

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Alvin Leos, Sr.
First Cavalry Division
Philippine Islands
October 7, 2010
Aransas Pass, Texas

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is October 27, 2010. I am interviewing Mr. Alvin Leos, Sr. by telephone. His address is 2009 West Wheeler, Lot 111, Aransas Pass, Texas 78336. His phone number is 361-758-0413. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Leos:

Thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

First thing, what is your birthdate?

Mr. Leos:

10th of November, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, where were you born?

Mr. Leos:

I was born in Nixon, Texas. Just this side of San Antonio. Close to Seguin, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Leos:

There was five brothers all together. I got two sisters and only got two living brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many of your brothers were in World War II?

Mr. Leos:

Two, me and another brother.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Leos:

No, he's deceased.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He's deceased. OK. Now, you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family? How did the Depression affect you all?

Mr. Leos:

Well, it was kind of hard for everybody because everybody was in the same situation at that time, the Depression days. No work to be found nowhere. Work was very limited and the government set up warehouses around the towns, different cities where you could get commodities you know, like coffee or sugar, flour or something like that. Everybody wanted to work but there was no work to be found. I lived in a little town called Ganado, Texas. I lived there at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Leos:

My father was a barber, retired barber.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He was a barber. Did he keep working during the Depression?

Mr. Leos:

No, he got a little bit on the side because he tried to do something else to make a little money, to make a living, you know. It was kind of hard you know because they didn't pay anything much for haircuts anyway back then, you know. About 25 cents for a haircut and had a shave for fifteen cents and at the time made about five or ten cents, that's all you made out of the barber business.

Wasn't much then. Then the government came out with stamps to buy shoes and stuff like that, you know. It was just hard on everybody.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Leos:

I went to school in Ganado, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you graduate from high school there?

Mr. Leos:

No, I didn't finish up. I went as far as seventh grade at the time and I quit school to help my parents, you know, with the fields and buying stuff, you know. To make a little money to help them out. So I quit school. They got mad when I quit school but I wanted to help them out. I went to work at a dairy farm. I was just a young kid but I worked at the dairy farm that wasn't too far from town, milking cows and stuff like that. They paid me a little bit and I brought it home to help out my folks with the money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you milk the cows by hand?

Mr. Leos:

Milked by hand. Wasn't no place that had machines, milked by hand, 62 cows. Milked by hand and made butter and delivered milk and made a little drink like chocolate milk and orange drink. Stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Leos:

I went in 1940.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What day and month, do you know?

Mr. Leos:

Sixth of August, 1940.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer?

Mr. Leos:

I volunteered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which branch did you go in?

Mr. Leos:

The first time I went in the Army. I went to Galveston, Texas, coast artillery guns. They had a bunch of guns up there, 12-inch guns on the seawall. Took my basic training there but basic

training was different that it is today. I know that to be a fact because I used to be a trainer and it's different things now. Then it was different. There was marching, weapons, you know, manual of arms and stuff like that back then. That was the extent of my training, you know, we had other things that we had, like grenades. Teach us about grenades. It wasn't like it is today. I had to go through infiltration courses, confidence courses, other courses, all that kind of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there in Galveston?

Mr. Leos:

In Galveston I was just a private, you know, what they called us recruits when I first got in. So they give me a job. I didn't know nothing about the military you know, but I didn't have to worry about discipline because we had a lot of discipline at home. I was just glad for anything they give me, you know, following instructions and discipline in the military. But they gave us jobs at the beginning I didn't know nothing about nothing. They gave me a job, it bored me, in the barracks cleaning the recreation room and stuff like that. Not all the time but once in a while get assignment to that job. Then later on they made me a bugler to blow taps, retreat and all that stuff throughout the nights and daytime. I did that for a while and then after I got through with that I got elevated a little bit, I made PFC, Private First Class. After I made PFC, then we went to firing those big guns, I became a gun pointer. That put you put back on beneath the gun. You gave them the azimuth. And that went on and then shortly after that World War II broke out.

1941, December 7, 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you remember where you were when you heard about that?

Mr. Leos:

I was in the barracks, in fact, I was fixed to go on a pass. I went to the orderly room and check with the charge board of quarters for the pass and he said you can't go nowhere since war had been declared. The company sent a bunch of people in Jeeps and whatever they could find to go to Galveston because it wasn't very far, to call all the military people to come back to the post. We were quarantined to the barracks and we couldn't go nowhere. We couldn't even talk to our parents or nothing because it was very restricted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you feel that would affect you?

Mr. Leos:

Well, at the time I knew it was a bad situation you know but I would do anything to help our country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you volunteered in 1940 how many years did you volunteer for?

Mr. Leos:

When I went in with the intention to stay in forever, as long as I could. I got accustomed to the military because I had no problem following direction and structure and things like that. I had no problem with discipline and those things they told us to do. I respected the orders they gave me and I'd do that, you know. I had no problem with that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When war broke out there in December, did you all man those big guns there at Galveston?

Mr. Leos:

No, what we did was the military, there was a bunch of anti-aircraft guns there in front of the barracks. They set up those guns right in front away from the barracks of course and the military

put up a gun emplacement all down the beach. Had the security going patrol down the beach, checking everything that was coming in and we were prepared for whatever took place, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you man those anti-aircraft guns?

Mr. Leos:

I was on the 20mm, no not on those guns, on machine guns. Machine guns, 30 caliber machine gun emplacements setting around the barracks also.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did you do that?

Mr. Leos:

I did that for a little while, it wasn't very long. After that within two, three months later I was on the way to Norfolk, Virginia.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do in Norfolk?

Mr. Leos:

Really what happened, back up a little bit. When at first they didn't know where we was going.

They gave us a bunch of clothing, new uniforms, stuff like that. Not Class A, summer clothes.

We had no idea where we was going. Nobody told us anything. We got on... They sent us over to Norfolk, Virginia. We were in Norfolk, Virginia and we knew we was going overseas then.

We didn't know where we was going.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, were you in a particular division at that point?

Mr. Leos:

When we left Norfolk, Virginia, they put us on transports in a convoy with thirty ships. We had all kinds of destroyers around us, guarding us, going across the Pacific Ocean. We crossed the equator and then we landed, our unit landed in Tunga-Tabu Island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in an outfit then?

Mr. Leos:

Our outfit landed there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit was that?

Mr. L

We lived in Tunga-Tabu Island and then we set our artillery guns up on the coast. We set guns up on the beach. Coastal guns you know. 16 to 18-in guns. Then we set also anti-aircraft guns, we set up like 50 caliber machine guns and stuff like that around the gun emplacements. We stayed there for not too long. I'm trying to figure my time. It's been a long time. I'd guess we stayed for six-seven months in that area there. Then they put us on transports again and sent us to New Hebrides Islands. You heard about New Hebrides Island?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, sir, I've been there.

Mr. Leos:

We went there and then they put us down and sent us up to Tunga-Tabu Island which is a little island not too far from New Hebrides Island. We set the 50 caliber and the 20 mm gun emplacement on the reef up there. We stayed there for a while and during that time we had one

or two raids that came in to try to bomb the New Hebrides harbor, you know. Japanese came over and we fired on them when they came across there. On the planes, we tried to hit them. We tried to get them but they didn't last there very long. Made their raid and took off. Then there at the New Hebrides Islands, that's where a lot of ships were taken to be repaired there, after they'd been hit by torpedoes. They'd come in there and they'd repair them at New Hebrides. They had floating docks and they'd put them and repair them and put them down in the water.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit were you with then? What outfit were you in then?

Mr. Leos:

At that time I was with the 20th Coastal Artillery and then went over there and worked with, let me think. I can't remember....

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were with Coastal Artillery or Anti-Aircraft

Mr. L

Coastal Artillery. It's been about 67 years and I can't remember all that. You're writing a story on me and I have to remember when this happened, when that happened, you know it's been a long time. Anyway, I'll do my best.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You're doing good, keep going. What happened then?

Mr. Leos:

Later on I was sent back to the United States after I had been there about a year or so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Came back to the United States?

Mr. Leos:

Come back to the United States. I remember that was in 1944. In January. I landed in Tyler, Texas. They called it Camp Fanmn there. I trained recruits at the time I was stationed there. It was like a training center. Then from there, I didn't want to stay too long, I wanted to do something for my country so I volunteered to go overseas and join a unit overseas that was fighting the war and they sent me out to the 1st Cavalry Division in the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were in the Philippines at that point, right?

Mr. Leos:

Went up to the Philippines and I landed at Leyte Island but the year that I went through there, they'd been up in the Admiralty Islands shortly before that and then they came down to Leyte and I joined them in Leyte.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when would that have been?

Mr. Leos:

In 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When in 1944? The end of 1944?

Mr. Leos:

No, before that, just before that, I think about March or April, I just can't remember exactly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, the invasion of Leyte was October of 1944. October of 1944 was when they invaded Leyte.

Mr. Leos:

Yeah. Well, what I was doing there when they sent me up there to the mountains and I was doing a lot of patrolling and a lot of mopping up operations. When I got there, one of the units that took me up there right away. We were short of help at that time so we were doing mopping up operations. We went up in Lugena. Ever heard of Lugena?

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've heard of it, yes.

Mr. Leos:

That's where I wound up, on Lugena and then another place was Santa Maria and then Ana Polo. Lot of mopping up operations also in those little towns and villages and things. So then later on the same year, 1945, we knew where we was going, we know more or less some things that were going on cause everything was so secretive. We knew something was going on but we didn't know what it was. Then we dropped in the bomb in Hiroshima. We were taking pride in that after they dropped the bomb we was taking training to make the invasion in Yokohama. We was going to make an invasion in Yokohama after that. But then they called that off and the war ended the 26th of August 1945. Then they signed the treaty the 2nd of September 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let's go back to your time in the Philippines. What did you do with the First Cav? Were you a rifleman or what?

Mr. Leos:

Oh, no, I was actually, we were short of people and I was platoon sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Platoon sergeant, OK.

Mr. Leos:

See they didn't have any officers hardly. Then I became a platoon leader was the rank I had. I was only a buck sergeant. I was platoon leader. They tried to give me a battlefield commission but I wouldn't take it. A lot of guys got battlefield commissions. When they got that commission, then when everything was over then they'd go revert back to their rank they had before. I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to be a commissioned officer. I just wanted to be a non-commissioned officer. But I would hold the position as platoon leader.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you were doing these patrols and all, what all happened? What are some things that happened? Did you have quite a few fights with the Japanese?

Mr. Leos:

Oh, yes. I don't know if I should tell you all of this because I don't know if it's confidential.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It's gone now. That's past. Go ahead. You can talk about it now.

Mr. Leos:

OK. When I got there in Lugena, it was like they had a big wreck there. Anyway, when I was up there in Santa Maria when they sent me up the mountain over there and I went up and they sent us out on patrol, scouting for Japanese soldiers. I ran into a few Japanese on a patrol ahead of us, the guys with me, you know. We was going down this trail and it was pretty jungle, lot of trees, coconut trees, brush and all that sort of stuff, and these Japanese was eating on the side of the trail in a kind of an opening there and I saw them there and I called to the troops to surrender and they looked at us and shot at us. I killed two Japanese right there at the time. Then we left there and went on down the trail on this mission that we was on and we was going through a little

narrow trail on the wrong side. I always took the point I never let my men, I was the leader, I always took the point. We was going down the trail and I seen some movement on my left side like somebody was laying on the ground there and there was two Japanese laying there, covered up with leaves and stuff. So I captured two guys there, two Japanese guys. Then they put me on a mission and we went on down a little further and we were quite a ways from my command post. We was going on a little creek, and I saw two Japanese running across there and I fired at one of them. Don't know if I hit him or not but they took off. We kept on going and then we came to another ravine where there was kind of like a shack and the Japanese you know how they put a shack off the ground, stilts on it. Told my men, motioned to them to hit the ground, you know, don't talk or nothing. So I walk up to that shack down there, real slow, and I saw a Japanese guy come out of the shack and I told him to come on down and he didn't want to come out, so I shot him. Then I went underneath the building, it was four or five feet off the ground. I went up there and shot underneath the shack there, you know, the stilts. I killed two Japanese there. We just kept a-going. Later on we went back to the command post and everything seemed to be, I reported to the commanding officer and give him all the information I had and what I saw. Later on, a few days later, they sent me on another mission going a different direction and we went up quite a few kilometers down the trail there and I thought I saw some movement up on a hill so I told Jack I thought I saw some movement, didn't know what it was. I could see and I thought it might have been Filipinos but there was something. I dug my binoculars out and it was Japanese guys up there, up on the hill. I could see a couple moving around so I sneak over down the trail, through all this brush and stuff and got up there and there was this creek, with water running in it. There were two Japanese guys taking a bath there in the water. When they saw me, they started to run. As soon as they run, I started firing on them, you know. I hit one of them. The

other one took off. Anyway, that was the most scary missions I had ever been on. The war was scary but you went anyway. Everybody's afraid, you know. You don't know what's going to happen to you. But anyway, the most dangerous job was to expose yourself to the enemy when you don't know who's there you know. When you get in something like a big war, the invaders come, you know you're going to have people shooting at you and you're shooting back. But when you go out on a mission or a patrol or mopping up operation it's a different situation. You expose yourself to fire.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What island was this on? Was that on Leyte or Luzon?

Mr. Leos:

That was on Luzon. Santa Maria.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Leos:

Anyway, when the war ended, you know, that kind of stuff, I'll tell you that later. They decided they were going to ship us back home. You know about the point system? I had a bunch of points, so he said you're going home. I was good to come home. I weighed 90 pounds when I came home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

90 pounds.

Mr. Leos:

The rations, which we ate, we couldn't carry much stuff you know. You couldn't carry anything that rattled or anything like that, you know. Turned out I had bandoleers of ammunitions and

grenades and stuff like that. The rations, in cans, we had C-rations at the time. You know about C-rations?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, yeah.

Mr. Leos:

We had some that had meat and vegetables, stew and hash, three times a day when you were hungry you ate, you know. When time went on they come out with K-rations. They came out with all kinds of stuff. Things changed around. When I got back to the United States I landed in San Pedro, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you get back?

Mr. Leos:

It was after the war ended in 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

September or October?

Mr. Leos:

September or October, somewheres in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, go ahead.

Mr. Leos:

I landed in San Pedro, California. I didn't stay there very long. I was drawing combat pay already. They put me in an artillery unit. I didn't like that. I wanted to go back to get my combat

badge. I had a combat infantry badge. So we went on... I stayed there about six months or so, something like that and then I asked for a transfer. I wound up in Fort Hood, Texas again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Leos:

Well, I stayed in Fort Hood, Texas for a while there and well, got assigned to another unit, Second Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas. I stayed there for a while. I stayed until 1949. Then took us back home. Then in 1949 they sent me to Germany on occupation force. Patrolled and checked borders in Germany dividing East and West at the time. The patrol there was patrolled the first one. Name of the town in that area was Hersfeld.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit were you with there?

Mr. Leos:

I was with the 1st Cavalry Division.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The First Cav, OK. Then what happened?

Mr. Leos:

Well, from there I spent 52 months in Germany. I was stationed... Need to back up a little bit. I was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany and from there we went on patrol in that area.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were there for how long?

Mr. Leos:

I was there for 52 months.

Mr. Misenhimer:

52 months, over four years.

Mr. Leos:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, go ahead.

Mr. Leos:

Cold up there. But you know when I was in Germany when I was doing my patrolling we had what you call a rolling patrol where you ride a Jeep all night long, 15 mph in the wintertime, And then you do that for one day and the next time on an observation post for three days. You go up on a post with a three-quarter ton truck and radios and stuff, and you keep track of what's going on your job, the area you're that you're in, for three days you don't come in for three days. Then you come back home, rest a day and then they send you back on patrol again. In the meantime while I was patrolling that area, Germany, I noticed some Russians on our side, violated the sector and got on our side of our zone, and I got a colonel, a Russian and a jeep carrying a bunch of maps, so I got him and I held him down and I called the CIC. They came and picked him up and took him and investigated him and interrogated him and all kinds of stuff. I don't know what all. They weren't supposed to cross our sector, violated the zone sector. Anyway, when I came back to the States, I was going to Fort Hood, Texas, and then shortly after that they sent us back to Germany for 28 more months on occupation forces.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were there for quite a while, then.

Mr. Leos:

Oh, yeah, absolutely. That's why I don't like the cold weather.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Like when you were over there for 52 months, did you get leave to come back to the States several times during that time?

Mr. Leos:

No, I never did. No, I never got no leave. We didn't get no leave.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Never came back. Were you married at that time?

Mr. Leos:

When I was in Germany in 1949 I was married at that time. Had my family in Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I was going to ask if your family came to Germany with you, right?

Mr. Leos:

I never got to see them. I would spend eight months out of the year in the mountains. Matter of fact, one of my boys was born in Wursburg, Germany. He was born in Wursburg, Germany in 1952 before I came back. Had to go to the Burgermeister to get papers to bring him back home, make him an American citizen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what rank did you have while you were over there?

Mr. Leos:

When I was over in Germany I had a Sergeant First Class. I got promotions along the line. I got promotions to Sergeant First Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Sergeant First Class, OK. Were you a platoon leader there or what?

Mr. Leos:

I was platoon sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Platoon Sergeant, OK.

Mr. Leos:

I was platoon leader for a long time. See I was eligible for another promotion but Korea was in effect. I guess when Korea took place it froze everything. We couldn't get no rank because everything was closed up. So when I got back to Fort Hood, Texas, after the war when I was stationed at Fort Hood after I got back from San Pedro, California, I got a box in the mail from the government, a Bronze Star medal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Got a Bronze Star?

Mr. Leos:

Yeah, with my name engraved on the back of the star. And it says what I got my Bronze Star medal for: Meritorious Achievement operations against the enemy. I was in Fort Hood when I got discharged in 1961. I hadn't been home but two or three months and I had orders to come to Fort Hood in Class A uniform. I didn't know what was going on. So I went back to Fort Hood in Class A uniform and reported to the battalion commander and they gave me the Army Commendation Medal. It scared me. I thought they were calling me back for duty. I was given the Army Commendation Medal. It's got a little note there that I had performed my duties in a well manner and everything else. Gave me credit for training 2000 trainees at Fort Hood, Texas.

Give them basic training. Let me say when I gave people all my men, I had respect for all my men I trained. I give basic training and I treated them with respect and that I never cussed at them or swear at them. I was strict on what I said for rules and regulations and went through all these courses I took, like infiltration courses, I demonstrated to all the trainees, 200 guys in the company. They watched me go through demonstration course and when I got through it I said that's what I want you people to do when you go through the course on your basic training. Confidence course, I did the same thing. Demonstrated that's what I want you to do when you're on your basic training. Then also the gas chamber, I'm going to demonstrate for them and they watched me when I went in and when I come out and that's what they had to do and how they had to do it. I run it out of respect for these guys. Treated them right. That's not the only thing. I got letters from the parents from time to time that appreciated what I did for their son, getting their life straightened out. Some of them were going in the wrong direction. Trying to do better in life, you know. They appreciated me helping their son.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you involved in the Korean War at all?

Mr. Leos:

No, I didn't get in the Korea War at all, I didn't get to Korea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Or Vietnam?

Mr. Leos:

My other brothers did. I had one brother that retired First Sergeant. He was in the same company that I was in and lived down the street. He was our First Sergeant. Another brother, next to me, that was in World War II, next to me, I'm the oldest. I had another brother but he was deceased

earlier. I'm the oldest in the family, you know. My other brother, he was in a B-26 medium bomber. He was on a B-26 medium bomber. He was an engineer gunner. All of my brothers, four brothers are military retired. Served their country well. World War II, Vietnam, and Korea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Mainly your combat in World War II was in the Philippines, is that right?

Mr. Leos:

Philippines, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it more on Luzon or more on Leyte?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Some in Leyte, some in Luzon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let's see. How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Leos:

Well, the morale, it was kind of hard to explain that. Some of them was scared like everybody else is, but you had a job to do, defend our country. Lot of people had to live with the Filipinos, had to live in those little houses. But some of them felt they was doing their duty, protecting our country. I didn't get too many people griping about anything. A commitment, what you do for your country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your worst day in World War II?

Mr. Leos:

Well, my worst days like I said was going out on patrol because it was dangerous. You were

exposed to stuff and didn't know what was there or nothing, going blind into an area and didn't know what's in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you lose any men from your platoon?

Mr. Leos:

No, I didn't lose no men, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Nobody got wounded or killed?

Mr. Leos:

When we went out on patrol we took one squad at a time. I didn't lose anybody.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Nobody was wounded or killed from your squad? Good, that's excellent.

Mr. Leos:

Everybody did what I told them to do, you know. I guess before on patrol I had meetings for my people what I was going to do, what the mission was, gather information, find out anything around you know. Anything you see. Tell them about my signals, I'd give them overhead signals when to go down and when to move forward and all that kind of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Leos:

When I first got there in the mountains in the Philippines we got fired on. We was up on the hill and dug in and everything and we got fired on the mountain the hill we was on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

By our artillery?

Mr. Leos:

It lasted a while. It didn't last very long but we also had some bombing at night time. But we set up perimeters, machine gun emplacements, booby traps with hand grenades, one man hole, set up machine gun emplacements. We strung our combat wire--- around all around the perimeters, called the combat wire. We set these booby-traps with grenades. We crimped the pin that you pull out, we crimped it out and run a wire from that ring to another ring, so many feet apart. If anybody tripped that wire the pin comes out and it goes off, you know. But only one man does the job, one man does the job. The next day is the hardest day, going back up there and re-arm the grenades again, pushing those pins back in and crimping them out. Arm them again. It's a dangerous job.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Leos:

Oh, yeah. Sure did on the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of her?

Mr. Leos:

Didn't think too much of her. Everybody was mad at her, called her all kinds of names. What was so bad, you know, when I first got there we didn't have transportation. We was carrying water. We carried all the machine guns, 50 caliber machine guns. The barrel weighed 28 pounds and receiver weighed 56 pounds and then you gotta carry all the magazines with ammunition in

them. We also carried 30 calibers. We men carried everything up those mountains. The Japanese, they poisoned all the streams, they poisoned the water. When I first made my first move up the hills down there, we saw some men who had been shot in the field, you know. Sometimes we had to get up there and get these guys on litters and bring them out, off the mountain and bring them down. Down to the command post. Men that had been killed there. It would make you kind of wonder. It was kind of rough, you know. You didn't know if you were going to be next or what but you had to be cool, you can't panic. It's hard to do. Some of these guys that we had later on that came in as replacement, recruits, you know, they'd get fired on and they'd panic and get up and run, you know. That's no good. Get killed every time. It was just a bad situation in other words. Dirty war.

Mr. Leos:

When you love your country, you fight for your country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right.

Mr. Leos:

One of my brothers was in Korea, one in Vietnam.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you crossed the equator, did they have any kind of a ceremony or anything?

Mr. Leos:

No. Not that I know. You know, when we come back from World War II, I remember when I got home. Caught a bus in Houston, Texas. We landed in New York and this guy from Louisiana, he bought a car in New York. I rode with him to Louisiana. Then in Louisiana I caught me a bus, Greyhound bus, and I landed in Richmond, Texas, where I originally left from. Got there about

midnight. Nobody in that town, the next day nobody even knew that I had even left to fight for my country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that right?

Mr. Leos:

Nobody even said well, so and so come back from World War II, none of that stuff. Got none of that stuff. Kind of hurt my feelings.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right, that would... Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Leos:

Well, we tried to get some but I had a Japanese bayonet. I had flags, suicide knife. When they processed us to come back, they took all that stuff away from me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, they did, huh?

Mr. Leos:

They took it away from me. At the processing center they make sure you don't take anything out of there. That was the rules and regulations they had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Leos:

No, not overseas, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Here in the States anywhere?

Mr. Leos:

No, not any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Leos:

Well, yes, one time. When I was going through Germany in 1949. You know you got to wait til get paid, you know. When I got to Germany, I landed in Erlnngen when I got there and I was at Nuremburg and Wurzburg. But any way I had to borrow some money from Red Cross. They helped me out. I had my family with me and I hadn't been paid yet. Wasn't very long, the Red Cross came to the barracks looking for me. I thought I had committed a crime or something. They wanted to know when I was going to pay back the money I'd borrowed. Made me mad, you know. I hadn't got paid yet and when I got paid I'd pay them back. I didn't borrow much or nothing. Maybe they did a good job, I don't know, but for me I felt like they didn't do nothing for me. Another thing I'm going to say when I got off the boat in San Pedro, California, landed in California, San Pedro, got off the ship, got on the train to go to a separation center, the Red Cross came on the train and guess what they gave me. Six chocolate bars and a little old newspaper. That's all they did. I said thanks a lot. That's what they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in the Philippines, did you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Leos:

Yeah, once in a while we'd get mail, not very often. The only time we got mail was when we were in a rest area, had mail call. Might get a letter or something you know. I didn't get much mail. Once in a while I'd get a letter. The one that I really worried about was my mother. My

mother, I really worried about her. Three or four of us brothers in the service, gone all the time, you know. At one time I was up in the mountains and my mother hadn't heard nothing about me, she thought maybe I got killed in the war. She looked to the Red Cross so one day the old man called me to the command post and he said, "I want you to sit here and I want you to write a letter to your mother. She is worried about you." I said, "OK, I'll write a letter." "No, you'll write a letter right here, right now." He made me write a letter and he mailed it himself. Mother got the word that I was OK. My mother worried. A lot of mothers worried about their sons. Hard on everybody.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Leos:

That was kind of sad, you know. I was up on the mountain at that time. Back when I was in the Philippines. I heard about it. It hurt everybody. Everybody was hit hard. President Roosevelt was the one who got us out of the Depression. He started the WPA. Put the CCC Camp in effect and all that. Put people back on the job, making a little more money, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now May 8, 1945 Germany surrendered. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Leos:

Germany in 1945?

Mr.. M:

Only about three weeks after Roosevelt died.

Mr. Leos:

Oh, that's right, I remember that. You know you ask me all these questions and you know how

long it's been since I was in the Army? Since 1940, 1941. It's hard for me to remember all this stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, but you're doing good. You've remembered a lot of stuff here. OK.

Mr. Leos:

I'm going to tell you this now. I have a hard time remembering. I don't think I did anything wrong but I might be mixed up on my dates and stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when they dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan, on August 6, did you hear about that?

Mr. Leos:

Oh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think about that?

Mr. Leos:

Well, I had kind of different emotions about what happened all of a sudden, you know. The Japanese did us wrong, too, you know. But they should never have done what they did to us. I had no idea that we had something like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they surrendered on August 15, did you all have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Leos:

No. When I was there, we were just busy all the time, like I said, getting ready to send us back home and all that stuff, you know. We were glad it was over. Matter of fact I was ready to go home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In the Philippines did you capture many Japanese?

Mr. Leos:

Yeah, I captured one Japanese soldier.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Just one.

Mr. Leos:

I brought him back to the command post. Really made me mad when we got him back because I took him to the command post and I told the guys there I want you, I had him sit down there by the post and said "You guys keep your eye on this guy here, don't let him get away" cause you know he's going to try to escape or something. Found out later the Japanese got away. I captured one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Leos:

Well, at one time when I come out, so many G.I.s, military guys was getting out at that time, you know, and I couldn't find a job. Couldn't find a job nowheres so finally I went to the VA hospital and I asked them if they had a job because I knew they hired people some times. Could I get a job? Well, this guy says, "No, I'll give you a job taking care of flowers and stuff like that." That's what he told me. I said, "No, I don't think so." Then the next move, I went to the post office, trying to get a job. You know what the guy told me? He told me I was too small, I couldn't carry a bag of mail. I'd been carrying all those weapons and stuff up and down the mountains. I don't know what you're talking about, man. You can take this job and you know

what you can do and I left then. So in 1961 I decided to go to barber college and I took my test and for six months I went to barber college. Matter of fact, I paid my own way. The government didn't help me with the schooling because I had had a break in service. I broke my enlistment to go regular enlistment, in and out right away and I wasn't qualified for the loan because I had a break in service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When was that break?

Mr. Leos:

When I got out in 1961.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean you had a break before that?

Mr. Leos:

No, that's the only break I had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out in 1961.

Mr. Leos:

But then I went to school for six months, got my apprentice license and then I went to work for a man in Temple, Texas, for a little while, for eighteen months. Then I went back to Austin, Texas, took my next test, got my registered license, passed my test and got my license to open my barbershop.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were a barber?

Mr. Leos:

I was a barber.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a G.I. Bill? Could you use your G.I. Bill?

Mr. Leos:

No, I never used the G.I. Bill. Tried to get schooling through the military but they wouldn't pay me because I had a break in service. But that was OK. I got my schooling.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Leos:

The highest rank I held. I was Master Sergeant. When the military changed their ranks, they came out with a Master Sergeant was the highest rank. Then you had either a First Sergeant with a diamond on his stripe and a Sergeant Major. I don't know what the Sergeant Major had. But then in 1961 after I got my promotion, before I retired, the Army came out with a different, an EAP9. But mine was a Master Sergeant but I was platoon sergeant. A First Sergeant had a star, three up and three down, First Sergeant. A Sergeant Major I think had a different thing between the stripes. But anyway, I was platoon sergeant, rank was supposed to be a Master Sergeant rank. They had one guy, one opening in Division, for a Master Sergeant. I went before the board. I passed the board, beat everybody. Got the promotion to Master Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now which all medals did you get?

Mr. Leos:

Well, the Bronze Star medal, I got the Army Commendation Medal, Combat Infantry Badge. I

got a bunch of ribbons, Victory Medal, American Defense, I got all kinds of ribbons there.

Combat Badge, they gave us ten dollars a month for being in combat. Korea was fifty dollars a month, I can't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

To me that Combat Infantryman's Badge is one of the most prestigious you can get because you really have to earn that one.

Mr. Leos:

Oh, you bet. If I can figure anything else I suppose my mind is going around and around.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You've done real well, you've done a very good job.

Mr. Leos:

I wanted to make this closing statement here: I appreciate your wanting to know what's going on with the veterans, you know. What really hurt most of all was the World War II Memorial. Everybody put up with _____. How come it took so long?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you been out there to see that memorial?

Mr. Leos:

Yes, I sure did. When they opened it up, I made a trip, a thousand mile trip, to see it and came back home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that one of these honor flights?

Mr. Leos:

No, I paid my own way. Drove down there. They said that when I made that trip down there.

You know I had my World War II cap on going through the crowd, all the stations they had set up down there and the saddest part for me was talking to people who coming up to me saying I wish my father, husband, grandfather or something. That it took so long to put it up that they are long gone and never seen it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right, oh, yes, that's the thing wrong, right.

Mr. Leos:

Well, I was going to tell you. When I was going through the monument that was put up I talked to a lot of people who came up and talked to me and said I wished my dad or brother could have seen it. That was kind of sad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I don't know why it took so long. It shouldn't have taken that long but it did.

Mr. Leos:

From time to time I hear, I'm not putting anyone down. We're all veterans, but now when I read when some one goes to Iraq and comes back, it makes big headlines. World War II veterans, they didn't do too much of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Those who got out in 1945 and 1946 they did for a while there. They had the big parade in New York.

Mr. Leos:

You have a lot of activity in Corpus Christi, veterans you know. They are pretty good about that. I tell my wife I'm not going to be around too long, I don't know how long the good Lord is going to keep me here, you know, but all the World War II veterans are just fading away. I remember

when I used to get ten thousand every day and all that kind of stuff. Been born in war. It was tough. It was hard for everybody, all the military people. I have a lot of pride in all these military people that put their time in. Protect their country, do their time. That's the cost of your freedom.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Al, I want to thank you again for your time today.

Mr. Leos:

Thank you very much. Did I give you my phone number?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah. I want you to know that I do appreciate your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Leos:

Thank you very much. I appreciate what you're doing, too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

We're just trying to preserve these stories because if we don't get them preserved, they won't be around.

Mr. Leos:

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, have a good day and we'll talk later.

End of Interview

Transcribed by:

Janice Conner

Winamac, IN 46996

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Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848