

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas

An interview with John Hayes  
San Antonio, Texas  
August 28, 2010

This is Doctor James Lindley (JL). This is August 28, 2010. I am in San Antonio, Texas interviewing Mr. John Hayes (JH). This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies Archives of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical Information related to the National Museum of the Pacific War. I want to thank you, Mr. Hayes, for taking this opportunity to provide the museum with your story. Please begin by telling us your full name and where you were born, and a little bit of your background. And tell us how you became a member of the United States Navy and your experiences in World War II.

JH: My name is John James Hayes. I was born April 4, 1926 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. My parents were Frank Hayes and my mother was Christine Watson-Clark. They met in Canada and married in 1925 and I was the only product of that union. When I was six months old, they moved to the United States. My father, having been from Iowa, was an American citizen. And he was in the business of selling a health book called "The Library of Health" which was basically remedy book for all illnesses. And at that time, of course, there were very few physicians, so a lot of the remedies were a benefit to, particularly an agrarian society. We moved to Kansas City, Missouri where I went to elementary school at Our Lady of Good Counsel, in Kansas City, Missouri. Then I finished and went to high school at Westport High School in Kansas City, Missouri. And upon my graduation and when I was 17, with my mother's permission, I joined the Navy. In Kansas City, Missouri. I went to Farragut, Idaho for my boot camp. I spent about six weeks there. And finishing boot camp, I was given a two-week post boot camp leave. And with my new sailor's suit I went back home. I remember I was paid \$21 a month and they paid me before I left, so I was pretty flush with money. On the train we stopped in Montana and we had about an hour layover there. As a member of the Armed Forces I went across and had myself my first drink. And I threw out a \$20 bill on the bar and they came back with 19 silver dollars and a fifty-cent piece. And it was very troublesome trying to find where you put 19 silver dollars in a sailor suit at that time. We boarded the train. I proceeded back to Kansas City and somehow or other I might add that my father had died when I was about 13. So I was really the only son of a widow and I did not have to go in the military nor was I drafted because, having been the only son of a widow, I would have been permanently exempt from military service. But being like most Americans at that time, I felt I had to go and do my part. So I had the leave. I went back to Farragut and checked in. And I was with a bunch of other people that the Navy didn't really know what to do with right at that particular time, so they put us all in the mess hall or in a big gymnasium. And, with our sea bags and our hammocks, you laid them down on the deck of the floor, and that's where we slept and waited for our call. And that took about a month. And one day they called the draft and they called my name and then they announced that we should prepare for a fifteen minute trip to the other end of Farragut. And we were all going to be made hospital corpsmen. That was their call, it wasn't my call. But when you go in the military, you do as they tell you to do. So I went. We went. I went down Farragut, Idaho, is near Coeur d'Alene and Seattle, or not Seattle, but it's very close to the Canadian border. And temperatures in the winter get pretty chilly there. And we had a cold winter and I really wanted to get out of there. And wanted me to stay and teach in the Hospital Corps School. And paid the omit \$5 to put me on draft to get me out of Farragut. I had to get out of Farragut. So he did, and they transferred me to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California. And I went, we got on a train and of course there weren't any Pullmans, you sat and a chair car came chairs and you didn't go to the diners on those trip trains. We went to open boxcar and they

handed out sandwiches and fruit; that was your meals until we got down there. When we got down to Oakland, I got off the train and it was just wonderful. The weather was warm. So they took me out to the hospital and I was a Hospital Apprentice, First Class.

JL: What year was this, now?

JH: This was 1943. And they assigned me my duty. My assignment was to operate what we called "hotel wards". A hotel ward of about 30 beds. At that time we were receiving casualties from the Battle of Tarawa in the Pacific. And they'd bring wounded in. We would keep them there maybe for one or two days, during which time I'd make arrangements to transfer them to other naval hospitals that might be closer to their parents' home. Every time we'd clear out the ward, I just went to sleep! Having been on the lower end of the pay scale, the \$21 a month, I decided I would see if I could put myself to work on the side. So I went to Alameda shipyard and I got a job stevedoring during the day, because I was able to sleep at night. And it paid \$3.50 an hour. And all of a sudden, I became a member of the affluent society. And on the weekends I'd be able to hand out money. I could go to San Francisco and stay in a nice hotel and enjoy the finer things in life. One day I was walking down the company street in the hospital and there was an officer that was approaching me. A lieutenant commander. And of course I was only a hospital apprentice. And he said, "John Hayes". And I said, "Doctor Knight". And it was Doctor John Knight who was a surgeon in Kansas City and I used to be his special caddie when I was caddying at the golf course. And he said to me, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Well I've just finished Hospital Corps School and I've been assigned here, and I'm just taking it as it goes." And he said, "Why don't you come up and walk around. I don't want you to caddie for me, I just want you to walk around nine holes and we'll go in and have a drink at the Officer's Club". I said, "I can't go to the Officer's Club." He said, "Yes, you can go with me". And I said, "Okay". So we had a drink and in the course of our conversation he said, "Now, you know you and I've known each other for several years", which I did. And he said, "I've got some drag around here. And if you pick out a school, a Navy Health Corp Hospital school that you want to attend, I'll see to it that you get transferred to it". At that time they would send you to specialist schools like anesthesia or whatever. And being big grown up 17 year old sailor, I said, "No, no, I don't think so, Dr. Knight. I'd kinda like to do this on my own." He said, "Well it's your call". So I didn't take advantage of that. And I'll address my regrets at a later time. But at any rate I stayed at Oak Knoll about two months. And then I found myself on a draft to Treasure Island Naval Hospital which is in San Francisco. And I got over there and they put me on permanent duty with a dying Navy Captain and I stayed there for about a month, six weeks, taking care of him. He passed away and of course my finances went to hell 'cause I had to stop stevedoring. So my luxurious weekends were short and sweet. One night I was coming in from liberty and there was a draft on the bulletin board and I was on it. And it said that they were transferring me to the Fleet Marine Force Field Medical Training School at Camp Elliott in San Diego, California. And I'd heard about corpsmen who went to the Marine Corps. Mortality rates were more than you'd really like to experience, but I didn't have anything to do with it, so I went to San Diego to Camp Elliott and I stayed there about eight weeks and they taught us basic life saving techniques. And converted us from sailors to brains. And so I gave up my sailor suit and took on Marine grain clothing and I was now a member of the Fleet Marine Force.

I might have hastened to say that the Marine Corps had always been a part of the Navy until recent years. And as such the Navy always supplied all of the physicians, the medical corps and the chaplains from the Navy. They assigned them to the Marine Corps. So that is the process by which I got into the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps was a different way of life. It was probably one of the best things that ever happened to me. If I had any leadership in my life and in my career, I attribute it to my time at the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps philosophy is to push that responsibility, whatever it is, as far down the line as possible. So that if Captain gets killed or wounded then the Lieutenant takes over. If the Lieutenant is killed or wounded, then the Sergeant takes over. And that, so the Corporal takes over and right on down to the basic Private. So in the Marine Corps, you're taught to be an independent thinker. And it really is wonderful training period for leadership. At any rate, I spent eight weeks there, and then we got word I graduated from Medical Training School. And of course we went to the rifle range to learn how to shoot a rifle 'cause we were Naval Corpssmen with the Marine Corps. We were armed with 45 caliber pistols and the carbine. Well, all of my time in my Marine Corps, in my combat duty, the only thing I ever shot was serum albumin or morphine. I would have probably shot my foot off if I'd had to use a gun. And it was out of my realm. I was not in the business of killing. I was in the business of saving lives. Which we did. We saved a lot. Anyway, they decided that it was time for us travel on. And it was then that we got our orders and we boarded the Robin Don Caster, a worn out, rusted out ship through transport. We boarded it in San Diego and we headed westward without an escort at 9 knots with about 1500 Marines and Navy Corpssmen on board. And about 20 days later, and we were awful glad to get there without getting torpedoed by Japanese submarines, we unloaded in Noumea, New Caledonia. We spent about four days there. It was a distributing point for replacements.

It was decided that some of my friends and I would be assigned to the First Marine Division. And they had just come off, about a year earlier, off of Guadalcanal. First Marine Division is a very noted Marine Corps division. And it's a very noted fighting force. It engaged in the first offensive battle of World War II and the last one. The first being Guadalcanal, the last being Okinawa. And somewhere between those two, I fitted into it. We went to a small island about seventy miles from Guadalcanal in the Russells – Russell Island group. Guadalcanal having been in the Solomon Island group. And we landed at a beautiful island full of palm trees and coconuts. And we got on the island and the First Marine Division, or the remnants thereof, from the battle of Cape Gloucester were there and they had already worked to renovate the island that Army condemned for Army troops. And it was a hell hole if there ever was one. And we stayed there and started training for the next battle that we were to be engaged in. We were housed in pyramidal tents, eight people to a tent. And of a course, I was a Navy Corpssmen, so our tent was also a sick bay where we took care of the medical requirements that we could handle for the people were assigned to. I was assigned to Baker Company, D Company, First Marines, First Marine Division, then Commander, Commanding Officer was a noted Marine Colonel, his name was Chesty Puller. At that time [he was] the most decorated man in the Marine Corps. We continued to train. I was assigned to the 60 millimeter mortar platoon of a rifle company. And I was responsible for taking care of that platoon of 30-35 people. We were doing some training and of course, a lot of the complement were replacements that had been brought in there to fill the vacancies that had occurred on the Battle of Cape Gloucester. And one day we were going to go to another small island adjacent to Pavuvu which was the island we were on, to do live fire. We were going to shoot a wild fire so the battalion, 81

millimeter which were the larger guns, they were set up behind us and they were firing over us. And we were firing in front of them. And one of their rounds hit a palm tree and burst right over us. And our Lieutenant got a bad shrapnel wound in the middle of his back. That morning before we went on the live fire, the Captain, whose name was Ranier, I always kind of thought he was a real asshole. And I still think he was. He decided that I was not gonna go and that I was going on a forest march. And I'd go with my platoon when they were shooting live fire. So anyway, I got the Lieutenant patched and we got him evacuated back to Pavuvu and over to the Naval Hospital Malaita, which was near Guadalcanal. And then I had a visit that night from the Captain Ranier. And he says, "you're awful lucky, Hayes". And I says, "Why's that?" And he says, "You're lucky that accident occurred. If it hadn't, you'd be court martialed for direct disobedience of orders." And I said, "Well aren't you glad I disobeyed your orders, Captain?" And he says, "Well if that accident hadn't occurred, you'd be out for court martial." I said, "Yeah, well." I didn't have any more trouble with him. Anyway, things progressed and we were getting closer to the time when we were going to be, felt we were going to be leaving. And one afternoon they announced to us that Bob Hope was on Guadalcanal doing some shows and that he was going to fly over to our little island and put on a show for us. So 25,000 Marines and Corpsmen were sitting on the beach waiting for two hours in the sun for Bob and company to come over and perform for us. And finally they came and [indiscernible] and Hope and Jerry Colonna were hanging out the side of the airplane waving at the troops and they put on a two hour show for us which was wonderful. But he had found out that we were going to be shoving off and it was not on his schedule but he went over and did the show anyway. And Francis Langford was there and Jerry Colonna was there and a dancer by the name of Patty Thomas. And while the show was going on the chaplains were in the back of the troops wringing their hands at some of the risqué commentary that Hope was performing with, but it was a real morale lifter.

Very soon afterwards they said, "Pack it up, we're going to board ship." And they didn't tell us where we were going so we got on our troop transports and got underway and we came to a point in the cruise where they made the announcement that we were going to make the invasion of the island of Peleliu. Peleliu is north, it's in the mid-pacific and its north of the Philippines. And the battle has been under sharp criticism ever since it occurred. Admiral Nimitz wanted to bypass it; it was only eight square miles in size. It was only about two or three miles long. They announced that we were going to make the landing on Peleliu and it was going to be a three day operation. And we would be out of there in no time at all. Nimitz wanted to bypass it. MacArthur wanted to take it to be sure that his return to the Philippines was not going to be hampered by air attacks from Peleliu. So we climbed down the cargo nets with our full transport packs and since I was with the mortar platoon and you never knew where you were going to get your next round or what they was going to get ashore, I carried six rounds of sixty millimeter mortar ammunition with me in addition to all of my stuff. And they put us on an LCVP, a Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel. And we went down to get on the little landing craft and they started running circles, about eight boats. Pretty soon the landing officer gave the command to proceed so we proceeded and we got about a mile and a half off of the island and we transferred to the halftracks which were slow and terrible. At any rate, we got on the halftracks and are going the rest of the way ashore and they had us ranged in and they were dropping mortars in the halftracks and it was a real fiasco. We didn't make it to the beach. We got hung up on a reef. So we all had to get out the halftrack

and just jumped over the side and of course I was weighed down by all the ammo. I went all the way down and hurt my knee. I finally got back up where I could breathe. We waded ashore but we couldn't get off of the beach. All the other ways out, I was in the fourth wave and the other three waves were stuck on the fifty yards of beach. They couldn't get off. And the bodies were just floating in the surf. And it was a real bloodbath. That first night was hell. And they had us pinned down and we just couldn't move. And it was highly questionable whether we were going to be pushed off of the island. The next day we still were on the beach. I remember one of the Riflemen in another one of the platoons in my company was laying on the beach. And he hollered, "Corpsman!" And I ran over to see what was the matter with him. And I said, "What's the problem?" And he says, "I'm hit, I'm hit in the ass." So I looked at him and I said I don't see any blood here. And he says, "I feel it, I feel it run down the crack of my ass." And I said, "Aww, come on." Well what had happened, the temperature was 120 degrees. And a round went through his canteen and the water was running. I looked at it and I said, "You're not getting off of here this easy!" At any rate, we finally got off the beach a little ways and we started moving inland and taped up the airport. And things, we didn't have any water. And then they brought water ashore and unfortunately they didn't wash the gasoline out of the drums before they brought it to shore, so we couldn't drink it. It was not palatable so it rained off and on. So we drank water out of the ditch. Just to stay afloat. And heat exhaustion was really playing hell with the troops. The Japanese were in caves, honeycombs of caves throughout the island. And they had German 88s trained on all segments. And they just had a real heyday with us. There was a hill called "Bloody Nose Ridge" which we were trying to take. We couldn't and I was up and down there hauling marines off. Which is where I received my first bronze star medal. And then I got hit. On the third day, and evacuated. And they took me off and put me on the hospital ship Bountiful. I remember I guess I slept for two days. And of course the ship was so clean and air conditioned. And when I was able to get up and walk a little bit, well I walked out at night and it was full ablaze with lights. The big Red Cross painted on the side, flooded with lights. Well on our troop transports, at night there wasn't even any smoking. And I thought to myself, "Boy, what a target for a Japanese torpedo." But we didn't get it, and they took us back to MOB hospital, MOB Naval Hospital 108 in Benicia. I spent six weeks there. And then they sent me back to our island paradise of Pavuvu to train for the next invasion.

We got replacements and we lost a tremendous number of people on Peleliu. Just tremendous number. I found a mistake, I can't remember what the numbers are, but history will relate that, but anyway we lost a lot of Corpsmen, we lost a lot of Rifleman, we lost a lot of Marines. Anyway our ranks were being filled with replacements and of course we started training again for the next campaign. And we packed up again, put on the transports and we went to Guadalcanal and they had a dummy landing on Guadalcanal. A training landing for the whole division. And so we went through that, got back on the transports and we started about a three week, I think it was three week trip to an anchorage called Ulithi. The ships started to arrive, and you get up the following morning and were there about, oh, four or five days. Every morning, more ships and more ships. And you could see them for miles and miles. And as it turned out, it was the largest armada of ships. Much larger than the battle of the European Invasion that had ever been formed. They took us ashore on Ulithi for a little R&R. They gave us two cans of beer. We didn't get it all the time when we were there. We maybe got two cans of beer a month when we were there. Officers got a couple of fifths of whiskey a month. And if you were lucky

enough in a poker game to amass a little capital, then the officers would sell you a bottle of their whiskey for \$50. At any rate, we stayed there in Ulithi for a while and then we started to move.

They announced that we were going to make the invasion of Okinawa. Okinawa is an Island in the Ryukyu chain. It was ninety miles long, twenty miles wide. And we were supposed to land there and of course it wasn't only us. We were one of several divisions that landed there. The first marine divisions' responsibility was to dissect the island. They gave us 15 days to do it. Unlike Peleliu where we were stopped on the beach, we had not a shot fired when we landed on Okinawa. Then we went ashore and crossed the island in four days. We met a lot of strafing airplanes. Japanese zeros came in and strafed us while we were crossing the island but no land fighting at all. We stayed over there for I guess about 10 or 15 days. It was great. We weren't in any combat. We rounded up stray chickens and hogs 'cause we hadn't had very much fresh protein. And it was good. That didn't last. The 27<sup>th</sup> army division was down on the beach near Kadena Airport. They were getting shot up pretty bad. And so they pulled them out and they put the First Marine Division down there and replaced them. We stayed there, we took over the lines and carried their dead out. They didn't take their dead with them. They lost their colors there. We were tied in with the beach. There were numerous variables over Okinawa where urns of the remains of people who died were put. They made wonderful gunning placements. And we'd set up our guns there and we were shooting. We stayed there about three. And we got return fire from big artillery. Big artillery. Shells this long. And then the mornings, that's when they'd shell us first thing in the morning and at night. And those shells would come over and they were already by us by the time we heard 'em. But they were landing between here and across the street from behind us, and they were all duds. They'd cut a furrow in the ground when they'd hit, and they never exploded. And we were sitting there one afternoon, one evening, and we tied in right with the beach and one of our people observed some movement out at sea. About 400 or 500 yards out. And what had happened was that they had put ten barges, the Japanese had put 10 barges in behind their lines and they were going to come around and come in behind us. And there were 100 Japanese on each barge. And we spotted 'em. And all the guns were shooting. The 60s were shooting, the 81s were shooting, the artillery was shooting. It was a real turkey shoot. And we sunk every one of those. They lost their 1,000 people there. And then we started to move and we were taking a lot of casualties. We got down about half way in the island and we came to a draw called Wana. Wana Ridge. And we were tied in with an Army Division on one flank. And the orders were that we were gonna all move in tandem forward the following day. Well we moved, we moved forward. Marines moved forward. And the Army was taking some fire, so they set up a night defense at 8:00 in the morning. And of course we kept on moving and my company was moving so fast that we were in front of the lines. And we'd gotten up on Wana Ridge. And we were surrounded. The company was surrounded. And they were sending airplanes over to drop supplies to us 'cause we were running low on ammunition. And they were all floating over into the Japanese lines! So we were sitting up there and we had a mustang Captain. A mustang Captain is an enlisted man that rose up through the ranks. And he was our new Captain. Had a handlebar moustache. Boxer Marine, Boxer Rebellion Marine. Hell of a guy. And we were having a meeting at CP and one of these planes were overhead and they dead dropped a box, about 1,500 pounds, and it landed about from here to the elevators from where we were. And it all broke open of course, but it had ammunition, it had food and among the other things, for reasons unknown, they dropped us ten

gallons of 95% alcohol. Which stayed intact and I went back to the Captain and I said, "Well what are we going to do with all this alcohol?" He said, "Fill your canteens and mine and issue the rest of it out." And we did. And the rain, God it was raining, mud, and we were sleeping on casings in our foxhole and the rain was filling the holes. If we'd had a Jap attack that night, there wasn't anybody there, they'd kick our ass with both hands. It was, quite a party. And finally the rest of the battalion moved forward and we got back inside our lines again. And we continued on down toward Naha passed Shuri Castle which another division had taken with great casualties. And by this time our casualties were just horrendous.

JL: This is Doctor James Lindley and this is the continuation of the oral history begun on August 28, 2010. Mr. John James Hayes. This is continuation of the oral history that was interrupted by an equipment problem. Mr. Hayes, please go ahead and continue your story and again, if I think of a question that I think will help to amplify story, I'll ask the question. Otherwise I'm going to listen and let you tell us your story. And once again, thank you very much for taking the time to share your story with National Museum of the Pacific War Oral History Archives. Go ahead, Mr. Hayes.

JH: Well after the Okinawa campaign continued and then the rain started to come and come in tremendous amounts where there was nothing but mud everywhere. If you dug a foxhole, by the time you'd got it complete, it'd be full of water. And we laid 60 millimeter mortar casings which were the casings that, the 60 millimeter mortars were transported in, in the hole to keep us out of the water. We were ordered to move into the attack on Wana Ridge. We were tied in, we were on flanks, by the Army. And at the time that meant we were supposed to move forward. Our battalion and our company moved forward but the Army was taking a lot of fire and they set up a night defense. We continued to move and my company continued to move and we got to the top of Wana Ridge and found that, because of the fire and the fact that the...we were surrounded. The Japs had closed in behind us, so we were sitting up on top of the ridge and we were running low on ammunition and we were running low on rations. And, in order to remedy that problem, they started bringing air drops over. And parachuting them, trying to reach us. But every time they would come over with a parachute drop, the parachute would go into the Japanese lines, so we weren't getting it. The rains continued. And it was getting kind of futile and they company Commander called a meeting and the CP, the Control Post, and I was there, and just about that time, an airplane flew over and it did a dead drop. It dropped a box of about 1,500 pounds which landed about three or four meters away, three or four yards away from where we were meeting, and broke into a thousand pieces. But it did give us some relief in terms of ammunition and food and some water. As we picked up the remnants of this drop, I found two five-gallon cans of 95% alcohol. For what reason they dropped that, I have no idea. But I told the captain that we had ten gallons of alcohol, what did he want me to do? He said, "Fill your canteens and mine and then we'll issue it out to the troops." He was an old Boxer Rebellion Marine and, well, a mustang. A mustang is an enlisted man that came up through the ranks. And so we did that, and that night if we had been attacked by the Japanese, nobody would have been able to find their weapon because we were all pretty well put away with the alcohol. After about two days, the rains continued, the tanks got bogged down. They could not move. No vehicles could move. Jeeps were axle deep in mud and we continued to hold our position there. And then the front moved forward and embraced us so we were no longer out in front of the

lines. We sat up there for three or four days and we were doing some mopping up around that area, some of the caves.

One afternoon I got a call from the captain. Called me and he says, "There's a cave over in this general area and these two demolition people are going to go." And he would like me to go along with 'em. So I agreed. <Laughing> Well, followed orders. And we went over there in a jeep and they wanted to know if I wanted to go up to the cave and to look around for souvenirs. I said, "No, I don't. I'm not interested in collecting souvenirs." So they went up and there was no Japanese in the cave. It was empty. But they had warehoused a lot of ammunition and the ammunition was made primarily of black powder. Black powder gives off fumes. And I don't know what happened in there. I guess that they must have lit a match to see what was going on, and the cave exploded blowing the two demolition people out of the cave. And I ran to take of them and they were burned so badly that when I tried to put in an IV, the skin just broke open it couldn't be put in. They both died there.

We progressed on down the island and we got to Naha which was the capital. At Naha there was a ridge that ran all the way across the island called Yonabaru. The cliffs were about two or three hundred feet. And of course, some of our people were scaling those cliffs. That is just about at the southernmost end of the island. Meanwhile we were taking a lot of fire and I was tending to my patients and the Captain that I mentioned earlier got hit. So I went to take care of him. He was hit with some shrapnel. I got him in bed and stuff and says, "Well you're gone Captain." He says, "I don't want to go." I said, "That is not the point. You're going to go." And he says, "You better not send me out of here." He argued with me a minute. And then I just walked away calmly. The Letter Bearers hauled him to a jeep ambulance and he was gone.

The campaign was just about over. And the Japanese were jumping off the end of the island so many of the civilians were also jumping off. The men and the women and children. The Japanese had told them that we were a bunch of animals and we were going to be raping the women and killing the children and of course I'd been taking care of Okinawa patients all the way down the island as they'd come in. We would in turn them. Such was never the case of the accusations. [The accusations] were all false. Then the island was declared "secure". They took what remnants of the division all the way to the northern end. Okinawa was an island about 90 miles long. We went all the way to the upper end and we set up a camp up there. Got a tent set up and a mess hall was set up and everything. Then there was a typhoon that was approaching Okinawa and did hit the island. And it blew all the tents, it blew the whole camp away. And it went on for seven or eight hours. The rains came and continued to come and the winds. When it was over, the camp was just in shambles so we had to start putting it back together again. And it was about this time that I decided I had enough points. You collected points for decorations and the campaigns and so forth. And I had enough points to go home. And so I went down to the Captain, the new Captain. And I said, "Captain, I've got the necessary points to go home. And I want to go home." And he looked at me and he says, "Well Hayes, you know how many Corpsmen we lost here." And I said, "Yes sir, I'm aware of that." And he says, "I can't let you go. You've got to stay. We're frozen here."

Then a few days later the word started dribbling out that they dropped the A-bomb on Japan and that Japan had surrendered. And sure enough that happened. Of course, when it did happen, when the war ended, the whole island, all the military on the island just went crazy. All the anti-aircraft guns started to fire, firing into the air. And I guess they weren't thinking but all that shrapnel that they were firing up had to come down. We had several injuries caused from that because the shrapnel was bursting over our area. And it would just drop down. And then the war was over. Needless to say, we were all pleased about that. So I went back down to see the Captain. And I said, "Well the war is over, Captain. And I still would like to go home. I've got the points to go home." And he says, "Well will just have to wait a couple of days. I've got to see how things work." Well we waited a couple of days and the word came out that they were going to send the First Marine Division to North China to repatriate a quarter of a million Japanese that occupied North China during the war. I went back down and said to the Captain, "I'm really not interested in going to China." He says, "You're frozen. You know we don't have the Corpsmen. You're going to have to go with us."

So we loaded things up and what we couldn't take, and there was an awful lot of equipment, I mean trucks and jeeps and what have you. They were brand new that they'd brought over in support of that campaign. And we didn't load 'em up and send 'em home and we didn't take 'em with us 'cause we didn't have the transportation. So they just put 'em on barges and took 'em off the coast and run 'em off into the water. All brand new trucks and jeeps and what have you.

Anyway, we get on the ships, climb up the cargo nets *again*, and Okinawa is close to Japan. And likewise close to China. So it was about a three or four day trip for us to get to North China. So we anchored one morning and it was in the fall, you know, the war ended in the late summer. And we anchored at Tsingtao. Tsingtao, China is a coastal port. And thirty miles in from Tsingtao is Tianjin which was a major city. And then thirty more miles inland is Peking, or what is now known as Beijing. And we dropped the seventh marines off. They stayed in Tsingtao. The First Marine Regiment, which I belonged, went to Tianjin. And the Fifth Marine Regiment went to Peking. And we got on a train, the first regiment, and it took us only about thirty miles but it took maybe about four or five hours for the train to get to Tianjin. Old train. We get to Tianjin and the Captain said, "We're going to form columns of fours to march to the old English compound." Which was a compound that has the British constabulary in the early days. It was composed of a series of brick, red brick buildings, which were made into squad rooms heated by pot belly stoves with a long latrine outside. A finished latrine with tile and everything, and water. But no sewage. And of course that's where the excrete was deposited. And then every morning a honey cart would come by and gather up all the feces in the latrine and take it. They used that for night soil to fertilize their crops. But getting back to our arrival in Tianjin, we get off the train and there were three million Chinese on the streets to welcome us. And every one of them must have had a handful of garlic that morning when we arrived. Because the air was just rarified. The column of fours wound up being a column of ones because they were hanging on our packs and you know, they were very happy to see us come and get rid of the Japanese. We got up maybe about, half a mile, it was about a five mile march to the old English compound, and one of my Marines fainted. I told the Captain that he fainted and he said, "Get a couple of rickshaws. You take him and go to the old English compound. Bring him over. Take him on there." So I put him in a rickshaw. I got in another one

and off we went. And I waived to my fellow Marines <laughing>. They weren't very happy to see me riding in a rickshaw, but they understood. And during the early times when we got there, we were setting things up and we were taking liberty and I was catching the watch in Sick Bay a lot. And also riding night jeep patrols to the various lock-ups that we were gathering in the Japanese and getting them ready to ship them back to Japan.

Winter was coming on. We didn't have winter clothes. When we left Okinawa, all we had were khakis and fatigues. So we didn't have any overcoats or anything. It was late winter before it ever got there. Tianjin and Peking are thirty miles from the Manchurian border and I can tell you that it's damn cold up there in the wintertime. We were able to go on liberty. We'd go out in the community and it was wonderful. We didn't have to worry about getting killed anymore. The Chinese were making Vodka. They'd make it in the morning, sell it in the afternoon, and we'd drink it at night. Also we used it to start the coal in the pot belly stoves. To get the fire started. Things walked along, the military set up a house of prostitution, a whorehouse and downtown, in one of the downtown hotels. About a seven or eight story hotel. And there must have been about 150 prostitutes there. And of course there was a lot of visitation there by the Marines. And sufficient problems with venereal disease that they set up a prophylactic station in the lobby of the hotel. As luck would have it I got the duty there about three nights a week to give drunken Marines their prophylaxis. Anyway it was an interesting experience.

I met a white Russian woman there. She must have been about 35. I of course was just 20 or so. And she was telling me that the Japanese propagandist minister that we had not picked up, we didn't know about him, that was occupying her house with all of his printing equipment and everything there. She wanted him out of there so that she could open up her restaurant. So I went and told the Captain and we got a couple of jeep loads of Marines and we went down there and sure enough he was there. Picked him up and took him and put him in the encampment and got rid of his propaganda machines. And she did set up a restaurant there. I guess we must have been there about a month and a half or two months before this happened. And all the rest of the time that I was there, I go down there when she opened her restaurant. I never bought a meal or a drink after that. At her establishment.

Conditions were tolerable. I did get pneumonia and was admitted to the hospital, because we just didn't have any clothes. I'd been there about six months and they were calling people, that they were shipping them out and bringing replacements in, and shipping the troops out. And I wasn't getting shipped. And finally one day they call my name in a draft to go down and get on the LCI, Landing Craft Infantry. It would take us out to Tsingtao to the port down the Hai River, which runs through Tianjin. We got aboard ship and we started home, still cold. Finally we got down about three days out, we were in warm temperatures again, in the Pacific.

I got a call from the ship's doctor. He called me and he says, "Hayes, we're going to press you into service." I says, "I'm a Troop." And troop transports are not a real pleasure to travel in. They take the holes of the freighter they put bunks about seven or eight high and that's where you travel. It meant if you were on the top bunk and you had to relieve yourself at night, well you climb down the seven or eight bunks and went and took care of business. At any rate the doctor told me, he said, "Your Marines

are coming down with gonorrhea.” The incubation period was just about right. He says, “And you’re going to have to take care of ‘em.” Aqueous penicillin had just come out on the market, and we were using it. And of course, with the aqueous you had to do it every three or four hours. So I didn’t get a hell of a lot of sleep. And we finally got the gonorrhea under control. And I started to lay around on the deck. It was nice and warm and we were continuing in the right direction after two years or thirty months. We got out about another week and I get a call from the doctor again. And he said, “We’re going to have to press you back into service.” I said, “I already played that tune.” He said, “You’re your Marines are coming down with some chancres.” Which are the primary indications of syphilis. And he says, “You’re going to have to start giving ‘em some treatment.” So I shot penicillin all the way to San Diego. And there was several of ‘em there. I felt sorry for one fellow – he was married and had a couple of kids, and had contracted syphilis and when they got to San Diego, they knew he was comin’, they put him in the ambulance, and his family was there, and they took him off to the hospital. I don’t know how he ever explained that. But anyway we finally got off in San Diego. They gave me back my sailor suit with the 13 buttons. I spent about three days there and they put me on a train, sent me to Lambert Field, St. Louis, and I was discharged. I went home, I stopped off in Kansas City on the way. My mother was on the train that came in there about 1:00 in the morning. She was down there when I got off the train. I didn’t even recognize her. When I left, her hair was black. When I got back, it was white.

Anyway, I got discharged. And I entered civilian life and joined the Coast Guard for a couple of years. Went to Puerto Rico on independent duty and I came back from there and was in St. Louis working. And I got postcard from the Commandant of the Ninth Naval District saying, “Mr. Hayes, contact me immediately.” And of course, I was married by then, had a child. I thought, “Boy, this is really something. I must not of signed all the papers and they’re calling me back to Korea. They’re going to send me to Korea.” So I called the Commandant and he says, “Thank you for calling me.” And I said, “Well Admiral, I want to know what the problem is.” He says, “Well it really isn’t a problem.” This was five years after the war. He says, “The Navy department has awarded you second bronze star medal for your action on Okinawa, and we want to have the presentation.” And the Reserve Navy Battalions were going to have a parade. I said, “Ahh, just put it in the mail.” He says, “I can’t do that, you’ve got to come.” So I called my mother and told her that they were giving me another medal. And she wanted to know how much I’d been drinking. <Laughing.> As much as five years after the war. Anyway, I went down and I got the presentation and that’s the end of my story.

JL: Well we certainly appreciate your story. From our discussions before, a couple of questions that maybe you could answer and talk about. One is when you were in China and you were seeing the Japanese who were being repatriated, what kind of illnesses did you happen to observe in those troops?

JH: I didn’t observe a thing. And if I had, I would have had to been ordered to take care of ‘em. I never took care of any Japanese. That wasn’t in my pay grade. <Laughing>.

JL: Just from casually observing them, did you see diseases in them?

JH: They looked like they were pretty well fed to me. But they weren't subjected to war. They were in China and they'd occupied. They were occupation troops over there. So they were living a pretty sweet life during the war. The ones that were there.

JL: One story, and I may have in my mind gotten confused about when you told it to me before, was the episode, and I thought it was on Okinawa, when the civilian had a concealed weapon.

JH: Yeah, that's true. As the civilians were coming through the lines and surrendering, we would take them and put them into camps and take care of them and feed them and take care of their problems. Anyway, I was standing there one afternoon, at the line, and this was before we secured the island. And the civilians were coming through and one woman with a long dress, she was coming through and she got right to the line. And she pulled up her dress and there was a machine gun. And she started shooting at all of our troops and shot three or four of them. I can't remember if she killed any of 'em before we shot her. Somebody shot and killed her. As for me, the only thing I ever shot in the whole war was penicillin and serum albumin and morphine. I don't think I ever shot a round. I wasn't there to do that. Not that I couldn't have.

JL: How soon were you given penicillin to use? How early in the course of things did the military have the drug available?

JH: The aqueous penicillin, the first I saw any of it was when we were aboard ship coming back home. When I was shooting up the fellas with the clap.

JL: What were you treating them with, there in Beijing or in Peking? When you were there.

JH: I wasn't treating them with anything. They must have been doing that at the hospital. We had a hospital there.

JL: I see. Cause penicillin did not become available until toward the end of the war.

JH: Oh, that's right. I'd never, hell, we didn't even know what penicillin was until I got on the ship.

JL: Amazingly enough, at that point in time, the gonorrhoea was very susceptible to the drug.

JH: Yes it was.

JL: Small amounts took care of it. Not like it is today.

JH: Yeah. Well, it's like any other drug. When it's over used and abused, well it's going to be not as effective I guess.

JL: Right, that's right. Well the bugs are very smart. They develop resistance and that's the problem. Well I certainly appreciate you taking the time to retell this part of the story. I thought it was pretty important and an important story. And I was disappointed when I got home and found that despite our best efforts, it was not there.

JH: Well I hope it's coming through a lot better than your conversation with me because you're coming and going.

JL: Well I don't think we have a problem with it. I'm watching the meter on the recording device and so I think that part of it is ok. It's just the telephone microphone, I have to hold it very close to my mouth, and I can't wear the headphones and do that very easily. Anyway, I think we've got a good recording here and what I will do is I will amend this to your previous recording. I will also make an MP3 file and I will send this to Naomi and make sure that she gets a copy of it to complete what I had sent her before.

JH: Oh, okay. Will she get a record?

JL: Well she was able to read the file that I sent her. You mean a transcript? Or you talking about the digital copy of this?

JH: I don't know what I'm talking about.

JL: Well, what I did was I was able to send to her, over the Internet, a copy of the digital file that I made the other day.

JH: A DVD?

JL: Well I sent her, not a physical copy. I sent it to her electronically. And then she was able to store it in her computer. So she has it on her computer now. And we'll do the similar thing with this portion of it so that she has the complete story. So that's what we'll do for her. I'll make sure that she gets this. So that should be no problem.

JH: Well she seems like, did you talk to her?

JL: Yes I did. She seems like a very nice person who is working hard to do this. She's an undergraduate and this is just part of her work in order to complete her degree.

JH: Well there's been so little written about the hospital corpsmen with the Marines and that's the reason that I guess she chose it.

JL: Right. That's what she said.