

Richard Haw Oral History Interview

EDDIE GRAHAM: This is Eddie Graham. Today, November 9, 2011.

I'm interviewing Dick Haw. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas. 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. Okay, Dick. Tell us, where are you from?

RICHARD HAW: Well, first, my name is Richard Haw, H-A-W. A lot of people call me Haw or Doc, or a few other things maybe not so complimentary. I was born in Davenport, Iowa. My father was William Haw. My mother was Mary Haw, but everyone else called her Marie. So she was Dutch. My father was English. But they made it an amicable pair, and we had a happy, loving home. I had one sister and one brother. The brother is now deceased. And I may bring him up later in the story. He was a sailor also, but didn't experience some of the things that I got myself tangled into. And I went to Davenport High School, and while in high school, I became interested in the ROTC program. And I joined the ROTC. The only requirement for being in ROTC was that you were not in athletics, so that you could not

march when they told you to or stop when they told you to, either. And when I was in high school, I only weighed about 127 anyway, so I didn't think I was going to make much of a football player. And at 5'8", I wasn't going to be much of a basketball player. And so I thought I'd try the ROTC. I liked it. I worked up into it a little bit, so that I was a minor officer in the ROTC. We marched in parades and did the other things that usually the ROTC does. We had to learn to take apart a rifle, of course, put it back together. Those kind of things. And that did come in handy later. Since I was in ROTC, they encouraged us... I was 17 at the time when I enlisted. And they encouraged us to go to summer school and try to get out early and use our ROTC as a bouncing board and perhaps get a little better deal, as far as an assignment or something like that. So this I did. And so as soon as I got enough credits to receive a diploma, I talked my mother into letting me join. I said I was interested in going into the Navy Medical Corps, Hospital Corps now known as the Navy, and into the Hospital Corps and learn what I could. Perhaps go into dentistry or medicine or something like that later on. While it was a hard sell and I had to promise her that I would make an application for hospital corpsman, which I did. Unfortunately, my mother passed

away before I was ever in any contact, service contact with enemy, that is. I worked, went first to Farragut, Idaho, and took my boot camp training there. And then did get as I had applied for and they had promised me, a slot in a class in Hospital Corps School down in San Diego.

EG: Let me ask you one thing. What were you doing? Where were you on December 7, 1941?

RH: I was riding... When I first heard the news, I was riding a streetcar, just on a Sunday afternoon because I had nothing better to do than to ride a streetcar and watch people get on and off and look at the crazy world.

EG: And where was this at?

RH: In Davenport. I'd get a transfer and get onto another streetcar and go up another... We had hills in Davenport, and go up another hill or get onto another end of town. Just ride around. Or if we didn't do that, why, for a nickel, we could get on a ferry and ride the ferry back and forth across the Mississippi all afternoon. Generally, we'd get somebody to go with me. Generally, we'd be nicer if someone you could spark along with, you know.

EG: Continue on with your story.

RH: So Farragut... I was assigned after Farragut. Taking me back to Farragut, yes, my ROTC did help me. I became a square-knot admiral there. That was a platoon leader. And

you wore a little square knot, sewn on the sleeve of your arm. Sometimes got you in the chow hall a little earlier and got me out of some other kinds of duties that others had to do. So I was a squad leader, or platoon leader. And then I also played it smart. I joined the Farragut choir and got out of all guard duty, by joining the choir. And even when I got aboard ship, I thought that was a pretty good idea. I joined the chaplain's choir, and I got out of all loading ship duties. When the ship had to load stores, everybody had to pitch in and get out on the dock. Got a sack of potatoes or crate of oranges and carry them up the gangway.

EG: Let me go back to your basic. Where did you actually do your basic training?

RH: Went to corps school in there, in San Diego, then went to Oak Knoll Hospital for my initial training and spent several months at Oak Knoll, getting some of the basic training. And then went into... From there, they sent me to Shoemaker, to the surgical team in Shoemaker. Shoemaker was a receiving base and also would be the base I knew that I would be shipped out on when the time came. So I was in charge of an operating room there, and we did minor surgery. Anything more serious was sent in to Oakland, to the Oak Knoll Hospital, where they had everything. But we

did minor surgery. The main surgeon we had there happened to be an ENT specialist. And so you'd be surprised how many times we had to do, to relieve some forms of infection [that, going?] behind the ear and scrape the bone and scrape the infection out. And that procedure's no longer used, since we got antibiotics. So I got quite proficient at that particular procedure. It seems as though each doctor you would work with, he was a specialist in something. And so he would find somebody in that vast number -- probably of 20,000 recruits out there, waiting to be shipped out someplace -- he could always find somebody to work from. And so we'd do those for a while, and then we'd have a run of appendix, and then a run of gallbladders. They seemed to run with the doctor's specialty. And one specialty I got into, yes, was OB. And kind of humorous on my part. I had to write back and tell my friends still in high school that I was winning the war burping babies. And they got a kick out of that. They believed me. And by golly, it was the truth that sometimes, I was in the nursery and told to pick up a nurse and burp... Pick up a nurse. I would have liked that. Pick up a baby and throw it over my shoulder, because the nurse on duty or the corps (inaudible) on duty had just brought the baby in from her mother. And so we'd burp

her. But mainly, the surgery I got in on was obstetrical deliveries and difficult ones. And that proved of little value later on in the Philippines, too. So while I was in Shoemaker, I got word that my mother had passed away. And I had a heck of a time getting a pass or a leave of absence to go home. I'm always a little bit bitter at the Red Cross, although I suppose I shouldn't be. But it seems as though the Red Cross wasn't able to find proof that my mother had passed away. And days went by, and finally the American Legion got word of it, and they took it into their hands. And within 12 hours, I had my leave papers. And I had a relative in Oakland, California, a sister of my father. And he was... Her husband was one of the superintendents of the steel mill at Pittsburgh, California. And they always would reserve roomettes for their top men going back and forth across the United States. You had to have... It was hard for civilians to get those kind of things, so they always had a few in reserve. Well, they came out to the base and picked me up and took me to the station. And I thank God for my good uncle there. He was able to get me on a train. You had to wait for tickets, and he had me set up, ready to go. So I went home to my mother's funeral. Came back because some yeoman had made a mistake on my leave papers. He said I

was due back on April 10, let's say, on Friday, April 10. Well, I came back on April 10, which happened to be on a Saturday or something like that. I don't remember the days right now. And I stepped off the bus, and two MPs clamped shackles on my wrist. "What's going on?" "Well, you're AWOL." I said, "No, I'm not. I've got my leave papers right here." "And it says here that you were due Friday. This is Saturday." I says, "Yes, but look further. It says the tenth. That's today." "Oh, we're sorry, Mr. Haw. We'll take you down to your barracks." Well, that didn't go over that smoothly at home. My father was heckled by the FBI and all kinds of people. And printed in the paper that I was an AWOL sailor. And he was a hopping mad Englishman. And so he wrote President Roosevelt at the time, and gave him some good English and told him, "No wonder we're losing the war" -- we were pretty well losing it then -- "if this is the way they were running the Navy." Well, [Forestall?], I think, was the person who wrote him back and apologized, that this had all been a mistake, and it would all be erased from my record and there would be no problem, no further problem. But it did bring my name up in front of, of course, review courts and so on. "Well, how long has he been in the States here now?" "Well, he's been here plenty long." So they assigned me to sea duty.

And the sea duty I got was to be assigned to a beach party training at Camp Pendleton with the 5th Marine Division. We trained pretty much by ourselves, although the 5th Marines, of course, had to be taught how to make landings. And so they and we would learn and make our bumbling errors together. And we got to be a pretty smooth running outfit, I do believe, even if after the war, maybe a couple of the admirals wrote some scathing remarks about how the situation was handled on Iwo Jima. But that's how far ahead they were actually planning Iwo Jima. They would take us to beaches that had loose sand, that had mounds we'd have to crawl over, and so on. And we had all the general training of the Marines. The Marines got to climbing up these walls and getting over in so many seconds, and taking a rope and swinging over the swamp. And I didn't think, as a corpsman, I'd be doing that. But I found out sometimes, it was handy I had it. After we had pretty well met our training, the commander of the beach party that I was on was Commander [Otley?], and his assistant beach master was John Dunn. Commander Otley was a lieutenant commander, but Lieutenant Dunn was a full lieutenant. And very few beach masters had that rank of lieutenant commander. Most of them were, just like John Dunn, were two-strippers. So we found out later that

Commander. Otley had been a very respectable businessman on the East Coast and had quite a good-sized yacht. and he donated that to the Navy for a weather ship. And they gave him a commission. And he was an older man, and we thought he'd never make it with us. But by golly, the old gentleman stuck with us on every landing we made.

Unfortunately, Lieutenant Dunn lost his life on our first invasion. We trained with the 5th Marines further in Hawaii, on the Black Sands Beach. Of course, none of us knew anything about Iwo Jima or Black Sands. We just thought it was an awful waste of our time to be climbing up and skidding back down a steep slope when it really wasn't necessary. There were better beaches to practice on.

Again, we didn't see the full story, or we might have known what was going on. And I remember one time, after

(inaudible) we went on, I think we trained in some other islands, too, besides Oahu, where the Black Sands Beach is.

I remember I... Again, we had made a trial run landing, and I'd gotten in as far as I was to go. And my job was to

(inaudible) a soft, safe place for getting the injured or anybody else off the beach, if we had to get them off, and

mark that area with flags so that the incoming boat crews would know what they were doing. And we were supposed to

dig a foxhole, yes. It wasn't as sandy as what we normally

were on, so I didn't think I had to dig too much. I kind of put my helmet down over my eyes and closed my eyes and was resting in the sun. And all of a sudden, somebody gave me a good kick in the ribs. And I looked up and saw four-stripe [an eagle?]. And this big man looked down at me. He said, "Sonny boy, what are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, sir, I'm on the beach party. And I'm just waiting for this operation to be over to go back aboard ship." He said, "Sonny boy, you keep acting like this, and you ain't never gonna go home and see your mama." And that man was Captain Anderson, a man that was written up in *Saturday Evening Post* one time as being one of the fiercest but most educated men in amphibious warfare that there was. So my encounter with him was I started digging a foxhole real fast. And we had many experiences like that, but I think we got well-trained and were a well-trained team. Well, and shortly before, after we left Hawaii and were told we were heading for Saipan, an inevitable invasion, Commander Otley got us aside and said we were going to have to form an advanced element of the beach party, which would be made up of so many... Two corpsmen, four to six radiomen, two signalmen, some hydrographic sailors. And Lieutenant Dunn would be heading up one crew, and our chief petty officer, who was also killed, would handle the other one.

EG: Now is this after you were aboard ship?

RH: This is after we were aboard ship.

EG: Which ship were you on?

RH: We were put aboard the USS *Hansford*. The shakedown cruises were... I should back up a ways before I get myself overseas. We took over the *Hansford* in August of '44. And took [down on?] a shakedown cruise. And that gave the crew and everybody but the beach party a lot of work to do, because they had to adjust everything, from gun sites to water distillers. I mean, we had to make sure everything was working.

EG: What type of ship was this?

RH: The *Hansford* is an APA.

EG: Stands for?

RH: Assault Personnel Auxiliary. Assault personnel, of course, would be the Marines or Army. And the auxiliary would be that we would take auxiliary supplies in, equipment, personnel, anything else that was in there (inaudible). So the APA 106 was to be my home. And [whether?] we took aboard the group that was going to be with us or we were going to be with them, which was Company A of the 27th Battalion. And what else did we add to that? A 127, anyway, of the Marine Corps. And we got to know them pretty well. We would [guff?] around with them at various

times of the day when we were free. We were told then that we would be going to Iwo Jima. And Commander Otley then came down and explained to us, in one of our learning sessions, that we would be divided up into these two groups. There were 49 of us in the beach party. My wife thought, when she first found out I was in the Navy, I was in beach party, that I was going ashore having parties. It isn't quite that kind of a party. It's a party if we get back. The advanced element would go in ahead of the major element of riflemen. Most of the people going in at the time we were going in would be specialists of one kind or another. Radiomen, for example. Signalmen. There were only two of us corpsmen, and our job was mainly to take care of the ones that were coming in. And then again, locate a safe location spot for removal of the wounded. Well, there was no safe spot on Iwo Jima. That I found out before we even got ashore. So my time was immediately taken up with work. I had my picture taken in my... I'm trying to think of his name now. He wasn't the one who took the famed picture of raising the flag, but he had been aboard our ship. And we had quite a few brass aboard the ship, observers. And we had a lot of photographers, news people that were going in, too. And he was standing up, drawing fire. And I looked up at him, and I yelled at him

in language my mother would have died if she hadn't already, to get his rear end down. He was drawing fire on us. Later, friends found that picture [by him in?] a book called *100 Best Pictures Taken in [War?]* in 1995, I guess it was. By then... Or 1995, yeah. And so there I was, sticking my nose up, just when he snapped that picture. But that was just a little sideline. We started losing men fast. I think the first, probably the first couple of boatloads that got in made it pretty safe. But then, when they saw that this was not another one of those fake landing things that they thought they had stopped an invasion several days ahead of time... I don't know if you knew of that or not. But that's another story. The [underwater?] men thought that they had the rocks, [two?] (inaudible) rocks that were right in the middle of Red Beach Two. And they were going to have those things blown out of there. Well, they didn't have them blown out much. And as the waves hit those rocks, they sent up a plume of water. And we had to go around them. So the amtracs that took us in, we didn't have all the beach markers up yet. And that would be part of the work of the, some of the guys in our group, to get markers up on the beach so they --

EG: (inaudible)

RH: Yeah. So whether I landed on Red Beach One or Red Beach Two doesn't make any difference. They were the same for a long time, until groups got reorganized. And commanders would get their small groups together and go ahead. And so that's when I told this photographer to get down. I later had a signed picture by him, of that picture that he took. But I think my son, Jeff, must have [copped?] that on me. He seems to walk off with a lot of my things that I thought precious to me. He thinks they're more important to him now. Maybe they are. I was on the beach five days. The first day, I don't think Commander, or Lieutenant Dunn was on the beach more than two to three hours before he was completely mowed down. He must have taken a shell right in and then it exploded. There wasn't... It was a messy situation. And one of the... He had a pearl-handled revolver he was always proud of. And one of the boys got away with that. I don't know who it was. And I wouldn't want to know, because the one I suspected didn't make things anyway. So we were without a beach master for a period of time. Commander Otley, when he got ashore, I had picked up a walkie-talkie by then off of one dead officer. And I thought it better than buried in the sand. And I had taken his 45 and I'd put that on. And usually, just officers or their attaché would carry their walkie-talkie.

Well, they were big boomers. Not like they have now. And anyway, I had that. And Commander Otley spotted me. He says, "Doc," he says, "Get up to the radio pit and tell them on the control line to slow the waves down." They had to command so slow of a maneuver in, that gave time for the Japs to (inaudible) just one boat right after another, just go down the line. And there was no room for boats to bring anybody in to fight. And we were just there stuck. And some of the [coxswains?] would get scared, would drop their ramp out, and they were too far out in the water. And the guys didn't know how far they had to wade. They walked off the end of the ramp, and they were in 15 feet of water. And they... That was no good. [Ben Cranefield?], I've got a story on him I'm sure he will not tell his interviewer. Ben, when we were in... I got off the *Hansford* in Saipan, after we'd been announced that I'd be on (inaudible). Ben Cranefield would be under me as a corpsman. I was a third-class pharmacist mate then. And Ben would be under me and report to me when we got ashore. But he would come in on one boat (inaudible), and I'd come in on another. They did this so that at least one of them would make it through. And one set of radios would make it through, one set of signalmen would make it through. So Otley told me to get up and tell the radiomen to call control. Tell them to

slow the waves down and get a control boat in there to haul the, or salvage boat, I mean, to haul off the wreckage off the beach. Just haul it off and sink it out in the bay, so that they could get boats in to the beach. But I never quite made it. I was rowing in to the foxhole, and it got hit with two fast shells. And when I came to, I was... I didn't know where I was for a few minutes. I mean, I knew I was in a war, but I mean, I didn't know hey, where do I go now? And then, I could hear someone yelling, yelling my name. And it was Leo [Kepker?]. And Leo had part of his ear shot away, and a fragment of a shell had gone through his carotid artery. And so I had a bleeder on my hands. And fortunately, this is where my operating room experience had come in. I did have some hemostats in my bag, so I put a hemostat on that carotid. And then wrapped him as tight as I could without strangling the poor fellow, and let the handle of the hemostat sticking out so that the handlers would know he had gone quick. And I didn't think he would make it. I thought he would, probably had lost too much blood and was probably losing more. I couldn't get it all stopped. It was still coming. But later on, I found a year later that he had lived and was even aboard our ship. But he was a radioman. They kept up in the shack then. He didn't have to go on anymore beach party. And I was never

on the bridge, and he was never down in sickbay. And I think he didn't want to see me. I actually think it would bring back too much, because his family later on that contacted me, they never knew why he had a disfigured ear. And they knew he'd been in war. They didn't know where. And they knew he'd been aboard the *Hansford*. And so they got in touch with me at one of our reunions, and spent the better part of the night with me. And then came back the next year and brought some more relatives. And they recorded everything that time. And then they printed it all on a little booklet, "The Life of Leo." And so I was glad. It was a very, very emotional time. And [I'm feeling?] emotional even now, thinking about some of these things. But during that blowing out of the foxhole, I knew I had done something to my back. I was going to stand up and run, but I couldn't get on my feet. They kept going out under me. So I crawled to where Leo was. He was in the foxhole. The equipment was blown all apart, and nothing left in there. And I think there had been another marine in there, because there was another body. Now, whether he flew in or was in there when I had looked, I was concentrating on getting my message through to Hanson and Anderson, who were on the squawk box talking to the control boat. So after a couple of hours, I was able to get around

a little. But Dr. Browning, the medic with us, said better not be lifting anything. And they knew I was good with a needle, and I could hit a vein pretty good. And so I was kept on as busy for the next couple of days, just --

EG: Were you able to walk at that time, though?

RH: I was able to walk some. I mean, I limped. This leg was pretty, pretty paralyzed then. It did start coming back, as sometimes a spinal injury will. And...

EG: So you were... Your back was injured.

RH: Yeah. I had a spinal cord injury. And it had blown out some of the discs, jammed my spinal blocks, [I call them?], together. So, and the ones that got pinched, I was numb there. But my back was definitely sore. On the fifth day... Of course, this continued. Our first night was probably the worst night of my life. We'd been told that there would be no one moving from their foxhole. If anybody moved, shoot. Because the [IQ?] boys had picked up that the Japs were going to counterattack. They picked them up on radio, and radioed back that they were going to counterattack to push us off the beach that first night. And then, one of the officers from the, I think it was the *Arkansas*. I'm not sure. I got that [papers?] back there. But 62, 63 years, some of these names get all mixed up with me when you see one battleship one day and another one the

next. And you think it's the same one. And Commander Otley said, "For heaven's sakes, light it up like a football field." And they did. And they...

EG: You mean they [turned in?] the artillery?

RH: The Japs didn't dare move, because we'd get them. But first thing in the gray of the morning, I was going to stick my head above the edge of the (inaudible). I found another corpsman, Jim [Concannon?]. And I spent the night keeping plasma going. And we had four or five wounded with us. And we kept that going all night. But I stuck my head up, and I saw something black lunging into our pit [back here?]. It wasn't a foxhole. We had room for four or five, six people in there. And as a poor marine, I mean, I did take my training to heart, I guess. My rifle is stuck in the sand, and I had a plasma bottle hanging on it. And my knife was at my side. I hadn't even taken the buckle, unbuckled it, because I had plenty of other knives I was using to slice tubing and so forth. I didn't bother using my contaminating knife. And I had the 45, but it was buckled down, too, so I wouldn't go off shooting somebody with that. So I reached for everything, and by then, it was in on top of me. And it was Ben Cranefield. They had made it through. Their tank had made it through, but he had landed way on the wrong beach, wrong beach. And he had

spent the night crawling from foxhole to foxhole. "Anybody know where Haw is? Medics? Where are the medics? Haw is supposed to be there." Nobody knew Haw. So he finally found somebody that said, "Yeah, he's probably up in that big hole over there." But I would have killed him. So I did save one life in Iwo Jima, and that's Ben's. And I've told this story at quite a few banquets. And Ben just kind of hangs his head. But he had a motorcycle jacket. It was cold that morning when we went ashore, so he put that motorcycle jacket on underneath his Marine jacket.

EG: How did he get a motorcycle jacket in?

RH: I have no idea. We took our sacks, our sea bags with us, when they put us on the LST. Because he went in on one LST, I went in on from another. And so I don't know how he got it out of his sea bag.

EG: But he smuggled it in.

RH: He smuggled it [more?] in. But those chaps, seeing a guy that all, the first day running around. And when he had to go into the water and get out, we all were taught to have our things on straps, where we could just peel them back. We had about, oh, 150, 200 pounds of med gear on us. So he had done that. And there he is, in a black jacket. Why, if I'd been a Jap spotter, you know, I'd see somebody in a black jacket. I'd consider the general himself's making an

inspection and take the guy out. But Ben has the [luck?] of an angel all the time. Maybe you'll be interviewing him, too. Ask him if he still has his motorcycle jacket. Anyway, about the fifth day, I was getting pretty worn out. And the rest of the medics were, I'm sure. And between wounded and killed, we were missing about 17 out of 49. So they sent in another beach party to replace us. And we went aboard an LST first to get out of the firing line. And that's when the flag went up. We got to watch that go up. And then, they got us over to the *Hansford*, finally. And told us we could get out, take a shower, and report for duty. I reported back to the operating room, and I told them I was feeling pretty punk. I --

EG: Could you still walk at this time?

RH: I was walking, but I couldn't climb any rope ladder, I can tell you that. I waited until they got a, dropped a gangway for me [to come up on?]. And then they told me, "Well, take it easy and we'll send you over to the hospital ship tomorrow." The hospital ship took an X-ray, and they examined me and poked me around a bit. And said, "Well, I don't think there's anything broken. We can't see anything on the X-ray. And we'll send you back for light duty." Well, light duty meant that I wouldn't have to help load ship, which I didn't do anyway, because I was singing in

the choir as a chaplain's little golden boy. And shouldn't have that speaker on, because the chaplain was, he was so interested in me that, "Now, when we get back to San Francisco," he says, "my wife and daughter are going to meet me." And he says, "I bet my daughter would like to go out to a movie with you." I knew what the old man was going to [lead?] me and his wife to. But I got in trouble there and lost that [bet?]. They put me on light duty, and light duty meant that the first of April, we were going to land on Okinawa. Just February 19. I had March to recuperate with the light duty, and then back on. But I didn't go in on advanced element. We didn't have an advanced element on this one, because we went in nine days after the original invasion. And then, we did find a safe place to evacuate, and we did a lot of evacuating.

EG: Well, did you go on Okinawa yourself?

RH: Pardon?

EG: Did you go on Okinawa yourself?

RH: Oh, yes. Yes, we landed on Okinawa with troops.

EG: And you still had light duty.

RH: That was light duty. It was light compared to Iwo Jima.

We kept track of Iwo, of course, all the way through. And Okinawa was a picnic for us, really, as far as we still had to worry. Those darn Japs would sneak in at night, and

they could climb these palm trees quicker than a native could. And they'd get up there and tie themselves in a palm tree. And then in the morning, just start picking us off like nothing. So we had to be on the lookout for them. But as soon as we spotted [where?] they were, where the trouble was coming from, we'd get one of the marine sharpshooters to shoot until they fell out of the tree. And so that was our biggest problem on Okinawa. And we didn't have to stay too long. You doing a wash on Iwo, on Okinawa. Pardon me, that shouldn't be in there. But we all made it back from the Okinawa trip. We had no casualties. We had to... We felt safer on the, actually, on the island than we did when we were out in the bay. You probably heard that they lost 5000 sailors in the Bay of Okinawa, with suicide boats. They had suicide boats and suicide planes. They sunk more ships there than they had sunk for most of the war.

EG: How long were you in Okinawa?

RH: I'd have to refer back to my --

EG: Just approximately.

RH: We stayed around Okinawa about two weeks, unloading and taking in casualties. And so after a couple of days, they probably sent in another team. I forget why we left so early. And we came back to the ship.

EG: Did you have to take care of many of the casualties themselves, or did you just make sure they got on, or what?

RH: No, we had to take care of them.

EG: You had to take care of them.

RH: Yeah. We had three operating rooms. One we called forward, the main room was midship, and we had one on the fantail. And I was in charge of the one on the fantail, for taking casualties. We would take the ones that maybe just needed sewing up and things like that. Ones where they had to open their belly and take stuff out [of the way?], that was done in the main operating room. And over a few days, we would have a (inaudible) [at sea?], on our way back to Saipan again. They... I think we were the only ship that had a mortician aboard. And because he was a mortician, the skipper said, "You want to [bury a body?]." It was buried at sea. "Prepare it just as you would in the mortuary." So I'm sure they didn't do that on any other ship that I've heard of. And the *Hansford* did. A fellow by the name of Tate, T-A-T-E, had been an undertaker in life. And he volunteered to do the first one, because he was a shipmate of ours. And then skipper found out about it, and he says, "We do them all that way." But they --

EG: So that means he embalmed all of them.

RH: He embalmed everyone, right. Put them in a clean uniform and did it [upright?]. Then, we went down to the South Hebrides. After that, picked up a lot of new Army men. I think the Hebrides were pretty well secured then. I think we were probably picking up some of MacArthur's boys. I don't know. And I couldn't even tell you what units they were, or whether they were any one unit. They may have just been, you know, a lot of stragglers, what was left of company so-and-so, just thrown into a pool. And we'd clean out the pool. And they'd formed them into working units. And we landed them on Panay and Negros. Neither one of those we had any opposition from, except from snipers again. And snipers and one fight between the Army and our ship. We had one big fellow aboard ship. We later found out he had been a New York Golden Gloves boxing champ. He's a black man, and he looked (inaudible). And he'd [say?], but I mean --

EG: He was just a big man.

RH: He was just a big man. And he just... And so a buddy of mine thought, well, (inaudible). . They're going to have a fight. We didn't want to get in on any fight. We just wanted to see what was happening. And it seemed kind of peaceful. And we opened the door and walked in. First thing I knew, I saw Big Paul grab me. And, "It's you,

Doc." He says, "You stand in the corner and catch anything that gets by me." (inaudible). They cleared everything out, and so they aired the whistles of a highway, shore patrol. And the MP's coming.

EG: So in other words, this was literally a fight between the Navy and the Army.

RH: Yeah.

EG: What was the occasion? Why would they --

RH: Oh, I, you know... There's always that little friction. Oh, we're better than you are. You wouldn't have gotten to where you were if you were... Up you one. Don't say that to me. Well, I'm saying it to you. Well, you say it to me in a bar some night, and you'll find out what we are. You know. Maybe you don't.

EG: No. I've got an idea of what you're talking about, though.

RH: So anyway, a little thing can break into a big brawl. And when I got back aboard ship that night, I had salts on wounds. We had... Quite a few got gashes under their eyes and so on. But the Philippines, then we started preparing and making trial landings in the fashion that we would on the island of Japan. And we were to land on Kyushu we found out, after the fact, after the war was over. And by then, we had become the flagship for Admiral Hall, Admiral John Hall, H-A-L-L. And then, I guess he must have told

General Chase that we were a good ship, because General Chase came aboard with his staff. And each one of them would have a staff of 200-300. Don't ask me what they do with them. But the staff people thought they were pretty brassy, too. And they'd try to come down. "I need a little terpin hydrate of codeine." "Oh, the hell you do. We don't give that out." "Do you know who I am?" I know one time, one guy came down. The next morning, he came down and asked for some. He had on a colonel's pin. The day before, he'd been a sergeant. And I said, "Now just how do I record you?" He says, "You don't record me." He says, "I may be a general tomorrow." They...

EG: What was this one particular supply that they were asking you for, and you said, "No, you're not going to get it." What was that?

RH: It's cough medicine. It's a good cough medicine, but they've taken it off the market now because of codeine.

EG: Okay. So that's the main reason they wanted it, because of the codeine.

RH: Yeah, yeah. Gives you a little bit of a high. They'd hack at us a few times. "I've got to have it." You know. "Well, we'll give you something else." We'd give them a [black and white?] laxative or something. A favorite trick was when we had to give shots to the officers, we had to

re-use our needles all the time in those days. We didn't have sterilizable needles. So we would, anytime we weren't doing anything, we'd be told to, well, let's get some needles sharpened up here. We've got to shoot the crew. When the officers came through, their needles would always have a little burr on the end. It went in, wasn't bad. But when you pulled that thing out, snatch a little tissue with it. That was... It was kind of a mean thing, but it happened. It happened under my watch, but I didn't do it. I'd never do a thing like that. Oh, there were so many tales to tell. We were then sent General Chase. We then headed for Japan anyway. After that, we ran into a typhoon, and we had to go back. That's when the end of the war was declared. And we were going in then to occupy instead of fight. But we went into Tokyo Bay. And we were laying off the Missouri. You'll see some signings of, pictures of signing the documents. You'll see a ship just lying off the starboard, the front right. That was the *Hansford*. But both Admiral Hall and General Chase going over to the signing, they gave us a berthing close to the Missouri because they wouldn't want this good general to get seasick. They were... General Chase, then, was going to be in charge of the occupation for the time being. Of course, MacArthur was over all. But MacArthur had taken

Chase's flagship away from him. Because a communication ship, the flagstaff has, it's got a tremendous amount of radio, radar, and long-distance reception. And they're just one mass of antennas and radio rooms and decoders and so forth. So the McKinley had been General Chase's ship. But when MacArthur got free, he got chased off. And so they came to live with us. And we started the first beer tavern in Yokohama Harbor. We were the first ships into the bay, in to tie up at the dock, too. The first ship. All of our mail going out of that, on that first day, had a big stamp put on it. "First ship to dock at a Japanese port." And the third ship that docked, McKinley came in. And we came in first. McKinley followed us. And then another ship loaded with beer. And they unloaded that, put it in this warehouse. And they would give each guy on his, when he wasn't on watch, he could have two tickets, two beers. I wasn't old enough to drink then, so I'd sell mine for about four or five bucks. And...

EG: Did they actually pay attention to your age? Could you still go and get those beers?

RH: Oh, I could have. I didn't think beer was that good then. And I could do more with money. But I always had a few tickets extra, so I'd take those cans of beer. And I'd put them in my duffel bag. And when I went back aboard ship,

I'd take them down to sickbay and put them in the fridge. And so on nights the guys knew I had to close up, I was a cashier there. Again, the chaplain thought I was a good, honest boy. I always checked out okay. But I always kept those few couple of tickets, and then I would take a few cans aboard ship. And so I had been giving [them to?] the guys on watch down there that night. Here, the chaplain comes walking in. He had to have something. And he said, "Who's senior petty officer down here tonight?" And I said, "I am, sir." He says, "And you're serving beer?" I said, "Well, no sir." I said, "I just found it in the refrigerator." "And you did nothing about it?" I said, "Yeah. I let them have it." And a few days later he says, "You know, I think my daughter and my wife will be meeting me maybe in San Pedro or some place." He was telling me I couldn't take his daughter out. So that's what I meant when I said there's more to that story. So I was on his list for being a little dishonest in my activities. But that's the worst thing I could have done, I suppose, aboard ship. Yeah. I don't know. Probably some of these other guys talking today might say different. But one thing, Ben and I were the only corpsmen. The rest can speak for radiomen. And I don't know if you'll speak to [Irv Layman?] or not, but he was down in the fire rooms, boiler

rooms. So he doesn't say much. But he talks. We had an interview up in Michigan last year. And they interviewed one of our guys. Now, he's had several strokes, and he's, he won the war. He was telling how they'd lop one here. They'd lop one there. And they'd lop one there. And that's when they got shot. And he was going on. But he's a good guy.

EG: Now, last you told me, your ship was where now?

RH: Where is it now?

EG: [Right at the?] last you were talking about the beer and stuff. Where was this, all that then?

RH: That was in Yokohama Bay. Yeah, yeah. I didn't have any problem over that. Just the only problem I had was with the chaplain.

EG: Okay. Well, I was just wanting to bring you back up so you could continue your story.

RH: Okay. Well, on the trip back, we had a lot of prisoners of war, too. We were one of the first ships that... They were flying them back, of course. But those who were nothing wrong particularly with them...

EG: These were Japanese prisoners of war?

RH: No, they had been Japanese prisoners of war. And had been released. And they were of course skin and bones. And they fed them well, gave them steaks. Where they came

from, I don't know. But they found food for them. The crew treated them real well.

EG: How do you think... How was the reaction? Did they seem to appreciate that?

RH: Yes. For the most part, yes. One night when I was on night, and I had one come down. And he said, "I want a knife." And I said, "What for?" He says, "I'm going to kill you. I'm going to kill myself." And I, of course, start talking to him. "Well, what do you want to kill yourself for?" "I don't want to go back and face people in the United States looking like this." I said, "They're going to fatten you up before they send you home." "I'll never look the same," and on and on. And I said to him, "What do you want to kill me for?" He says, "Because you know who killed me. This way, they won't know which one did it." And I said, "Well, if it's going to be me," I said, "let's go in the galley here. And I was just going to have an egg sandwich. Would you like an egg sandwich?" He kind of smiled. He said, "I've never had one." I says, "You've got to have a fried egg sandwich." And I kept talking to him for hours. Where he'd been and how he'd got there, and so on. And he had a pretty horrible story.

EG: But he could speak good English, though.

RH: Oh, yes. This was, had been on (inaudible) and taken. And so they... Some of them were pretty ugly that way. They... I know the chaplain was kept real busy trying to keep them, do as much as he could. He was real busy. And the doctors were medicating them heavily. And as soon as I could ring for help, I did. And they brought a crew down. And I said, "Now, he's all right. He's all right. He just wants to go to bed and he forgot where his bunk is." I said, "Kind of take him there. Kind of watch him until he goes to sleep. I think he will." And we gave him a couple of pills, and we told him if he felt this way tomorrow, I'd help him. If I saw him coming, I would have jumped overboard. He was pretty big and gangly, but that was the only experience I had with prisoners of war. We didn't take any Japanese prisoners. Going way back to Iwo Jima, (inaudible) we were talking about taking prisoners. And the Jap, the marines had taken about 200 Japanese off of Iwo as prisoners for interrogation. I said, "We didn't see any prisoners." They said, "If we had a prisoner, and almost every one of them tried to run away. We had to shoot them." And that's what our marines in our outfit would do. And I think it was one that must have gotten our Dr. Browning. He got a leg. And from where he was over the dune, it would be hard for him to get shot from

anyplace but out of the water. And we started looking out there. And we saw another gunshot fire go off. It was a Jap tied to a couple of slabs of wood, just drifting down. And waves were taking him real up high, and he'd let loose with one. And then they'd wash him down in. So one of the marine sharpshooters, it took a couple of times to get him, because he'd go up on these waves. And then he'd ride it down.

EG: Was this Japanese person, was he trying to escape somewhere?

RH: No, no. He knew he'd get killed. And they were told if each one of them killed 10 Americans, they'd make it through. Well, they...

EG: Make it through what?

RH: Make it through, they'd say, their island. They'd run us off if each one of them shot 10 Americans. And if each one had been able to do that, I think that they might have been able to by that first day or so. But after we got dug in and got [cervache?]. And the flamethrowers were our lifesavers there, because they, that whole island was tunneled. They had seven layers of tracks and connections and so forth. They could go from one end of the island to the other without ever going above ground. And a flamethrower would get at one of these entrances, which

might just be a hole that you would just take for where a rock had been. And he'd go there and stick a nozzle of that flamethrower in there and give it a good blast. And you'd hear screaming from all over, because what it would do, it would use up all the oxygen. They couldn't breathe. And we were told later, when they went in these tunnels, they weren't scorched a bit. But they'd just died of suffocation. So we were very protective of flamethrowers. When we knew a boatload of flamethrowers was coming up, we made sure that the hydrographic section got that load in. And we got them up on where they were needed.

EG: And you mentioned that they didn't take any prisoners. But yet, these prisoners you had on board the ship, were they soldiers, too? Or why did they --?

RH: They were Americans who were in the Philippines.

EG: Oh, they were Americans.

RH: Yeah.

EG: Okay. So these weren't Japanese people.

RH: No, no.

EG: Okay, I understand. So they could be civil service or whatever. Okay. So yeah, okay. I understand that now, what you're talking about.

RH: I don't know whether any nurses were... There were nurses on Corregidor and... I've read several books on the

nursing. My wife's a nurse. And she got them, made me read them. How the nurses had been taken, many of them abused. But they kept them. They didn't kill many of them off.

EG: Well, did they use their ability to do nursing their soldiers or such?

RH: Their own.

EG: Okay. So the nurses helped the Japanese, or the others?

RH: They would try to help the Americans that were completely down, down with scurvy and...

EG: But in other words, the Japanese didn't make them treat the Japanese soldiers?

RH: I imagine they made them treat them, too. I'm not clear on that. It's been so long ago since I read that book, and I don't have any stats on that.

EG: Okay. So you're coming back to the states. Now, what's happening?

RH: Well, as soon as I got back, of course, I was given an immediate leave and shipped to Great Lakes Naval Base Hospital. And same diagnosis there. Well, they had a little more sophistication. They felt they would do a disc operation, which may have helped at the time. But I said... They gave me that and no discharge, or sign a waiver. Take a discharge. I wouldn't ever come back at

them. Well, I signed the waiver, and I got out and immediately went home to my own doctor, who sent me right over to the orthopedic. And what I needed was a neurologist, not an orthopedic. But in 1946, when I got out, they didn't know anything about spinal surgery. And sure, he made me feel better. I was in college, and I had this done over Christmastime. The first Christmas, I found I couldn't walk to campus anymore. And so at Christmastime, I had it done. And then I'd go to the buses down at the university until they got to where I could walk to where my room was. And I got along fairly well. But in '49, (inaudible) down in '48. In '49, I started having trouble again. And in '50, I got married. And my wife carries on the story from there, about how I kept saying, "I haven't had that much trouble." "Oh, the heck you didn't. What about the time... What about the time..." Something I was bothered all the way through, but I stayed in reserve. They called me back for Korea. And I had passed my officer's commission the month before. And so I would be going back in, and [supposedly?] on the USS *Cleveland*. And I would probably be something in the hospital division, but I was not a doctor then, or a dentist, which I am now. But they... A month later, they found it. And they said, "No. You're good today, but you

wouldn't be good tomorrow, or maybe next week." And that's the way it's been until I got completely down to where I can't navigate at all, with just crutches.

EG: Let's talk about the whole time that you were in the service. What particular things happened to you that you still remember something, that you still think about now and then?

RH: Almost killing Ben.

EG: Doing what now

RH: Almost killing Ben when he --

EG: Oh, almost killing Ben. Okay. That's right.

RH: I mean, Iwo stands out so much more than Okinawa. I had a brother-in-law who had an arm blown apart almost from having it shot. He was a corpsman, too, on Okinawa. He was riding a tank (inaudible). And had several (inaudible) in Okinawa. But it didn't... Those stories, sure, I sympathized with, but they didn't tell about the fire that you actually see when you see the muzzle of a gun 12 feet away from you. And you know it was coming at you, but missed you. And I still wake up at night, my wife tells me. And I never think that I'm on the field. I think they've found me. They've been after me all this time. They found me. And that panics me. But not enough to drive me berserk or anything. She wakes me up and, "What

are you dreaming about this time?" "Oh, nothing." "Oh, don't give me that." We chitchat back and forth a while and go back to sleep.

EG: Well, you seem like to me you had quite an experience. You certainly have got a good story here to tell. But of all the people, other than Ben, are there any particular people that you remember that, for some reason, that sticks out in your mind?

RH: Well, I think Lieutenant Dunn as being a hard taskmaster. But I think he was human, too. He was an attorney, put down young in life. But I could see why maybe he wasn't married. He treated girls like he treated us. Not that we wanted to be treated like girls. So he will always be in my mind. And a couple of the doctors I worked with will be. Dr. [Ingervoll?], he died just not too long ago, I've been told. He must have been an old, old man by then. But most of these guys that have come back and forth over and over and over again to reunions, why, you've got much closer to them now than we ever were aboard ship. And of course, we tell on each other for foolish things we did now, and we'd deny it before.

EG: (inaudible) What was the reactions overall of all the people -- (inaudible) Army, Navy -- but when the atomic

bomb was dropped, what was the reactions of most of the troops?

RH: Oh, we were pleased. Not that it would necessarily end the war, but the lives it was going to save. And Japanese lives, too. And so they lost maybe 100,000 are dead. It was a round figure, maybe 200,000 maimed or burned. But when you think of the millions that would have been slaughtered uselessly on both sides... And so we were very pleased with it. And we've had a lot of questions on, how can you justify taking the island of Iwo Jima and losing the number of marines that you did there? And the number of wounded. And the number of B-29s that would not have made it home after the bombing of Tokyo, that had to make emergency landings on Iwo Jima after we had secured it, was three times what we lost. At least three times. I've heard the figure, the actual figure, and it was amazing. So the Air Corps was very pleased of having a place where they could make a landing and patch up a fuel tank and fill her up and go on home. Or patch up some wings, put a few wires in them, or something. Whatever they do, they did it and got them off the island and back to Saipan. Tinian, I guess they sent most of them off of.

EG: Well, okay. You've got a very good story. And I just wonder, is there anything else that you want to add that... ?

RH: No. I think that a lot of people ask me, would you do it again? And I think I would. I'm not a thrill hunter. And it wasn't that. But I wouldn't have felt good today if I had pulled any strings and dodged the draft. I would do it again. And I'd do it the same way. I'd join ROTC, get a little experience so that I could show somebody else how to take a rifle apart, and get a few stripes.

EG: Well, on behalf of the Nimitz Museum, we really appreciate you sharing your experience with us.

END OF AUDIO FILE