometimes I'd get -- later on, in Okinawa in particular, I got shot at and I knew they were shooting at me but I would duck. And then I -- trying to get out, I'd shoot again and they'd kill somebody behind me. And that was [my fault?]. That'd bug me. I still think about it, I shouldn't have got out, I mean try to get out and shoot.

EM: Yeah. It feels guilty, doesn't it?

AS: Yeah. But I had to.



EM: So when your assignment in Leyte was over, then where did you outfit go?

AS: First they don't tell everybody where you're going.

EM: Oh, no, you don't know --

AS: After being in Leyte about four months, and clearing out, there weren't any Japanese but they were coming.

(inaudible) come to this side and kill us.

EM: Did you ever have any air raids or aircraft raids on your?

AS: Not that -- I knew of some that were a little farther away from that little town. But everything in Leyte, they went to the bigger cities and airfields, or wherever they went. But we heard of other places, but we were relatively -- it was safe there, it seemed like. Like I said, we could even show movies on Saturday night. So they couldn't figure out where we were, I guess. But we'd hear from farther north in Busan that they had an air raid, jets came over with their betty bombers and so forth. (inaudible)

EM: Could the Filipinos speak English that were there?

AS: Oh, yeah. I don't know they -- we could understand. And they'd learn words like wash.

EM: Money.

AS: We paid them a little.

EM: Well, it's only fair.

AS: Sure. But we left the girls alone. I mean, I'm afraid some of the officers did otherwise.

EM: There wasn't any fraternization, I guess.

AS: No. We kept pretty secluded. None of that, that was fun. But actually it was fun, getting acquainted with someone. Because we'd recognize them, we didn't remember their names, but we knew the ones we'd see often.

EM: Did you ever go back to the Filipinos after the war?

AS: No. I had no desire.

EM: It's not exactly a tourist destination, is it? So the Leyte campaign was over, so how did you come to go to your next [excursion?]?

AS: OK. (inaudible) was OK. They didn't say where we were going, nothing until we were already on the ship. That's when I was clear up on the top bunk.

EM: Put your spikes up there to climb up there like it were a palm tree.

AS: (inaudible) It was confining. And finally, it seems like we were only out a day or two, and they told us where we're going, Okinawa. Where's Okinawa? Well, it's closer by Japan. And it's a little island, but we're going into Okinawa. But then --

EM: Had Iwo Jima occurred at that time, and did you know anything about it?

AS: No, that was later. Well, almost the same time.

EM: Yeah, right. Iwo Jima was in February or March and Okinawa landed April 1<sup>st</sup>.

AS: April 1<sup>st</sup> -- April Fools' Day. And Easter Sunday and so forth and so on. But it was an interesting trip because they kind of let us in on the idea of what we were going to do. They told us, "We're not going on the front side of Okinawa where the Japs are dug in. And we were going in on the back." And there's coral there around the island. Things like that. They were telling us. But then a typhoon came up. It was horrible. The ship would rise up in the front and the bow would be out of the water. Then it would go down and the back, and the propeller would be out of the water.

EM: Spin.

AS: And we'd spin around. Everybody -- well, the sailors were all seasick too.

EM: I can imagine.

AS: And everybody was vomiting. There was vomit all over the place. But I had never been seasick in my life, and I wasn't. "Is it time to eat breakfast?" I'd go down to try

to find something to eat. All these cooks and sailors were sick. "What do you want to eat for? You better get it."

EM: Isn't that amazing.

AS: Evidently I've had trouble with my ears, probably -- eventually I had to (inaudible) replace the (inaudible) in there with wire for hearing loss. But at that time, it was probably started to happen in my early twenties. But there wasn't any motion sickness at all, not a speck. And I've never been seasick in my life.

EM: It's a blessing.

AS: Yeah. But a typhoon -- well, the ship's going not up and down, but sideways, and the water would come over. And they tried to keep us in our bunks.

EM: But forget it.

AS: If it was not going to come straight up, it wasn't going to stay level.

EM: So where did you tend to stay during the storms?

AS: In the hole, down off the deck for sure. The only place to stay was on your bunk. So that's what it ended up being. But boy it was rough. It really was rough. I've taken trips later to (inaudible), and my wife would get sick every time, but I tell her, "It's only in your head anyway?"

EM: Literally.

AS: Yeah. Oh, dear. But the sailors were even -- these was extreme weather. And we did come into the China Sea like they had told us, and the back side of the -- the west side of Okinawa. And instead of [LSTs?], we used what we called [alligator?]. They were on a track and it would ride over the [car?] and I'd step off on dry land, didn't even get my feet wet on Okinawa. It did confuse the Japs for a while because they didn't -- they weren't expecting any [liner?] to be on the east coast. And we went, oh goodness, maybe three days and didn't see a thing. We went all the way across to the other side. Of course we landed with six [units?]. I think six units. They went north. And 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 96<sup>th</sup> Division Infantry, we went across and then we went south. And about three or four days later, it started. They had regrouped and the war was on for sure, there. And I had a round in the chamber.

EM: You'd learned your lesson.

AS: (inaudible) shooter.

EM: Now, were you on kind of the first wave that landed when you went in, or very close to the first?

AS: Very close to the Marines. I remember eight o'clock in the morning, we were first -- it was about the first (inaudible) all up and down the coast.

EM: So this is really your first real combat situation?

AS: Yeah.

EM: What's going through your mind at this point? Tell me about it.

AS: I was certain there was going to be somebody there shooting back, but there wasn't. And when there wasn't, "Well, maybe they're all hiding and are going to surround us. Maybe they're in the trees," because there were trees, palm trees and so forth. I thought of that. And that's why I stayed with my rifle. But nothing. Nothing until we turned south.

EM: Did they give you any special training ahead of time prior to going in?

AS: No.

EM: They just assumed you were trained?

AS: Yeah. We'd been through Leyte. And it was a shooting place. Oh, I remember the first (inaudible) when I dropped my gas mask on Okinawa. "There's a big pile there, you won't need a gas mask." "OK." (inaudible) We didn't need them. They're probably still sitting there.

EM: Maybe they made a memorial out of it or something now. So they must have thought that there was a chance of poisonous gas by the Japanese.

AS: Yeah.

EM: I've not really heard much about that.

AS: Yeah. And they had decided there wasn't anymore because they had evidently gone into enough -- Leyte, there wasn't any problem, but we kept them there. But in Okinawa, we had to (inaudible) carried ammo and everything else we were going to need.

EM: So you were a rifleman; is that correct?

AS: That's what I had when I wasn't typing. I was still typing. I still had to run around and pass out the mail. And whatever the captain and the company said, I'd do it, follow his orders. And then when they were shooting, I'd grab my rifle and shoot.

EM: So what did they have, kind of just kind of like a field headquarters that set up?

AS: Yeah. Most of the time we were just on the ground without any headquarters.

EM: OK. But what I mean is what did you do, pull out your typewriters? Those big, old, boxy typewriters back then.

AS: No, I didn't. On Okinawa, I didn't have a -- I don't know what I did for the correspondence. There was a little one I remember working on. It might have been handling the mail and there wasn't much to type out and do anyway because we were busy all the time in the shooting back.

EM: So you ran into some real resistance finally?

AS: Real resistance.

EM: So tell me what happened?

AS: Well, first day, of course, the snipers were in the trees, always in the trees. And you just were trying to rake the tree and hope to hit somebody. You didn't know -- well, when they stopped shooting we knew we got them.

EM: That's the only way you knew?

AS: Yeah. And it did happen almost constantly. And then we got to (inaudible). We'd go as far as we could and then we'd get too much ground fire and (inaudible) fire. And we'd have to dig a foxhole, stay confined until morning or afternoon, or whenever we wanted to move up a little bit. And it was a matter of yards.

EM: What about mortar and artillery fire?

AS: Yeah. Mortar, and artillery, and I remember the airplane strikes on the front line. And then finally, oh, there was washing machine. I don't know what they call it, it was a



big old -- we called it a washing machine because it sounded like (whooshing sound) -- and you'd hear it coming. It was a big old mortar. It must have been -- we could almost see it. You could see them coming, but it was going so slow and making so much noise, you could run and get away from it. What was it? I've seen a picture of it in one of my books. I don't remember. It was a 360 mm or something.

EM: Rather slow...

AS: And it was just coming up and you can hear it. We called it a washing machine because that's what it sounded like. But then, usually you could get away from it because you saw when it was coming back down. It did make a hole, oh, 10-feet deep, 20-feet across -- gigantic hole. But I don't know if anybody was ever hit with it because you could run. And I remember one night, we were dug in and I was -- you know, sometimes you put your (inaudible) against somebody else, with your feet together. I remember one night over there, and I was dozing off -- couldn't have a good night's sleep it seemed like. An artillery shell -- it had to be artillery. It hit the tree trunk -- a tree probably 10 feet off and got most of it up in the air. The came and landed on my helmet.

EM: The tree did?

AS: The trunk, yeah. And flew my glasses -- I had to wear glasses all the time -- and cut my forehead right here. Well, I stayed in (inaudible) until morning, went to where they had another pair of glasses and the medics. They put a band aid on. And they said, "Now you got your first Purple Heart." "Oh, that's all right." Of course they gave it to me anyway.

EM: So you got a Purple Heart for your --

AS: For my glasses --

EM: -- your glasses scratched your -- well, I've heard stories of guys for getting Purple Hearts for getting shot in the butt and this kind of stuff.

AS: You it was a surprise. I didn't expect it. I wanted my glass so I could see where I was going. (inaudible) But I remember it was May 15<sup>th</sup> they treated me. And we'd go along and then finally, my real big one was the end. I already delivered -- well, I was delivering the mail on [Oval?] Hill. And I had gone out and (inaudible) and distributed it that way. And then I was walking back to my foxhole where I had my rifle -- I'd carry my rifle out to the companies. Then I had my rifle, I had a Japanese rifle I was going to take home with me, maybe. And I had an

officer's (inaudible). I said, "That's easy to carry. I'm going to take that."

EM: The Japanese officer's?

AS: No, it was mine. Some officer got shot so I had that. I was going to take that. I never got used (inaudible). On the way back -- this was May 21<sup>st</sup>, '45. I saw a little of guys coming up toward me and was (inaudible) pick up somebody who was wounded. And all of a sudden, right behind me, maybe four, five feet, something hit, and I went about 10 feet that way. And my leg hurt real bad and my back hurt terrible all over. Japanese knee mortar. You know, they're about -- they'll knock you -- I think it was probably two or three grenades worth of shrapnel. I tried to lay down and my leg hurt terrible, really, really. And the medic came over -- the medics that were carrying the litter, somebody else, came over right away, took off my boot and, "Yeah, got you in the leg." And it went through my leg, actually, my shin bone, not kidding you -- split it, took out part of the bone. And I said, "Put something (inaudible) on. My leg hurts terrible. Put something (inaudible) boot out of there." And then they started carrying me back home, back to the company headquarters. And that was my real one.

EM: Your second Purple Heart.

AS: Yeah, second Purple Heart. But that was a real one. But that didn't end the problems. They put me out -- took me part of the way back to where my stuff was, picked up my little sack full of -- not any rifles, not any guns, not any real things, but I had a -- in a bombed out house, some Japanese medals I found in the floor. Some Japanese -- a couple of Japanese medals and some other things that were in a house -- well, a house in [Gong?]. When I looked in there, there was -- I found out later they were Japanese victory medal. One of them was a Japanese victory medal over in China. I still got it.

EM: No kidding. Wow.

AS: But anyway, they took it out of my little personal items. You make up a personal items you want to take with you, and that's all I got. Well, anyway, I got back to the company headquarters, carried. And I was through, no further.

EM: Now you were bleeding quite a lot.

AS: I was. They put a tourniquet on. And when I got to the doctor, he put -- I had a full cast on all the way up this right leg clear to my hip because the bone was broken in there. And it hurt --

EM: And you had a lot of (inaudible) too?

AS: Oh, yes. When I got to the operating room -- well, the clearing -- whatever they call them -- clearing station. I counted. They took pieces of shrapnel, I counted as they dropped it in -- I should have saved them -- 15 clunks of little -- well, I suppose they were big enough for me to hear -- but 15 clunks in the basin they were putting them in. And I found out later that I still have 25 hunks all up and down my back and both legs.

EM: You light up the X-ray machines when you go (inaudible)?

AS: Right. I still -- I couldn't (inaudible). I go through airport -- they thought I had lung cancer -- a lung X-ray, they get excited, "Oh, there are spots all over your lungs." I say, "Turn it sideways." Instead of taking (inaudible). Once in a while some of them was trying to get out and it was --

EM: Really?

AS: You can get them taken out?

EM: My gosh, you're still dropping clinks of World War II --

AS: Sixty years later.

EM: -- tokens.

AS: I can feel them. I've got one down here that -- right now I wish I could -- I haven't been able to get the -- I can feel it.

EM: Isn't that something?

AS: Right there.

EM: Right there. You brought home some souvenirs, didn't you?

AS: Japanese metal.

EM: Probably made from US scrap metal.

AS: Probably.

EM: Probably originally US steel.

AS: That was when I was -- I figured, "Oh, boy, now I can rest. Done with the war." But I wasn't. You know, of course, the next couple of days, I took off -- they pack you up and send you up to the next hospital place. It was in Guam.

EM: So they put you on a hospital ship?

AS: Hospital plane. And I was going to Guam. We had been in the air about maybe 15 minutes and the plane dived down like this and a Japanese [zero?] was after us. They missed and the plane got away, but the hydraulic system, brakes on the plane, had gone out completely. And we couldn't go to Guam -- Guam's airfield -- over the ocean. And if you can't stop --

EM: If you don't have brakes, you go over the cliff.

AS: You're dead in the water. So the pilot says, "Oh, we got to go back to Okinawa." "Oh, OK." He landed in a plowed field and everybody in the plane of course was just about

passed out a little bit -- and bounced. Boy, that hurt my leg even more. It bounced the plowed field and they set us, of course, nearby in a -- well, near the airfield on the ground. And (inaudible) but in the middle of the night, we could even see [Tressa?] boats coming through the top of the tent. We were down on the floor --

EM: And trying to get lower probably?

AS: And we would hear bomp, bomp, boop, boop -- oh, half a dozen of them. The Japs had sent in a Kamikaze crew and they'd landed several Betty bombers guys' suicide mission and bombed those airplanes that we had taken off from the day before. That's why those airplanes looked like -- they (inaudible) charge underneath the middle. And the wings, of course, (inaudible) well, it's a dead airplane. But we saw them as we got into, once again, the next plane. They had bombed a half a dozen. I could see out the window and there were a half a dozen planes just completely gone.

EM: American planes?

AS: Yeah.

EM: So these things had worked?

AS: Oh, yes. But they finally got them all cleared out. They killed the --

EM: Would they actually land?

AS: They landed, and then they ran from plane to plane.

EM: I see.

AS: Put a (inaudible) charge underneath the -- well, what it was -- ruined the planes completely. There must have been a half a dozen. Well, we took off again that same day in a good plane. And we did make it to Guam.

EM: With brakes.

AS: With brakes and we stopped. I think it was about three weeks there in the hospital. Oh, a funny thing happened in Guam the first night. The doctor kept asking me, "Hear that? Hear that?" "Yeah, I hear it." Finally I went to sleep. I woke up back in the bed, the cast was gone, and my leg hurt terrible because it was resting on the heel. And I asked somebody, "What happened?" "Uh-oh." I said, "Where's the doctor?" "Oh, he cracked up." "Oh, great." And he took the bandage off and everything. So I knew what happened, battle fatigue.

EM: Yeah. I mean, that was quite common.

AS: Yeah. So another doctor finally came in, he put the bandage back on, and the cast up to my hip. So it felt better with the cast on.

EM: Did you see much battle fatigue when you were in Okinawa?



AS: Yeah. When they were bringing them back from the battle. There weren't originally. There were a couple of guys sitting there in the Jeep just like -- just staring. I said, "What's the matter with him?" "Well, you know."

EM: He lost it?

AS: Yeah. He was out of it. Yeah, quite a few. Every once in a while.

EM: Do you think any of that was being faked?

AS: I never thought of that.

EM: Who knows.

AS: I didn't think that. There was enough of them cracking up without --

EM: The real thing?

AS: Yeah. And most of the time they were shooting or running. Yeah. They usually get killed too because they didn't have the sense to stay down. Like I said a while ago, I was in one nice, big, deep foxhole (inaudible) and when I put my head up to get a better shot at something, I couldn't see where, they shot at me and killed somebody behind me. (inaudible).

EM: Tell me the actual situation again.

AS: Yeah. I was in -- they were shooting right (inaudible) behind me there were some other guys, too, and they weren't

particularly -- they were down more. So I put my head up and they started with a machine gun and killed one guy behind me.

EM: And so you ducked down and --

AS: I ducked back down and they caught it.

EM: Wow. And you kind of felt responsible in a way?

AS: Right. And the other time I was, you know, when (inaudible) out, can't do anything but move -- you can't move, better not. And I was almost kind of underneath -- well, it was a building up here -- I mean, dirt was high up here and I was down here. And they would come over to us, if you poked your head up, you'd get shot at first. And I was in that little gully -- it wasn't too much of a gully, but (inaudible) all penned up. And somebody, I don't know who it was, but I thank him, he yelled, "Skiles, jump." And I automatically jumped forward. Oh, I almost came almost out of my shelter forward, and just then a German tank came over the hill and right where I was laying -- and somebody called a tank in because we needed it. When you're pinned down, you need help. If hadn't jumped -- I taught school for years, and especially when I began, I'd tell the kids that story and they'd -- I said, "When I tell you to do something, do it now." I was pretty strict in

the beginning. And but I did, I jumped, and it probably saved my life. That tank landed -- the tracks landed right where I was laying. If I hadn't have jumped -- well, I jumped -- my legs and body.

EM: So you owe your life to that fellow.

AS: I don't know who that was. He was where he could see the tank coming.

EM: And you didn't give a second thought about questioning?

AS: No, I didn't question a bit.

EM: You just jumped (inaudible).

AS: I jumped automatically.

EM: And if you hadn't automatically...

AS: I'd have been dead, squashed to pieces. And it happened. It happened sometimes. Yeah. God was watching over me and the sergeant every where we go.

EM: Tell me about when you found those Japanese war medals.

AS: It was a little bit of a lull and we were walking. And we came to a kind of a city, a town. Of course, all the junk, it was all over. The buildings were all obliterated. But the floor, you could see where the chairs were, but they weren't there anymore. And the things were scattered all over. And I looked in there and I saw a few things. The medals were on the floor and probably, oh, there was a

table there. And I saw those on the -- and then I flipped -- it looked like metal. They were in the cases.

EM: Oh, they were in the cases?

AS: Yeah, in little cases, yeah. And I just picked them up and put them in my pocket.

EM: Now, do you figure that was from the occupying Japanese army or do you think it might have been the person who lived there? Because you know, those were Japanese citizens, their homes in Okinawa?

AS: Yes. I think -- I turned them in one time and they said China -- it's a medal indicating conquering China by the Japanese. It's a Chinese war medal that they got for fighting over there.

EM: Yeah. Japanese have been in China since 1933.

AS: Yeah. That's what that was. And the other, they didn't know what it was.

EM: But where did you take to try and find out?

AS: I don't know.

EM: Was it while you were still over there?

AS: No, after I got back. I don't remember where I did that. I had it written. It must have been -- I think it was in a hospital somewhere, because I was in the hospital in Guam about three weeks or so. Nothing much changed except the

guy taking the cast off and back on. And then Hawaii, I was in Honolulu in a school that was converted into a military hospital. And I could look out my window and see -- what's the mountain out there?

EM: The one on Waikiki Beach?

AS: Yeah. And Pearl Harbor.

EM: Diamond Head.

AS: Diamond Head. I could see Diamond Head. And I even tried to draw -- behind me, since it was a school, there was a blackboard up there, and I had some chalk, and I'd draw pictures. Well, one of my friends from back in Santa Ana was stationed there and came and visited me. And he was on his way home.

EM: So it was a pretty bad wound cases there with you?

AS: Yeah. Oh, yeah. One fellow had his arm off. So I remember him in particular. Of course, what they did, and they were still counting points whether if you got well, you could go back and join your unit. And he said, "I don't have to worry." He didn't have an arm, so he wouldn't be going back.

EM: He knew he wouldn't. He had his points.

AS: My leg could have got well -- it took May until December before I got out.

EM: So you were there in the hospital?

AS: Yeah. And then on back to the United States.

EM: So were -- no doubt when the war was over, there must have been a nice celebration?

AS: Oh, boy. Yeah.

EM: I heard that some people got killed in the celebration just from all the (inaudible) the stuff that was falling.

AS: I wouldn't be surprised. Yeah. I went from Hawaii to Palm Springs Military Hospital there. Of course my folks would visit me there. And that's when the war was over abroad, I think.

EM: How did your family find out that you were wounded over there?

AS: They received a telegram.

EM: The dreaded telegram.

AS: Yeah. And I still have the telegram. Of course, they're gone -- my parents are gone. But the telegram states that: Clarence Albert Skiles was wounded on such and such a day. And they didn't give specifics, but they said that it was a serious wound, but he's recovering. Your standard telegram to parents. And they were glad that I was out of the action, because of course was still -- I was able to

contact them and tell them it was just my leg and I was going to be all right.

EM: I bet that was a relief.

AS: Yeah.

EM: Did you ever experience any of the infamous banzai charges or, you know, where the Japanese soldiers would just up and charge and scream and it was almost a suicide?

AS: No. We were able to stop anything that started. And I responded back, being the company clerk, that I usually didn't have to -- many a lot of the ones I shot were on patrol. But most of the time I was a little bit behind the first shooters. And I did not have -- and we didn't -- I don't remember any of the men, no Bonsais. We knew they did it. (inaudible) knew what to do and we were well armed for it, with their machine guns and BARs, BARS and so forth.

EM: So did your outfit take heavy casualties on Okinawa; I've heard some --

AS: Oh, yes.

EM: -- huge percentages?

AS: I don't even remember what percent it is. Half, I expect -  
- I don't know. Very much, yeah.

EM: What was the date that you got your second wound that took you out?

AS: May 21<sup>st</sup>.

EM: OK. So you'd been there from April the 1<sup>st</sup> until May 21<sup>st</sup>?

AS: April 1<sup>st</sup> to May 21<sup>st</sup>.

EM: So you had seven weeks?

AS: Right. We got one little break, and that was a dangerous break because we were up on a hill. We could see the harbor down -- Buckner Harbor.

EM: Buckner Bay.

AS: Bay -- Buckner Bay. We could see down there and ships in it. And one time, the Japs came in with kamikazes. And I don't see how they got through (inaudible) from the ships and the land, but they did. And they hit ships. And I remember one day they were shooting back this way, toward us. And some of the shells landed in our area where we were taking a break.

EM: Friendly fire?

AS: Yeah. And it was -- they were trying to hit the planes that were coming in between us and them. And suicide -- they were all suicide. But we were getting shells from the ships trying to hit them. And I remember one ship, and when I got back to home, this girl -- well, she's my age,



"So did you ever see ships go down?" I said, "Yeah."

"Remember on this day?" "Oh, yeah, I saw the ship was the USS *Morrison*." She said, "My dad was on it and he was killed." So every time I see that lady now, oh, she still remembered I saw the ship. I did.

EM: What was it, a destroyer or?

AS: No, it was a cruiser. I think it's a cruiser, USS *Morrison*. I'm not sure what it was.

EM: Usually the cruisers were named after cities and the destroyers after people.

AS: Maybe it was a destroyer, yeah. It's the *Morrison* because I remember the name of the ship, the *Morrison*. And that would have been, well, before -- it was during the time I was still (inaudible).

EM: So that happened in Buckner Bay?

AS: Yeah. And I've also talked to people who were there at the same time I was when the Japs landed and blew up airplanes.

EM: That's an interesting story.

AS: On the airfield. They -- I thought I was (inaudible) -- it's hard to be on your way, and you came back and got -- this is the day I came back because we couldn't land in Guam. They got more -- it was scary. You could see the tracers and of course somebody was guarding the airfield.

We were the wounded. But they were shooting through the -- getting hit by the suicide --

EM: They were within range?

AS: Yeah. We were beside the airfield.

EM: You had said earlier that you still, for a long time, thought about some of those instances where like you ducked back down.

AS: Yeah.

EM: So how long did that bother you?

AS: Oh, the first job I got was teaching in a military academy. And it was real there, it was a military boys only, of course. And they wanted to know all about the war, too. And I would talk and it bothered me then, the things that happened and didn't happen. But then I went to a regular public school, probably a couple of years. I would think about it seriously, things I could have done different and try to do differently. But then I decided I'm just going to on. And I adjusted well.

EM: You do have to put it behind you.

AS: Yes.

EM: Yeah, I've heard a lot of stories from the veterans about waking up in the middle up, in cold sweat, and not being able to sleep. Or their wives telling stories about them

trying to sleep and -- were you ever bothered at night by any?

AS: Oh, if I watched a war movie, like they'd been having a World War II, I figure I'm back in it. No, it hasn't really.

EM: That's good.

AS: I put it behind me. Yeah.

EM: How do you feel about the Japanese?

AS: No problem. I have good friends (inaudible) No problem at all. Yeah. In fact, my gardener at home is Japanese. He's just like anybody else. Yeah. No problem.

EM: You can buy a Japanese car?

AS: Well, I've never had one, but (inaudible) all day long today, Toyota. My daughter (inaudible) no problem. No feelings about it at all.

EM: So how did it feel when you got back to the good, ole US of A?

AS: I made a big sigh of relief that I knew I was safe. It was wonderful. Thank God for that.

EM: And that was after the war was over? You stayed --

AS: Yeah. I was still --

EM: -- in the hospital until --

AS: Yeah. I got out, went back to church, and lost all my friends. Of course, a couple of them didn't make it but I did. I got one picture of me on crutches with my sailor friend and one with -- in the Army. And they made it. Yeah.

EM: So how do you think that experience changed you as a person?

AS: Well, it probably made me more compassionate, more -- I mean, I was more -- I don't know how it did. For a while, I was pretty belligerent. I was -- and still.

EM: Some anger in you?

AS: Yeah. There was anger. I didn't like that. But then I got to thinking, "Well, maybe I did my job. Maybe I did what I was supposed to."

EM: Well, did you think you hadn't done what you were supposed to?

AS: Well, no, but I got to thinking, "Well, it's all right. I did what I'm supposed to. I'm glad I did. I'm glad it's over and I did the right thing. As far as I go, everything is right." And I think I just put it behind me. And since then, I've been -- I'd been a good schoolteacher, 38 years.

EM: Oh, boy.

AS: Retired.

EM: That's a lot of kids.

AS: Yeah. Oh, boy. And they really -- I see some of them and then I see their -- I (inaudible). So now I see grandkids of the kids I taught and they stop by and wave, "Mr. Skiles, that was my mom's teacher." Well, I think it made me a better person, really. Yeah. And I told them, "Be what you can and do your best."

EM: And when somebody tells you to do something...

AS: Do it right then, don't compromise. I still tell that. Yeah.

EM: Well, what else can we touch on. You have some cheat notes there that you're referring to.

AS: I think I'm probably winding down. Yeah. I covered everything that I could think of.

EM: So you never had to use your movie projector skills after you got out of --

AS: Oh, yeah, I did in school.

EM: Oh, OK. I guess the teacher had to run the movie.

AS: Yeah. Had the old 16-millimeter projector. And of course, then they got television, so -- I remember the first television I bought for one of the kids in that military academy's dad. He came out with a little thing like this.

EM: Yeah. About six- or eight-inch screen. Yeah.

AS: Yeah.

EM: And thing probably weighed 300 pounds.

AS: Yeah, it did. That was kind of a transition, the military academy. I always looked at it kind of like that. Never made it above PFC and had keep moving around so often. I stayed a PFC since I went in and seems like I came out I was Lieutenant Skiles.

EM: So you must have gone back to school and got your --

AS: I went back to USC, got my (inaudible) teaching credentials and a master's degree there. And I still like USC.

EM: Well, they got a heck of a football team.

AS: Yeah.

EM: But you don't talk much about them around here. This is [UV?] country.

AS: I didn't wear my USC hat.

EM: (inaudible) OK. Well, what else can we cover?

AS: I think that's pretty near it.

EM: That's quite an experience you had, particularly in Okinawa?

AS: Oh, yes.

EM: Do you ever make any of the reunions or have any contact with --

AS: I haven't made any real reunions, but I keep in contact with the 96<sup>th</sup> Division. I keep contact and I've gotten books from them and also I get a bulletin paper.

EM: Kind of a newsletter type?

AS: A newsletter every month.

EM: That's good.

AS: And they let us know when they're going to go on a visit back to Okinawa or the Philippines.

EM: But you've avoided those trips back to beautiful Okinawa, huh?

AS: No. I've avoided it completely.

EM: Like you said, you've put it behind you.

AS: Right. But I still enjoy reading the books that they have gotten to me. There's one in particular that I've given to all my kids and written in it for them, where I was, and what I did, and --

EM: Which book is this?

AS: Oh, dear. I can't tell you. It was written by [John Dunker?], the historian for our 96<sup>th</sup> Division. It's [*Love?*] *Company*.

EM: *Love Company?*

AS: *Love Company*. It's a very thorough -- he kept notes. He was in L-Company and I was in C-Company action. Yeah.

EM: OK. Well, that's quite a tour we just went on.

AS: Yeah.

EM: Your stories of Okinawa are mind-boggling.

AS: It's surprising how everything [matched?] as I -- it helped what I did in high school even helped all the way through, and my background in music.

EM: Have you pursued your musical...

AS: I still, yes. I still play the organ at church every other Sunday. Actually, tomorrow, I'm back here and the other organist -- we have an organ. But now we have so many things added to it that they can't tell it's an organ either. I can play --

EM: A synthesizers and --

AS: It's a synthesizer and I got 120 voices I can do. I can do voices, oohs, ahs, guitar, drums, and the (inaudible) doesn't have a soloist, I can do the solo and all.

EM: Boy, technology marches on, I guess, even though we don't.

AS: Yes. I can't keep up with it -- 120 voices, and I probably use 20.

EM: That's more than what most of us do.

AS: Oh, boy.

EM: OK. Well, let me end it here then, Al. Thanks for spending the time. We appreciate it. And this will be a



very interesting addition to our archives. And I want to also end this by thank you, again, and I hope other people have been doing this, thank you for what you did for our country during World War II.

AS: Thank you. You've made it very pleasant. I enjoyed it.

EM: Well, I hope so. And I've enjoyed it too.

END OF AUDIO FILE