

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Burnes R. "B.R." Whitehead  
Athens, Texas  
July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Driver  
Headquarters Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division  
Tarawa, Saipan

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is July the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011. I am interviewing Mr. Burnes R. "B.R." Whitehead by telephone. His phone number is 903-677-1695. His address is 703 E. Corsicana Street, Apartment 456, Athens, TX 75751. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Nimitz Center for Research and Education, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

B.R., 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. Whitehead:

Okay, I appreciate it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum. If you were in person you could read it, but let me read this to you.

"Agreement read."

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. There's one thing I want to clarify here, now. I got a letter here the other day from somebody, some country, they wanted me to – they knew all about me - where I'd been – and they even mentioned down here at Fredericksburg. Then at the top of the letter, it said, "Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian." "I would sure like for you to send me a picture with your signature." Well, you know, that ain't gonna to happen. This fool said he was a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, and I knew that was a damn lie because he had a funny name and lived in some other country. He wasn't in no Marine Corps. I know it's a con game, but if there's anything like that in this participation, well, I won't be giving that out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No sir, there's nothing like that in this.

Mr. Whitehead:

I'm just mentioning it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

There's no charge. We don't charge you anything. Everything we do is provided to our veterans free.

Mr. Whitehead:

You know what they wanted to do here about thirty-five miles from here, they called me a year or two ago wanted me to come over to Tyler. They wanted to make a documentary about where I'd been and everything, and they said, "Well, you have to come over here." I said, "No, that won't happen." They wanted me to spend, you know, that ain't going to happen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The next thing I need to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road, we try to get back in contact with a veteran he's moved or something. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact to find you if we needed to?

Mr. Whitehead:

Kathy Roberts.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her, an address?

Mr. Whitehead:

Here's the address: 2841 Sundown Drive, Kaufman, TX 75142.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number?

Mr. Whitehead:

214-384-8881.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you. I hope we never need it, but you never know.

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, that's right. You never know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. Whitehead:

04/17/24.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Whitehead:

San Augustine, Texas

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Whitehead:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You grew up during the Depression; how did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Whitehead:

It wasn't very good. In fact it was terrible. What I'd seen as a young kid: people having to scrape, to beat hell just to try to eat something, whatever. It was not good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Whitehead:

I had a stepfather. My father, I never did see that lousy son of a bitch for I don't know how long.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your stepfather's occupation?

Mr. Whitehead:

He was a carpenter and a contractor and he'd done – where you play basketball...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Arenas and things like that. Gymnasiums.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, he put the flooring in back in them days, and it was a tough job. That life was pretty tough.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you live in town or in the country?

Mr. Whitehead:

We lived in Dallas and right out of Dallas about fifteen, twenty miles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a garden?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. Gosh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any chickens or anything like that?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah. Yeah, had chickens and pigeons.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about a milk cow?

Mr. Whitehead:

Had a milk cow, also, in town.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you had a way to get something to eat, then.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, yeah, we did. We was poorer than a snake, but we did scratch around and have something to eat, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you didn't have any brothers or sisters, then.

Mr. Whitehead:

No, didn't have any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Whitehead:

I went to Mesquite High School and then I went to Corsey Tech in Dallas, too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you finish high school?

Mr. Whitehead:

I didn't. I dropped out and got in the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your last year of school?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, it was '40, I think. I was working also at the time for Western Union and Postal Telegraph, too, delivering telegrams on bicycle.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you get paid for doing that?

Mr. Whitehead:

We got paid for so many – I think it was how many telegrams you delivered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How much could you make a day?

Mr. Whitehead:

I can't remember that. It wasn't much, let me tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably less than a dollar.

Mr. Whitehead:

Seems to me we made a little more. It just depended on how fast you could do it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go in to the Marine Corps?

Mr. Whitehead:

July the 10<sup>th</sup>, '41.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Marine Corps?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, there was seven of us joined at the same time. We all knew one another, and we all come back. I was the only one that got wounded.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you pick out the Marine Corps to go to?

Mr. Whitehead:

I got out of jail on the 10<sup>th</sup> and walked down about two blocks, there was a sign there: "Join the Marine Corps," so that's what I done. I lied about my age.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were seventeen though, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. Well, there was three of us in a Model A Ford, about three o'clock in the morning we run out of gasoline. We tried to use one of them "Oklahoma credit cards" and it didn't work out. We got caught. Do you know what that is?

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, what is an "Oklahoma credit card"?

Mr. Whitehead:

That's a gas can and a siphon hose.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that why you were in jail?

Mr. Whitehead:

That's right. They kept us overnight, fed us some biscuits and syrup the next morning. Juvenile detention.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you had just turned seventeen in April, then. You told them you were eighteen or what did you do?



Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And they didn't question it?

Mr. Whitehead:

No, they didn't question it at the time, but I got caught after I was in the Marine Corps about two or three weeks. They pulled me in there and said they was going to have to send me home. They said, "There's one way: if you can get letter signed by your mother." So, they wrote her and she signed it and sent it. She didn't want me back, have to feed me, you know. (laughing) So I got to stay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your boot camp?

Mr. Whitehead:

San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel out there?

Mr. Whitehead:

We went by train to get there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip?

Mr. Whitehead:

It was great. It was something else, really. Had a stop at El Paso and then from then on to... it seemed to me like we come in to San Francisco or up there somewhere and then we come down the coast by train. I don't remember now exactly how that worked, but it seemed to me like boy it was a nice trip down through the orange groves – my introduction into California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a place to sleep on that train?

Mr. Whitehead:

You know, I don't think so. I don't think so. I can't remember that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did that trip take?

Mr. Whitehead:

Let's see, we left one day... it was all in the *Dallas Morning News*, too. I've still got that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Because seven of you joined at one time?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, and we all come back on leave at the same time because we all went to boot camp at the same time. We got back here and they took a picture of us when we was leaving to go back. That's all in the *Dallas Morning News*.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on that trip out there, had you been that far from home before?

Mr. Whitehead:

Nope.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was quite an adventure for you, then, huh?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, it sure was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about your boot camp. What all happened there?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, it was really tough. We had a Sergeant there, he was Asiatic Fleet Champion, he whooped everybody in the Navy and the Marine Corps, too. Every Wednesday, he'd fall you out and there was four boxing gloves – we'd form a ring, and everybody got a glove and I was right handed and I got the left-handed glove every week for thirteen weeks and got the hell knocked out of me for thirteen weeks. I never got a right-handed glove.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had to use just one hand, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh, he put your other hand back behind you and zipped that web belt up tight. You couldn't get it out of there. This guy was something else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He's the one you fought, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

No, we fought four of is there at once.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I see, you fought each other.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. If you knocked one another down, well that was a hit and then somebody else get the glove.

Everybody knocked the hell out of one another.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you did that once a week?

Mr. Whitehead:

Every Wednesday. It's called "Grab Ass Week."

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened in boot camp?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, at two or three o'clock in the morning, he'd wake you up, get your bunkmate up, put your locker up on your bunk, grab your bucket, and he'd run you all the way out to the beach towards Coronado Island and fill that bucket up with sand, run back, and throw it on the barracks floor.

Then, you do that twice and then you'd scoop it all up, brush it up, and take it back out there and put it in the same spot.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use that sand to clean the floor or anything?

Mr. Whitehead:

Obviously that's what he had in mind. Of course, we cleaned 'til daylight then and we would fall in and went to eat. This was common.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Every day or how often would you do that?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh we done it a couple of times on that deal, but he'd bring us out to the rifle range in La Jolla, California. He brought us out one morning about the same time and run us 'til daylight. We was celebrating the birth of his child. He had a jug of booze in each hand and we the rifle at port and we run. He was something else, this guy. He done me a favor anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that?

Mr. Whitehead:

Made me somebody that – stronger.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Got you in good shape.

Mr. Whitehead:

He sure did. I weighed 120 when I went in. I was in there two weeks and weighed 110 but I was hard as a brick. I gained it back. The chow was good. What do you think the salary was for a Private 1941?

Mr. Misenhimer:

\$21 a month?

Mr. Whitehead:

No, 18. Same was it was in World War I, what they told me. \$18. That's living it up, ain't it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course you had room and board provided.

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah and I had \$8 of it went to an insurance policy. They conned me in to that. Of course I never used it, luckily.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you only got \$15 then, whatever it was?

Mr. Whitehead:

I got 10. I had spending money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would a meal cost you at a restaurant back in those days?

Mr. Whitehead:

We didn't go to no restaurants that I know of. I might have got some chips or a hamburger or a hotdog on the corner or something, but I never did – I can't recall ever going into a restaurant and eating there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hamburgers were what a nickel or a dime?

Mr. Whitehead:

Very little, yeah. In New Zealand we had fish and chips on the corner and I did eat there, though. Of course we were on Guadalcanal a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Nickel hamburgers, right.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yes sir. I can remember, heck, if you went downtown Dallas like on a Saturday, we'd walk all the way down there, me and another old boy, and if we had a dime we could get in to see a show. If we had another nickel, we could get a big malt. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back in your boot camp did you have any weapons training?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah, we had the '03.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Springfield '03 on the rifle range.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, the rifle range. You had to disassemble that sucker and sleep with it and everything else before we ever went to the rifle range.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have bayonet training?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah. A lot of exercise with it every morning.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about hand grenades?

Mr. Whitehead:

We had that, too. We had the hand grenades. We had it all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you live in there?

Mr. Whitehead:

When I got there, they had just built some barracks and we got the barracks. There was tents there, but we got the barracks. That was good. Then Randolph Scott was making *Halls of Montezuma* there. It was something to see, but I've never seen that show on these old repeat things. Him and Maxie Rosenbloom. Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened in boot camp?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, other than having to trot all over the country, I was in the machine gun company and we force marched to – that was after boot camp when we were at Camp Elliot and had to go pull them damn water-cooled machine guns on a cart all over I guess you'd call that northwestern California for two weeks. That was after I got out of boot camp.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were at Camp Elliot there, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, that's, I think, thirty-something miles east of San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In that same area, right. Anything else you recall from your time in boot camp?

Mr. Whitehead:

Pearl Harbor was hit. A friend of ours from Dallas, I found out that he was living in LA and I got ahold of him - me and another boy got ahold of him some way - and we hitchhiked up to LA. He had a car. We were out fooling around, pulled in the filling station about three o'clock in the morning, this guy said, "Y'all better get back to base." That's when I found out Pearl Harbor had been attacked. I didn't go back until my seventy-two hours were up. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard about Pearl Harbor, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Whitehead:

I didn't have no idea at the time, but boy, when I got back to the barracks I found out - we was on these dang beaches all the way up and down the coast, a different spot every night with a water-cooled machine gun waiting for the Japanese, can you believe that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, they thought they were going to land, that's right.

Mr. Whitehead:

That water-cooled machine gun would have really stopped them, wouldn't it? (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's .30 caliber, right?

Mr. Whitehead:



Yup. We had them dang things when we went to Guadalcanal. We didn't have none of that air-cooled stuff. It was all water-cooled.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They called that the heavy machine gun.

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, it might have been. It was .30 caliber, though.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They call the air-cooled the light and the water-cooled the heavy.

Mr. Whitehead:

I got out of that machine gun company as soon as I could and got in the Headquarters Company.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let's go back. When you finished boot camp then you went to machine gun school, is that right?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. I was in there and when one morning they fell us out, see they were just forming the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, they only had one marine division and they were over in Iceland and scattered all over the world. They were forming the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division at Camp Elliot. They fell us out one morning and said, "You, you, you, and you are replacements to Peking, China." So we boarded a ship, went up to Espiritu Santo and took on oil, from there we went up to Pier 40 at San Francisco and tied up. We were there about, heck, I guess two weeks and all that stuff happened over there at Japan and Corregider and wherever, all that – when the English got in to with the Japs and they took us back to San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

This was after Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you say Espiritu Santo, where is that?

Mr. Whitehead:

That's California. Espiritu Santo. That's just up the coast, well it's about halfway between San Francisco and San Diego. I don't know that we took on – they said it took on oil. By the way, back then now, that's all Merchant Marine stuff, they were just a scow. That was the nastiest dang thing you ever seen. That's all we had. We didn't have nothing. The Japanese didn't either, good thing, too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get in to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, it was formed after we got back there and finally they formed it up. We were there until either May or June when we left the submarine base there in San Diego and they put an old Merchant Marine ship, had five holes on it. *USS Alhena*. Good thing they put them 22mms on there. When we got to Guadalcanal – them boys practiced all the way over there, the Merchant Marines – there was 103 Marines and 110-or-12 Navy personnel on that ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you left in May or June of what year?

Mr. Whitehead:

'42. We hit August the 7<sup>th</sup> of '42 at Guadalcanal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where you in the invasion on August the 7<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. Sure was. Sat right up on – my battle station was on top of a stack of the *USS Alhena* with twin Lewis guns and you could get off three rounds and it'd jam. The Japanese come in there as we were in the convoy coming in to the harbor, well, the Japanese come in with some Betty Bombers, two motor Betty Bombers. One of them turned right towards us. That old Navy boy, he shot him down just before he got to us, and damn good thing 'cause we had hundred-octane gasoline all around the deck of that ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you land on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Whitehead:

Didn't land there. My outfit went ashore at Tulagi across the bay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What regiment were you in?

Mr. Whitehead:

2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Headquarters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Headquarters Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>, that's what they call it. Now they diverted us. We didn't even get to go ashore.

Headquarters Company, we wound up in Espirtu Santo in New Hebrides. We were there for a long time. That's where I got malaria.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you didn't land on Guadalcanal or Tulagi, either one, then?

Mr. Whitehead:

Nope, I didn't go ashore there at all. I was lucky as hell I didn't do it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did any of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division land there?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah, we all landed... the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division hit Guadalcanal, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine – see we only a had a regiment, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines, we reinforced the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines. I don't know where the rest of them was; I don't think they was formed yet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were just getting put together, right.

Mr. Whitehead:

The 5<sup>th</sup> Marines from the 1<sup>st</sup> Division and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division – 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment – took Tulagi. The rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division went on to Guadalcanal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think it was the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Regiments in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division.

Mr. Whitehead:

You got me now 'cause we went on, I don't know why, Espiritu Santo, but we did. Headquarters Company, I guess, is the reason.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do in Headquarters Company?

Mr. Whitehead:

I was a driver.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't have the machine guns anymore.

Mr. Whitehead:

No. Had a sidearm and my old rifle and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you drive?

Mr. Whitehead:

Anything they needed to operate, but we only had, at that particular time, Jeeps. I don't think we had but one or two of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You would drive the officers around or what did you do?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah or anything else that you needed to do. Most of the time we stayed there on the island.

Nothing to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were conditions like on Espiritu Santo?

Mr. Whitehead:

It was pretty bad. Nothing but Tonganese people there and it's French-controlled. They had some French policemen or something like that, but hell, they sunk the *Wasp* and all those survivors come over there. We helped unload them and get them and get them put in a – they had a hospital set up there, too, the Navy did. I was in the hospital there with malaria. Ship come in there at the channel and the damn captain wouldn't wait on the pilot to come out there cause it's zig-zagged with nets for submarines, and he hit one of them mines. It was one of them president liners, too, with soldiers on it. And looking straight at it – we was right up there looking at it. It looked like a bunch of ants trying to get off that damn thing. They lost a bunch of them right there, four miles deep.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the name of that ship? The *President* what? (**It was the SS *President Coolidge***)

Mr. Whitehead:

I don't have no idea what the name of it was right now, but it was a presidential liner and he got his butt kicked about it, too, and he should have.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He beached the ship though, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

He tried to beach it, he run against the reef, and hell there wasn't no beach there. It just went backwards right straight down. I was looking right at it, and he shook the island when he hit it, too. We were up real high in that naval hospital and boy them guys come off there trying to get off that ship looked like ants crawling off of something big. A terrible thing. Terrible, terrible.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you get malaria?

Mr. Whitehead:

Mosquito.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you get that?

Mr. Whitehead:

I've got no idea. I doubt if there's any record on it. I know the last attack I had was '86, a real bad one, was here. I had it ... I have no idea. We got there around the 8<sup>th</sup> day – August the 8<sup>th</sup> – and I was there maybe a week or two before I got... hell, damn near all of us got malaria.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So it would have been August of '42 you got it.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened? How long did you stay on Espiritu Santo?

Mr. Whitehead:

We stayed there until... I think it was either November or December we went to New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel to New Zealand?

Mr. Whitehead:

Ship. They loaded us up and took us over to Wellington, New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do there?

Mr. Whitehead:

When we first started unloading the ship, a guy come up with one of them things of ice cream. We dove in that sucker and took it all. He's screaming and hollering and the Captain come by and told this guy, "Don't worry about it," said, "We'll pay for it. We'll pay for it." He left and the guy come along there with a small milk truck, we inhaled a whole truck with canteens. That guy come back with our ice cream wagon, we got that, too. (laughing) I laughed about that a bunch of times, but that was something else. That old boy was screaming and hollering. You know, they're English.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand that the longshoremen were on strike in New Zealand part of the time. Did you have to unload your own ships?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah, we unloaded our own ship I didn't know nothing about no longshoremen. That's the first I heard of that. Unloaded it and went to Paekakariki; put us on a train and took us out there. You

know, I don't think it was a train, I think we trucked out there. Thirty-eight miles, I think it was, thirty-something.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do there?

Mr. Whitehead:

Made camp. Camp Tarawa is right there now. Paekakariki, New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you live in tents there or what?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, we lived in four-man tents. They were built up toward the side of a mountain, hill or whatever. They formed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Raider Battalion there. I didn't have to do that because I was in Headquarters Company, thank goodness.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were still in the 2-2, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. Artie Shaw come there one night. (laughing) All them boys that I was there with, damn near all of them, got it. Some of that was really... we had one old boy from Philadelphia, he drank one beer and he would just start shaking like the dickens. We'd have to cover him up. Quinine and Atabrin was all we had. That's all we could do. It's a wonder he didn't die.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got to this camp out there, what all did you do there?

Mr. Whitehead:



Well, everybody trained and that was all we done. Inspection, eating. We hadn't had no good food for a long time, but boy we had it there. Go on liberty to Wellington. Practice early in the morning and during the night and every other time. Something else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had they formed the whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division now?

Mr. Whitehead:

I guess they had because we went to Tarawa from there and that was the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Raiders was along, Colonel Carlson. I'm the only survivor out of a Higgins boat. I worked my way over to the pier and there was a Marine underneath the end of the pier there cutting the ring off of a dead Marine's body. I started to shoot the son of a bitch, but I didn't do it. I got to thinking we might need everybody that we could get ahold of. I got up on the pier and there was old Colonel Carlson, he was laying up there, too. Me and him crawled all the way up there – 850 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

November the 20<sup>th</sup> of '43 is when they landed on Tarawa, is that right?

Mr. Whitehead:

I can tell you exactly. It was the 20<sup>th</sup> day, yeah I'm sure that it's. I'm trying to get back to this right here. We were there for three nights and four days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you were the only survivor from a Higgins boat?

Mr. Whitehead:

As far as I know I was. I never seen them no more.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened? Did it get hit?

Mr. Whitehead:

We got hung up on a reef; misfigured the tide, of course. Something's going to happen in these wars, I don't care what happens, something's going to happen. We got hung up and a mortar hit us. I got shrapnel in my arm. That's all that happened to me. I was on the front of the gate, ramp, right in front of it. Of course the ramp didn't go down, I had to go up over the side to get out of there. I was in water up to my neck 'til I got over to the end of that pier. I was damn near off the reef, actually. I don't know why they misfigured that dadgum tide but they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They had a real problem with that there: the boats hanging up on that reef.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you on Tarawa?

Mr. Whitehead:

We were there three nights and four days. The fourth day we left.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had the fighting pretty well stopped by then?

Mr. Whitehead:

We stopped at – let's see, we were out there at the big pillbox... yeah, we done had it stopped by then. Killed everybody there, damn near four thousand something.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of the Japanese.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened on Tarawa?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, I fell in a pillbox on top of a Jap, but that's another story. I don't like to fool with nothing like that, it's just something that happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You fell in to the pillbox, huh?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, that's what it was. It was a little old pillbox right off Headquarters Company. One friend of mine there, he was in Headquarters Company, he got hit in the helmet, but it bounced off pretty good but it went through – a hole in his helmet and I've got a picture up here of his helmet when he got back to the States he showed it. Made a picture of it and I still got it hanging on the wall here.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He lived, then, huh?

Mr. Whitehead:

He lived down in Del Rio, I think. He was a Vice-President of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division Association for a while or Chaplain or Sergeant-at-Arms or something, but he passed away. Kent was his name.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the other six people that went in with you, what happened to them?

Mr. Whitehead:

I'm probably the only one still left alive that I know of. I don't know... one of them I know he drank himself to death. One of them moved to Florida and I don't have any contact with him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they stay in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines with you or did they go to different outfits?

Mr. Whitehead:

They were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, yeah, different companies. I haven't seen them or nothing - no contact at all in years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened on Tarawa?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, as we was disembarking, walking, we was lined up going out on the end of the pier, that's where we got on the ship, and we was getting in Higgins boats, rather. Just as you turned off the island to get on the pier, which was dirt, that damn Jap was buried there in a barrel upside down and he shot an old boy in the leg. He just shot out of the end of there, you know, and that guy would be standing there. We told everything in the world to that goose and could never get him out, we finally got an interpreter. We put incendiary hand grenades down in there and he had this barrel upside down. We got him out of there, finally, he was burnt all to hell but he come out with an interpreter. Then getting on the Higgins boat I was so weak I couldn't make it to the top on that cargo net. I got damn near up there, couldn't go no further, and I locked my arms in there hoping I would get enough strength. Finally, an old boy, Navy guy, reached down there with one of them long poles with a hook on it, got ahold of the pack on my back and he encouraged me and got me up there. That's the second one of them sailors that saved my ass.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the first one?

Mr. Whitehead:

When he shot that Betty Bomber down. I heard he got the Silver Star for that or the Navy Cross or something, I heard. He couldn't have got the Navy Cross he was a Merchant Marine. I don't know what he got. I heard it was pretty good, though. He should have got it. I watched both those Japanese fall over on instruments. I was looking right at them. I'm sitting here looking at my television, it's not on, but it was just as plain as looking at them. That was real early in the morning 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you left Tarawa where did you go?

Mr. Whitehead:

Went to the, big island of Hawaii, and lived up on the Parker Ranch up by that volcano that's been giving them so much hell. It was dormant when we were there. We were there six months getting replacements.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What do they call that camp up there? Was that Camp Tarawa?

Mr. Whitehead:

I believe that's Camp Tarawa. What the hell do they call that thing over there at New Zealand. It wasn't Camp Tarawa, it was Camp something else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think that's on the big island of Hawaii.

Mr. Whitehead:

The name Tarawa was at Parker Ranch there at Hawaii on the big island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many people did you all lose on Tarawa?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, we showed to be thirty-something hundred wounded and dead. I had heard that we lost 1026.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yup.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that the only Marine division that landed there?

Mr. Whitehead:

That's the only one that I know of other than the Raiders.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Carlson's Raiders.

Mr. Whitehead:

Carlson's Raiders. You know, Elliott Roosevelt was Captain there. (*Actually, it was James. Elliott was in the Air Force*) They went in ahead of everybody there at Tarawa. I don't know why in the hell he was up there on that pier but he was. Nice guy. He said, "It's kinda hot out here in this sun," and it was damn hot (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there in Hawaii?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, let's see, we trained on gas and we trained on hand grenades and rested, just about. Had a little liberty there, which was nothing. Wasn't nothing there. From there we went to Saipan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you still in the Headquarters Company?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah. Captain McPherson. He was an undertaker in Los Angeles by trade.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you left there to go to Saipan?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about Saipan.

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, we landed there, it seemed to me like in June.

Mr. Misenhimer:

June 15<sup>th</sup> of 1944.

Mr. Whitehead:

Something like that. I wasn't in the first wave or second wave, but we were pretty close to it, though. There was quite a few things that happened. One boy found a Jap there and he had a ring on from his brother that got killed in Guam so he shot him. Captain told him to take him over and put him in the brig – they rigged up a little old brig right there pretty close to the beach – but he didn't make it that far.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What wave did you land in there?

Mr. Whitehead:

Heck, they had done took part of the beach. We had about two or three hundred yards of the beach by that time – by the time we got there. Headquarters Company is always with the Commander and at Tarawa was Howlin' Mad Smith, we protected him. He wasn't there at Saipan that I know of. If he did, I didn't see him. While we was taking Saipan, the capital of that bunch of islands is

Garapan, and that was a pretty tough deal there – street fighting in that damn Garapan. I didn't have to do it, thank goodness.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were you doing in the Headquarters Company then?

Mr. Whitehead:

I was still a driver. Corporal. By the way, we finally got up on top of the mountain there at Garapan and we set up the water-cooled machine gun there at Headquarters and we got word that civilians were coming up to the top of this – it's the highest point on the island – coming up this road that you could over look Garapan with it from the top of there, and they were coming up there to give up. Turned out that they were Japanese dressed as civilians. They can hide these sabers, something else, anyway we had that water-cooled machine gun and every third round's a tracer you could see it go in to them. They charged, had no chance. We cut them down, and hell, I crawled over to get that saber but I was fourth out. I wish I could have got that saber. My Gunnery Sergeant got killed there that day. A friend of mine Federoski, he got shot through the neck.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were carrying your friend – where did you carry him to?

Mr. Whitehead:

I carried him to our bivouac area to try and get – and then a Corpsman took him to the – they set up a first aid place quite a ways away towards – but they took him down there in the Jeep. It had a litter thing where you could lay him down. Anyway, Gus Bloomenshine, my Gunnery Sergeant, he got shot right through the heart. Boy what a hole. One of the finest men I ever knew, but anyway, I made a stupid move. I charged in there and got shot myself.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you get shot at?



Mr. Whitehead:

Right shoulder and come out – it crushed my right arm. I had my rifle, my elbow bent back and had my rifle in there when I fired. I shot the Jap and he shot me in the right shoulder. When that round went through my shoulder, it come out the back of my arm and it shattered that sucker. It was really bad. They told me in Hawaii that I would never use it again, well they lied. I told them I wasn't going to be without my arm. It took me a long time to get it back, but I got it back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got wounded, then what happened?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, let's see, I got wounded and then they put me on that stretcher and carried me down where they put a cast on me and put me on a plane. Another Gunner Sergeant, an old China Marine – when they stopped at the Marshall Islands to fuel up and he was in the bunk next to me, they had a hospital there, and gangrene had got in to his rear end. He was shot right through the cheeks of his butt while he was trying to get through some barbed wire. Anyway, he was out of his head and he was trying to make the nurse – and I'm over there with this damn cast on laughing myself to death – I don't know whatever happened to him. I don't guess he made it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you on the plane at this point or were you in the hospital there?

Mr. Whitehead:

In the hospital at the Marshall Islands. Fueled up there and then put you back on another plane or the same plane, I forget, and flew us on in to Pearl Harbor to Hickam Field, the hospital there. Are you familiar with that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah I am, right. So there in the Marshalls they took you off the plane to the hospital and then back on the plane, right?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened there when you got to Hickam Field?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, of course they took us in the hospital and they took an x-ray of my arm and showed it to me after a day or two. I still had the cast on. This doctor says, "Son, you'll never use this arm." You wouldn't believe the way it was shattered so. The big bone in your arm, from the elbow up, it was hit right in the middle. Man it was in a million pieces in the picture. He says, "You got one chance. I'll get you a rubber ball." He got me a rubber ball. I couldn't even move not one of my fingers. Not a one. He put a cast on my right arm where it was away from my shoulder and I could lean over with a sling and let it – I kept doing that and you wouldn't believe it, but my dadgum finger, I could move my little finger. Then I got this ball, they put me on a ship to San Francisco, and by the time I got to San Francisco that cast had got tight on my elbow and it was killing me. That nurse said - as soon as I got over there, they took us over the Oakland Bay Bridge, I said "You get me a doctor right now. I've got to cut this off." She said, "Why you won't see a doctor for two or three days." "That's good, I'll just go wash it off." I got these Marines in there and we got in the shower and washed the damn thing off. I had hell straightening my arm out, but here come the doctor then after me. He said, "You can't do that." I said, "Get your goddamn ass out of here, we're going to do it." Of course, he left damn quick. After what I'd been through thirty months in the South Pacific, you know, he wasn't going to help me, uh-huh. That's bad news. After I was there about –

it wasn't long, about a week, they took me to Seattle on a train. Stayed up there I guess a month. Then I got thirty-day leave from there on to Quantico.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got in the shower, did you get the cast off of your arm, is that what you did?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, I washed it off. Made a pretty good mess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It wasn't plaster?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. It was field dressed, you know. It was good enough to hold your arm, but I got where I could squeeze that ball and my arm, it got big, especially at the elbow. Oh man, it was terrible. I'd asked her, "All I wanted to do was cut a hole in it." "No, no you can't do that. You can't see the doctor." So, hell, you can't be in misery like that, it's not good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well I spent nine months in Quantico, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In hospitals or what?

Mr. Whitehead:

No, I was out of the hospital. By the way, I went from – well, I was in the hospital in Tennessee for a while. Then from there on to – I got there in December. It was snowing in Quantico.

Mr. Misenhimer:

December of '44.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. I think it was. Of course I was there until I was discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You weren't in the hospital there, though.

Mr. Whitehead:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was your arm healing or how was your arm doing?

Mr. Whitehead:

It done good. I went right on in to motor transit. They put me in motor transport. First they put me where there was a water-treatment plant right out of Quantico, I was on guard duty there for four-on, four-off for a while. Then I put in for a transfer and got back to motor transport there on the base – Quantico.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You could use your right arm good enough to drive with.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. You know, the Marine Corps really done me a disservice there, though. They never gave me a Purple Heart until I got out of the Marine Corps and they mailed the damn thing to me. I bitched about it. I didn't think that was right. I won't think it's right next time, either.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you wounded once or twice?

Mr. Whitehead:

I was wounded twice, but they never did turn it in – when I got to the ship, the Corpsman took all the information and I had the shrapnel in my left arm. It come out in 1949. I never did fool with it

no more, the hell with it, that's all right. I had a friend of mine take it out. I pinched it. I couldn't get it out myself, and there was a piece in there about as big as the end of your little finger.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was in your left arm?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, and it worked down toward my elbow and when it surfaced, I scratched it and pinched it up and it pooched out so I got this guy, he was a yardmaster, I was working for the railroad and he was the yardmaster, and it was dark and I asked him to take this out and he fainted. (laughing) He'd never seen anything like that, I guess. I don't know what the hell happened to him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When were you discharged then?

Mr. Whitehead:

I think it was November of '45. Didn't the war stop in September?

Mr. Misenhimer:

September 2<sup>nd</sup> was the ceremony when they...

Mr. Whitehead:

I thought it was the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Misenhimer:

August 15<sup>th</sup> was when Japan surrendered.

Mr. Whitehead:

It might have been in October. I'd have to look on my discharge. I don't know. I could have stayed in. They wanted to make me a Gunnery Sergeant, and I said, "No, I'm going to get out."

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Whitehead:

I was still a Corporal. I left a Corporal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get where you could use your arm again?

Mr. Whitehead:

Obviously, by the time I got to Quantico they put me on sick leave there about two weeks, but heck I could use it. I spent thirty years on the railroad and I started out as a brakeman. That's climbing boxcars. I can't do it now. I have to take my left arm, pick my right up, put it on top of my head. It got worse. It's been giving me a lot of hell. That goes along with it, though. Talking to you about this stuff, there's no way you can cover it all because there ain't no way. You have to live it. No way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from what happened on Saipan?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah. I watched that banzai attack on Saipan. What they done. They pulled the Marines back to the – they had the Japs pushed all the way to the end of the island, and that area down there at Garapan's flat. Where we was – we was up on top of the mountain looking down there. When the attack started, the Japanese had guns in front and sabers and hoes and whatever they could fight with. The Army had took over the Marines' position and they come right through them. Anyway, that's when I was telling you about them people coming up there and the banzai attack. We got rid of them. Anyway, a good friend of mine there, he went to Boston College, he went through boot camp with me, and he was a catcher. Boston College baseball and he was one big, strong guy. One night there on Saipan his hair turned white. He never smoked and I never will forget the last time

I'd seen him, he was sitting on a can puffing a cigarette, mumbling to himself, and his hair was white. One night. One night. That was really impressive to me. I never have forgot that fellow.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand on Saipan a lot of the civilians committed suicide by jumping off the cliffs, is that right?

Mr. Whitehead:

They sure did. Yeah, I saw some of that, too. I got bit there one night. We got under mortar attack on top of that mountain still before we ever made bivouac, we had to dig in right at dusk. You can't dig in far on coral. Anyway, something bit me or stung me or something on my left knee. I couldn't holler at the Corpsman, I couldn't light a light to see what the hell it was. I had to take my knife and cut my pants loose – I had on loose dungarees and it swelled up so bad it was that tight on my knee. Let me tell you, it was miserable the next morning. The damn thing was down and the Corpsman or nobody could find out if I was even bit or stung or nothing. Isn't that something?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah that is.

Mr. Whitehead:

I thought I was going to die. I just knew I was. I didn't know what the hell was going on. Brother, that was something.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You never did know what it was, huh?

Mr. Whitehead:

Never did know. It come out of that damn coral somewhere. I'm sitting here with a book in front of me. It's called *The 2nd Marine Division - Follow Me*, you ever seen it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

No I haven't.

Mr. Whitehead:

That's the story of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division in World War II by Richard W. Johnston. This book was written and passed out in 1948, sent to all 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine people. It's quite something. Along with it come Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., December 15, 1948 and this is C.B. Gates, General, U.S. Marine Corps, Commandant of the Marine Corps. And this letter came along with this book to everybody. It's the whole thing on the Marines starting up and through the Belleau Wood, the whole bit, and then this book on Guadalcanal and where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines have been. Of course I lost – I didn't get to go everywhere – they went on to Japan, you know. A lot of people don't realize, I don't know whether you know it or not, but we didn't have nothing. Damned old wrap leggings and that helmet that was flat across the top. Old World War I stuff and we went to Guadalcanal and the Japanese didn't have nothing either. It's a damn good thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course you used the Springfield '03 on Guadalcanal, too.

Mr. Whitehead:

That's what I meant. They had a .31 caliber and a .25 caliber. That's it and a bunch of fish heads and rice.

*Follow Me: The Story of the Second Marine Division in World War II* by Richard W. Johnston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

*Follow Me* is the name of it, huh?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, *Follow Me*. And it's printed with Random House. That's it as far as I can see here. More stuff here about some writings and Marines done over the time. (laughing) Some of it's pretty darn good. If you had a mailing address I could get some copies and send it to you. "Beside the Trail,"



it's dedicated to the boys who fell on Guadalcanal by Robert N. Herriot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Raider Battalion. You know, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Raiders went to Guadalcanal ahead of everybody.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Whitehead:

As far as I'm concerned, we always had pretty good enough morale. We never did have – we had one Captain that I know they probably killed him at Tarawa, I don't know that, but I heard the scuttlebutt they was going to. Anyway, he was Captain of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion – I don't remember what company, but he gave office hours to “if you could whoop my ass I wouldn't give you nothing” and a platoon sergeant whooped his ass and he put him thirty days pissant punk there at New Zealand. There was a 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant I heard that they were going to do something to him in Saipan so I don't know whether that ever happened or not. I don't know whether the Major ever got anything. War makes very bad people out of you. I don't know what happens, but you'll damn sure turn in to an animal. That's just the way it is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well you have to, to survive.

Mr. Whitehead:

I wonder about that. I know I'd done some thing I don't even want to put down nowhere. I don't know about nobody else, but I've always regretted it. But now, what are you going to do about it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, Navy. That was on Saipan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They opened up for some damn reason. You could see the tracers coming. We got on the beach and dug down in there. We'd already dug in, but I don't know why, but they shut it off. They didn't hit us. If they did, I didn't nobody get hit. It sure looked like it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you say was your most frightening time?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, I'm pretty sure that when that Betty Bomber heading at us, I think that was – I just knew it was over then, and that boy shot it down. I mean close.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your worst day?

Mr. Whitehead:

Probably the day I got shot, I'm pretty sure, 'cause the people that got killed and wounded with me. Probably was. But they knocked me out with that morphine pretty quick so I'm glad they done that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you crossed the equator the first time, did you have any kind of a ceremony?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah. (laughing) Pollywog Day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did they do?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh every damn thing in the world to you. My God. Shocked you and put you through that garbage pit. They saved the damn garbage up for no telling how long. You had to swim through it. It was quite a treat. They mopped you down with syrup and feathers all over you, it was unreal. Just really unreal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you got your shellback card, huh?

Mr. Whitehead:

I got it right here on the wall. *USS Alhena* crossed the equator in 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How do you spell that *Alhena*?

Mr. Whitehead:

A-L-H-E-N-A. Bound southwest for the equator and bound southwest to set the Rising Sun. That's what we did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Whitehead:

Seemed to me like I heard it somewhere. I don't remember now where it was. Heck, that wasn't nothing anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April the 12<sup>th</sup> of '45 President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Whitehead:

I was there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were where?

Mr. Whitehead:

At his funeral.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Roosevelt?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How is that?

Mr. Whitehead:

Downtown Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about being there when Roosevelt died, his funeral, tell me about that.

Mr. Whitehead:

I was downtown there, took a bunch of Marines down there for guard duty there in Washington, D.C. when they paraded him right down the middle of town. I think that was April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He died on April 12<sup>th</sup> so it probably was April 15<sup>th</sup>, right.

Mr. Whitehead:

Seemed to me like it was the 15<sup>th</sup> when we were chasing all that stuff come down through there.

We was all guard dutying. That's about the size of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was a few days after he died, that's right.

Mr. Whitehead:

It could be, I don't remember exactly. I think that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On May the 8<sup>th</sup> of '45 when Germany surrendered, have any kind of a celebration then?

Mr. Whitehead:

I don't remember if I did. Might have. I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about August 15<sup>th</sup> when Japan surrendered?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah, we damn sure were ready for that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you then?

Mr. Whitehead:

I was at Quantico.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where you ever in any typhoons there in the Pacific?

Mr. Whitehead:

We were in one going over there but it wasn't no bad one – towards Guadalcanal. It got pretty rough, but that ship wasn't nothing but a five-holder and my bunk was right by the screw. Brother, when she come up out of the water it would just shake it like hell.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, I don't know, I got stars and some of this damn stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Battle stars, several.

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh yeah. Asiatic-Pacific. I don't know. I've got them all in a case here.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Whitehead:

They've had several of them but I won't go to them because well hell it's too much money. I went to some dinners here for Purple Heart, Prisoner of War guys out here at Barksdale in Shreveport. I've been to some of those dinners.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah. Bought a farm and then I got a divorce and had to sell the damn thing. She didn't want me to have it so I sold it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life when you got out?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, I don't think so. I had a little money left so I didn't do nothing for about ten months and then I got a job at the railroad and that's what I've been doing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you join the 52-20 Club?

Mr. Whitehead:

Oh, the unemployment? Yeah, sure did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say that you've got PTSD now. You've developed PTSD.

Mr. Whitehead:

Yeah, I've been to a number of psychiatrists and this guy that runs it is – he's not a psychiatrist but he's some kind of a specialist that he does it for the VA, he works for the VA. He has an office there in Palestine at the VA outpatient. He does about three of them a day for a bunch of us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Are you getting along okay with or how is it going?

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, it wakes me up at night. It comes in about increments of two hours.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which is it: is it Saipan or Guadalcanal or what is it that you remember?

Mr. Whitehead:

A bunch of stuff that happened. I guess you could call it all of it. It'd be more Tarawa than anything I'm sure. I know I went to that – have you been to that demonstration on Tarawa down at Fredericksburg?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes I have.

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, I was the only 2<sup>nd</sup> World War veteran there in three hundred people. I broke down; I couldn't stand it. I didn't think that would happen to me, but it did. I had a friend with me, and it's a good thing, too. Good thing. There's a road that comes up there out of Garapan on Saipan, it was a dirt road, and it went up right beside that – it ain't nothing but a coral reef, that's all it is, that's stuck up there. I don't know how long that took, but it was a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Whitehead:

I'm glad it's over. (laughing) No, I guess that's about the size of it for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, B.R., well I appreciate your time today and thank you again for your service to our country.

Mr. Whitehead:

Well, I appreciate it. I did the best I can. I'll try to get this to you here. I'll get somebody to take a picture of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'll get you the information on the symposium coming up.

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