

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

**Center for Pacific War Studies**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Clarence W. Masching**

**Pontiac, IL**

**August 31, 2010**

**184<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital, Kodiak, Alaska**

**328<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital, Attu, Alaska**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is August 31, 2010. I am interviewing Mr. Clarence W. Masching by telephone. His phone number is 815-844-7164. His address is 6 Meadow LN, Pontiac, IL 61764. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Cary, I want to thank you for taking time today to do this interview today and I want to thank you for service to our country during World War II. Now, the first thing I like to do is read this agreement with the museum. When I do this in person, I hand the paper to them and let them read and sign it but since this is by telephone let me read it to you. "Agreement Read." Is that ok with you

Mr. Masching

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birthdate?

Mr. Masching

10-26-1921

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Masching

I was born in Emington, IL

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Masching

Yes, I had 5 brothers and 2 sisters. There were 8 of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were any of your brothers involved in WWII?

Mr. Masching

Yes, one.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branch was he in?

Mr. Masching

Well he was attached to the Air Force but I don't know which Air Force now, but he was, I think, a mechanic like in the motor pool.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did he come home from the war?

Mr. Masching

Yes. We both went the same day and he passed away back in 1989.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your sisters, were they involved in any kind of war work of any kind?

Mr. Masching

Not really, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Masching

Well it was a lot different then what it is now, I'll tell you that. Uh, we were, you can imagine with 8 kids, my folks had, and back in the 30's I remember that every time my folks went to town to get some groceries they would back up to the old chicken house and load up a few old hens and have a little cream from the cows that we milked and they brought that right to the grocery store and then they would get some groceries for it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you live on a farm?

Mr. Masching

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had a garden, did you?

Mr. Masching

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you live on the farm during all of the depression?

Mr. Masching

Yes. I lived on the farm all my life until I went to WWII?

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you own the farm or did you rent it?

Mr. Masching

No, they rented the farm.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Masching

Well, I tell ya, I hadn't gone to high school. I got out of grade school when I was 13 and I, well, we didn't have no way to get to town to get to the high school. We had an old car but we didn't have no gas to put in it and but I did get a high school diploma from Indianapolis Technical High School. When I was in service I ended up at Billings General Hospital at Indianapolis and the Army had put out a pamphlet or something that you could take this test, you know, and if you passed it you would get a high school diploma or you could pass it and get a college degree. So I passed the high school one and so I got my high school diploma.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year was that?

Mr. Masching

It had to be in 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you take the college exam then?

Mr. Masching

No, I didn't but I should have, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Masching

In 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day, do you recall, or what month?

Mr. Masching

Yeah I got that stuff laying out here because I figured you would be asking some of those questions. Induction was August 24, 1942 and then it says a little bit further over the date of entry into active service 7<sup>th</sup> of September of 1942. So, uh, take your pick on that I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branch did you go in?

Mr. Masching

Well, that was at Chicago where I was sworn in for the service and then we went to Camp Grant. That was a camp by Rockford, IL and it, uh, they had an induction center there, I guess, or whatever. My brother went at the same time and a cousin went at a same time and all I did was that they appointed us where we were going and I just went across the railroad tracks into the camp and they went; we thought that we might kind of stick together but we went 3 different directions.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went into the Army, is that right?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, but they did too.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you drafted?

Mr. Masching

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your training, where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Masching

Well basic training was right there at Camp Grant, what little I had.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me what you had, what did you have in the way of basic training?

Mr. Masching

Well I was only there about 6 or 7 weeks, I think, and we did a lot of marching and stuff like that. That is about all it amounted to.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any weapons training?

Mr. Masching

Uh, very little.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go to the rifle range and shoot a rifle or anything?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, yeah, we did that and we went on these 20 mile marches and that is about it besides being on KP once in awhile?

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have bayonet training?

Mr. Masching

No, not really.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished up there where did you go?

Mr. Masching

Well from there they put us on a train and we went to Seattle, WA.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip out there?

Mr. Masching

Well the train trip was long, I tell you. But it was, for a little ole country boy, it was something new because I was never on a train before, you know. And there were mountains out there. You would look out the windows and see the back end of the train way over there on the side someplace. And, uh, you wanted to be sure and shut your window because they had the old steam engines, you know. You went through some of those tunnels you would have been black when you got through them if you didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did that trip take?



Mr. Masching

Oh it seemed like forever, I don't know just how long it did take. It must have taken, I would say 4 days to a week.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a place to sleep on the train?

Mr. Masching

Uh, you know I know we did when we got back from Aleutian Islands and we went to Florida for recuperation and I know we had a place there. I really can't tell you if we had a place to sleep or whether we didn't or if we just slept in our seats.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went to Seattle, you say?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, Seattle.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

Mr. Masching

Well, you might say nothing. It rained every day we were there and I know we were at Ft. Lawton and some of the guys that were suppose to be in charge of us, a group of us; I don't know how they pick them out or anything else but there would be like a, maybe 8 or 10 or 12 in a bunch and they would appoint them to rake leaves or something. It was in the first part of December and this one day, I can remember that so good, this guy told us where the motor pool was and we didn't know where it was I guess, we were to march down there and get into this certain truck and they would take us someplace to do some

work and bring you back at noon to eat dinner and we marched down there and got in the truck and sat there all morning and nobody came and moved it. So, then we marched up for dinner, we had to go up a hill, I remember, to get to the mess hall and then after dinner he said to us to go back and do the same thing we did this morning, so we went back and sat in the truck. (laughing) That was one of the days I know. We didn't do much of anything besides they had a bunch of them raking leaves and that was about it. After the first day or two, why I noticed that at noon a lot fellows' raincoats were dry. Well I figured out how come they were dry, there was a PX down there in the center where everybody was raking leaves and they were spending time in the PX all morning. So, it don't take long to catch on to something like that, you know, especially when it is raining.

I think we were there about 3 weeks just doing nothing, raking leaves or something. And then we got our orders that we were going to be shipped out. So we didn't know where we were going or anything else, they didn't tell us anything. So we left one morning about, I think, about two in the morning and each of us had two barracks bags. So we drug those things, one on our shoulder and one we carried or whatever. It seemed like we walked a mile or more and loaded up into these big old trucks, you know. They took off after awhile and went right back past where we started from. Of course that is the Army, you know, nothing to organized. So, they took us down wherever the ship was and loaded us onto that. We went out through Puget Sound is all I can remember. We didn't even get out of Puget Sound and I was so sick, seasick. I had never been out on a ship before or out in the water, you know. Yeah, I was sick for days.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a ship were you on?

Mr. Masching

I don't know a big old ship that was full of soldiers. But it was about 4 or 5 layers of these canvas bunks on each side of you, you know, and your barracks bag in the center or between your legs and, uh, your helmet hanging on the side and you would take the inside out and everybody that was sick was throwing up in their helmets. And, uh, it was so rough up there in that North Pacific that the water was coming in those big vents up there you know and I was up about, well I suppose as high as a kitchen table, and sick and I said: "I don't care whether if I get wet or not but I am going to stay here until that water gets to me." And after awhile they got the pump going, I guess, and got it pumped out.

Mr. Misenhimer

About what month did you leave to go up there?

Mr. Masching

I left the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. I left Seattle and I landed at Kodiak and I left there the 13<sup>th</sup> of December the next year. And that is something I had written down, I didn't write too much of a diary. I had here 'we departed from Kodiak December 13<sup>th</sup> of 1943 in the AM'

Mr. Misenhimer

And you left to come back on December 13<sup>th</sup> of 1944?

Mr. Masching

No, no, I left Seattle of December 13<sup>th</sup> of 1942 and I left Kodiak December 13<sup>th</sup> of 1943. And then we were suppose to be going to Attu, well, I got here that we stopped at Cold

Bay December 15<sup>th</sup> and it was cold there, I got down. And we left Cold Bay December 16<sup>th</sup> of 1943 and we arrived at Dutch Harbor December 17<sup>th</sup> of 1943. It just took about a day for each one of them, it looks like. And then we left Dutch Harbor and we arrived in Adak, that is another island out there. I've heard all of them all the while we were up there at about the same time about 1400 pm, I got down.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date was that?

Mr. Masching

That was December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1943 we left Dutch Harbor at 9 am and we arrived at Adak on Sunday at 1400 pm. Uh, on December 19<sup>th</sup> we left Adak on December 20 of 1943 and on Monday at 1400 pm we arrived at Kiska. Tuesday December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1943 and we got off of the boat there and walked for about an hour or so up a mountain and then we worked for a couple hours to find a place to sleep. See we, there were about 70 of us enlisted men that got shipped down to Attu and that was as far as the ship was going. So they dumped us off there and we didn't have only a buck sergeant was the highest guy on our bunch and so we were stuck there.

That was December 22<sup>nd</sup>, let me see here, no we arrived at Kiska December 21<sup>st</sup> and on December 22<sup>nd</sup> on a Wednesday noon, we had been working all morning trying to get things straightened out, I have down here. At noon we moved out of the ward, we were in a hospital ward I guess, into tents. You know these old paramidal tents; they hook two of them together? Yeah, well we slept in those things and they had so much snow that, uh, you know a dirt floor in it and little pot bellied stoves and we had to go down to the

dock, they had an old Caterpillar tractor there with a trailer behind and they sent us down there to get some coal to burn in our little pot bellied stoves. And, uh, there was Canadians there too on this hill where we were camped out, I know, and they would swipe our coal and we would swipe theirs. But it was just dumped off down there at the dock and covered with snow and ice, you know, and we had to dig that out and it was in bags, you know, burlap bags. And we would haul that up and then we would have to shovel the snow off our tents every night.

But, let's see, then December 24<sup>th</sup> we hauled coal all morning, it says. Then, we ate dinner and we moved the barracks bags again over into the medical supply, wherever that was, I don't even remember it.

Let's see, oh we went to church that night on December 25<sup>th</sup> and I had a good friend who was there with me and he lives in OH. He is really the only one that I have kept in touch with but he can't, I might be a little hard of hearing but he can't hear anything. You can't even call him up on the phone and chit-chat. But, anyhow, when we were in those camps we would play cards at night, you know, and we were sleeping on cots and we had 2 barracks bags and we would go to bed at night and we would put our clothes between the first one and the second one and then we would put our shoes on top of the second one because it would be frozen in the next morning. While we were playing cards we had, oh a couple guys there from West Virginia, well they were alright in the daytime but if they got anything to drink they were a little bit wild. (laughing) And, uh, while we were playing cards they found some, I don't know how they found them but they had some Jap

bullets and they threw a few of them in the fire. Well, hell, we never knew when they were ever going to go off and which direction they were going.

But, anyhow, then every night somebody would be appointed to start the fire the next morning, you know. Well this one morning I was only about 6 foot from that tent pole and I woke up and I said "Boy, that tent pole sure has a bow in it this morning" and around the top it had the canvas was tore about 2 foot square up there and about that time "kabang!" down she came and all that snow on top of it, you know. But, we got out and we went down to where they were building this hospital and asked the officer down there in charge and he said "Pitch another tent." Well can you imagine pitching a tent in a blizzard?

Mr. Misenhimer

Not very well. (laughing)

Mr. Masching

Well, you got to get the old one out of there first, you know. Well, anyhow, we found a Quonset and whoever moved out of it left both doors open. Well you know it was pretty well filled up with snow. So we cleaned that out and there was an oil burner in there and we found some oil burner fuel someplace, I don't know where but anyhow that seemed like moving into a motel, you know, compared to what we had.

Well, lets see, I didn't realize it until I looked at this book, but we got to Kiska, I remember right back there a page or so, we got there in January 21<sup>st</sup>, I think, in 1943 and we were at Kiska and no mail all this while, they were sending it to Attu and I got down

April 26<sup>th</sup> we reached Attu. But then when we got to Attu, they had decided a day or two before that to send the mail to Kiska. So then we had to wait for it to get back. But that is all about I had written down on this. I got down that we left Attu in January of 1945. So, it seems like I was there for 4 years but I got there in December of 1942 and got out in January of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

A little over 2 years.

Mr. Masching

Yeah, yes, it was 3 Christmases though; 1942, 43, and 44.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got to Kodiak, what did you do there?

Mr. Masching

Oh, we worked in the hospital.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do in there?

Mr. Masching

We had patients there and, uh, well see they were fighting down at Attu, I think part of the time we were there. They probably bring a patient back. Oh, also, they, uh, they were teaching us classes on being a medic, you know, and I know one that really I can remember forever. They had called us down to the morgue one morning, for a class down there, and they had a couple stretchers along the outside of the room there along the wall and the edge of the room with veterans in it that were in an airplane and they were burnt pretty bad. They'd have one leg burnt off, maybe off at the knee, you know, and

another one their arm was burnt off or something. It wasn't covered up 100 percent. And, uh, they had one on the table where they were doing an autopsy on it, you know, and they had a 5 gallon bucket underneath to catch everything, all the liquid, you know. And you could hear that running out and every part of the body that was taken out was shown to us, you know. And I remember real well their rib plate, they had a like a big tin snip or something to cut through the ribs and took the chest plate out. And then take out the heart and show it to you, you know, and so forth. But the worst part was that you didn't quite get done at noon, so when they did get done, well they sent us up to eat dinner. Guess what? Spare ribs for dinner! (laughing) I don't think anybody ate too much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, were you actually a medic treating people?

Mr. Masching

Well, I'd give shots and as far as treating their wounds, no, they had somebody like a buck sergeant, or a Corporal. He was a little bit above me and he treated the wounds. We did other things that had to be done, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of training did you get to be a medic?

Mr. Masching

The only training that we got was in this hospital. Well most training that I say that we got was like that autopsy on body parts, you know.



Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you learn to give shots?

Mr. Masching

Oh, I think that was probably at Kodiak. I think that was at Kodiak.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were at Kodiak for about a year?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, just exactly a year.

Mr. Misenhimer

You worked in a hospital there?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, yeah, we had barracks there that we lived in. That was good going there but the weather was the worst of the whole time up there. They lost more Americans from the weather than they did anything else.

Mr. Misenhimer

What outfit were you with? Were you in a unit there or what?

Mr. Masching

It was, I got it right here, it was a 728<sup>th</sup>, Kodiak must have been the 728<sup>th</sup> hospital and, uh, Attu must have been the 184<sup>th</sup> station hospital and the 328<sup>th</sup> station hospital in the Aleutian Islands.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was on Kodiak or where?

Mr. Masching

No, that was on Attu, the 328<sup>th</sup> station hospital. And then when I got back from the Aleutian Islands I was stationed at Billings General Hospital in Indianapolis. I worked in the eye, ear, nose and throat clinic; worked in the office. It says, 'made and filed out and produced upon requests reports of patients; also, made out morning reports.'

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't actually work with the patients there?

Mr. Masching

I didn't do much with patients there, I guess, no. Then I got discharged from Camp Atterbury, that was south of Indianapolis.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date did you get discharged?

Mr. Masching

Date of separation 12<sup>th</sup> of November of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

November the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Masching

The 12<sup>th</sup>, it is what it says here, the 12<sup>th</sup> of November of 1945. I knew it was the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> or right in there somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

You spent most of your time up in the Aleutians, right?

Mr. Masching

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever get into any combat at all?

Mr. Masching

No, no. We, uh, some of us went out on like a Sunday afternoon, maybe or something in the summertime and there was still some Japs in their foxholes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they do when they found the Japs in the foxholes?

Mr. Masching

Well I suppose they had a crew that was burying them, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh, they were dead?

Mr. Masching

Well, see, we got there and I don't know exactly the dates that they were fighting there but I know that there were still some in their foxholes that died there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever bombed or shelled by the Japanese?

Mr. Masching

No, uh, they said that when we got to Kodiak that there was, oh what do you call it, just missed us on the boat going up there.

Mr. Misenhimer

A torpedo just missed you on the boat?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, that is what they said but I don't know that myself.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there anytime you felt frightened?

Mr. Masching

Oh, well I don't know what to tell you on that. I suppose there was, uh, I'd tell you, being seasick you get scared and frightened both. I don't know, just seemed like you couldn't even stop throwing up and then when you did get stopped and got back to your bunk, then you got settled good and then they would call you and they would want you to come for KP or something like that. I just couldn't understand something like that. What would they want with somebody that couldn't even keep his mouth shut, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

In your hospitals up there in Kodiak and Attu were there many wounded ones being brought in?

Mr. Masching

Well, yeah, yeah, that is where we were getting most of our patients, I think. There was a Naval base there, too, and of course they had their own hospital. But, uh, there were quite a few men there in our camp, too.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever have any Japanese patients?

Mr. Masching

No, nope.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened up there in Alaska?

Mr. Masching

Well, I don't know all that did happen. Well, they had some bad snowstorms out there, I will tell you that. I got pictures of Attu, they had a hospital built out of Quonset huts, you know, and each Quonset Hut they called them a ward, you know, and there would be all attached with a walkway between two of them, you know, and I remember we got a patient in there that must have been in a plane wreck and he was burnt. Oh, he was burnt. He was wrapped with Vaseline gauze; you know, his whole body, and after that, that skin started rotting, lets say, and that whole hospital stunk. It wasn't his fault, you know, they were doing the best they could to save him but in the end, you get that much skin, why it stinks pretty bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did he survive?

Mr. Masching

I think so, but we had one patient worse than that, uh well I thought that was worse than that. No, I guess he wasn't worse, but anyhow. He had spinal meningitis and I remember we had to go in and feed this poor guy and that is one time I talk about being scared, I didn't feel to good about doing that. Because you know that stuff is catching, you know, and he had this spinal meningitis and he didn't know, he was out of his mind a little and, uh, you would have to take an orange and pull it apart and feed him and then of course there would maybe be a seed in there or something that you wouldn't get taken out and he would spit that in the air, you know, and it just made you feel like, boy, you were going to be doing that next, you know. I know that they sent him home but I don't know

what happened to him. They sent him back to the States anyhow. That was one of the worst patients, I thought, besides that fellow that was burnt so bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

How big was this hospital? About how many patients did you have at any one time?

Mr. Masching

Oh boy .....

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot?

Mr. Masching

Oh yeah, I would say that there would be hundreds of them. I'm just guessing, but I think there would be....

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Masching

Oh, it was all right but I remember they had some guys that were 40 years old in there and, of course, I can remember him saying one time, you know, and it was true, he said "how do we know we are on Kodiak? Just because somebody told us that." (laughing) I guess he is right, we could have been some other place, I don't know. Well, about the only thing we could get on radio was, there was, maybe you heard of her, Panama Hattie. She was that was suppose to be talking from Japan and she would tell how many American planes that they shot down, you know, and here and there and just trying to get the American soldier morale down, you know, that was her job was all.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about Tokyo Rose, did you ever hear her?

Mr. Masching

No, not too much. It was Panama Hattie that we heard the most of. I don't know how come we get her, but that is what they called her, uh, she was over in Japan, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you work with the doctors in the hospital?

Mr. Masching

Uh, no. I saw several operations, you know, like an appendix and things like that. That was all interesting, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

When the doctor made their rounds, you didn't go with them or anything like that?

Mr. Masching

No, I didn't. Like I said, this fellow, this friend of mine from Ohio, he was like a buck sergeant, you know, next notch up and everything, he went with them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they have nurses there?

Mr. Masching

Uh, on Kodiak they did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Women, female nurses?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, and now lets see, no not when we got down to Attu, uh, we didn't have no trees or anything down there.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the nurses?

Mr. Masching

Down at Attu I know that there were no nurses down there because they had signup all the time. Uh, male but no females. So, but, I remember when we were at Kodiak there was an officer, OD they called him at night, and had what they call an emergency room around here, not the equipment like they got now days and anyhow I was put in there, some, in the emergency room and if you got something you couldn't handle, you know if it was something minor you took care of it, but if it was something major you called the OD all the time. Otherwise he got to sleep.

So this one night they had one guy driving the jeep and he got in an accident. Anyhow, the ambulance brought him in, so we called the OD and he come and of course he pronounced him dead because he was dead and you know, you can imagine this being a farm boy and I was 20 years old when I went into the service and didn't have anything to do with dead people and speaking of that, I have been in charge of a cemetery for the last 60 years, I guess. But anyhow, the doctor came and pronounced him dead and they wheeled in the next room to where I was, and no more calls that night, but every five minutes I could hear a noise in that next room. (laughing) that is the way it goes when you never handle anything like that before.



Mr. Misenhimer

What is some other things that happened while you were up there in Alaska?

Mr. Masching

Well, lets see, I was on, I'm pretty sure it was Kiska, I think so, there was a big old ship that; oh I don't know what happened to it, all I know is that we went down to the ocean and, like we had a decent day or something and, uh, there was this big ship and it was run aground and so of course us guys were just nosing around and doing nothing that afternoon, we climbed aboard it and went all over on it, you know, and then somebody says "we better think about getting off of here because the tide will be coming." So, that will give you a little thrill if the tide come in and you wouldn't be able to get off the ship.

But, oh, another thing, when we landed there, see, uh, the Japs had dug a bunch of caves in Kiska and well probably Attu too but I wasn't in any of them in Attu, but a lot of these guys get off of that ship and they run up this mountain a ways and they couldn't wait to get into them caves and get some souvenirs, you know. You know, that didn't bother me a bit, if they want to go in there and get blown up, you know which the Japs could have left mines in there and so I didn't bother about getting to many souvenirs. I got some Jap shells and stuff like that, but they had blankets and a few more things but I never got too interested in that too much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any live Japanese?

Mr. Masching

No, no I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some of the souvenirs you got home with?

Mr. Masching

Oh some Jap shells, I don't know what MM they were now, they were probably an inch and half in diameter, but they had already been shot, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this just the lead or the brass?

Mr. Masching

The brass part of it. Well, I had the ends of it too, but they had been dismantled or something, and while we were up there on Attu and we had spare time we, like in the evenings we would have something to do or go nuts, one of the two because some of those guys from the United States would come up there and they wouldn't be there for two weeks and they'd be crazier than crazy. Just from the weather and nothing to do, you know. And we tried to keep our own mind, anyhow. Anyhow I brought two home, I had 2 daughters. No, I didn't have 2 daughters, I wasn't even married then but I made 2 out of these shells, you know, they were about 6 inches tall and that is with the bullets off of the end of them and I put a little handle on each side of them, kind of round like, I got them soldered on there and it made a nice little flower vase or something. I brought a couple of those home and some other Jap stuff but nothing important.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your typical day like? What time did you go to work, how long did you work and stuff like that?

Mr. Masching

Oh God, well I think that we worked most everyday, but if you wanted like Sunday morning off, well if there was a church you went to church and, let me see, uh, they had a big cemetery there at Attu, Little Falls Cemetery and all these white crosses. I got pictures of them. But from what I understand they got all of them dug up and sent home now.

Mr. Misenhimer

What time did you go work in the hospital in the morning?

Mr. Masching

Oh God, we must have had a schedule but I don't even remember it now.

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm sure that they had somebody in the hospital 24 hours a day though, right?

Mr. Masching

Oh yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you work days or nights or both?

Mr. Masching

Oh, probably some of both. I know on Kodiak we just, a lot of times we worked as laborers, you know. We hauled these 5 gallon cans of fuel, diesel fuel you know, fuel up stoves with them and anything to keep things going, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, yeah, I'm trying to think, I don't know just exactly where they were now but I saw Bob Hope and, who is that guy who had a big mustache? Uh,

Mr. Misenhimer

I know who you mean, Jerry Colona.

Mr. Masching

You know like I tell everybody once you get past 39 you kind of forget a few things.

(laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, there was a Red Cross but there was a USO, I think it was the USO, I don't know what that stood for right now, but in Seattle and where else. I didn't do too much in the United States before I went I was just up there at Camp Grant for about 6 or 7 weeks. I got home, I think once from Camp Grant and until I got back, well we got back in 1945 and then we went to Florida for recuperation for couple 2 or 3 weeks and then we came back to Indianapolis. After I got back to Billings General Hospital in Indianapolis, I use to hitchhike home and that was about 200 miles, I guess and I could hitchhike home about faster then I could drive it, you know.

But I went to see this friend of mine in Ohio a few times and I thought once that I would just stop and see what that Billings General Hospital area, that camp looks like and I got there and I didn't even know the place. You know, we lived in barracks there and I never

saw a barrack on the campground. All brick buildings, these soldiers are living in brick buildings and I just couldn't believe it.

Mr. Misenhimer

January of 1945 you came home from Alaska, is that right?

Mr. Masching

What was that?

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you come home from Alaska, what day and time?

Mr. Masching

From the Aleutian Islands I got home January of 1945 and I got home at the end of January or the first part of February.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they going to be sending you anywhere else overseas or just into the hospital in Indianapolis?

Mr. Masching

Oh, I don't know. You see, we went to Florida and down there at the motel we were staying at, well every day they'd put up a list of where people were being sent too and mine was Billing General Hospital and this friend of mine from Ohio, his was, I think he went to New York someplace and so we stayed there until we got discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer

In April 12<sup>th</sup> of 1945, President Roosevelt died, did you hear about that?

Mr. Masching

Oh yeah, we were home then.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Masching

Well, uh, I don't know they probably wondered what was going to happen next. I don't know for sure. I can't give a good answer on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

On May the 8<sup>th</sup> of 1945, Germany surrendered; did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Masching

Uh, well, where I was nobody celebrated too much anytime. You know, there should have been a big celebration when Japan but you see we were in the Pacific all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When Japan surrendered you were back in the States.

Mr. Masching

Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't have a celebration when Japan surrendered in August 15<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Masching

Oh, not no big one, I don't know that has been quite awhile ago now. Oh my God, that is over 60 years ago and see I am past 39.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Masching

No, I don't think so. I know I tried to buy a car and I couldn't buy a car no-place. You would go to these garages and they would "what do you want?" and "I would like to buy a car. I don't care what kind or anything else, I need a little transportation" and they were "what do you have to trade in?" Well you would tell them "I never owned a car so I don't have anything to trade in." So, it wasn't to easy then.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, I was working on a farm down by a little town south of me and working for some farmer farming and they had classes, I think every week and I guess, well I was born and raised on the farm but still they were giving these farming classes and I went there for awhile. I know that I dropped my veteran insurance, when I got out I dropped everything. I really was no big fan of the Army, but I know that somebody had to be there and I was one of them but I never, I thought if I got out I'm just going to get rid of everything, so I did. I should have kept it, but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank that you got to?

Mr. Masching

Corporal.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Masching

Yes, uh, I know a fellow in Florida and I don't know how I got connected with him but he was in the Aleutian Islands but I don't think he was there until 1945, but he sends out a little folder stapled together, its probably got, oh, might have 25-30 pages in it and some guys have written him articles, you know, about where they were and so forth. And, then he always got right on the start of it all the ones who have passed away that have written him letters. And then he's got his reunions lined up and I remember 10 years ago he used to have 2 or 3 or maybe 4 a year but of course I was busy working then and I never gave them no thought at all.

Since I have retired my daughter and son-in-law took me to one in northern Ohio about 3 or 4 years ago and there were probably 30 veterans there and their wives, some of them that had wives, you know. But, I didn't know anybody, of course. They call it the Aleutian Island reunion. So then I went to one just, I'm going to say 2 months ago, it was probably in June in Kansas City and he had another one this year but he is getting up there in years, too. I know that he mentioned in one of them last little pamphlets or book that he sent me that he didn't know how many more he was going to have. So, I don't know if any is scheduled.

We went to this one in Kansas City and I was going to drive and my 2 daughters, they didn't think that I ought to, I don't know why, I was still alright. So she came one Sunday, my one daughter, and she said "Have I got news for you." She had it all lined up going to Kansas City on the train. So I went from here to St. Louis and then I transferred



trains to Kansas City. That was probably 500 miles, I don't know, or 600. And so everything went fine and we got back to St. Louis.

Well about probably, I want to say 6 or 8 years ago, my wife had a bad stroke and she was crippled up pretty bad, her one whole side. And they took her to Peoria to the hospital down there and she was down there for a month or more. And she saw the people that had strokes down there and she says "I'm not going to be like them." So, she worked hard on it and she got 95 percent better and her one foot yet, if you didn't know that she had a stroke you wouldn't know. But she doesn't lift it up quite right and she has fallen a couple times but she hasn't hurt herself.

But, uh, we are coming home then and we got to St. Louis and you know I don't care whether it is a train station or a airplane, to get into the, lets call it a depot, you got to go up an escalator or down an escalator and so forth. Well, we got to St. Louis and we got her off the train. We had to transfer to a different one and we went up the escalator and we went in the depot and had to wait there for an hour or two. So then we left there and went down the escalator and of course I had the luggage and I was behind her and she was doing fine and you know there is an elevator there too that you can take, you don't have to take the escalator, but she was doing so good we just went with the crowd, you know. She stepped on the escalator and we were going down and she got her foot on half of a step or something and fell down. And she tumbled down and I was behind her with the luggage and there was nothing I could do and if I let those loose they would have tumbled down on her.

So, anyhow, by the time she got to the bottom she sat on her hind end then and rode along the side all the rest of the way down. We got to the bottom and the lady ahead of her helped her get up and by that time I was getting there so I helped what I could. And it just happened that there was an Amtrak man there, which was good. Of course my wife, they saw that she had 2 places in the back of her head where she had hit something, she was bleeding out of there a little bit. And her arms, of course she had them all uncovered, you know, and they were bleeding each one of them had a half a dozen places. And she said to this Amtrak man "I got to catch that next train in 10 minutes." And he said "I don't think so. I am going to call the ambulance." So he called the ambulance and her one knee got banged up pretty bad but it didn't break. She didn't have a broken bone in her body and he called the ambulance and they picked her up and took her to the hospital and she was in the emergency room from 3 o'clock to after midnight and they x-rayed every bone in her body. So a little after midnight this one doctor was finishing up bandaging some of the wounds and I don't know how she got so much skin taken off of her, she was bleeding a lot of places. So, anyhow, he said "you can go home now." And I said "go home? We are 200 miles from home." And he said "Well maybe I better put her in the hospital for the night." So he put her in the hospital for the night and we came home the next day.

So, that Amtrak man, he said; which was one of the best things, he said "send all of the bills to me." So, we get one from the ambulance guy, we've got about 2 or 3 of them and I try to get a hold of this guy and I can't but I got a hold of him this morning and he said to send it to him. So, anyhow I did that this morning so I hope that is the last of that. The

hospital did call, I don't know what they wanted but my wife asked them what the bill was there and you won't believe this, I don't think, \$26,000 at the hospital. She had cat scans, MRI's, and oh, I don't know what all. They even, she said, x-rayed her fingers. Hell, even I can tell if you got a broken finger. You wouldn't think they would have to x-ray them but that is probably to keep them on the safe side.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have insurance to cover that?

Mr. Masching

Well, he said to send the bill to him. I got Medicare and I suppose they are getting a lot of it from there. Anyhow, I just can't imagine \$26,000/

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you another question, December 7<sup>th</sup> of 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that.

Mr. Masching

Yes, I recall that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you home? Or where did you hear that?

Mr. Masching

Well, see I was probably 18 then and what I can remember mostly was I think we were at a dance someplace and some guy was in service and he was home and him and his wife and my wife and I were talking, well my girlfriend then, I guess. And he said that somebody told him that they had just bombed Pearl Harbor and he said "Where in the hell is Pearl Harbor?" That is one thing that I remember about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you think it would affect you?

Mr. Masching

Well, I didn't think it would at the time but I didn't know how bad it was by just hearing that, you know. Yeah, then my brother got called and he was a big fellow, a lot bigger than I was and he had muscles galore, you know, and by God they turned him down. I don't know what it was, it wasn't anything to serious, I don't think, but they turned him down. And then my name came up and of course I was 6 foot tall but I was skinny, you know. They didn't bother saying yes to me. I guess it was a little further along and as long as you were warm they took you. And then my brother said that his name was coming back up and he said "We might as well go together, if they will take me" So he went to see them and they said "Yeah, they would take him" And then my cousin went, so the three of us went, like I said before, and we went three different directions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now I understand that you went on the honor flight, recently, to Washington D.C., is that right?

Mr. Masching

Yes, I got on that. You know, I had a friend that lived close to me here that I knew that went to it and I asked him when he signed up and he said "two or three months before he went." I said "2 or 3 months? I've been signed up for over 6 months and I haven't heard a word." Well, my papers got lost or something and I called Bloomington, IL and that is a pretty good size town and they said to call there. I called there and he said that "no it wasn't down there" and he said that he would call Springfield, IL. So he called down

there and he said "but you are Chicago area" so after he couldn't get either one of those places he said "I'll call Dayton, OH. That is where the headquarters are." So he called there and they said "Yeah, they found it there" so he said to have them send it to Chicago. So, then they called me awhile back and that was great. That was really nice.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you do that?

Mr. Masching

Boy, I should have that all down, uh, this year. I got, lets see maybe there is a date on this thing here. It was toward the end of June.

Mr. Misenhimer

After your wife fell in St. Louis?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you fly from?

Mr. Masching

Oh, I left from Chicago, from Midway Airport and landed at Dulles Airport. Then, when we went to come home they had a terrible storm in Chicago. Rain, hail and so forth so they had the place closed up, Chicago. So we were suppose to get back there about 7 o'clock and we didn't get there until 11. I always heard that they had a little surprise for the veterans when they got home, you know. Well I said on the way home "I won't have no surprise for us. They will all be home by the time we get there." And we got off of that plane and they said that there were between 2-3,000 people there. There was bands

and, oh, everybody just seemed to be there and we got to walk down the middle of all that. And they all wanted to shake your hand and give you a big hug. Oh, that was great.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the memorial like out there in Washington D.C.?

Mr. Masching

Oh, that was fine too. That is a wonderful place out there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been there before?

Mr. Masching

No. Of course we saw the Vietnam one and of course the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington Memorial and all of that. And Iwo Jima, that was good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to Arlington Cemetery?

Mr. Masching

Yeah, we just saw the edge of it, we drove past it.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't see the changing of the guard there?

Mr. Masching

No, we were there probably 30 or 40 years ago and we saw it then.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else do you remember from your time in WWII?

Mr. Masching

Oh, I was saying to somebody the other day "you know, it is all together a different world

now then it was then." When we came home, well we got back to the States in Seattle there and you could hear those ships, you know the fog horns but you couldn't see nothing, it was so foggy. We pulled into the dock and I know that the sailors were in the front of that ship just looking, just straight ahead trying to see that we missed everybody. And, we pulled into the dock and we could hear automobiles, we only saw like a pick-up truck or a jeep or an ambulance you know all the while we were up there. And we could hear street cars and everything and then the sun came out and that place was so full of ships I don't know how we got in there. Golly sakes! I just don't know how we made it. Anyhow, coming back I didn't get sick coming back but we were on the boat for quite awhile. I looked here awhile ago and we must have been on it 10 or 12 days coming home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land? Seattle?

Mr. Masching

Seattle.

Mr. Misenhimer

What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Masching

Well, I don't know. I didn't get hardly anything, I guess. I got down here, its written down here on my discharge what I was suppose to get but I don't know if I got any of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were you suppose to get?

Mr. Masching

Well, the Asiatic Pacific Ribbon; American Theater Ribbon; Good Conduct Medal; WWII Victory Medal; and that is all that they got on my discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, that is all the questions that I have unless you can think of something else?

Mr. Masching

Well, lets see, not any off hand I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Masching

Well, I want to thank you for all your trouble there, Richard.

Mr. Misenhimer

No problem at all.

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