

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**Major General John R. D. Cleland, U. S. Army Retired
Melbourne, Florida
November 16, 2011**

**503rd Parachute Infantry
Regimental Combat Team, Negros Island, Philippines
Company E, 2nd Battalion, 188th Parachute Infantry Regiment
11th Airborne Division
Occupation of Japan**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is November 16, 2011. I am interviewing John R. D. Cleland, Major General, U.S. Army Retired, by telephone. His phone number is 321-757-9327. His address is: 1340 Democracy Avenue, Melbourne, Florida 32940. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II

Mr. Misenhimer

John, 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.

General Cleland

I am proud to have served.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Museum. "Agreement read." Is that okay with you?

General Cleland

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

General Cleland

Dr. Bruce P. Cleland. That is my son. His phone number is 225-752-2702. His address is 3902 Frostwood Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70817.

Mr. Misenhimer

Hopefully we will never need that but you never know what will happen. What is your birth date?

General Cleland

July 5, 1925

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

General Cleland

Washington, D.C.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

General Cleland

Two sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they involved in war work at all?

General Cleland

The oldest one worked as a clerk in one of the government departments in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

General Cleland

It wasn't too pleasant but we survived.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

General Cleland

My mother and father were divorced, so my sisters and I lived with our mother and grandparents.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your grandfather's occupation?

General Cleland

He was retired.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

General Cleland

I went to high school in Washington, D.C.

General Cleland

What year did you graduate from there?

General Cleland

1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

General Cleland

Yes. I was playing sandlot football with some buddies. I came home and my mother informed that she had heard it on the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you feel that would affect you?

General Cleland

I didn't know how it would affect me. All I knew was that the dirty Japs had attacked Pearl Harbor and our country was going to do something about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were 16 at that time, right?

General Cleland

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

General Cleland

I went into the service; I enlisted in June of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just after you graduated from high school.

General Cleland

Actually it was before I graduated. My mother let me enlist in the reserves with the proviso that I wouldn't go until I graduated from high school.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went into the Army, is that correct?

General Cleland

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the Army?

General Cleland

I chose the Army because both my father and my grandfather had served in the Army and I wanted to be a paratrooper.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go in at?

General Cleland

I was inducted at Ft. Lee, Virginia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go for your basic training?

General Cleland

I got my basic training at North Camp Hood, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where is that?

General Cleland

That is north of what is now Fort Hood. Back then it was Camp Hood. It was a tank destroyer training center and an infantry basic training center.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel to Camp Hood?

General Cleland

I traveled to Camp Hood by train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

General Cleland

From Fort Lee to St. Louis it was excellent. I and another recruit had a compartment. However from St. Louis to Waco was another story. (Laugh) We had two seats in a day coach.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been that far from home before?

General Cleland

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do during basic training?

General Cleland

The first thing we did was, we waited for the rest of the recruits to come in to fill up the company and the battalion before we started training. They sent us out on detail clearing land for the next group of barracks that were going to be built.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of training did you get after that?

General Cleland

Then we assembled and the training I got was tough. It was hard but I found out later that it was good and it was just what I needed. The first day when Sergeant McBroom, that was my platoon Sergeant, called the roll, when he got to my name he said, "Cle-lan", I said, "That is Clee-land, Sergeant". The next morning, the same thing and I said, "That is Clee-land, Sergeant." The third morning, the same thing and I said, "That is Clee-land, Sergeant." The fourth morning, I didn't

answer. The guys kind of looked at me and he said, "Clelan." No answer. He said, "Clelan". No answer. About 11:00 in the morning Sergeant McBroom came up to me and said, "What is your name, soldier?" I said, "Clee-land, Sergeant." Oh man, did he lower the boom on me. (Laugh) So I became very familiar with extra duty KP and all kinds of extra duty. About a month later, we were standing in formation and he called me out in front of the platoon. "Cleland, front and center." I thought, "Uh oh, what did I do now?" I went out and stood in front of him. He put his nose about six inches from my nose and said, "Soldier, you've done good." I found out then that I had been high man out on the rifle range. From then on things were a lot better. I couldn't complain.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were "Clee-land" from then on, right?

General Cleland

Yes, I was "Clee-land" from then on, that's correct. I was "Clee-land" from the time he blew me away. From then on I was "Clee-land."

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a lot of marching?

General Cleland

Yes we marched everywhere. We sang songs like "Pepsi Cola hits the spot; twelve full ounces that's a lot; twice as much for a nickel too; Pepsi Cola is the drink for you."

Mr. Misenhimer

I remember that song.

General Cleland

Yes, songs like that. We always sang when we marched. We had to do a 24-mile march with a full field pack. We had to do PT every morning; not every morning, but most mornings. In basic training we learned how to be a basic Infantry soldier.

Mr. Misenhimer

We used to sing a song called "Jody."

General Cleland

The “Jody” was a chant, rhymes about the Army that we sang when we were double-timing. We weren’t double-timing.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all weapons training did you have?

General Cleland

First of all we used the Enfield ’03 rifle. We trained on the M-6 light machine gun and the M-4, which was the same as the M-6 except it’s on a tripod. We also trained on the water-cooled machine gun and we did some training on the 50-caliber machine gun. We trained on the 60mm mortar and the 81mm mortar. We fired the .45 caliber automatic pistol.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about hand grenades?

General Cleland

Yes we threw the hand grenades some, which was kind of exciting especially if you had a dummy in the pit with you.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have bayonet training?

General Cleland

Yes we had bayonet training, long thrust, short thrust, vertical, butt stroke series, hooo.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the infiltration course where you crawled under the live ammunition being shot over you?

General Cleland

Yes we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that?

General Cleland

It was very wet and muddy. It was an experience.

Mr. Misenhimer

It would make you keep your head down.

General Cleland

Yes, you kept your head down, no question about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall from your time in basic?

General Cleland

During basic my squad leader was Corporal Immenschu. The squad leader of the second squad was Corporal Schimberg. Both of the squad leaders were Corporals. On our third or fourth day, or probably the second week sometime, we were told we were going to have a full field inspection by the platoon Sergeant. Very seldom did you ever see an officer, and none of us knew what a full field inspection was but Immenschu showed us how to do it. We had all of our stuff on our bunk. We were living in hutments. Hutments have a wooden floor on wooden pilings. You walk up the steps to the hutment. There were two kinds. One takes five soldiers and one takes a platoon; with a platoon being about 30 men. This was a platoon sized hutment. It had wooden sides from the floor to about four feet high. Above the wooden sides were screens and a canvas top with canvas flaps that you could drop if it was raining or it was cold. We had double deck bunks in there. I was looking at the second squad and Corporal Schimberg was across the aisle with the second squad. Corporal Schimberg was inspecting and about the third man that he inspected; Corporal Schimberg, who was a German immigrant we found out later, said, "What is that in your mess kit?" The young soldier looked over and he said, "That is a piece of dirt Corporal." Schimberg said, "That's right." Then he took the mess kit, which was the old heavy aluminum kind, and he crumpled it up in his hands, like you would crumple up a piece of paper and dropped it back on the bunk. All our eyes were as big as saucers. Then he said, "I don't ever want to see no dirt on any equipment in my squad." Everybody got the message including those

of us in the First Squad. We found out later that Schimberg had been a circus strongman and he was one powerful guy. When we were on a hike, for example, he would inspect his squad while walking around on his hands. They were sitting down taking a 10 minute break and he was walking around on his hands. He was a piece of work. Sergeant McBroom had been a professional Private in the regular Army and he was a Buck Sergeant and he really knew the Army. Between them, they made soldiers out of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long was your basic?

General Cleland

It was 13 weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where did you go from there?

General Cleland

From there, I had volunteered for parachute school. I was kept behind; myself and another man had volunteered for the ski troopers and so we were left behind until our orders came through. They put us on detail. That was not good. All that KP in the Officers Mess and then they asked for volunteers to drive trucks. So I volunteered and my first real job in the Army was as a 2 ½ ton truck driver. About that time I got my orders to go to Jump School. The first thing you have to do is take a physical. I took the physical and I flunked it because of my eyes. I stayed on as a truck driver, which was fun and interesting for a kid that had just turned 18 but it was not what I wanted to do in the Army. Sergeant McBroom said that he wanted me to be one of his squad leaders, so I became a squad leader. Then they took the whole Infantry Basic Training cadre from North Camp Hood, Texas and we went by a troop train to Camp Blanding, Florida. The troop train was wooden, the cars were wooden. They had wooden bunks with GI mattresses in them. One bunk with one mattress on top and a double bunk with two GI mattresses below. Two kerosene lanterns were swinging from the ceiling in the car. That was a ride I will never forget. It was also the first time that I ever really understood what a homosexual was. About 2:00 in the

morning I heard the First Sergeant's voice and he was pretty profane to put it mildly. You could tell that he was very upset. I looked over the edge of my bunk and he was beating the hell out of the company clerk. It turned out that he and the company clerk were in the same double bunk and the company clerk had made a pass at him. That was kind of a learning experience.

We got to Camp Blanding, Florida, which was an interesting place. Again, we were in hutments. This time I was in a five-man hutment with a Sibley stove in the middle. I got a bad cold or something and I went to the dispensary. While in the waiting room of the dispensary, which was in a WWII wooden building, we would call it a shack today, I looked up on the wall and there was an eye chart. So I memorized the 20/20 line and I applied for jump school again. The orders came through and I took my physical and I passed it with 20/20 eyesight so I was off to Fort Benning, Georgia.

I got to Fort Benning, Georgia and they had a big gymnasium, an old World War II gymnasium and they were giving physicals in there. So I went through and got my physical. The last thing was the eye exam. You walked out in the middle of the gym and the eye chart was on the other side. I got there and a Sergeant at a folding field table said, "Read the most bottom line that you can read soldier." So I read it and he said, "20/70; how did you get here?" So I told him. He said, "Okay, are you going to make it through jump school?" I said, "Yes, Sergeant." He said, "Okay, 20/40"; which was the maximum you could have to be a paratrooper. So that is how I got into jump school.

I went to jump school there at Fort Benning, which at that time was a four-week course. We had to wait in the Alabama area until they had the next class filled up. So I was there in the Alabama area and we were doing details and that kind of stuff for probably a week to ten days. Then we went to Fort Benning and we went into the parachute school for jump training. The first week was basically physical training and how to do a parachute landing fall. I thought I was in pretty good shape but I'll tell you that was some of the most rigorous physical training that I had been put through up to that time. There were dumbbells for example and you had to lift them over your head and move them around in circles and you thought your arms were going to drop

off. You did pushups, squat jumps; you name it. Parachute landing fall was a piece of cake compared to the rest. Then the second week we had what they called the 36 foot tower. You learned how to jump from this 36 foot tower. You jumped out of it and you fell 15 feet and then you are snatched up by cable and you slide down the cable. And we had more parachute landing falls and learned how to exit from an airplane. You had all these kinds of things. It was good training and those NCOs were fantastic. The third week was the tower week. I don't know if you recall but the New York World's Fair had four big towers, 250 feet high. They each had four arms on the top of the tower and you sat in this little seat and you were hauled up by a cable to the very tip top, up 250 feet. Then you came down with a parachute, but you were really coming down the cable. This was a ride at the fair. They moved those towers to Fort Benning and during tower week you went up to the top. They rigged them up differently. You were pulled up with a parachute, which was rigged to a circular parachute shaped frame. So when you got up to the top, the instructor that was down below, was way down below (laugh), he would ask you, "Do you see your flag?" You would say, "I see the flag, Sergeant." He would say, "Release number one (number one arm)." They would release the parachute which was already open; the little frame was holding it. Then you came down and you landed and you rolled up your chute the way you were supposed to, like they taught you on the field for a regular jump. That was the tower week. The fourth week was the jump week. The first day we went down to the Lawson Field and we were shown how to pack a parachute by the riggers. We packed our parachutes, the one we were going to jump with. Our rigger was supervising to make sure that we did it right. Then the next morning, we went down and got our parachute and lined up as we were instructed to do. It was a C-47 aircraft with 20 troopers; ten on each side. The plane took off and it was the first time I had ever been on an airplane. The plane took off and the jumpmaster was there with his Air Force chute on with a ripcord in case he fell out. He was there and he gave you the commands, "Get ready," "Stand up," "Hook up," "Check equipment," "Sound off for equipment check," "All okay," "Stand in the door," and everybody was ready and chuted. Then he said, "Go." The first guy popped out the door and everybody followed him out. The second stick either follows them

out or waits for another pass of the aircraft over the drop zone. That was pretty exciting, to put it mildly.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that first jump?

General Cleland

The first jump, you really didn't know what to expect, but the excellent training had physically and mentally prepared us. I thought I was doing everything right. I was apprehensive but I wasn't scared or frightened or losing my faculties or anything like that because I had the training. You knew what you were doing. Everything went just the way our instructors said it was going to. You were trained to do it. But when you go out that door and you are waiting for the opening shock; in those days the parachutes were blown open by the air from the propellers. So you counted 1000, 2000, 3000 and on 3000 your chute opened. If you had a good body position you got a tolerable shock but we were young and we could handle that stuff. But if you had a bad body position, it turned you every which way but loose when that chute opened. You would say 1000, 2000, 3000 and wham! A lot of guys got riser burns or you got whacked by metal connector links that hit your helmet. We landed on a plowed field and that wasn't too bad. We were trained and it was pretty much like they told us it was going to be.

Mr. Misenhimer

What altitude did you jump from?

General Cleland

We jumped from 1,000 to 1,200 feet. I was in the first stick, from the first airplane that jumped. What happened to me was they took a number of us and spotted us around on the drop zone and we had a flag. We would wave the flag if anybody was hurt when landing in our area. Then the Lieutenant would come over in a jeep and they had a medical team there too. I was there and I was looking at the plane coming over and one parachute didn't open. I could see the paratrooper, moving his arms and trying to get his chute open. Finally, just about 50 feet from the ground it opened. He oscillated once and then he hit the ground. I went over and I waved the flag and a

Lieutenant came up. This guy was lying there and I was helping him unbuckle his chute and the Lieutenant said, "Are you okay?" And he said, "Yes sir, I'm okay." He said, "Were you scared?" He replied, "No sir, I was too busy to be scared." (Laugh) That was about right. He was working hard to get that reserve chute untangled from his main chute so that one of them would pop open, which he did. That was an experience that I will never forget.

Mr. Misenhimer

From the time your chute opens until you hit the ground is not very long, is it?

General Cleland

Just a couple of minutes and if you are heavy you will come down a little bit faster than if you are light. I remember the fifth jump is an equipment jump. You take your rifle and put it in a Griswald bag and you have all your equipment on. One of the jumps is a night jump. I think the fourth jump is a night jump.

Mr. Misenhimer

On that equipment jump, how much did that equipment weigh?

General Cleland

Probably 30 to 40 pounds. All you had was your individual equipment. You had a musette bag, a rifle, and I guess that was really about all that we had. When I finished jump school, I was sent to the Parachute Demolition School. There were about 50 to 60 in the class; mostly officers and senior NCOs with some junior enlisted men like me. I asked the Sergeant, "How come I'm going to demolition school?" He said, "What is your AGCT?" I said, "I don't know what that is." He said, "That is your score. Your Army General Competence Test score." I said, "I don't know, Sergeant." He said, "If you have above 105, they will send you to parachute demolition school. You have to be above 105." That was a real good school. That was the best school that I ever went to. They really taught you everything you needed to know to be a parachute demolitionist. We made several jumps. One time I carried a Bangalore torpedo strapped to my side. Parachute demolitionists were used to open up a path through bunkers. That is one thing that we did. We were also used to blow up bridges. They took us down to the Columbus, Georgia railroad yard

and they taught us how to drive a locomotive; a steam locomotive and a diesel locomotive. We also learned how to ride a motorcycle. I had a motorcycle for a while when I was a kid so I thought I knew how to ride one. I really didn't. They taught me how to spill the motorcycle and when you landed you had your rifle at the ready firing from behind it. This was a great school. A really tremendous experience for a young guy. We went out and rigged up a bridge above the Chattahoochee. We rigged it for demolition, with dummy explosives. We rigged it up with primer cord, the whole thing. Then the NCOs came out and inspected it. We learned how to set up booby traps and then we learned to deactivate booby traps. I will never forget. I was walking on a patrol and the Instructor Sergeant said, "Soldier, pick up that jump knife there." I said, "Sergeant, I think it is booby trapped." He said, "I said, pick it up." So I picked it up and about two blocks of TNT up in a tree above me went off. It was a booby trap. We got lessons on booby traps. Do you remember the movie, "The Best Years of our Lives" about the fellow with no arms?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes sir.

General Cleland

He was a Sergeant, one of our instructors. I knew him. He was teaching our class. He is not the one that told me to pick up the jump knife. He was the one that gave us that class. The most interesting thing; when I came out, I was number one overall in the class. I thought that was pretty darn good for a kid right out of high school. Then I stayed on as cadre. While I was there I applied for OCS and got into OCS. I went to Officer's Candidate School in Fort Benning, Georgia. That was another excellent school and training experience. It was 90 days. They called us '90 Day Wonders.' They were graduating a class every couple of days. The average class started out with 200 and graduated with about 125. That was eleven weeks of hard training. We lived in a barracks but we spent a lot of time in the field. I was impressed with about 75% of the candidates who were excellent soldiers. We had a lousy company commander. We used to say, "How in the world did he become a Captain, much less ever get a commission?" The food was

the worst that I ever had in the Army. But the Executive Officer, Lt. Hess, he was a crackerjack. We had physical training every day before instruction began. When I got out of those 90 days, actually it was closer to 100; I knew that I could lead a rifle platoon in combat. I didn't know much else, but that was all I was supposed to know. That was all I was supposed to learn, to be a rifle platoon leader in combat. It was excellent training. Physical training, they had you run the obstacle course, in a certain amount of time. There was a 10-foot wall that you had to get over by yourself. We had a candidate who had been a First Sergeant, John Brami, but he couldn't get over the wall. We would go out with him at night to try and help him learn how to get over the wall but he could not get over the wall. He was dropped from the course.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the trick to getting over the wall?

General Cleland

First you had to jump up and then you had to kind of bounce up off the wall and grab the top. He was too heavy to do that. He didn't have enough power in his arms.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would be kind of tough with a 10-foot wall.

General Cleland

It was. The best athlete we had in our class went over that wall almost like you would a hurdle. It was unbelievable. He was one of two black candidates that we had. I went to jumpmaster school with him later on when we were Lieutenants. He was a good man and a fine officer. Anyway, we had a 36-hour field problem which was a kind of graduation exercise. I was assigned to a heavy machine gun squad. I was assigned to carry the tripod. There were four of us and we had to carry the weapon itself and the tripod and the ammunition. You had to carry ammunition with two straps that went over your shoulder with two hooks. On each of those hooks you put two ammo cans. So you have these ammo cans banging into your legs. Then if you were in combat you also had the water cans, but we didn't have those. Instead of ammo cans we had cement blocks, one cement block on each side. I can still remember that I started out with the machine gun itself.

That was very awkward. The guy with the tripod offered to swap, so I thought, "Oh boy," so I swapped with him. That tripod was heavy like the gun but it was also extremely awkward. You just couldn't get it right. So, we all agreed to swap once more and I got the two cement blocks. In those days we had pockets on the sides of the legs of our fatigues. Those blocks actually rubbed the pockets off. Luckily, I didn't have anything in them. That was quite an exercise. There was no sleep. You went through the whole thing. Again, it was excellent training.

Map reading was another thing. I got a goof off partner for the night compass course, a guy who I didn't think much of and some of the others didn't either. I was figuring that I would have to take him through this. We had to go down into the creek beds and cross the creek and climb up the other side of the creek and through the woods following the compass course that had been laid out for us. We were told to go so far on this azimuth and then go so far at that azimuth and so far on the other azimuth and you were supposed to come out at the finish point. Well, I said, "Okay, Hogan you go out (we started out in the middle of a field and it was dark), and when I can barely see you, I'll take a compass reading." He said, "Why don't we take a compass reading on the stars?" I said, "Give me a break, what are you talking about?" So he named all the stars up there and said, "What is the compass reading?" So I told him and he took a compass reading on a star and he told me what the name of the star was. I looked at it and that star was right on our first azimuth. We went through that course just following the stars and we came out right at every designated point. We came in first at the final point. That was kind of a lesson to me about how smart you are and how smart you aren't. We graduated from OCS.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you graduate from OCS?

General Cleland

I graduated on November 8, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

As a 2nd Lieutenant, right?

General Cleland

Yes, 2nd Lieutenant. I went home on leave which was fun. We had gas rationing; in fact almost everything was rationed. I had a buddy, a high school buddy; he was in the Army too. He lived two houses from me and his parents said that I could use his car. He had a 1936 Ford convertible. I used his car on this leave. I took one of the girls I used to date in high school out. We went to a night club in downtown D.C. I've forgotten the name of it but it was run by a Chinese family. We parked the car and went into the club and there was a line inside the club, waiting for a table. We were standing there and I was in full parachute Army uniform with my 2nd Lieutenant bars. The maître'd came up and he said, "Sir, we have your table reserved for you. Come with me." We went with him. We passed all the people in line and we got this nice table. I said to the maître'd, "Why did you pick me out of that crowd?" He said, "Sir, the manager will come over and talk to you in a minute." The manager came over and his son was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division and he saw me there with my date and he invited us up. Everything was on him. It was a great experience. That's the way things were in World War II.

I got back to Fort Benning and went to jumpmaster school which is where they taught you how to lead a planeload of jumpers. I was taught to give the commands on everything, check everything, and be sure they were all squared away and look out the door, find the drop zone, coordinate with the Air Force pilot, and jump out at the proper time. That was an interesting course. By that time the parachute school had about 200-plus of us Lieutenants waiting to go overseas. At that particular time there was no need for replacements. They had 200 Paratrooper Lieutenants with basically nothing to do. That was a bad situation. We hung around there and several times we went to Atlanta, but we really didn't do anything. They finally sent us back to the Alabama area where they rigged up a training center to keep the soldiers and the officers busy that were waiting for orders. We stayed there for a month or two and then they assigned all of the officers to the Infantry Replacement Training Centers. They did it alphabetically. Everything in the Army back in those days was done alphabetically. So the guys that I remember from back in those days in the Army have names that begin with "A" up to about "F" or "G". I

got assigned to Camp Blanding, right back where I was as an enlisted man. We trained troops for about two months and then we finally got our orders. Carl Bergstrom, another Lieutenant; and I drove. I had an old 1938 Studebaker, and we drove that from Camp Blanding to Fort Benning. We got about two-thirds of the way there and a rear tire blew and the tread came off of the other rear tire. So we had to pull in to a garage. In those days you couldn't buy new tires. You had to get a re-tread, so we got re-treads and made it to Fort Benning. I sold the car and took off for the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment in the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

What unit did you go to?

General Cleland

The 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team which was on Negros Island. They were the regiment that jumped on Corregidor. I joined them after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you join them?

General Cleland

I joined them in late June of 1945 on the island of Negros.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's in the Philippines.

General Cleland

Yes, in the Philippines. We went overseas on an APA, which was a troop transport. APA-192. The USS *Pondera*. I was in charge of a hold. All the officers slept in an officer's compartment. Then in the hold below were the troops. I will tell you, those guys, I really felt for them. In the first place, down in the holds the bunks were from 3 deep to 5 deep. There was just room between bunks for you to turn over. You had to take all your gear and hang it on the foot of the bunk. You have five bunks and all this gear hanging there. It was miserable down in those holds. I had about 100 Infantry replacements, no NCOs. I was responsible for that hold. I gave them P.E. and some instruction. I had to go down there at BMNT (before morning nautical twilight).

That was when the submarines were most likely to attack. Living in those holds was not a good thing. They got two meals a day. Just about the time the last soldier got through with breakfast, they were ready to serve the second meal. It was not a happy thing for those soldiers. On the other hand us officers, there were about 40 of us in our compartment, compared to the troop holds it was high-living. It wasn't high living, but compared to the troop holds it was. We ate in the ship's officers' wardroom with good chow.

We got to the island of Ulithi and that was kind of an R&R island. The APA had LCMs on them (landing craft mechanized), that is the one that has the big ramp that drops down. I was detailed to take the first LCM load of troops to the enlisted island. We landed there and they dropped the ramp and I briefed my people on what they could do and what there was to do. They also had beer there, 3.2 beer. So the troops were there all day and when it came time to come back, all of these LCMs were coming in. The troops had been playing baseball, playing volleyball, drinking beer and doing all the things that could be done on that island. They had had a good workout and a lot of them were inebriated and the LCMs came in and dropped their ramps and I felt sure somebody was going to get struck by one of the ramps but nobody did. We all got in the LCM and got back to our ship. Many soldiers got in the wrong LCM and all night long blinkers were going in the convoy back and forth. "I got two guys from your ship" (laugh) "And I've got three from yours." All night long they were shuttling back and forth getting the troops back in the proper ship. Anyway, that was an interesting kind of a break

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that little island called Mog Mog?

General Cleland

It was in the Ulithi atoll.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes it was right around there.

General Cleland

Anyway, there we are. We arrived at Leyte and the LCMs came alongside. We had to throw our bags down into the hold of the LCM's below. I told a Navy officer, "If these guys throw their duffel bags down in there, they are going to break open." He said, "No, they won't break." I said, "Sure they are going to break." Anyway, we had a big dustup and the senior officer said, "If you want to get off the ship, you have to do it." So I threw my Val Pak down there first and it busted open. We finally got ashore and separated from the soldiers. There were 13 of us Lieutenants assigned to the 503rd. Nobody knew where it was. We went to several headquarters and nobody knew where the 503rd was. Finally we found an NCO and he said, "This is Leyte. They are on the island of Cebu." We got on one of the Navy's inter-island boats, the ones that go from island to island. We got to Cebu and unloaded and the only outfit that was there was the Americal Division. We again tracked down the 503rd and it was on Negros Island, which was across the channel from Cebu. We got on two DKWs, which were 2 ½ ton trucks that were amphibious, so we went across the island of Cebu. Each DKW had a driver and an assistant driver. As we drove through Cebu the Filipinos were shouting "Victory Joe" and waving and making the "V" for victory hand sign. All this and we had not heard a shot fired in anger. But anyway, we got to the spot where you catch a boat to Negros Island, across the strait, and the idea was that we were going to go across on these DKWs. Well, you could just barely see that there was something on the horizon. And the drivers were not happy at all but we finally convinced them to make the voyage. We arrived on Negros Island on these two DKWs. We finally got assigned to our various jobs. I became the Demolition Platoon Leader; actually the Assistant Demolition Platoon Leader, which was what I was trained to do. That was an interesting time. Flame throwers, Bangalore torpedoes; all the things that I had been trained on, they were all present. We got in a shipment of new flame throwers, so I got the job of training the platoon on them. I went on several patrols and got shot at a few times. Then the war ended. I was a 2nd Lieutenant and was told to report to the Regimental Adjutant. I reported to the Regimental Adjutant and he said, "We have dropped an atomic bomb on Japan and the Japs have surrendered." Of course no one knew

what an atomic bomb was. "The Japs are going to surrender here on Negros and we expect there are about 2,500 Japs in the hills, so you are going to set up a POW compound to hold them as prisoners." I was kind of dumbfounded but I had a lot of help. I got help from everybody. The Negros capital city Bacolod had a jail. The jail had a big farm and there was a 10 foot wall all the way around the farm; a masonry wall. That was going to be the prison compound for them. We salvaged two tremendous vats from a burned out sugar mill and the Jap cooks could stand up on a platform around the vats with a fire underneath to cook their food. We got ready as well as we could and 9,000 Japs came out of the hills. I got a third of them and two other Lieutenants had camps at other locations. I had Major Ngao and he was the Jap officer who reported to me and I told him what to do. The Emperor had given the word, loud and clear to the Japs, "You will do what the Americans tell you to do." So they did. Everything they could use as a weapon, we took away from them. We had squad tents, which held a lot more than a squad but we called them squad tents. Before the Japs came in we erected the squad tents. When the Japs arrived we marched them into the compound and they ran the show under my direction. Of course, I got my orders from the Regimental Commander. We ran a good show and the Japs were very cooperative. We only had one incident of violence toward a U.S. soldier. A Jap went berserk and started yelling in Japanese and climbed up one of the guard towers. The guard, when this Jap got up to the tower platform, gave him a vertical butt stroke and sent him sailing back down. He died later. We had another time when the Japs had a secret court martial and sentenced one of their soldiers to 50 blows, which killed him. I didn't know about that until the inspection the next morning. I found this dead Jap behind some bales in the kitchen tent. It turned out that he had stolen food and there was no reason to steal food because there was plenty of it. But he had stolen some food; he was court martialed by the Japanese and sentenced to 50 blows with a club and that was done by a baseball bat and that killed him. That was a good example of Japanese discipline. Another incident was when we had the Commanding General of the Southwest Pacific Area Command come to inspect our POW compound. Then he and the Regimental Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Joe Lawrie, came through the compound. I had been told by the

Adjutant that he was going to come and that everything had better be straight and so forth. So we had an honor guard at the gate. On either side of the roadway in, which was a dirt roadway, there were 25 Japs on each side. The General arrived and the Jap officer in charge of this honor guard commanded, "Eyes right." The Japanese all turned their eyes right or left and they followed the General as he walked down the road. They followed him with their eyes. But unlike the U.S., when the inspecting officer steps in front of you, you don't turn your head anymore. You just look straight ahead, but the Japs follow the inspecting officer all the way. The General said, "Why are they looking at me after I pass?" I said, "That is the way the Japs do it, sir." He got a little further along and we had set up a bunch of 20-hole latrines and there was nothing around them because there were 10-foot walls around the compound. We had 20-holers scattered around in different locations, out in the open. The General saw these Japs squatting on the 20-holers. He asked Colonel Lawrie, "Why are they squatting like that?" Colonel Lawrie looked at me and I said, "Sir, that is the way the Japanese do their business." He said, "This is an American POW compound. In here they will sit down like Americans." We went through a lot of other things but anyway, I got a call from Major Levine later and he said, "The General was pleased with the visit and the Colonel was too. He wants you to do everything the General said to do." I said, "Everything?" He said, "Yes, everything." So I got Major Ngao and went over the list with him. When it came to sitting instead of squatting on the latrine, he was not a happy camper. I said, "That's what the General said, so that's what we are going to do." So I went back the next day and they were still squatting, so I got Ngao and I really read him the riot act. He really got upset. He called his people and lined them all up and walked up and down in front of them, yelling at them in Japanese and about every second or third Jap officer that he came to, he whacked them upside the face with his hand. By the time he finished he had whacked every one of them at least once. He dismissed them and they went down to their units. I followed one of them down and he was doing the same thing with his subordinates and hitting his guys with his fist and knocking them down. The troops got the message and started sitting down. Behind each 20-holer was a Jap with a big board and if anybody came up and squatted, he came up behind them and whammed

the squatter with that board and sent them sailing. It didn't take long before everybody was sitting. Then the next thing, as they were sitting there, they were smoking cigarettes, talking to their buddies, reading Japanese books and then lines began to form. We had never had any lines at the latrines before. So there are several morals to that story and one is "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

We trucked them to the Port of Dumaguette where they were loaded on Navy ships. I had to negotiate with the Navy ship Captains as to how many Japs he would take onboard. All Navy ships going to Leyte had to stop by the island on the way and pick up Jap prisoners. The ships were as big as an LST and as small as the inter-island boats. The ship Captains didn't want these prisoners because they were dirty and I could understand that. So we would negotiate to see how many we could fit on the ships to try and make room for more. We finally got them all shipped out to Leyte.

I was a low point man. They deactivated the Regiment and all the high point men went home and the low point men went to Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer

About what date did you get rid of the last prisoners?

General Cleland

It would have been probably late September or early October of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

So just a month or two is all that you had them?

General Cleland

Right, just about.

Mr. Misenhimer

Go ahead.

General Cleland

Us low point guys loaded up on three LSTs and went to Manila and they wouldn't let us off the ships. We stayed in the harbor for three or four days. Then we went in a convoy to Japan. At that

time we caught the tail end of a typhoon that had hit Okinawa. That was the only time I ever saw a ship's bow and stern go up at the same time. It was a big storm. The troops were on cots in the hold of the LST, where normally you put the tanks. The officers were in the compartments they had along the sides of the ship. It was pretty bad with that storm. We weren't allowed to take animals onboard but one of my soldiers had a pet monkey that he had had for quite a while. He wanted to take his monkey, so he put him in a Musette bag and snuck him on ship. That monkey made it all the way to Japan. I don't know what happened to him after that or if they got separated.

Another officer had befriended a Filipino boy, maybe 16 or 17, and he had become his personal servant. He let this kid pack up his stuff for him. We each had a duffel bag and a Valpak. When we got on the ship, my friend opened up his Valpak to get something and it was stuffed full of sugar cane stalks and leaves and stuff like that. Everything he had, that kid had run off with. When we got to Japan, we landed at a place called Matsushima. We spent the first night in a former Japanese barracks. Almost all of those Japanese barracks had rice straw mats on the floor and they had rice straw mats on the built-in bunks. Well those mats were infested with fleas. So the rice mats had to be removed and burned. The floor that was left was very thin to put it mildly so you had to walk very carefully. When we got there all we had were fatigues and khakis. By now it was late October or early November and it was cold. We were really cold that first night. So in the morning we went down to the latrine, which was Japanese style, and it also had a three foot deep pool where they bathed. So we all jumped in the pool with our soap. We hadn't had anything but saltwater showers on those LSTs and we went in there and really got clean. We were lathering up in this pool and a Japanese caretaker came in and he looked in there and he started yelling "Dami Dami" Which is "no no." He finally got our attention and by pantomime he explained that you stay out of the pool until you are washed. You get one of the buckets and fill it up with water and get yourself wet and lather yourself up and get yourself all cleaned up and then you take a couple more buckets and wash the soap off and then you get in the pool. (Laugh). That was a new culture that we were getting acclimated to.

I became a platoon leader in Easy Company of the 188th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The Regiment was stationed at Camp Schimmelpfennig near Sendai which is where they had the recent tsunami. My first job was to go out with my platoon to local villages and collect weapons. We would get to the village and the village Mayor would have the weapons ready for pick up. . He and the police chief would have the weapons lined up and tagged with the owner's name. The Emperor had said to do this, so they did it. Then we would go to the schools and at the grade schools and in the high schools they had wooden rifles, grenades and mines. They had books like comic books that showed you how to shoot a rifle, or throw a grenade or put a mine in the road. The Japs were ready for the expected invasion of Japan. If we hadn't dropped those atomic bombs we would have had to go in there and subdue every single town and city in Japan. They would have fought to the death. That was what they did on Okinawa. It would have been a bloodbath. There would have been more Japanese killed than were killed by the bomb and a whole lot more Americans would have been killed. There is no question about it.

The whole battalion went to the Fukuoka Naval Arsenal. The engineers blew the arsenal up. We removed all weapons and explosives. There was no way they could start a guerilla or terrorist movement. We took everything lethal away from them.

At the Fukuoka Arsenal the buildings were all metal framed and they had tiled roofs and tiled sides. I was standing in the street with my Platoon Sergeant while the engineers were blowing up caves, or really ammunition bunkers, in the side of a hill and all of a sudden the most tremendous explosion that I have ever heard before or since went off. I was flat on the ground. He was on the ground. The tiles were coming off of these buildings. When the explosion was over, some of the buildings were like skeletons. What had happened was, the engineers calculated the amount of explosives in one of the bunkers built in the side of this hill, figured out how much explosive it would take to blow that bunker up but they didn't know that the Bunker was connected to another bunker, which was then connected to another; a series. So when that first bunker was blown up, they all went. The whole side of the mountain went. It was just blown off. Like I said, there was no way the Japs could fight the American forces after we finished.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was anybody killed in this explosion?

General Cleland

Nobody was killed. Surprising, but nobody was.

Mr. Misenhimer

They were very fortunate.

General Cleland

Very fortunate. The engineers took all the precautions. They were the only ones that were right there at the scene but they were okay. Then the rest of the Occupation was mostly not so much contact with the Japanese people, as it was training to keep ourselves proficient; in our case as a rifle company. Then I went up to Sapporo and I became the Aide to the Assistant Division Commander of the 11th Airborne Division. He was a good man. I learned a lot there. Then he went to China because he spoke Chinese having been stationed in China with the 15th Infantry before World War II. I went back to the 2nd Battalion and took command of Headquarters Company. I left Japan in December of 1947. I reported into the 82nd Airborne Division in January of 1948.

The 11th Airborne Division was located in northern Honshu and Hokkaido, 188th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) at Sendai, 511th PIR was up at northern Honshu and the 187th PIR was in Hokkaido. Then division headquarters, the 187th PIR and the Division Artillery, and Special Troops were all on Hokkaido at Sapporo. Then south of the 11th Airborne Division was the 1st Cavalry Division.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you some questions about it. When you picked up all these rifles and things, what did you do with them?

General Cleland

We turned them in and then at a later date, we were allowed to each pick out a Samurai sword. I had already gotten a Samurai sword in the Philippines. But there was this extra-long sword,

which I later found out was an executioner's sword. I selected that. I sent it home but it never got there. All I have now is the Samurai sword that I got in the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now I understand that they would let anybody in Japan bring home a Japanese rifle?

General Cleland

I'm not sure about that. I do know that we got our pick of the Samurai swords. I'm not sure about the rifles.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was in in 1945 and early 1946.

General Cleland

That is when I was there. One other thing that happened was in December of 1945, myself and 29 other Lieutenants in the 11th Airborne Division were sent to the Fujiya Hotel which was right there by Mount Fuji, a beautiful Japanese hotel. Our job was to repatriate Germans. The Germans were diplomatic corps, personnel and businessmen and assorted high ranking officials. Five German submarines had been scuttled in Tokyo Harbor when the Germans surrendered to the Allied Forces. So there were also five submarine crews to repatriate and really all they had with them was their clothes and a couple of iron crosses and not much else. So we were there for a month and my job was pretty easy; prepare a German submarine crew for repatriating. It was an interesting time. We Lieutenants climbed up Mt. Fuji. The Fujiya had a beautiful golf course and we played golf. There wasn't any snow on the ground. It snowed, but it melted while we were there. It was just a kind of an interesting interlude while we repatriated those Germans.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in Japan did you have much interaction with the local Japanese people?

General Cleland

Yes and no. We had Japanese that worked for us and we had interaction with them. For example, my company had a Japanese barber and we had a Japanese tailor. The Japanese policed the area. There was a stable there because Camp Schimmelpfennig had been a Japanese Cavalry post and

they had horses. Our regimental executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Mortimer J. O’Kane, had been a cavalryman before World War II and he liked to ride. Almost every Saturday we had Colonel O’Kane’s Wild Ride. About 15 or 20 of us would follow the Lieutenant Colonel over the woods and through the fields there in Japan on horses. It was different. Then the troops would go to town and go to Japanese bars and things like that. So yes, and there was no feeling of animosity, no feeling that you might get stabbed in the back or have your throat slit or anything like that. The Japanese had been told by the Emperor, “The Americans are here and they are in charge.” So everybody was very cooperative.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about military aged young men; returning soldiers. Did you come across many of those?

General Cleland

No I don’t recall coming across one. I’m sure they took off their uniforms as soon as they got home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Of course anybody of military age, from 20 to 40.

General Cleland

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

I’ve heard before that people just didn’t see many of those.

General Cleland

No we didn’t.

Mr. Misenhimer

I’ve heard that before.

General Cleland

Yes. Years later when I was an instructor at the Army Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, we had Allied students and I sponsored Japanese officers. Every Instructor had to sponsor one of the Allied students and kind of make them feel at home and help them. I

sponsored about half a dozen Japanese students. They all stayed in contact with me. When I came back from one of my tours in Vietnam, I went to Japan for R&R and they had a big party for me, all six of them. It was really a nice affair. Our relationship with the Japanese was good then and it has continued that way until today. You have to hand it to General MacArthur. He was instrumental in turning a dictatorship and absolute monarchy into a democracy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any interaction with MacArthur?

General Cleland

Never had any interaction with MacArthur other than to see him. I was in Tokyo on temporary duty and every day when he went to his office, the Japanese would line the streets and he would arrive at the Daiichi Building like the conquering hero he was. It was the same way when he went home. So I did see him on one of those trips to or from his office.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of MacArthur?

General Cleland

At the time I was just a young Lieutenant and I didn't really understand it all. But looking at what he did in Japan, it was masterful. It was masterful. He put the lid on that country, right at the very beginning, and then kind of eased off. He turned things over to the Japanese slowly. He forced them to make their new democracy work.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that he is the one that insisted on keeping the Emperor.

General Cleland

I'm not sure, that's a little murky. But it was very clear that the Emperor was key because the people looked upon him as if he was a god. Not anymore, but they did then. Yes, I think MacArthur did a masterful job there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you learn to speak Japanese?

General Cleland

I learned enough to get by, like (*speaking words in Japanese*) and so forth, but that's all.

Mr. Misenhimer

It's a pretty difficult language.

General Cleland

Right. It is also easy because there is no tense; it is not a formal language at all. The structure is very simple. You learn the words and the more words you learn, the more you can speak.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were in Japan for almost two years. Is there anything else that you can recall happening there?

General Cleland

No, just the good training. The training area was outside of Camp Schimmelpfennig where we lived. One was the fact that we had to burn all those rice mats. We got new ones. The living accommodations were very good there. We did a lot of things. For example I had a good friend, Steve Martin, who commanded a company in the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and they were up in a big resort area, Hakodate, totally different from Camp Schimmelpfennig which was near the big city of Sendai. I selected a soldier of the month, the best soldier in the company for that month, and he got a three-day pass. There wasn't really any place for him to go. Steve did the same thing with his company in the 511th. So we worked out a swap. My soldier of the month went to Hakodate and stayed with C Company of the 511th. And his soldier of the month came down to Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion of the 188th, my company. So we got these young soldiers and they went there and enjoyed being in a different place. The troops that came down to my company were free to go any place and could go down to Sendai and go to the bars or whatever. My troops that went up to Hakodate enjoyed the resort area up there. You could do things like that in those days.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get to be a 1st Lieutenant?

General Cleland

Shortly after I got to Japan but I can't remember exactly when.

Mr. Misenhimer

So it would have been late 1945.

General Cleland

Yes, it was in late 1945 or early 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer

You came back to the States in December 1947. Now you stayed in the service?

General Cleland

For 37 years. I retired October 1, 1980.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you involved in the Korean War?

General Cleland

I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

General Cleland

I was a rifle company commander in the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. I made the first combat jump north of Pyongyang, north of the North Korean capital. I was wounded at a place called Sillim-in and I was evacuated to the 1st MASH at Chechon which is nothing like the movie MASH. I went into the receiving tent and a very good looking nurse was busy working there on wounded because of a big fight; I was one of many. I remembered her. She remembered my name because that was the name of one of her professors at Duke University. Eight months later I was lying in a bed in Walter Reed Army Hospital and in walked the new Ward Nurse and it was the same gal. We got married and it's been almost 60 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Congratulations. How did you get wounded?

General Cleland

I was a rifle company commander and we made a night attack. It was a tough fight going up a snow covered mountain. In that kind of a fight the company commander is supposed to be in front, which I was, and I got shot in one arm and Corporal Gonzales, the 3rd Platoon medic, patched me up and rigged a kind of a sling for me and about 30 minutes later, I got shot in the other arm. That kind of ruined my night. That was a bad night. When I got shot the first time, a North Korean jumped up out of a hole in front of a tree and drilled me. Sergeant Allen who was right beside me drilled him and killed him dead. The second time, it was a light machine gun from a hill that overlooked the hill that we were attacking.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date were you wounded?

General Cleland

I was wounded on February 18, 1951.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long had you been in Korea at that point?

General Cleland

I had been in Korea seven months.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were evacuated from there and how long were you in the hospital in Korea before you got evacuated back?

General Cleland

I was in the 1st MASH for probably five or six days. Then I went by ambulance to a railhead. That ambulance driver, the roads were terrible, the ambulance ride was really bad. The guy above me was dripping blood. I was lying there rehearsing what I was going to say to the driver when he opened the door. It was that bad. The door opened and the driver stuck his head in and said, "I am sorry. I am so sorry. I did my best. I did my best. I really did, but these roads are absolutely the pits." So I said nothing because I was sure he did his best. Then I was put on a

hospital train and went to Pusan and put on the hospital ship *Repose*. We stayed there for about a week to 10 days and then we sailed to Tokyo. I was in Tokyo General Hospital for a while and then I was air evacuated back to the States to Walter Reed Hospital near where my mother and sisters were.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were your bones broken?

General Cleland

Yes. I had a shattered left elbow and I lost the ulnar nerve in my left arm. They had to take bone out of my hip to put my right arm together. My left arm is not of much use.

Mr. Misenhimer

So but you were able to stay in the service, though?

General Cleland

Yes, I was able to stay in the service. I got back on jump status when I was at Fort Benning. That is a long story but I got back on jump status at Fort Benning.

Mr. Misenhimer

In Korea, what outfit were you with there?

General Cleland

I was company commander of Company G of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. It was a separate regimental combat team.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you made one combat jump there, or how many in Korea?

General Cleland

I made one combat jump in Korea. It was the only combat jump that I made.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you involved in Vietnam?

General Cleland

Yes I was. I did two tours in Vietnam. The first one I was MACV staff officer and that was in 1962-1963. I worked on the Strategic Hamlet Program which was an interesting program that foundered because of corruption by President Diem's brother. The second tour, I activated the 3rd Battalion of the 503rd; the same regiment I was in in the Pacific. I activated the battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where we trained before going to Vietnam. I commanded them for about eight months in Vietnam. Then I got promoted to Colonel and became the deputy brigade commander. I wound up commanding a new brigade task force formed to provide security in the four southern provinces of the Vietnam II Corps area. My brigade Task Force, TF South, operated with the Vietnamese 44th Infantry Regiment.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you make Brigadier General?

General Cleland

I made Brigadier General in 1970.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you retired as a Major General?

General Cleland

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you make Major General?

General Cleland

I made Major General when I was in Cambodia. I was in Cambodia for two years. 1972-1974. I made Major General in either late 1972 or early 1973. I could look it up.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's close enough. I was just curious. Let me go back and ask you some questions about World War II. During World War II, what would you consider your most frightening time?

General Cleland

Hmm.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you didn't really get into combat in World War II, did you?

General Cleland

I did but it was mostly with patrols looking for the Japanese. I was shot at but didn't get hit. I don't think I was ever really afraid. I had a few anxious moments, but I don't recall any time when I was frightened.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

General Cleland

I never did.

Mr. Misenhimer

In World War II, did you ever cross the equator?

General Cleland

Oh yes. We went through that big ceremony they have.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did they do to you?

General Cleland

They didn't do much as I recall. They gave us some nasty stuff to drink. It wasn't anything. The ceremony; I'm pretty vague on that but I do remember it.

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

General Cleland

Yes. I was still in the States.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

General Cleland

It was one of shock and dismay because Franklin Delano Roosevelt pulled this country together to fight World War II. He did a magnificent job. He was a great leader. When all is said and done, he did what was best for America. I can't say that about some of our politicians today.

Mr. Misenhimer

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. How about then, did you all have any kind of a celebration?

General Cleland

We were onboard ship so the reaction was "Hell, we had better get over there and get into this war before it is over." That was a spirit that I have never seen since. We were going to win that war and everybody wanted to do whatever they could to help win it. When I was in high school, in the high school Victory Corps, we went around collecting aluminum pots and pans for use in manufacturing airplanes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And rubber tires for the rubber.

General Cleland

That's right. Every one of us had a war bond book with 25 cent stamps. You would put them in your book and once you got \$18.75 you went to the post office and you got a war bond. We were all in that war together.

Mr. Misenhimer

To me, that is the most united this country has ever been.

General Cleland

Exactly. Every American knew why we were fighting and knew what was going on. We need that kind of leadership today and we don't have it.

Mr. Misenhimer

On August 6, 1945, they dropped the first atomic bomb. Did you hear about that?

General Cleland

Oh yes. Oh yes. We didn't have internet, we didn't have twitter, and we didn't have cell phones. We didn't have any of that. The first word we got was that the U.S. dropped some kind of atomic bomb on Japan and that it had radiation and that the radiation might be coming out here to the Philippines. That was the way we got it. Then of course we dropped the second one and Japan surrendered.

Mr. Misenhimer

They surrendered on August 15, or probably August 16 there in the Philippines, was there any kind of a celebration?

General Cleland

This Filipino friend of mine had a bottle of gin that he had hidden under the floor of his house and he invited myself and another officer over to kill that bottle of gin. That was our celebration. Incidentally the Filipinos are great. They are the closest to Americans in their way of thinking and the way they act. I have the greatest respect and admiration for the Filipinos.

Mr. Misenhimer

Other than that one Japanese sword, did you get home from World War II with any other souvenirs?

General Cleland

Only a Jap meatball flag. I sent my mother the sealed will of a Japanese soldier. She opened that envelope and a clump of his hair fell out. According to my sister, she was really upset. I can't think of any other souvenirs off the top of my head.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

General Cleland

Oh yes. I saw my first one in Camp Lee, Virginia at the induction center.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any big names?

General Cleland

No but the comedian was a comedian that I had seen on stage in Lowe's Theater in Washington, D. C. Back in those days, at a big theater like Lowe's they would have a little warm up of the audience, if you will, with a comedian or a singer or something. So I saw that comedian at Lowe's and the next time I saw him I was a soldier at a USO show. I saw Bob Hope in Korea and I saw Bob Hope in Vietnam.

Mr. Misenhimer

He did a good job.

General Cleland

He did. He was quite an individual.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

General Cleland

Yes. I found that if I had a soldier who had a problem at home, the Red Cross would invariably take care of it. We had a Red Cross man with us at the 188th there in the Occupation. This guy was really good. My experience with the Red Cross has been that when a soldier had a problem and it was referred to them, they took care of it. Very positive. When I was there at the Fujiya Hotel there were two Red Cross girls there that kind of ran things because it was a recreational hotel for the U.S. troops. I remember they had a bingo game one time and I got bingo and I got a wash cloth and a bar of soap as my prize. (Laugh) That was the only time I ever won anything at bingo.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you remember from World War II?

General Cleland

Yes. I remember the American soldier and I have to tell you, there just wasn't anybody better than the American soldier. They were absolutely top notch. There were a few that weren't, but by and large, we had troops that were just outstanding, particularly in the Airborne, paratroopers.

Those guys were gung ho and honest and just a pleasure to work with. I have to say it was the same way in Korea and it was the same way in Vietnam. After retiring, I wound up as the honorary Colonel in the 1980s of my Korean War Regiment and those troops, then and today are still the same. We have got the best military in the world. They deserve better than they are getting right now. I just can't say enough about these soldiers that are serving their country. America is at war? Baloney! America is not at war. America is at the mall. The military is at war. The military and their families are the only ones making any sacrifice. That is a damn shame. You are familiar with the Harris Poll and the Gallup Poll. Once a year they conduct a poll on our national institutions. One poll lists 15 and the other poll lists 13 national institutions. The poll asks what national institution you have the most confidence in. For thirty years now, the U.S. military has been number one by a significant margin. Number two used to be the Supreme Court, now it's the Supreme Court or the medical profession. And it goes on down from there, Congress is kind of low, but lawyers and labor unions are at the bottom. The American people understand that the military has always done what it's been asked to do!

Mr. Misenhimer

I appreciate your time today John and I appreciate your service to our country.

General Cleland

Thank you too Richard.

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