

## Allen Havron Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler. And today is the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 2010. I'm doing a telephone interview with Mr. Allen Havron. He's located at his home in Hobart, Oklahoma. 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 out, Allen, by thanking you for spending the time on the phone this morning with us and telling us about your World War II experience. So let's get you started by having you just give us your full name, date of birth, and where you were born, and we'll take it from there.

ALLEN HAVRON: Well, I was born at El Dorado, Oklahoma, on September the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1922. I grew up and graduated from Lone Wolf, Oklahoma, which is a small town 10 miles from where I now live. And I had just got out of high school...

EM: Well, let me ask you this. Now what did your dad do for a living?

AH: He was a farmer.

EM: Well those were tough times back then, wasn't it, for farmers?

AH: Oh yes. That was back in the days of the Dust Bowl and everything else.

EM: That's right. Oklahoma was hit by that big time.

AH: Oh boy.

EM: And did you have brothers and sisters?

AH: No, I'm an only child.

EM: Oh, the only child. OK. So when you were growing up on the farm, did you have real dust storms and that kind of stuff?

AH: Oh boy. We had a black Sunday where you couldn't see your hand in front of your eyes.

EM: Oh my gosh. Boy. But you and the family managed to stick it out, huh?

AH: Oh yes. Yes, we were stayers.

EM: My goodness. So let's see. You went to school and high school where, now?

AH: I went to high school at Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. That's 10 miles from where I now live.

EM: OK. Yes. Now what part of Oklahoma are we talking about?

AH: Southwestern part. Close to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

EM: OK, and, let's see, had you graduated from high school when the war started?

AH: I just had.

EM: Oh boy. What do you remember about the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked? Do you remember -- when did you hear about it for the first time?

AH: Well, my mother and I were listening to the radio. And I heard that. And it kind of alarmed everybody, of course. And I had begun to see a red, white, and blue poster all over town. And it had a man in a big hat saying -- pointing his finger at every -- any direction you went. He was pointing at you.

EM: That was old Uncle Sam, wasn't it?

AH: That was old Uncle Sam. He was saying, "I need you!" Well, the draft had started. And an uncle and I -- he had received paperwork to report. And he talked me into going with him. Because we were trying to stay together during the war.

EM: Let's see, now how old were you...

AH: Well..

EM: How old were you when the war started?

AH: I was 19.

EM: OK.

AH: My uncle, they turned him down. But they took me. So I had two trigger fingers.

EM: So what was this, going into the Army, then?

AH: I went into the Army on 6 January, 1943.

EM: OK. And where did you go for basic training?

AH: Well, when I joined up, I went to Fort Sill for a few days. And I pulled KP three days in a row. And from there, I went to Fort Bliss, Texas, to begin my basic training.

EM: OK, Fort Bliss?

AH: Fort Bliss, Texas.

EM: Yes, that's out by El Paso, right?

AH: That's right.

EM: Oh boy. Well, you're used to desert country, anyhow, having come from the Dust Bowl.

AH: Well, we weren't quite that bad.

EM: So what was your experience at Fort Bliss? Did they work you hard, or was it easy for you, or what?

AH: Well, I rather enjoyed it. It was something different. And it was, you know, a pretty good education.

EM: Yes. Well, what kind of things did they do?

AH: Oh, close order drill. And crawling under machine gun fire. First one thing and then another. Anything to get us ready for a good experience later on.

EM: Yes.

AH: I was in a 40-millimeter outfit after I got out of basic, and they called us Coast Artillery then. 487<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery.

EM: Is that what you...well, where did you after you left Fort Sill? I mean, Fort Bliss.

AH: Well, I went to Camp [Hahn?], California. That's out kind of in the desert again. There we trained on 40-millimeters, and the quad-50, 50-caliber machine guns.

EM: So is this antiaircraft type?

AH: Yes.

EM: Yes, right.

AH: We were set up...after we got up to [home?] there, we were set up along the coast, West Coast of the United States. Because they kind of

thought that -- the US kind of thought that they might have a landing, or a bombing, coming from that direction.

EM: Right, from the Japanese.

AH: So we were set up as coast defense, from California, up to Washington and Oregon.

EM: Right. So what was the first location where they deployed you?

AH: Up in California?

EM: Yes.

AH: Camp Hahn, California.

EM: Camp Hahn.

AH: That's where we left from to go up and down the coast. I was at, oh, two or three places along the coast there. I don't remember just which ones.

EM: And so you just stood there at the gun, waiting for the invasion that never came.

AH: Oh yes. We were out in people's pastures, meadows, and you know. Had our gun possessions all set up. We were ready for anything that happened, but it didn't happen.

EM: That must've not been a very exciting assignment then.

AH: Well, no, not really. I met a lot of people. The people in Oregon were terrific. At this time, they...seeing that nothing was going to happen there. So our mission changed. We stayed as the 487<sup>th</sup> Antiaircraft, but we weren't called Coast Artillery. We were called Anti-Aircraft Artillery, semi-mobile. Had a little different title, but the same old thing.

EM: So when they did that, where did they send you?

AH: Well, I went up to -- all up and down...oh, after I finished along the coast?

EM: Well, yes. Is there anything we can talk about while you were on the coast? Did you ever have any interesting experiences while you were doing the coast...

AH: Well, I was in one pasture, and we were trapping some birds. Pheasants. And one day while we were going to cook them, a neighbor that lived -- a farmer that lived across the fence from us -- he came over and said his wife would cook them for us. So we cleaned the rascals...

EM: How many did you get?

AH: Huh?

EM: How many of the birds did you trap?

AH: Oh, we had about four. We trapped them. And she done the frying. She baked some apples, and she hollered out one day to come get them. So we went over and it was delicious. And that's just the kind of people that was up there in Oregon.

EM: So they treated you guys right.

AH: Oh boy, yes.

EM: You know, I think the people in the Armed Forces were treated in a special way during World War II, really.

AH: Oh, I do, too, yes.

EM: And you probably have other experiences where they treated you in a nice way. So these were pheasants that you trapped?

AH: Yes.

EM: Now how do you trap a pheasant?

AH: Oh, some of the guys were just a little bit [wilder?] than I was. Kind of like a box, a trap overhead, with a kind of a figure-four trigger. And they would get in there to eat, and they'd trip this box on them. And we had them caught.

EM: So that was when you were in Oregon. Did you get up to Washington as well?

AH: Yes, it's about the same thing all the way up the coast. We were treated like royalty.

EM: And never had to fire a shot.

AH: Never had to fire a shot, right. Just sit and wait, which, you know, is part of it.

EM: So after your coastal duty, then, where did they send you guys? When you became AA Artillery?

AH: OK. Most of the people in this was from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. And we had very good training. We became very proficient at our trade and just had a good reputation here in the States. Well, all of a sudden, we knew we were alerted for overseas duty. And we left out of Frisco, and we departed there on a Dutch freighter called [Echota Agoin?]. Now I knew I was a-going somewhere, but I didn't know where. On the Agoin.

EM: You were a-going on the Agoin, huh?

AH: I knew I was a-going. And we set sail and we went across as a loner. One ship. And boy, we zig-zagged all over that Pacific. And about -- I think it was 33 days later, we landed at a place called Finschhafen, New Guinea. That was, to me,

a tropical paradise. I had never seen anything like this.

EM: Well, tell me what you saw.

AH: Oh, beautiful rain forest. Beautiful waterfalls. Beautiful flowers, beautiful birds of many, many colors. And the deeper you get into those jungles the more you could see.

EM: So when you went to New Guinea, what did they do? Deploy you inland, in the jungles, or...how did that work?

AH: Well, our equipment wasn't with us. Our big guns. So we done patrol duty. And mile after mile. New Guinea was kind of in two parts. The New Guinea part, and then the (inaudible) or however you say it --

EM: I think it's Papua.

AH: -- was another part of it.

EM: Yes.

AH: And we just made patrol after patrol, out into the jungles. And there we got to see the natives, which was very, very educational.

EM: Yes, tell me about the natives.

AH: They proved to be a happy people. They dressed a little different than we did. The men, they wore

a kind of a G-string. And the women wore a wrap-around skirt. Now I said skirt, because up above, there was nothing worn.

EM: So they went topless, huh?

AH: Yes. They were wild-looking. They had tattoos all over their body. They had bones through their chin, lower chin, through their nose. And just a wild-looking bunch. We were told that they had been cannibalistic a few years before we got there. And from the looks of some of them that I'd seen on these patrols, I wasn't for sure that they hadn't -- wasn't still that way. But they were a very, I'd say fun-loving people. They didn't harm us; we didn't harm them.

EM: Now the Japanese weren't anywhere around at this point in New Guinea, were they?

AH: Oh yes. That's why we were out on these patrols. Well, we'd get word that there was a group of Japanese at a certain place up in these jungles. So we'd take off that way. And we got a bunch of them.

EM: So tell me about some of these patrols where you ran into the Japanese.

AH: OK. I was on one that -- I got to see a sight that I'll never forget. To me, it was one of the top experiences that I had in the Army. I was point man on this patrol, and all of a sudden, I began to get a very strong odor. Bad odor.

EM: So you were out in the jungle (inaudible).

AH: Yes, out in the jungle. Well, I had a radio, and I called back to the lieutenant, and told him that I'd smelled this, and now I'd found the source. I told him that I was eyeball to eyeball with the biggest darn lizards I'd ever seen in my life. And they were in a small clearing that we'd come up on. And there were six of them. And there was a tree out there with the limbs kind of come out a foot or two above the ground. And went various directions. And some of these lizards was laying up on these limbs with their feet hanging down. You know, just like they were really enjoying their selves.

EM: Having a nap, huh?

AH: Having a nap. Well, I called the lieutenant, and told him that I didn't know what to do. I'd never seen anything like this. And he said, how big they are. I said, "Well, they looked like

they weighed 300 or 400 pounds anyway." And he said, "Oh, I've heard of those animals." He says, "They're called komodo dragons." And he said that they were an endangered species. And didn't want us to do anything about them. He just told me to spur around them, go to the left. He said, "I'd go to the left about 50 yards." And I said, "Well, make that 100 and I'll start moving." But boy, they looked mean. But, you know, seeing six of those animals in the wild, in their native habitat, was very special to me.

EM: You know, there's not many people been able to do that.

AH: That's right. But it was quite an experience.

EM: So they didn't seem to be aggressive? Did they know you guys were there?

AH: I don't think they ever knew that I was looking at them, really. They stunk so darn bad, I wasn't really wanting to stay around them very long.

EM: Really? Huh. So you went on around them and then continued on your duties, huh?

AH: Yes. We encountered some Japs that day. And it was pretty going rough for a while.

EM: Well, tell me about that.

AH: Well, it was -- you either shoot, or you either get killed. So...

EM: Yeah, you shoot them, or...

AH: So we took care of them. We did not lose a man.

EM: That's good.

AH: But we took a few.

EM: So did you have any...

AH: I returned from this patrol back to the headquarters, and my company clerk met me, and said, "Sarge, you're wanted up at battalion headquarters ASAP." So I headed that way. And I get up there, and the Colonel, he got up and was addressing us. He said that us four and one officer had volunteered for a special assignment. Well, you know...

EM: You didn't know you volunteered...

AH: I was on patrol, so who in the devil volunteered me? I began to wonder. Well, I had a couple of buddies -- foxhole buddies -- that lived close to my hometown. One lived at Carnegie and the other one lived at Silver Springs. So I thought it was them, and I asked them. "No, not me." "Not me." Well, finally, the lieutenant seen that I was

pretty well concerned. He said, "Sarge, I wanted you. So I asked for you." He said, "I knew you'd volunteer anyway." So I did. That word "volunteer" keeps coming up, you know. Like you volunteer for the Service, but what Sam was wanting you to do. These two guys was named [Grinfaller?] and [Herbert Baker?]. And we had laid in the mud a few times together. And really could depend on each other. Well, the Colonel said that we were to be put on detached service. We were to be attached to the 158<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team. And they -- later on, this bunch of men...you know there's a Tokyo Rose, an old gal that talked on the radio pretty much. And she called them the Bloody Butchers. This was a pretty doggone rough bunch of men. I kind of hate to say it, but a lot of them wore a tobacco sack around their necks, and they had it full of gold teeth. Well, now I don't know for sure where those gold teeth come from, but I'd seen enough of them to have a good idea. But she called them the Bloody Butchers. But I enjoyed being with them. Well, this mission that we were on, was we were to do reconnaissance. The unit

was to make a beachhead landing on an island called Numfoor.

EM: Can you spell that, please?

AH: Numfoor?

EM: N-O-O-M-F-O-O-R [sic], I think. We were to do reconnaissance to find sites suitable for us to put our big guns on. And we made a beachhead landing...

AH: Now is this close by to New Guinea, or further north, or...

EM: Well, it was just an island...I think it was about 60 miles off the coast of New Guinea. We made this landing, and us five went looking for sites suitable for guns.

AH: So when you say you made this landing, what did you have? A small landing craft, or what?

EM: Oh, they was many, many, many. The Navy and the Air Force had bombed the devil out of the beaches. And we went in on landing barges, and just did our thing. You know. Did what we was taught to do. And we got in a little bit into the beach. And we knew that our big guns was going to arrive the next day. So we got to look...their landing site was about a quarter

mile to our left. Or a little better. And so we went down there to look. And to our surprise, we seen a thing sticking out of the sand. They were 250 pound bombs. Infrared. And the tidal waves had washed the sand off of them, so that they were exposed. But they was quite a few of them. And that -- they were trigger loaded, you know, to explode if something went across them. Well, the lieutenant said these bombs had to be defused. And that was something new to these four men that was with them. But the lieutenant said that he'd had a little experience with that on demolition. So we gathered around him, and he proceeded to defuse one. Well, everybody was really paying close attention. That was an experience. I'll tell you, it would make a man out of a boy right quick.

EM: That sure focuses the mind, doesn't it?

AH: Yes, it does. Well, we located -- we had overlay maps, and we marked where we wanted the various guns to go. They was -- we had 20 40-millimeters and we had 20 quad .50 machine guns. So that's what we were there to do, find locations for them so they would have a good field to fire.

EM: OK, but the -- the US Forces had already landed on this island and you guys were setting up basically defensive positions for if there was an air attack, huh?

AH: Well, we were in the initial assault. We were with the first group that went in to that island.

EM: Now was this is 158<sup>th</sup> that went in?

AH: Yes. We were the 487<sup>th</sup> troops attached to them.

EM: Right, attached to the 158<sup>th</sup>.

AH: Yes, sir.

EM: And was there quite a bit of resistance when you went in?

AH: Well, that's what I said. The Air Force and Navy had bombarded them, and kind of drove them back from the beach. They were back into the caves and things, holes back in the -- further back inland. And the infantry went on pushing deeper into the land. And we stayed around there on the coast waiting, knowing that our guns were going to arrive the next day. And we was marking on our overlays of where we wanted each one of these guns to go. Well, the ships came in. Brought our guns in the next day. And then went right on into their positions that we had picked out. We

had no explosions from the bombs or anything. So we had done our job.

EM: So how many of those bombs did you get to defuse?

AH: Well, I don't know how many I got, but they were -- oh, I was going to say, a hundred or so in this landing area. I'm quite certain that I got my share of them.

EM: And none of them ever went off? You guys were perfect in your...

AH: None went off with us, and none went off when the landing was made. This landing -- I guess you'd say was a joint effort of the Army, the Navy, and Air Force. And it had a nickname. I think it was called "Table Tennis." That's a nickname for this task force that went in. This island, Numfoor, was about 15 miles by 12 miles. And I think they had guesstimated 3,000 or 4,000 troops. Japanese troops on this island. And this task force that I went in with was about 14,000. So we had them pretty well outnumbered, you know. And we went in on -- it was D-Day. And it was dated 2 July of 1944. The Air Force was hitting that coast line with B-24s, and B-25s, and A-20 bombers. And I guess about 50

planes, plus these Navy boys out there shooting their big three inch guns, whatever they were, inland and driving them back. The Japs, well, the first few days, they would make air attacks. But our anti-aircraft (inaudible). Convinced them otherwise.

EM: So during that time, were you operating 40-millimeter, or the .50-caliber...?

AH: Right. Yes, I was a chief of section the unit. And there's about -- somewhere between 15 and 20 men to a unit. And we were just set up in those positions that we'd picked out. And we had a pretty good field to fire. And it gave us -- this whole island gave the US the advantage of future attacks in the Pacific there. They used Numfoor like a big supply dump, you know. We had packs of high-octane fuel out there. And there was -- the Japs had started three landing strips on that island. One of them was in pretty good shape, that's where we went in with infantry. And it wasn't no time until the engineers had this airbase back into operation with our planes. Now they was another one on down a little bit further. It had pretty good craters in it.

They'd been working on it for a couple of years or so. Another one up on the very tip of the island. Now the one on the tip of the island is where I set my gun position. And it was close to the coast. And at night, we could hear the drone of a motor. And we reported it in, and it was Japs from the other side of the island trying to get away. They was going by barges over to an island called [Biak?]. Which was not too far from us. But they were kind of reinforcing that base over there. Well, while I was in this position up on the island -- tip of the island, there, it was close to a native village. Now these villages -- all of the inhabitants of that island lived on the coast. The interior was not populated. But they was a native village about three, four hundred yards from my gun position. And I would lay there at night and listen to these guys down there. They were happy-go-lucky. They would be singing hymns, or chants -- it sounded like a chant, to me. And they would beat drums, and had some kind of instrument, it had to be strings. But I don't know just what it was.

But I'd lay there and listen to them. The enjoyable part of the whole trip, I guess.

EM: Yes. Now, were these -- these were natives who were quite a bit different from the ones who had been exposed to in New Guinea, is that right?

AH: Not exactly. They were all about the same type. Looked like cannibals, anyway.

EM: Yes, I was just looking here on a map on the computer and it looked up Numfoor Island. It's just off the north coast of New Guinea.

AH: Yes.

EM: And it's right next to Biak Island.

AH: Yes.

EM: So you're right on, on all of this.

AH: Well, my memory's not as bad as I thought it was.

EM: No, your memory's excellent.

AH: Well, to us, Numfoor was a well-planned operation. The US didn't lose many. We were told later on that the casualty rate that the Japs suffered was 11 to 1.

EM: Eleven Japanese for everyone allied loss?

AH: Allied troop, yes.

EM: Right. Well, that's a good ratio.

AH: Well, they were the big losers. And that's the way they usually was anyway. This island had gave us a greater tool to hit them further up in the Pacific, you know. Towards the Philippines. And before this encounter of going in with the infantry and everything, us five were presented a Bronze Arrowhead and each got a Bronze Star.

EM: That's great.

AH: I don't know whether we earned it or not, but that's what they gave us anyway. They had to pay us something, you know.

EM: Well, I guess it made you feel good, though. That they recognized what you'd done.

AH: Yes. I never was much for the glory bars and things. Well, in fact, the only medal that I ever received was the Good Conduct medal. Now that was being good for a whole darn year. I got it back in the States. Well that's the only medal that I'd ever received. Well then, the Army would issue a Special Order saying that you had been awarded this, had been awarded that, you know. Well, it was just paper used for other purposes. As far as I was concerned, they

could've kept it all. I was just wanting to get that job over with and get home.

EM: That's right. Without getting killed.

AH: Yes.

EM: Are you there? Hello?

AH: Hello.

EM: Hello. Are you there?

AH: I'm there.

EM: We got kind of a bad connection here, it sounds like.

AH: I hear a lot of roar.

EM: Can you hear me OK now?

AH: Hello.

EM: Hello, are you there?

AH: Oh yes, I can hear you know.

EM: OK. I don't know what's going on with our phones. But anyhow.

AH: Oh, we'll get by.

EM: OK, so you got the Bronze Star for that.

AH: Yes, and the Bronze Arrowhead.

EM: And the Bronze Arrowhead. Now what's the difference between the Bronze Arrowhead and the Bronze Star?

AH: Well, one's an arrowhead, like an Indian arrowhead. And the other one's a bronze star.

EM: OK, I just didn't know if they had different meanings, or not.

AH: Well, the arrowhead signified a beachhead landing.

EM: OK.

AH: And well, it's not very often that artillery -- anti-aircraft artillerymen -- will received that gadget.

EM: Yes, that's right.

AH: It's a...

EM: Because that's not the kind of thing you guys usually do.

AH: No. They were five of us in this battalion that got this. And I was proud of it.

EM: Well, it was nice to be recognized for volunteering.

AH: Well, after the island was completely secured, it was used for a supply line, you know. The strips was used by our crafts that were going out -- they were bombing the Borneo oil fields. And they was given the Japanese Navy pretty good

fits. They were just doing their job. We were doing ours.

EM: Yes. Now how long did you stay on that island before you came back?

AH: Well, I stayed there quite a while. And finally we started to push towards the Philippines from there. On the way to the Philippines, well I seen Leyte -- I'm trying to think of these -- and Los Negros. Mindoro.

EM: Yes, Mindoro. Now did you land on Leyte, or did you just go by it?

AH: I landed for a little while, a short while, on Leyte.

EM: Yes.

AH: And then we went on up. We pulled up to Negros - - oh yes, that was an experience there. I had a pair of binoculars and I was looking inland on Negros there. Well, they was a meadow out there and it had a bunch of cows on it. And it kind of looked like Oklahoma to me, you know. Felt like I was getting home. Well, the closer we got, I realized that they weren't cows. The doggone things was water buffaloes. Now they used those water buffaloes to plow their rice paddies and

this, and that, and the other. You know. Like we use horses. And we didn't get off there. And we pulled up to Mindoro and did about the same thing. Sit and wait for something. Well, it came. We were to make a landing on [Mindanao?]. Well, we went into Mindanao. D-Day was in April, now this was...1945. I think. Yes. And this island of Numfoor, it was a pretty good size. And it kind of proved to be like New Guinea was. You know, same type of people.

EM: Now you're talking about the island of Mindanao, right?

AH: On the island of Mindanao. Right.

EM: Right. Yes, that's the big southern island in the Philippines --

AH: Yes, that's one of the big islands.

EM: -- chain. Right.

AH: And to me, it resembled New Guinea a lot.

Because it wasn't -- I don't know what the word is. It wasn't civilized. It was still back in the ages past, you know. The people. They were like the New Guinea natives.

EM: Right. Primitive.

AH: Yes. They were wild looking also.

EM: But they looked different than the New Guinea people?

AH: No, they were pretty much -- they didn't have the tattoos that the people had in New Guinea. But they were still wild looking.

EM: Now did you have any interaction with any of these? Could they speak English? Would they come up and speak to you?

AH: Every now and then, you'd run onto one that could speak English. Back in days before, the Dutch had missionaries down in there to them. And some of them could speak a little English. Enough that you could get them to do things, and know what they were going to do. We were -- well, I'd say we had a good time in Mindanao. We were fairly close to the capital, Davao, I think.

EM: Yes. D-A-V-A-O. I've heard of that.

AH: I believe that's right. We'd get into there (inaudible) pass every now and then. Well, the people in Davao was civilized. Davao was a pretty city. Had been. The Japs had pretty well made it a shambles, but I met a girl in Davao. She was a schoolteacher. And she told me a lot of things about how the Japs had treated them.

And her grandfather was a pretty wealthy man. They had mines and when I was getting ready to leave, her grandpa said if I would come back, that he wanted me to work with him. You know, he'd promised me a job if I'd come back to the Philippines when I got out of the service. But that never did happen. But anyway, this girl explained a lot of things to me on how the Japanese would have treated her girls back in the States. If they had have come in. And thank goodness, they didn't.

EM: Well, what kind of things did she describe?

AH: Well, rape, and such as that. You know. To me, the United States is so far ahead of everywhere else that I'd been that there was little to compare. You think when the war broke out, the Japs hit us pretty hard at Pearl Harbor. And I visualized the things that would've happened to the populations of the United States. I guess there were five or six million like me, men, but we also had the women there, you know. The Navy had the Waves, and then Army had the WACs. And we had the Rosie the Riveters. We just had -- we were a nation that were determined to keep our

freedom. And we pretty well showed the Japanese what we could do.

EM: Yes. What do you think about the Japanese after what you saw, and heard in the Pacific?

AH: They were a worthy foe, I guarantee you.

EM: They were what?

AH: They were a worthy foe.

EM: Yes. Tough fighters, huh?

AH: Oh yes. They'd battle it out with you. On this island of Mindanao, well long about then, the US really began planning for the return to Luzon. You know, he said, "I shall return."

EM: Yes. Some guy named MacArthur, I think.

AH: Yes. Some guy named MacArthur. He had a bunch of stars on this shoulder. They -- I think that the Japanese began to wonder about what they had started. And we were beginning to get the upper hand. I think that they was a little disagreement in the top brass along about then, on how to prepare and where to hit the Japanese. Up on Luzon. I know things began to change for us. We didn't have the planes to shoot at. The Air Force had took pretty good care of their planes. And we'd get what -- I'll say it anyway.

We called "Piss Call Charlie." Now that was a zero that would come in every morning. And I'm sure he was taking pictures of what was going on, on the ground. But we started doing these patrols again, like we'd done in New Guinea. On Mindanao, we made about 1200 miles of patrols. And some of the things that we done. We took 60 buildings, and we had 15 pillbox and [WFs?]. I've got this written down. Five tobacco groves, two troop concentration, and we captured three dual-purpose three-inch guns. And we shot down one zero. And three bombers. Our losses on that island was 63 KI.

EM: Well, you guys had a lot of action in Mindanao.

AH: Well, I've always said that the 487<sup>th</sup> was a bastard outfit. But we were good at what we done. We were assigned to every darn thing in the Pacific, I think. You know, we didn't have a good reporter with us, like the Marines did. So we got very little publicity. Which was all right with us, as long as we could get our job done. That was the main thing.

EM: Right.

AH: After things...well, there on Mindanao, this big brass kind of got into an argument on what to do for taking, the re-taking of Manila. And it ended up that the Japs were expecting us to make initial assault from Mindanao to them. Which really didn't happen. The Army decided on how it was going to be done, finally. And one group went one way, and one group stayed on Mindanao. Well, I was one of the few that got to stay on Mindanao. And that's all the mopping up, that we were doing. The other -- the rest of the guys was hitting it pretty rough, too. But I think that the Japanese began to see daylight, you know, long about then. And as they got on up in the Philippines, you know, the president give them...well, they called it the Potsdam Declaration. And we had been -- well, I said "we" -- the Air Force had been taking its toll on their cities. They was really getting bombed, you know. And when the Potsdam Declaration was given, President Truman decided, we're up to big firecrackers. You know. We dropped two atomic bombs, one on -- what the devil was this?

EM: Hiroshima.

AH: Hiroshima. And Nagasaki. And I'm sure that engagement give them a clear view of what was in store for them if they didn't accept it.

EM: If they didn't surrender, yes.

AH: Yes. The -- not about too much before the end of the war, the Air Force was bombing all of their cities with -- at will. You know, you might say. Because their Air Force and Navy was like we were at the start of the war. Kind of helpless. And to me, these two bombs showed them what was in store for them if they didn't. Well, they finally accepted it. And they signed a treaty on one of the ships. *Missouri*, I think.

EM: Right, in Tokyo Bay.

AH: Yes. OK, in the days ending, we was leaving Mindanao going to Luzon.

EM: Now were you on Mindanao when you heard that the war was over?

AH: Right.

EM: Was there a big celebration?

AH: Well, pretty good. Yes.

EM: Well, it was party time.

AH: We didn't have the bottle to tip to drink to it, but we would've if we could've. What we done, we

loaded up everything. Well, I'll take it back. We didn't. We had all of this equipment. Jeeps and everything. And they -- I don't know who they are -- decided that it would be a more costly deal to bring these items back to the States. So we used these landing crafts, and load Jeeps, and load machine guns, 40-millimeter s, take them out at sea, and roll them out. Now the only thing that bothered me. They was a lot of food done the same thing to. Now I was in favor of giving that food to the natives.

EM: Because they had to be needing it.

AH: They had to be needing it. That was the only thing that I kind of disagreed with the actions that we took. To me, this wasn't human.

EM: Yes, it seems to me like they could've used the vehicles too. You know. Because I mean, the food, and the non...you know, the non-gun and ammunition parts. They...

AH: Well, they had plenty of those darn Jeeps and things back in the States.

EM: You know, they sold them as surplus items after the war.

AH: That's right.

EM: Everybody could buy a Jeep. I tried to buy a Duck, because I lived on a big lake and I was going to have excursions on that lake. You know, make a little money. But I couldn't get a duck. But I could've got plenty of trucks and Jeeps. But I couldn't get a Duck.

AH: But they could've left those Jeeps and trucks with the Filipinos and they would've put them to good use.

EM: They could've, yes. The Japs had left them with practically nothing. Well, we left them like we found them.

AH: Well now, were you ever wounded during the war?

EM: Not that war.

AH: OK. That was the Korean War that you got wounded, huh?

EM: Yes, it was. I got wounded in both legs. By the way, it was on Thanksgiving Day. What a thankful meal.

AH: Yes, that messed up the turkey dinner, didn't it? Oh.

EM: Well, it saved my life. I am certain if -- what had happened to me had happened two days later, I never would've got home. But that's another war.

AH: Yes.

EM: And then we've got a couple more going.

AH: Yes. Well, we always seem to have a war somewhere.

EM: Somewhere.

AH: Now, when you guys left Mindanao, you went -- did you go to Luzon after you left...

EM: Yes. We loaded up on LSTs and was headed for Luzon. Oh yes, on this trip, we hit a storm. And it busted the seams of this LST, and we was taking on water. They had all the pumps going, and bucket brigade, and most of our duffle bags and things was up on deck. And the skipper of this ship told us to throw everything overboard that was loose up there. Well, they was stoves, and duffle bags galore up there. Well, I hurry up to the upper deck because I had a duffle bag with my prize possession in it. And I was looking for it, but I couldn't find the darn thing.

AH: What was your prize possession?

EM: This prize possession was a two-handed samurai sword. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. It had the two handles, you know. Two-

handed handles. And it was -- had jewels all in it. Now whether they was real or not, I have no idea. But they looked good to me, you know. And I was wanting to get back to the States with that.

AH: How'd you get it?

EM: Well, I took it from a Jap village that I'd went into. I'd rather not get into that.

AH: OK. That's fine. So this must've been an officer's sword, because that was -- all the officers had those fancy swords from what I understand.

EM: Well, I've got one hanging on the wall over here now that I took off a second lieutenant. It was the kind that -- it was in a silver scabbard. Like a bayonet, you know. Nothing fancy like what I had.

AH: So what happened to this samurai sword?

EM: Somebody threw it overboard.

AH: Dammit.

EM: Davy Jones got it.

AH: Oh, man.

EM: Yes, that's what I thought. I see things now that -- this is another thing that I'm kind of

bitter about. The enlisted men, it took an act of Congress to get anything back home. Nowadays I see many, many displays of things that generals and colonels got back. Now how in the devil they done it, I don't know. Because I tried. Many, many times.

AH: That's the difference between being an officer and just being an enlisted man.

EM: Well, you know, rank has its privilege.

AH: Yes. They ate better, they slept better, and they got to bring stuff back.

EM: That's right. On this one that I've got, there's a little story on it.

AH: Tell me.

EM: It's hanging on the wall over here, and I'm sitting here looking at it. The story on it is, that I was behind a tree. A sniper had me pinned down.

AH: Where was this, on Mindanao?

EM: On Mindanao. I had a good friend, another Okie, name was Jack Hamilton. Well, every time I'd look around the corner, this sniper would peel the bark just above my head. I'd scoot down a little bit, you know. Get my head down lower.

And peep around, and he'd peel the bark. Well, I couldn't locate him. But Jack Hamilton finally spotted him, and got him. And, well, Jack saved my life I'm certain. Because I wouldn't ever have gotten -- out of sight of that son of a gun.

AH: Yes. Did you stay in touch with him after the war?

EM: No. I got married. I met a little gal over at Lone Wolf and I married her. And I never did even try, outside of Herbert Baker and Glen Fowler, the two foxhole buddies. They both lived through it all. And Glen died oh, about, four or five years ago. I went to his funeral. I liked him awful well. And they did not even say a word about his action in the war at his funeral. And he was a Bronze Star recipient, too. But they had a flag folded up out in the foyer of this church. His wife was presented that. That's the only act that honored his service, to me. I felt pretty bad about that. He had two adopted boys, and I told them what I thought. You know, I was always the kind of guy that would speak his piece. One time I refused a direct order from a second [John?]. And he reported me. Well, I had

six stripes, and I knew that they were going to go. The company commander called us in. The lieutenant and myself, all at the same time. And he proceeded to unload on me and the lieutenant. And finally he told the lieutenant, he says, "If you would pay attention to your experiences of your NCOs, you'll live longer." He said, "Now I've heard this story. And Sarge, you did wrong too. He gave you an order; you was obligated to carry it out." And I told him why I'd done it. And he told the lieutenant that what he was wanting me to do would've damaged our mission. He says, "I'm going to forget this. And I want both of you to forget it. I want you to shake hands and go about your business." We did. Well, that's the way my life went.

EM: So did you get along --

AH: I came back to...

EM: -- with him OK after that?

AH: I had no problems with him after that. I came back to the States, and I was kind of like a Sergeant Major back down at Fort Bliss. Well, now here I am, getting the Korean War into this.

And that ain't what you're wanting to hear. I got a habit of getting these two wars together.

EM: Well, they all run together after 50, 60 years.

AH: They all run together. All of them was horrible.

EM: Yes, that's right.

AH: But I...

EM: It's all right. Don't worry about it.

AH: My experience in Korea was, oh man, it was horrible. I don't want to even talk about it.

EM: I can understand.

AH: I've told you more than I've told anybody.

EM: Really?

AH: My wife and my children, well, they knew I was wounded in Korea because my wife got a telegram. And that's one of the things that I had to prove when I got back from there. To get medals. I got them 50 years later.

EM: Oh my God.

AH: And I don't know, I got them all mounted in a little deal. I'm kind of proud of them. But the one that I really was wanting was the Purple Heart.

EM: Yes, and you never got it.

AH: I got it finally.

EM: Well, good. I don't understand why those things are hard to get.

AH: It's hanging on the wall in there right there.

EM: Well, you should be proud.

AH: And that I am proud of.

EM: Yes, you paid for that.

AH: Yes.

EM: Well, let's go back to the end of World War II. Because you were in Luzon, and the war was over. What happened then? Did you just come back to the States, or what?

AH: Yes, we just started...everybody was just getting ready to come home. Of course there was the occupation left. All of us didn't get to come back. But they had this point system. And I didn't have enough points to get back early, but I did get back.

EM: So you stayed in the Philippines for a while?

AH: For a while, yes, I stayed for a while in Luzon. I don't know just how long. I guess a couple of months or so.

EM: So did you get a pretty good look at Manila, after you were there on Luzon?

AH: Oh, I did, yes.

EM: Tell me what you saw.

AH: Manila had been a beautiful city. The Army got in there and was helping straighten up the mess that had been made. The Army had a pretty good NCO Club in Manila. And when we'd get on pass or something and go to Manila, we'd always go to this NCO Club. Well, a funny thing happened to me there. Me and three or four more were sitting at the bar, having a sip. And all of a sudden, the darn bottles, and glasses, and things over in the cabinet in front of us started jumping up and down. And I said, "My God, what's happening?" The chandelier started swinging. We started for the exit. And we got the heck out of that place. But it was a small earthquake. But it was enough to get my attention.

EM: You don't get those in Oklahoma!

AH: Oh yes. No, really. My true feelings...Uncle Sam don't owe me nothing. But...

EM: What do you mean?

AH: I owe him. Through him, I lived what I would have never lived through. I seen what I could never have seen. I was just well taken care of in the Army. I wouldn't take anything for my

experiences down in New Guinea. That was, well, like I said on the start. It was a tropical paradise. But we were just in the wrong profession at the wrong time.

EM: You never got a chance to go back after the war, huh?

AH: No, Lord, no. I couldn't afford that. But I will say this, I am kind of bitter about World War II. And about Korea. To me, neither of them should've ever happened. There's no reason for a nation like ours to get caught with our pants down, like we did. The Japanese had a picnic. And I'm sure that if we had deployed prior to their sneak attack, it would've been over with much sooner. I don't think that any nation in the world can stand up to the US.

EM: Yes, I'd say you're right.

AH: Now this -- another one that's got a greater population. And they got a little taste of us at the end of my career. We were making believers out of them until we got outnumbered about 200 to one. And they did kick our butt good. But there's no reason for that to have happened. If our intelligence had been what it was, they would

never have been an invasion by China into North Korea. I'm certain of that.

EM: Really?

AH: But, we can take care of ourselves if we have to. The United States is -- well, we're just a class of people that will bind together in a hurry.

EM: Yes. We get unified when we have to.

AH: That's right, yes.

EM: So when you came back from the Pacific, what did they do? Just put you on a troop ship and send you back, or what?

AH: Yes. I came back on the sister ship to what I went over on.

EM: Really?

AH: I went over on the Echota Goin, I came back on the [Echota Beru?].

EM: I thought you were going to tell me the Echota Coming.

AH: The Echota -- not the Echota Coming. Going home is the Echota Beru.

EM: So what did you do, go into San Francisco, or what?

AH: Yes, we came back into San Francisco --

EM: So you went up...

AH: -- I got on the train, met another Okie. Then we headed for Oklahoma. Well, we went to Camp Chafee first. And then we got leave, if we wanted it, and go home for awhile. Report back. Decide whether you're going to stay or get out. I was offered a commission. This is another war story. Well, no, it involves Korea. You don't want to hear that...

EM: Well, I mean, I'd love to hear it. But I don't have time to do it on a tape, here. But when you came back to the States, how did you feel coming in under the Golden Gate Bridge, and seeing the...

AH: Oh, and what a great sight. Everybody was thrilled to death. Of all the yelling...the bands playing, and everybody was on deck (inaudible).

EM: So how do you think your experience in the Pacific changed you as a person?

AH: I don't think it really changed me as a person. I think that I'm just like I would've been if I hadn't have been through it. Hardheaded. If I start something, I finish it. I do things to the best of my ability. And if that don't suit them,

it don't suit me. In my hometown, I'm treated like a hero. But I'm not no...

EM: So you don't think you're a hero, huh?

AH: I'm not. To me, those that paid the supreme price are the only heroes that any war produces. The rest of the guys were just doing what we were told to do, to the best of our ability.

EM: Yes, and you got lucky.

AH: I got lucky.

EM: But I think it's the right thing to do, to treat you guys with the respect that we try and do. Don't you?

AH: Oh, they do. I ended up my career in 1956. After I got out, I went back in. OK, I ended up in '56. In 2000 and something, my daughter got these medals and things they give me. I ended up with the National Defense ribbon. I'm just trying to think; I really don't know. I ended up with the Asiatic Pacific Medal, with Bronze arrowhead and three Bronze Stars. I ended up in the Philippines with a Presidential citation. And one Bronze Star. From there I went to Korea and got busy. It was an education within itself.

EM: Well, have you ever gone to any reunions after the war? With your old buddies, or your old outfit?

AH: Well, we have a reunion of the 487<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Dallas, every year, up until last year. My company clerk's name was [Cletus Goss?]. And he was the [getting together?] of all of these anniversaries we were having. Like -- Paul [Custer?], he was a New Jersey boy. He was bent on getting this reunion set up. So we had up until last year, we had 29 of them. And it was a fair crowd at every reunion. Well, the last one that I attended, there was four of us there. Paul Custer was not one of them. Today Cletus has departed, about a year or two ago. Today there's three of us. Me, and Paul Custer, and a fellow by the name of [Crittendon?]. Crittendon worked for the -- in the Army, he was the communications sergeant. And he pursued that occupation after he got discharged. He can call anywhere in the world on AT&T and not cost him anything. So he talks to me quite often. But him, and me, and Paul, are the only three that we know that are still living. Out of the 487<sup>th</sup>.

EM: So you guys are the last of the Mohicans, huh?

AH: We are the last of the Mohicans. I'll be 88 years old in a couple of months. And I'm on life support, oxygen. I've had four bypasses. Heart bypasses. I've had one lung removed. And I'm just as happy as if I had good sense. I don't hurt anywhere, except my breathing is very bad.

EM: Well, you certainly sound strong on the phone. And your memory is 100 percent.

AH: Well, there's a lot of stuff that I don't want to remember.

EM: Well, I understand that.

AH: You understand that. I don't even want to think about it.

EM: OK, that's fine. I understand. Well, what else can we talk about, Allen, while I've got you on the phone? I've made you talk here for an hour and a half almost.

AH: Well, I'll tell you...can I tell you about my family?

EM: Sure, go ahead.

AH: OK. I lost my wife. We'd been married 57 years. I lost her in 2004. I put 57 red roses. Excuse me a minute...

EM: That's all right. That's all right. So 57 red roses. Go ahead.

AH: On her casket. And I guess she was like a general. I did what she told me to do. We were very happy. I have one son and three daughters. To me, they're wonderful people.

EM: You should be proud.

AH: I am proud of them. I live alone. Well, not alone, I've got a cat named Sassy. She's 14 years old.

EM: Well, let me tell you just a quick story from me. I had a cat that just passed away here, in the last month. And that cat was 21 years old.

AH: Oh, my gosh.

EM: You got a few more years with that cat.

AH: Maybe I have. She's a lot of company to me now.

EM: I know, they really are.

AH: I have one daughter that bought the house next door. And she works at the bank downtown, but she checks on me every night. You know, they just take care of daddy.

EM: That is good. Well let me do one thing before I end the tape here. I just want to state something from my generation. I was born during

the war, so you're one generation ahead of me.  
But I just want to thank you and the others for  
what you did for our country during World War II.  
I still think that we don't do that enough, so I  
wanted to end the tape by making that statement.  
So there it is.

AH: And I'll make a last statement. I am proud to  
have done what I done. I wouldn't want to live  
through it again, but we're Americans. And I  
always say God bless America. And may we have  
some peace. And that's about what I -- the way I  
feel.

EM: Well, I think it would be nice if we did have  
some peace.

AH: And I thank you for listening to me.

EM: Well, let me tell you, I appreciate your telling  
me and putting into the museum archives, your  
story. And like you said, you hadn't really told  
it all at one time. And now we've got it.

END OF AUDIO FILE