

Barney Tarver Oral History Interview

CHARLIE SIMMONS: This is Charlie Simmons interviewing Mr. Barney Tarver on today, 11/11/2010 at the Nimitz Museum. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas historical commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. So Mr. Tarver, would you begin telling us about yourself please?

BARNEY TARVER: My name is -- speak loud?

CS: You don't have to.

BT: My name is Barney B. Tarver. I was born and raised in a small town of Moscow, Texas. I was born on April the seventh, 1926. My father and mother had a cotton field in a rural area. We had the normal amount of yard animals, cows, horses, hogs, chickens. We raised cotton, peanuts, hay, and so forth. My father also worked for the Texas Forest Service for twelve years during the Depression years from 1928 to 1940. I have one brother, which has passed away. I have one sister that's still living. There were three of us children. I was the middle son. I attended the Moscow Independent School system, grammar school. Afterward I went to Corrigan High School and graduated from Corrigan High School in Corrigan, Texas. And then I spent

a small time working for a shipyard in Orange, Texas. And then I joined the -- volunteered for the US Marines, went to Houston, was examined and turned down. They said I had a bad heart, told me to go to a heart specialist and check it out. I went back to Beaumont, Texas, went to a heart specialist. He said my heart was okay. I went back to Houston and they okayed me, passed me. Go ahead.

CS: What year was this?

BT: It was in 1944.

CS: Okay. And so once they accepted you in the Marine Corps, where did you go to boot camp?

BT: Went to San Antonio, Texas and was sworn in, caught a train and went to boot camp in San Diego, California.

CS: How many weeks?

BT: It was two months of boot camp. Then after boot camp, we went to the rifle range. We finished rifle range and then we went to what they call land camp at Camp Pendleton, California, for approximately three months. That was advanced infantry training, mock battles, sham battles, all types of infantry training, hand-to-hand combat training, such as that.

CS: So how many of the men in your boot company, in your boot camp platoon were with you at Camp Pendleton, or did you all split up then?

BT: It was -- throughout my time in the US Marines, I occasionally lived with some men for quite a while, others for a short time, and I can barely remember some of them that went through boot camp with me. And of course we split up when we went to line camp. Some of them went to tank training; some of them went to artillery training, different types of training and we all got split up and every through the line company, trained. When we went overseas, we were split up again and when we got overseas, we split up again. So it was not a long time that you lived with the same people until you were assigned to a regular overseas company.

CS: Now when you finished your line company training at Camp Pendleton, what did you do at the end of the training period?

BT: We had maneuvers. It was severe training. Some Marine Corps rangers took us over, drilled us and marched and really did a great job of training us and after that, they took us down to San Diego and loaded us on the ship.

CS: Were you allowed to have leave during the time you were in training? Did you ever get to go home?

BT: I came home on a 10-day delay in route leave when I finished boot camp. After I got back, I went to what's called a casual company before I was assigned to the line

company training. And then after I started overseas, I got over there, was assigned to different organization.

CS: Did you have leave, like weekend leave, during your line training? Did you ever get in to San Diego on a --

BT: When we went into boot camp, we never got a day off until two months was over, and then we got that 10-day leave.

And then after we got back and went to line camp training, we would get an occasional weekend pass.

CS: Did you go up to Los Angeles?

BT: Los Angeles, San Diego, outlying areas of Southern California.

CS: Do you ever visit any USOs during that time?

BT: Yeah, sure did. Los Angeles, [San Layaha?], movie stars that were at the USO shows and so forth.

CS: Do you remember seeing -- what movie stars you might have seen?

BT: Bob Hope and Frances Langford and was there one named Ish Kabibble or something?

CS: Yes.

BT: Some comedian?

CS: Yes, yeah.

BT: Different ones like that.

CS: Yeah, so what -- talk about getting over to the far West Pacific. How did you get there?

BT: We were taken down to San Diego by trucks. We loaded on to the USS General Harry Taylor, which was a big troop ship. And to the best of my remembrance, it was a Sunday when we went aboard. Monday morning at daylight or before, we left out of San Diego, that one lone ship, and we sailed all day long. There was a blimp that travelled up above us and a destroyer that went along with us until almost dark. And they turned around and came back to California and we continued on. I forget how many days. It seemed like about 30 days. It must have been 5,000 men on that ship. Had two meals a day and nothing else to do but just live. And --

CS: Did you have any physical training or --

BT: Oh, we had calisthenics and this and that.

CS: How was the food?

BT: Well, not too great. (laughter) If you like Boston baked beans and so forth. We cross the equator. It was a great adventure. They warned us for days about King Neptune was waiting for us. And the day that we cross the equator, they made us all go down below and let us come out just a squad at a time, nothing on but your skivvy drawers, and immediately when you came out, they washed you down with fire hoses, and then you had to crawl through a canvas bag about 60 foot up the side of the ship and it was full of

cabbage heads and coffee grounds and banana peelings and everything else. When you came out of that, they were standing alongside there whooping you with paddles and you was wet. And the people that did it were the ones that had been across before. We were -- they were shellbacks and I forget what we were. And then they got us there and tried us so King Neptune found us all guilty and they had electric sabers that they would touch you if you were on the outside. So it was a big fight to stay on the inside. And then they put us up on some scaffolding and cut our hair, flipped us over backwards in a big tank of water and hair and oil and all that stuff. And when we came out of that, we were done with it. (laughs)

CS: I bet you had to take a shower I imagine after that, or two.

BT: Then we travelled on and wound up landing at Pavuvu in the Russell Islands.

CS: Okay, good. And what happened at Pavuvu then?

BT: Well, we were called out and assigned our combat organizations. People went to this, maybe artillery, this other would go to tank, maybe you'd go to infantry. They put all of us boys that didn't know nothing in the infantry. (laughter) And we were in the 1st Marine Division. It was on an island. It was a half-coconut

plantation and a half-jungle. And they had the 1st Marine Regiment, the 5th Marine Regiment, and the 7th Marine Regiment was infantry. And then they had the 11th Marines that was artillery and then they had the Tank Battalion and then the H&S -- Headquarters and Supply -- Battalion. And there were about 22,000 men in the 1st Marine Division counting everybody, engineers, a battalion, you know, when you counted them all.

CS: Do you remember what date this was, about when you got there?

BT: No, sir. I think we left San Diego about the first of September of '44.

CS: Okay, so it would have been --

BT: Probably the 15th of September. And then immediately after we got there, the 1st Marine Division came back from Peleliu in the Palau Islands. They had just underwent that blitz or campaign against the Japs on Peleliu. A lot of people don't know nothing about Peleliu, but that was a terrific battle, as bad as Taiwan, a lot of the rest of the Pacific War battles.

CS: And so you had not been assigned to a unit at this time, right?

BT: At that time, but I was when we got to Pavuvu.

CS: Could you talk a little bit about the men that -- what unit were you assigned to at that time?

BT: I was assigned to A Company, 3rd Platoon, 2nd Squad, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine.

CS: And when you were assigned to that, now, a lot of the men that were already there were men that had been at Peleliu.

BT: That had been veterans. Some of them actually had been on Guadalcanal and then Cape Gloucester. That was campaigns that the 1st Marine Division had had. It first was Guadalcanal, then Cape Gloucester -- that was in New Guinea -- and then Peleliu in the Palau Islands.

CS: And what frame of mind were they in when they got back from Peleliu?

BT: They must have all been mad because they treated us pretty bad. (laughter) And were [booed to?] recruits when we first got over there, you know? And I still remember some of the men that were there.

CS: About how many men were in Company A when you joined it that were still veterans?

BT: Oh, there were five -- maybe 100 something.

CS: So about half of the company's strength? About 50%?

BT: Yeah. It was a lot of us new recruits. That's the reason I guess they sent us to the first division. They'd just

left Peleliu and lost lots of men and we were replenishing those men.

CS: So you didn't get much respect from those fellows?

BT: No sir. Not for a while.

CS: Okay, so then what happened to you?

BT: We stayed there on Peleliu and made maneuvers and trained, mopping up operations on those outlying islands around Guadalcanal, Guadalcanal itself, [Seybold, Benica?], some of the islands I don't remember the name of.

CS: Did you get into some combat there then? Were you --

BT: There was some, yes.

CS: Yeah? Okay.

BT: And it was not great big campaigns or anything, just smaller operations, you know? Just more or less making secure the islands that, you know, had already been more or less taken over, you know? And training, getting ready to go to Okinawa.

CS: Did you know where you were going when you were training?

BT: No sir, no sir. We didn't where we were going until we were almost there.

CS: How long did this period take that you were in this condition where you were just in training with the --

BT: We -- I was there from, oh, say September to we left Peleliu in about -- I'd think along in February. And we

started loading up on ships, going to Okinawa. I was put on a brand new Navy attack transport, USS Marathon. And I went to Okinawa on that. We stopped at Ulithi on the Caroline Islands and I'd never seen so many ships in my life. I didn't know the Navy had that many ships. It was carriage, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, submarines, hospital ships, everything that the Navy had was -- like, as far as you could see, it was ships. And the USS Franklin came in there, came down from Okinawa. They pulled it down there and it was all burnt up and shot up at the time we were there. Hospital ship came close to us and if we were close up enough, we could see some of the nurses. We waved and hollered at them. They never paid no attention to us. (laughter)

CS: How many men would have been aboard your attack transport there? How about? Would it be like a battalion?

BT: Maybe a battalion or 1,000 men or something.

CS: And you had gotten familiar with the men in your unit pretty well by then?

BT: Oh, yes, we were all close then.

CS: Okay, what sort of a squad leader, platoon leader did you have?

BT: I had a big, tall, German squad leader named [Otto Amo Schmidt?]. He was from Luling, Texas. Big, sandy-headed,

blue-eyed fellow. And them other boys had told me, said, you stay behind that guy and you'll get to go home.

(laughter)

CS: He knew what he was doing.

BT: Yes, sir.

CS: So how about a platoon leader, did you have any officers leading platoons?

BT: Yeah, sure, we had. Most of those were young first lieutenants. Of course a captain and all [upper grades?], but it was good leaders, leaders dedicated and they were all good men. And I'm sure in my outfit there was a mixture of Southern from Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama. We had a lot of Midwesterners from Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, foreign boys. Had a bunch of explorer hunters from Tennessee and Kentucky and so forth.

CS: Did you do any further training with any sort of crew weapons like mortars or machine guns or anything?

BT: After we left the States, I had shot every gun they had, I guess, pistol, rifles, Mls, carbines, BARs, rifle grenades, mortars, all of that, you know. And I made a mistake. I shot a good grade in record day. We had record day in boot camp when we shot our rifles. And I made a good grade on shooting a BAR.

CS: Uh-oh.

BT: So they made me a BAR man. I didn't know what I was doing.
I did the best I could. (laughter)

CS: So you were assigned as BAR man when you got to Company A.

BT: Overseas, yes, Company A. Now you want to go to the
Okinawa Battle?

CS: Well, if you're -- you know, I'd like to finish -- I can't
think of any other questions I guess offhand for your
previous training, but I guess we're ready to start on
Okinawa then. So you get to Okinawa, and that's February
or --

BT: No sir, it was the first day of April 1945. And we landed
there. It was Easter Sunday, April Fool's Day, first day
of April. My birthday being on the seventh day of April,
it was just before my birthday. We landed, I don't know,
daylight or right at daylight. And they had told us after
we left Ulithia that we would come in contact with lots of
civilians. They told us where we were going then. Okinawa
was considered part of Japan. It wasn't just an island in
the Pacific, it was actually Ryukyu Islands was part of
Japan. So the Japanese 32nd Army that was there, 110,000
soldiers, plus navy, air force, and everything. They had
airfields, sub bases, navy bases, everything on Okinawa.
And they had good leaders and those Japanese were good
soldiers and they were dedicated. They fought to the

death. And we landed there at daylight. We started in on Higgins boats, and we got up and hit the coral reef, and then we had to transfer over into amphibs. That was a tracked vehicle because the coral reef was a long distance and there were deep holes and then shallow and it was rocking and rolling and going in, you know? And of course, on the way in in them Higgins boats, we just -- I'd say a platoon of men in each one of them little boats, and we'd run upside then battlewagons and they'd go south over the 16 inches. And fire and smoke would come out, blew, like, 100 yards out over us. We got there; they didn't put up much resistance on Okin-- on the land. And we didn't know what was going on and --

CS: Now were you first wave, second wave?

BT: I don't really know. We landed on what you called Yellow-3 Beach. It was two Marine divisions and three Army divisions landed abreast there. Three Army and then the two Marines and they had one Marine division in reserve, the 2nd Marine Division. They did a feint operation down on the southern end of the island, made out like they were going in and didn't to draw them down there. And hit that beach and started in on them and from then on, it was just combat.

CS: Okay, so after you -- there wasn't much resistance when you hit the beach, and then what happened in the next few days?

BT: When we hit the beach, it was mostly in the middle of the island and they had two major, big airfields along in that area, Yontan and Kadena Airfields, and that was our first objective was to take those airfields, which we did. And we went across that island, straight across, and the Army turned south and the Marines turned north and where we landed was mostly -- I'd say two thirds of the island was on the north, but it was less defended. They didn't have near as many troops up on the northern end. And the Army turned south, but they were soon bogged down and couldn't go. And after we took the north end of the island, they turned around and put both the 1st and the 6th Marine Division in line with the Army divisions going south.

CS: Now about how long did it take for you, once you were on the beach, for you to secure the north end of the island?

BT: About a month I guess.

CS: And talk a little bit about what kind of fighting you were doing during that month.

BT: Well, it was patrols. They had some areas, they had a -- what do you call it? -- Motuba (inaudible) up there that was heavily defended, caged, pillboxes and artillery and all types of defensive positions. But it was mostly

heavily forested and hilly. And it was perfect for defense.

CS: Yeah, well what kind of a typical day would you have? Would you shove off and attack or move forward in the morning or --

BT: In the morning, if conditions allowed it. Maybe sometimes we couldn't move and we'd maybe develop an advantage on one side or the other and the situation would change and --

CS: Well suppose you come up against a hill that's got caves in it and there are Japanese defending those caves: what would you do?

BT: Well, you got men; you called in a tank outfit. And they'd sit back and try to put that cave out of position. And you had an infantry that was protecting those tanks and tanks were protecting you more or less.

CS: Now you're a BAR man and you're up close to the cave, right?

BT: Right.

CS: And how far away would you be when the tanks were shooting at it? Were you closer than them? Were they behind you?

BT: Well mostly, they were behind us. We were in front. In some situations, the tanks would be out in front of us.

CS: Would you be laying down cover and fire for your other Marines coming up?

BT: Yes.

CS: Did you ever see the Japanese?

BT: Oh yes sir, yes sir. I've seen dead men.

CS: Well did you see them -- I mean, when they were still fighting, were you shooting at live targets or just shooting at the cave mouth?

BT: Some of both. Sometimes, they were in these caves. We couldn't see them. But you could see a bunch of little red dots flashing at you. They weren't blowing you kisses. And every one you saw, there were four more behind that because ever fifth bullet was a tracer.

CS: So you would be stopping and going all day long?

BT: Yeah, sure.

CS: Or sometimes you'd be in one place for a few days?

BT: Sometimes all day and all night. After about say the first of May, we secured that northern end. And the Army had bogged down down there on the southern end. They weren't able to advance much. They had the 27th Army Division and I think it was the 77th and 96th, and the 7th Army Division down there and we were placed -- the 1st Marine Division replaced the 27th Army Division down around Naha, which was the capital. And that's where the greatest amount of fighting took place, on the southern end of Okinawa.

CS: By the time you got down to Naha, or got down to the south end of the Island, what sort of casualties did you have in your company?

BT: Oh, maybe 25, 30 percent, something like that. I could say that it was 110,000 Jap troops there when we landed. When it was all over, I think it was about 5,000 surrendered. The rest of them were dead. And then we lost I think overall it was about 15,000 dead and 30-something thousand injured.

CS: Well, in your squad, for example, were there some casualties in your squad?

BT: Oh, yes.

CS: Your fire team, did you lose some of your fire team members?

BT: Yes, I don't know percentage. A lot of them were wounded and --

CS: Would you get replacements to replace them or --

BT: We got replacements several times. The Battle on Okinawa lasted three months. We spent the first month -- now I'm not perfect on that -- on the northern end. And then we spent the other two months on the southern end, and that's where most of the terrible fighting was, on the southern end.

CS: So when you hit the southern lines, you were operating at pretty close to company strength because you'd lost 20-30% but you had replacements, a bunch of new guys --

BT: Right. They weren't as efficient as the old men, you know. They hadn't been under fire. They hadn't dealt with weapons as much as we had. And the month of May was nothing but deluges of rain, mud, rain, wasn't a vehicle with a track on it or wheels on it that could move. It's all bogged down. And up on the lines, they flew airplanes up there and dropped out parachutes of food and water. First priority was ammunition; next priority was food; third -- I mean water -- the third priority was food. In other words, food was last on the list. (laughs) And but we slept in those mud holes and just night and day, it rained for about a month.

CS: What about Japanese artillery? Did they have pretty good artillery?

BT: Oh man, they had fierce artillery, correct. They had some guns, they had 47mm, sulfur-tip bullets that could just penetrate one of our tanks, burn a hole through it. And them tank boys -- they called them tanks rolling coffins.

CS: So were you ever pulled back off the line or were you right on the line all the time?

BT: Sometimes they'd give us a break, maybe a day or two. R and R they'd call it. And we pulled back off the line. They put us to guarding some first aid station or some command post or holding supplies as our break. (laughter)

CS: Well, you weren't getting shot at quite so much I hope.

BT: The worst duty I ever had to do -- it's bad enough to be up there behind a rock with a gun in your hand looking out to your front with your butt in the whole way, but occasionally, a sergeant would say, "Tarver, I need four volunteers for litter carriers, and you, you, you, and you." And we'd have to go out in front, take a stretcher, and get boys that had fell out in front of us, and bring them back and of course them Japs, they were just waiting on a situation like that because it takes four men to carry 200-pound men, you know? And they picked one of us off, that's what they liked to do. But it was stark terror, laying there in them holes at night, thinking any minute, one of them Japs would crawl in the hole and cut your throat.

CS: They had night infiltrators and --

BT: They loved the nights. We mostly just fought -- tried to fight in the daytime, but they did a lot of stuff at night. They tried to encircle us there on the southern end. They'd come out around, landed tight in behind us, and so

sometimes they would be in front of you and behind you on the side of you and everything else.

CS: Did you ever have to retreat, pull back from your lines?

BT: We tried to take a hill, maybe launch a hike in the early morning, try to go up the hill, take it, and lose a bunch of men, have to pull back. Couldn't stay there on the top. They had a lot of caves on the reverse side of those cliffs and they -- you'd put them all out of action in the front maybe, but they'd come out of the back on the back side of the ridge and come over at you. They had tunnels all through those hills, you know, sharp, you know? And they could shoot at you from out here in front, and then go through there and come out on the back side, but you couldn't see. And they'd come up over the top on you.

CS: How long did all this go on?

BT: Three months, from the first day of April to the 22nd or 23rd of June. Until they already declared it officially secured. It might have been secured -- that's when the organized resistance ended -- but there were lots of pockets, small groups, sometimes a good many in a group that didn't surrender. They'd still fight to the end, you know? And I don't know how long it amounted to. That was all before we just really covered out.

CS: So in the two months of that that you were on the southern line, there was never any extended pull back where you had a chance to reorganize or bring in trained fresh men or any--

BT: No, sir. No, sir.

CS: So you got these little short periods off where you're guarding the headquarters or something, but you were never out of the line for --

BT: No. No.

CS: So how many of your -- by the end of that two months down there, how many of the men that went into it with you were still there?

BT: Not a great amount. You know, you get a wound, they'd send you out on a hospital ship and if it wasn't too bad and it didn't last too long, they'd send you back. Some of the men would crack up, go Asia Ape, we called it. You know, they'd go crazy or -- not crazy, but I don't know how to explain it. They weren't fit to fight anymore. They couldn't. The pressure or strain, it just cracked them up.

CS: How were you doing at this time? Were you holding it together pretty good?

BT: I got to the point one time, I was having a lot of nightmares. And but I got over it. You didn't get much sleep to start with, and when you -- when we were in this

combat, you didn't get much sleep. If you one night sleep, seeing somebody or something, you were scared to go to sleep. And I guess altogether, it got to you.

CS: But you were still in there?

BT: Oh yeah. I never did -- yeah.

CS: And you were still humping that BAR after three months?

BT: Yes, sir.

CS: What about your squad leader, that sergeant, Otto --

BT: Oh, he came home. He got to come home, but he was wounded. He got three wounds in combat. And the men that I was closest to, there's only that I know is still living. It's a boy named Isaac Valentine. He lives in Maryville, Tennessee. He's about two years older than me and I had a good friend named George Reeder from Tupelo, Mississippi. He's dead. I had a real good friend from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Richard Williams from Grand Rapids. He passed away. Had one from -- Frenchie -- he wasn't Frenchie but his name was [Ron?]. He was what we called, well, a Frenchman. (laughter) From New Iberia, Louisiana.

(laughter)

CS: Sure, sure.

BT: But the only that, as far as I know, I ever have any contact with is that boy from Tennessee.

CS: Now these are all men that survived the battle and survived the war and came back, is that right? The two that you just named.

BT: Yeah, there were four or five of them. One named Clive Wade from Russellville, Arkansas. He's gone. Like I said, four of them old men in Tennessee is the only ones that are left of that group.

CS: Well --

BT: After -- you want me to talk about after the war?

CS: Well, if we're getting finished up, let's just kind of finish out real quickly here. When you finally got to move forward and you finally knocked the last of the Japanese out of action in southern Okinawa, did you have a -- were you part of the mopping up procedure?

BT: Some of it. Not much. They didn't make us go through too much of it.

CS: Okay, they put some of the newer units on that?

BT: Yes.

CS: And so what you pull back to -- did you set up on a base on Okinawa? Did you --

BT: Set up a camp on the northern end of Okinawa. The old Jap generals, old General Chō and Yamashita, they all committed hara-kiri and it was over. They carried us up on the northern end of the island, beautiful place up there, and

we started building a camp. But it wasn't long before they dropped the bombs and there was a little island off the coast out there, Ajishima. That's where that war correspondent -- what was his name -- got killed.

CS: Ernie Pyle.

BT: Ernie Pyle got killed on Ajishima. My brother was over there and he knew I was on Okinawa through the mail. And I knew his outfit had flown over there to Ajishima. He was in the Army Air Force. And so I got my captain to let me get a pass and I went over there to see him, rode a little mail boat over there from Okinawa. The war wasn't over but the battle on Okinawa was over. And then after the battle ceased and then they dropped the bombs, Japan surrendered, and they sent us to China. Everybody else got to come home. There was a scutter boat that the 1st Marine Division was going to get to New York and parade down Fifth Avenue because we'd won the Presidential Unit Citation there on Okinawa. And, oh, we thought we were going to get to come home and we got out there and they loaded us on ships. The captain came around, "Well boys, we've got some bad news. We've got we're going for before we go home. We're going to China. We ain't going home."

CS: Boy.

BT: So we went to China.

CS: Do you remember what point you went into?

BT: Taku Bar they called it. And from there up the Huang Ho River to Tientsin, China, and on up to Peking and [Tient Won Toa?] and the 1st and 6th Marine Division went to China and took all the prisoners and took their surrender and sent them home, and we were still in China.

CS: So you got these Japanese prisoners, now do you put -- you were a prisoner of war camp guard for the Japanese --

BT: We worked them on the docks. This river had docks along the river bank and Tientsin's a big city, and we worked those Jap prisoners loading and unloading equipment and sent all of them home. We took all of their planes, tanks, everything, took them away from them and gave them to the nationalists. The nationalists were fighting the communists too in China there, and we sent the Japs home. We stayed there. And we stayed. (laughs)

CS: Now are you still carrying a BAR by this time?

BT: I was in guard duty all right, but I didn't have a BAR, just had a [crespel?] then.

CS: They finally let you take that thing away from you.
(laughs)

BT: I did that for six months before I got to come home. I went all over northern China, walked on the Great Wall up toward Mongolia and out in there. And one time we were way

out west of Peking, out towards central Asia up there and looked up over the horizon, there come about 60 camels, a bunch of them -- I started to say a word I shouldn't -- Chinese are leading them. I told my old buddy from Arkansas, Wade, I says, "What if you just go up there and join that monster. There ain't no telling what we'll see." He says, "Heck no, we ain't (inaudible)." He says, "They'll eat you for breakfast." (laughter) The loneliest day in my life I spent in Peking, China on Christmas Day in 1945. Snow everywhere, couldn't see nothing but snow. I was wanting to come home so bad. They'd already began to send people home by a point system, but I was still there and I had a girl over here I wanted to see. And but that was the loneliest day of my life.

CS: You probably didn't have turkey and dressing that day.

BT: No.

CS: Okay, so how long were you in China then? What date did you finally get out of China?

BT: I don't really remember. I think it was in maybe about March. They came out with a list every so often. You came home on a point system. You had so many points for so many months in the service. Overseas service counted more. Battles counted more. And if you were married and had children, that counted more. But I was single and so, but

anyway, I came home on the point system. And we loaded on a Merchant Marines ship. They'd sent it down to Shanghai, sent some of the Army troops home, and they condemned it. They wouldn't let their men sail on it. So they brought it up to Tientsin up there and they put us Marines on it. And we go down off the coast of Japan on the way to Pearl Harbor and ran into a storm and I thought we were going to sink. And we limped on into Pearl Harbor and stayed there about five, six days while they worked on it before we could come to San Diego.

CS: And what did you do when you got to San Diego?

BT: Well, they examined us, all the doctors and lawyers I guess, whatever, and discharged us.

CS: So had you ever been wounded during all those --

BT: I got some scars on me, but I never did get a Purple Heart or anything. I got a scar on my right leg from barbed wire. I got a scar above my right ankle from I don't know what. I was running to get in a hole one night, just about dark. Something hit me on the legs, stung like fire, and they sewed it up and put sulfa drugs on it, but there on Okinawa, it never would get well. It would just keep -- that sore spot would -- they'd go in there and clean it all out and sew it up again, but when we loaded up and went to China, that cold weather up there, it got well right away.

CS: I'll be darned.

BT: But that was right at dark and the lieutenant, he was gone and so I never said nothing.

CS: Yeah, well, so after you got inspected and got your physical done, did you come back and you were still in the Marines when you came back home to east Texas?

BT: No, sir. I was discharged in San Diego.

CS: They discharged you in San Diego and gave you a train ticket home?

BT: They paid us for a train ticket home and at that time, I came from San Diego to Beaumont, Texas. That's where my father and stepmother were living. And my girlfriend, my future wife, was living in Houston. And I met her there in Houston when I came home. It took about two and a half days then on train to come from San Diego to Beaumont.

CS: Yeah, and so you were married. How long was it before you got married?

BT: We got married in January of '47. I came home just about maybe -- I got my papers at the house, but I forgot them -- about March or April and then we went together in high school. We were high school sweethearts. And when I went in --

CS: She waited for you.

BT: Yes, sir. Sat there waiting on the railroad tracks when I got back.

CS: No kidding. Oh, that must have been a pretty good feeling for both of you.

BT: And we have three sons. She's passed away last year.

CS: Aw, I'm sorry to hear it. That's too bad.

BT: We were married 62 and a half years. I've had a good life, been blessed. Fairly well, I've had good health, and had a good job most of my life. I worked for Union Oil of California for 35 years. And got three fine boys. I've got four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren.

CS: Well, it sounds like you've had a pretty good life. Did you join any of the military organizations like the --

BT: The VFW or --

CS: Yeah, anything like --

BT: -- American Legion or anything? I joined the VFW for a while and I -- no -- yeah, Veterans of Foreign Wars -- yeah, for a while but then I gave it up.

CS: And I think you said before we started the interview that you hadn't gone to the 1st Marine Division reunion, so you haven't belonged to any of those organizations since then?

BT: No.

CS: Just ready to let it go.

BT: I made several trips up to Arkansas and Tennessee to see them old buddies, but --

CS: Were they mostly from your squad, your platoon --

BT: Yes, my own --

CS: Your own squad, yeah.

BT: And this boy in Arkansas, he had sugar diabetes and died. And this man in Tennessee is still living, the [one and only?] still living. All the rest of them had -- good friends. Lots of them I left over there.

CS: Yeah. Well Mr. Tarver, I think that this has been a very fascinating story. I appreciate your time with us and I think we'll go ahead and wrap up the interview here unless you have anything further you'd like to add to it?

BT: I don't know, unless you know of something you might want to ask me.

CS: You've done a great job. I think you've covered all the bases.

BT: Well let me tell you this, going back to my first arrival in Pavuvu, which was a jungle island, and it was about a half coconut plantation, about half jungle, a little humid. And about the second night they put me on guard duty down at the edge of the jungle and I was approximately 25, 30 yards from the next man, you know? I was down there about three o'clock that morning walking guard duty, scared, that

second night there in that jungle. And I was walking along; I was sleepy. And something squawked at me. (makes squawking noise) And I liked to come unglued. (laughter) I didn't get to sleep the rest of that night. It was one little jungle bird. (laughter)

CS: Oh, that must have been pretty scary. Well, that's very good. Well, thank you sir, and I'll go ahead and we'll shut her down here now.

END OF AUDIO FILE