

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Daryl Haerther

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 22nd of April, 2013. I am in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Admiral Nimitz Museum, and I am interviewing Mr. Daryl Haerther. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. So, let me start, Daryl, by thanking you for spending your time today to share your experiences with us, and I'd like get started by having you give us your full name, date and place of birth, and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Haerther: Well, thank you. I'm honored to be able to ... contribute something to this wonderful foundation. (Throat clearing), excuse me. I'm Daryl Haerther; I was born January 17th in 1926 and I was born in ... the county of Boone ... Boone County. I don't really know if I was born in a house or a hospital, and whatever was standard procedure then, I assume, and ...

Ed Metzler: Where is Boone County?

Mr. Haerther: It is north of Des Moines about ... uh, fifty miles. It's on the ... the old Lincoln highway, Highway 30 that goes coast to coast. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, the heartland!

Mr. Haerther: The heartland of Iowa, that right.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yes. And my father was a farmer, and ... I grew up helping him. My earliest memories, oh, I don't ... can't really say I helped him with. I went to school at a parochial school that was about four miles from home, and I went eight grades there, and ...

Ed Metzler: Now, did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Haerther: I had one sister; three years older.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: No brothers.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Haerther: And ... the ... the school system in the Midwest ... it was at ... they had a public school every two miles ... grid, and by the time ... my era came along, it must be that there weren't nearly as many students because many of these public schools were fortunate to have more than one or two students in a class. And of course, the class is, you know, one room, and ... everyone was listening to the subjects of the other grades as well (chuckles), so, you'd advance as fast as you could pick up. Uh, the parochial school I went to ... we were fortunate to have ... there were eight in my class or eight of us ... graduated from the eighth grade. So, how many we had before that, I'm not sure. And ... I'm not saying that religion was that much a ... a part of it, but I think we had a little better schooling. I was a two-room school, and the first four grades were in one room, and the ... last other four grades were in the other room. And ... consequently, I can remember we had a morning recess, a noon recess and the afternoon recess. And we'd chose up a ball team in the morning one, and that was the standing team for the day, so we didn't have to fool around when we had recess time.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you get right to it (laughter).

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, (laughter). We left ... started up where the inning left (chuckles), and ... after that I, let's see, I graduated from ... the eighth grade in 1939 and then went to ... a high school at the town of Story City which is now a suburb of Ames you might say.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And ... about ... fifteen miles north of Ames, and a very ... friendly little community. I can remember the main street was brick and there was parking, diagonal parking in the middle, and then parking on both curbs. And basically, a Norwegian, Scandinavian community. And we ... we had bus service of a sort. My freshman year, I think, and then this fellow ... apparently it was not funded by the county because ... or the ... the bus was not furnished by the

county. He had built a ... wooden box on a truck bed and that was the ... the body for the ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: ... hauling us ... us students and he got drafted then ... probably by the second year. And then ... we might have had ... a more modern bus for a very short time, but then I ... I know the last two years, my junior and senior year, we had to provide our own transportation. So then, it became ... the students within an area, we'd share ... uh, one would drive every day ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, carpooling and that kind of stuff.

Mr. Haerther: ... yeah, and ... unfortunately ...

Ed Metzler: Now, were the roads paved out in the country at this point?

Mr. Haerther: No, that was all gravel roads, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: But they were gravel at least, (unintelligible) yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, they weren't just mud.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And ... this driving situation was not the best because you put some ... sixteen-year olds in charge ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: ... of driving their family car, and it ...

Ed Metzler: What's wrong with this picture?! (laughter), yeah!

Mr. Haerther: ... (laughter), anyway, we survived it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you did! You did manage to survive.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that's right.

Ed Metzler: Now, you were about ... fifteen going on sixteen when the war started for the United States, right?

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that would be about right. I ... I remember on graduation; I think I was the youngest in my class ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... because of the fact that I ... was January and I just turned ... I just turned eighteen.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Well, wait a minute. No, 1943 ... twenty-six.

Ed Metzler: You were seventeen.

Mr. Haerther: Seventeen, I'd just turned seventeen.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: So, I was seventeen and ... a third ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... when I graduated from high school.

Ed Metzler: Well, do you remember Pearl Harbor day and ...

Mr. Haerther: Oh yes!

Ed Metzler: Tell me about ... what you remember.

Mr. Haerther: Well, I remember ... uhm, let's go back then because ... the teacher in my seventh and eighth grade at the parochial school (throat clearing) was ... a young man who was studying to be a pastor, but this was an internship, and he taught school, and he tried to live as a bachelor, but he was ... not going to survive that, so my parents took him in, and he was living at our house.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: And I can remember ... walking down the street of Boone with him when the news came ... of ... this would been '38, '39 that Japan was making, excuse me again, (throat clearing), additional conquests in China and ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: ... and it ... it was ... kind of a warring situation going on there in Europe as well.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And I can remember he said, "I think we're going to be involved in a war," and I can feel it yet as ... it ... it was something ... words I never expected to hear and it ... I just ... my body just reacted, and I got over it then right away. But I

thought, "This is news I never even heard or thought of," you know? But that's ... first ... then come '41 ... I can't honestly tell you ... where I was. That was a Sunday, and I'm sure that ... uh, I was at home, going to church or something like that.

Ed Metzler: Well, things changed at that point, didn't they, for everybody?

Mr. Haerther: Yes, yes they did. Yeah. After I got in high school, uhm, well let's see, I was in high school then; I was a sophomore. Uhm, many ... some of the town boys who didn't have their ... other responsibilities ... joined ... a program; I want to say it was a V-1 program or something ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, there ... they had several of those, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... some of those? And ... were then preparing themselves for, and I had ... responsibilities to my father and I wanted to enlist, but I just ... knew I couldn't leave him.

Ed Metzler: Well, you weren't seventeen yet at that point.

Mr. Haerther: Uh, that's right.

Ed Metzler: Because in early '42 when the war was really cranking up, you were ... you were born in twenty ... see, you were sixteen.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that's right, uh huh. So, by the time I was a junior or senior, that's when a lot of these ... boys were ... joining something or ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: ... advanced training and all that.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Haerther: And, then I graduated in ... in the summer of '43 and I was still seventeen at that time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And then ... I ... I felt that I would ... wait it out and help him get all of the crops planted in ... in '44. You know, I have my dates right, yes, that's right. And I went in then ... uh, in the spring of '44.

Ed Metzler: Okay so, were you likely to be drafted or ... do you ... or your ... did you think that was going to be the case or ...

Mr. Haerther: Yes, yes, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Because a lot of time on the farms, especially if you were the only son and you were providing help on the farm raising food, a lot of times they would give you, you know, a pass.

Mr. Haerther: A deferment?

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: I would be absolutely against that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, I ... I couldn't see that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: I know that there are some fellows, a year or two older than me, who ... uh, hurriedly got married and tried to have the child right away ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: ... so they might be exempt.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And ... this was not my ... aim at all.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: The patriotism ... of those years ... is hard to describe. Uhm, of the fellows, my friends and all, I think maybe we had one or two who could not pass the physical and the rest of went in service. And I'll jump ahead a minute. It's interesting when I came home, uh, some of these same fellows who I had palled around with ... uh, prior to going in service, I don't know to this day where they served ... or what they did ... if they saw combat or not. We never talked about it.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible)

Mr. Haerther: Absolutely never ... said one word.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's interesting and that is a common theme in talking to World War II veterans.

Mr. Haerther: I didn't realize that.

Ed Metzler: They ... yeah, they come back and ... some people just want to shut it out because it was horrific.

Mr. Haerther: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Other people ... just want to put it behind themselves and say, "I want to get on with my life now."

Mr. Haerther: My parents ... never asked me anything about it, and I ... sort of at the time wished they had, not the combat stuff as much as ... even the bas ... uh, the training and all that I had and travelling by ship across ... huge oceans, you know? Uh, I ... I could have recounted some things that would have been ... somewhat interesting.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Uhm, had a brother-in-law ... who married my sister, of course, and ... after he got back ... he had served in England ... on one of the air bases, but ... you know, he had a tent over him every night or a cot to sleep on, and food. I never criticized it, but he spoke freely of it, and my parents listened to it. And it ... it kind of hurt me and it ... it ... uh, I ... I can't criticize them. I'm ... I think ... they were afraid to open up those areas.

Ed Metzler: They may have thought it was painful for you and they ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... wanted to spare you that pain. And that's just speculation, but ...

Mr. Haerther: I ... I can ... maybe I'm jumping ahead of where I should be.

Ed Metzler: No, no, that's okay, that's okay.

Mr. Haerther: I ... I can remember one time, the only time I ever mentioned something, I was with my mother and I just offhandedly said, "I wish I had brought the forty-five, you know, hand ... uh, pistol back with me that I carried," and she said, "Why in the world," in a shocked voice said, "why in the world would you want that?" And I couldn't explain it, you know? I ... I dropped the subject right there. It was just something that I didn't want to ... other than ... it probably saved my life.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles) multiple times!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And ... and that was it. But ... I think that's the only reference I ever made to ... to ... my experiences.

Ed Metzler: That's interesting, that is interesting.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. Well, you know, I trained ... at ... Wolters; it was Camp Wolters, it became Fort Wolters.

Ed Metzler: And where is it located?

Mr. Haerther: In Mineral Wells.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, in that hill country.

Ed Metzler: So, you came down here to Texas for your basic training.

Mr. Haerther: Yes. I think it was four months ... something like that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And I would have ... if they'd of asked me questions, I would have loved to tell you ... tell ... be able to tell them, you know, the training to try and get yourself into condition and all that ... that was interesting stuff. I mean, it was different country, hill country, and night maneuvers and things like that (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), yeah for an Iowa farm boy and away so it was an adventure.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, I can remember yet ... uh, it ... running the obstacle courses, you know, like ... maybe the first time. I was right at the front with Captain so and so; I can't remember his name, and he says ... we had a ... a wall of ... sheer wall. I don't know, eight, ten feet high, something like that; he says, "Okay, Haerther, we're going to run down there and we're going to scale that wall." Well, I ... I was fine; I was pretty active kid. And I ran and, of course, I jumped and my foot hit a third of the way up and I just balled it up and I was over the lam, and he did not. He hit that; I thought that wall was going to explode (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: Full weight of his body (chuckles), anyway, it was a ... a ... those little humorous things, you know? You ...

Ed Metzler: Absolutely.

Mr. Haerther: ... yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, overall though, did you find the ... basic training to be physically challenging or pretty easy for you or what?

Mr. Haerther: I think it was fairly easy for me because I was ... in pretty good shape.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Uh, you know, I ... weighed a hundred and thirty-five, forty pounds, something like that, wiry and I had wrestled a lot in school. I boxed in school, played ...

Ed Metzler: And you worked on the farm, too.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah, I was on the track team; played a little football, and was a little light for that, but I was ... good shape, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now, what about the city boys that were there at the ... at the basic?

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles), well, some of them were a little overweight, you know, and that to (unintelligible) ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), like we all are today, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... yeah. So, it ... it was good training, focused of course, on the use of the weapons, being familiar with all of your weapons, firing them. I made expert on the M-1, and ... uh, handled mortars, uh, all of the array of ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... combat.

Ed Metzler: Why did you chose the Army ...

Mr. Haerther: (Throat clearing).

Ed Metzler: ... since you went in, I mean, you volunteered?

Mr. Haerther: I guess I was just ... naive. The Navy didn't interest me. I think if I had it to do over, I might have chosen the Marines, not for any real reason. Uh, maybe because it was more of an all-volunteer thing as opposed to ... the Army. But when I found out (throat clearing) it was originally then ... initially ... eventually is the word I'm trying to come up with ... assigned to the 96th Infantry Division. They were a very spirited organization. We had a ... a General Easley who was ... act ... actually killed in combat.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I ... I remember that.

Mr. Haerther: And he was a stickler for ... uh, being proficient on the rifle, and that's where we got ... our name Deadeye.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, the Deadeye name, yeah, right.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: So, you survived basic training, and ... where did you go from there? Did they assign you immediately to the 96th or ...

Mr. Haerther: No, I ... went home for a ... just a brief period. This was ... before Christmas; it must have been late fall because I was in ... sent to Fort Ord, California, Monterrey area, and we did some limited training there ... just as a casual unit. I ... I was not assigned to anything yet.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And then ... went from there ... uh, to Fort Lewis, Seattle Washington. And ... I can remember getting there in ... it was early winter around ... around ... after Christmas ... somewhere in there, and was ... was not there very long until we board ship.

Ed Metzler: This is '43 still, right? Winter of '43?

Mr. Haerther: This was ...

Ed Metzler: No, it was '44!

Mr. Haerther: ... it was '44, '44 yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Haerther: And ...

Ed Metzler: So, you weren't actually involved in Leyte Invasion then?

Mr. Haerther: I was not.

Ed Metzler: You didn't join the ... the group until afterwards, okay.

Mr. Haerther: That's correct, yes. I was still ... just a casual.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Uh huh. And we ended up ... that was my first taste of being on water, and ...

Ed Metzler: How'd that go?

Mr. Haerther: (Laughter), not well.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: We hit some bad, stormy weather; even the sailors had a little trouble ... keeping the food down.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles), and I can ... I must say ... the military didn't have to feed me very much on that trip.

Ed Metzler: They got a deal; they got a bargain, huh?! (laughter)

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles), sure did! And ... we arrived at ...

Ed Metzler: So, was it just a troop transport of some sort?

Mr. Haerther: ... yes, yes it was.

Ed Metzler: Was it alone or was it a ... a group of ships or ...

Mr. Haerther: No, it was no convoy. It was ...

Ed Metzler: ... so, it was solo, huh?

Mr. Haerther: ... single, and we were zigzagging. And I'm sure it was an old Liberty ship or ... or a new Liberty ship, if you want to call it that. And we were zigzagging. So, at one time, you'd have the bow of the stern and then you'd have the roll sideways, you know, and we'd change directions. And it ... it was ... tough on the stomach.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: But we survived it well.

Ed Metzler: Well, did you stabilize after a while and get used to it or not?

Mr. Haerther: That must have been ... ten to ... I don't know how many days; maybe ten days across there.

Ed Metzler: Probably, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And ...

Ed Metzler: You went to the Hawaiian Islands?

Mr. Haerther: ... to the Hawaiian, yeah, uh huh, Oahu. And I ... I got so I could keep a little food down, but it ... it still ...

Ed Metzler: Still bothered you, huh?

Mr. Haerther: I can remember getting off and I still had that sway; I ... took me a number of ... hours or days ... I don't remember now.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you had that sailor's gait, that roll (laughter)?

Mr. Haerther: (Laughter), that's right!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: And ... so then, we went up to Schofield ... (throat clearing) and that's the ... the Med part of Oahu (throat clearing); did a little bit of ... of ... we did ... noth ... nothing rigorous, but to stay in physical shape, I think, more than anything.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: (Throat clearing), if you'll excuse me just a minute here, I'll try and clear ...

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Haerther: ... clear my throat a little bit (throat clearing), excuse me.

Ed Metzler: Alright, let's start up again. Okay, so you were ... so, they're basically just trying to keep you in ... in shape ...

Mr. Haerther: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... with that and all that hard work of basic training ... not go wasted, so ...

Mr. Haerther: That's right. At that time, I still knew ... a few fellows that had taken basic with me.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: We were ... by that time, being split up, too, a great degree.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so ...

Mr. Haerther: Actually, going back to the time at ... Wolters, I had ... volunteered for the paratroopers; had passed the physical which was pretty stiff and ... we ... really thought ... I thought I was going to Benning. And then they came and they said, "Looks like we're going to scale down on that, we need troops," didn't say where, and consequently then I just went ahead with the Infantry. And ... while I was at Oahu, uh, we did something but nothing of really ... of ... other than stay in shape to some (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Then eventually, we boarded a ship and headed west, and ended up at Sai ... uh, Saipan, yes.

Ed Metzler: So, you weren't ... you still weren't assigned to the 96th at this point?

Mr. Haerther: I was not, I was still ...

Ed Metzler: You were just kind of a ...

Mr. Haerther: ... a casual, yeah ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: ... or whatever they called it, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah, you were.

Mr. Haerther: Uh hum. And ... at Saipan, the war was over in ... this is 1945, early '45, no!

Ed Metzler: Yeah! Because ...

Mr. Haerther: Yes, it would have been, right after ...

Ed Metzler: ... that's right!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, and ...

Ed Metzler: Saipan did fall, you know, months before.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And ... the island was so called secure, but we still did a little patrol work ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... (unintelligible). And ... uh, that was ... pretty decent living yet. We had tents and we had ... mess hall and all the things that went with it, and ... actually had some ... movies outside on a ... on a bed sheet or a screen.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: And ... uh, there would be oftentimes a big ruckus going on. Some of the Japanese would come in to steal food, but they were harmless otherwise. And then, of course, there'd be all kinds of ... pursuit and things like that, but it didn't amount to anything. Then ... we loaded again and headed south from there and ended up at Ulithi, the big harbor where convoys were ... assembled, and never got off the ... the ship. And I can remember on that part of it ... between the time we left Saipan ... went to Ulithi in the harbor and all the way to Okinawa. Mercy, that was ... many days! I can't tell you how many. We were assigned ... uh, maybe four levels down to a bunk; you could barely walk an aisleway, and ...

Ed Metzler: This was another troop ship type?

Mr. Haerther: Troop ship, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: When you were laying in bed, the bunk above you was ... within ... six, eight inches of your ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: ... your nose, and all.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: And ...

Ed Metzler: Well, that intimate living arrangement (laughter).

Mr. Haerther: ... yeah. And it was pretty casual because ... I can remember we got in the habit then, a few of us, that we didn't sleep down there at night; we'd go up. And the deck, of course, during the day was hot, hot. You just ... uh, couldn't touch the deck, and we'd get in the shade. And at night, we'd climb up ... climb up on some of the lifeboats and sleep on the top of those.

Ed Metzler: It's cooler up there (unintelligible).

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, it was cooler up there, but there was no railing either up there. And I can't, to this day understand ... how ... it was that ... none of us fell off. If we had fallen off, we'd of ... maybe bounced once on the deck and then ... go into the ocean; I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and they wouldn't have missed you until the next morning! (laughter)

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles), that's right!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: But ... I slept a lot of nights up there, and nobody ... cared. And that's after we left Ulithi we were in a convoy then, and ...

Ed Metzler: And still not assigned to the 96th?

Mr. Haerther: No, still not assigned.

Ed Metzler: You're just in the pool?

Mr. Haerther: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: I'll be darned!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And ... as far as you could look, there were ships around you. And the little, I don't know if you call them destroyer escorts, would zigzag in and amongst the ships. And I can remember those guys, oh, they took a beating on that ... the waves and the wake of the ... other ships and all, bouncing through there. And ... I ... in order to be doing something, they organized a boxing team and I volunteered for that and participated in a couple of boxing meets and all. Uh, so, that was something to kind of ...

Ed Metzler: Something to do anyhow!

Mr. Haerther: Something to do, that's right.

Ed Metzler: And it kept you in shape.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Long as you didn't lose too many bouts.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: I ... I drew ... one guy was ... had about a six inch longer reach than I did, and ... kind of got the tar beat out of me on that (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: Uhm, I don't remem ... I don't ... I didn't play any cards or ... shoot any dice or anything like that.

Ed Metzler: At that point, were you writing letters home or ... or getting ... I ... I mean, it's still pretty early on.

Mr. Haerther: I ... I don't think I was. Oh, I did meet ... a fellow from Boone on that ship.

Ed Metzler: Amazing!

Mr. Haerther: He was in the ... medical ... so, I did get to go down and take a ... fresh-water shower at times.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Haerther: Not all the time, but once in a while, he'd ... sneak me down, and the rest of the fellows were taking salt-water showers (laughter). So, that was the only benefit I got there.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), that's amazing; it's a small world though ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... because ... run into another guy from your hometown.

Mr. Haerther: I ... I know, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Half way around the world.

Mr. Haerther: Uh huh. And our dress was so casual. I can remember ... uh, wearing shorts and no ... no top and combat boots.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: Combats boots is the only footwear I had. And I boxed in those, too, so, the footwear wasn't real fancy, yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Yeah (laughter)!

Mr. Haerther: And ... so anyway, we eventually arrived at ... oh! ... I ... back up. At Saipan ... it was still a secret where the next landing was to be, but we had a large map of the Pacific at the ... uh, beer garden or the ... whatever you call it, and the finger smudges on Okinawa was ... pronounced. I mean, that was just about rubbed off the map.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. See, Iwo Jima was already underway.

Mr. Haerther: Iwo was ...

Ed Metzler: Was in mid-February through ...

Mr. Haerther: ... February, yes.

Ed Metzler: ... say, you know, ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... mid-March ...

Mr. Haerther: Uh huh.

Ed Metzler: ... something like that.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, yeah, Okinawa would have to ... well, I think it was either Okinawa or Formosa. I think there was debates about which way they were likely to go.

Mr. Haerther: That's correct, yes, yeah. So, everyone ... whoever started that, I don't know, but I had never heard ... heard of Okinawa and didn't know any better but that was ... a likely place, and ... of course, that's where we ended up then. Uhm, when we got in the harbor, see the landing had already been made, and this was April 1, uh, April Fool's Day ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... Easter.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, Easter, April Fool's Day ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and that was when the landings started.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that's right, yeah. And ... well, I know from the fellows and from history, it was largely unopposed, an easy landing; four divisions. The 96th was on the right; the 7th ... is ... the 96th Army, the 7th Army was ... next to ... uh, Division, excuse me, Division was the next and then ... two Marine Divisions – the 1st and the 6th, so there were four of us ... made this landing ... or of them that made the landing.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And it was assigned that we didn't know where the enemy was, so the 96th immediately turned ... to the south, to the right. And ... uh, the 7th proceeded on and also turned south. And the two Marine Divisions turned ... north. And ... that ... was still, again according to history, there was some ... firing, but it wasn't intense.

Ed Metzler: What was it ... what was it like going in? I mean, it ... you ... did you ... know ... did you have a feeling it wasn't going to be ... uh, quite a lot of resistance, or did you just not know? Were you expecting to be shot up? What do you remember from how you ... what you were thinking as you went in?

Mr. Haerther: Well, since ... the war ... the invasion started on April 1st and I ... this was ... ten or twelve days later.

Ed Metzler: Oh okay.

Mr. Haerther: We were ... pretty sure that everything was going to be alright. And after we landed, we went up to ... where apparently the 10th Army, that was the 10th Army ... all of these four divisions ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... part of it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Uh, up to ... a headquarter area, and I can remember there were a string of pup tents set up and we spent one night there.

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: And then we were processed as to division, and I ... I was processed to join the 96th of 383rd Regiment, A Company. And that's ... where we started to make our ... trek up ... (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Now, were you a ... a rifleman?

Mr. Haerther: I was a rifleman.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And I can remember ... on our way up, we were in a very exposed area, and I didn't know about it at the time, but the Japanese had what we called the ... the "flying boxcar." It was a mortar that was the size of a small drum, and that came in; you could see it tumbling in the sky and landed. He was right on his ... distance, but he was wrong ... off on his angle of ...

Ed Metzler: His line.

Mr. Haerther: ... line, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Line, uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And it exploded off to my right. And I had not developed this reflex (audio is interrupted) I stood and watched it. You know, all of our training ... we were subjected to ... crawling under machine gun fire and ... uh, having concussions go off around us, and supposedly that should kind of clue you for something. But I found that I stood and watched this thing!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: And ... kind of interesting, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Uh, maybe some of the other fellows (unintelligible); I don't remember that, but ... and that, later on, after I saw ... of the replacements come in, I always figured if they lasted ... the first three or four days, they would develop this reflex which I have yet to (unintelligible) fortunately. I hear an explosion, I'm flat on the ground.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?!

Mr. Haerther: The first years, well, it still is with me, uh, if somebody will, around the 4th of July, uh, the fireworks ... somebody shoots a firecracker behind me, I'm ... liable to go flat.

Ed Metzler: You're on the ground.

Mr. Haerther: I ... easily ...

Ed Metzler: Isn't that something?!

Mr. Haerther: ... down on my knees, yeah, uh hum. Once in a while, we ... I'm a member of the MOPH, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and we have a very active chapter and go to a lot of parades. And we will sometimes be with ... uh, some group ahead of us or behind us that'll shoot off something like a firecracker and I have problems with it. I ... I ...

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Haerther: ... I have problems at a military funeral. Uh, when ...

Ed Metzler: Amazing.

Mr. Haerther: ... when they fire. And ... uh, recently I was one ... at one; it was in a church, and they didn't have that but they had recorded fire, and I ... if I hadn't had the railing ahead of me to hold on to, I would of gone down.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that something?!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, and I ... I'll never ... I'll never get rid of that.

Ed Metzler: Well, that's programmed for life.

Mr. Haerther: Yes.

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: That's right.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that something?!

Mr. Haerther: And more recently it seems like ... my elbow joints will react and kind of ... like they come unglued for just a ... brief ... moment. Uh, it's just ... I can't explain it any more than that..so ...

Ed Metzler: It's amazing. So ... so, you were ... assigned to the 96th and, you know, you ... regiment, a company, etcetera, and then ... what happened? Did they send you to the ... quote ... front line ... end quote.

Mr. Haerther: Yes. Yes, we went ... we joined them and we were ... at a slight reserved position, but it was, you know, a hundred yards behind the front line.

Ed Metzler: That's not very far (laughter)!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And then moved into the line and started the ... normal thing that you do for ... attack and ... uh, the Japanese were ... were great for trying to infiltrate. And at night was the worst; they would try and infiltrate. And some of them would try to ... crawl in on their belly, and others would ... come in standing up,

and some of them could say, “(unintelligible),” pretty dog gone clearly, and expect to get in. Even some of them would ... get an American helmet, so the silhouette showed different than their flap ... flat hat. And we ... just didn’t take any chances. Anybody walking around upright, we fired. And ... that’s ... kind of the ... how ... how the ... alertness became.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: Then ... oh, we had been in ... combat a while, and ...

Ed Metzler: So now, does combat include ... going out in sorties and infiltrating the enemy or is it just stand up and shoot and push them back?

Mr. Haerther: Just ... stand up and shoot; push them back. See, our advance ... if we were behind, uh, everything to the south was escarpment after escarpment. Except, once in a while there’d be a valley and a little mountain over here, but all of it was ... no open ground, so to speak. Uh, we didn’t really like to follow the valleys too much because we knew they were mined. So that ... most of it was up and down. And ... uh, those ... those were the things we’d try and push out. Once in a while, we’d send a squad out ... to try and see what’s up this valley. I watched some activities of a company to the side of us. We had an 03 ... besides the M-1s, we had a 03 Springfield, bolt-action with a scope on it, and we had a ten-power scope for spotting and all, and I was on that ... ten-power scope one day working with a fellow who was manning the 03, and I saw a company on our right ... had a squad that was going up a ... a valley, and ... I ... they were ... way out there, too far away from me to shout to them or anything like that. And they ... as they moved up, these bushes that were at the start of this little ... ravine opened up; Japanese came out of their ... shot all these guys in the back and then retreated back in. So, that was the case there. I’ve gone back to Okinawa twice. I went back in 1995 which was the fiftieth anniversary, and it was a very good thing because we got to see ... the memorial that the Okinawa people had constructed. They had named it the Cornerstone of Peace. And it’s really well done. They have a ... a wall with all of the names of the ... uh, Americans, the Japanese and the civilians that were ... killed there. And ... I was able to find the name of my company commander. I was able ... my

platoon commander. Uh, a cousin of mine who was in the 7th ... to the left of me ... all of their names are ...

Ed Metzler: They were all ... killed?

Mr. Haerther: Uh, they were all killed, yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Man! You lost a lot of ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Leaders and even ... some fam ... some ...

Mr. Haerther: Oh yes. Uh, during that battle, we lost ... we had two company commanders killed; numerous ... Second Lieutenant ... pla ... platoon commanders, uh, Colonel Edwin May, Colonel of the 383rd was killed, uh, General Easley was killed, and then eventually General Buckner was killed.

Ed Metzler: Oh yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Of the 190th Army. But I ... I learned that my cousin was in the 7th. You see, everything was censored, but it came through that ... unit that he was in ... was in the letter not censored out but didn't say where he was. Well, I knew the 7th was on our left, and I got the Regiment and all of that, so ... I went ... behind the lines. One day I thought ... I'm going to try and work my way over there and see him, and I did. I got up there and he had been killed the day before.

Ed Metzler: My word!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, so that ... it ... it's ... you get ... I grieved over it, but at the same time, I saw so much of this ... in our area, that it just ... it was an un ... unexpected thing. It saddened me, but ... you ... it ... it goes on.

Ed Metzler: So, what level of casualties is your outfit sustaining during this period of time? I mean, what was your observation?

Mr. Haerther: A Company, by history, had seventy-four killed and the count of the wounded ... we don't know for sure, but it was generally about a ratio of four to one.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: So, we probably had ... upwards of two hundred and fifty that were wounded. Now, all of these wounded doesn't mean that they never came back. They might be back ... for a week and then come back on line.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: So, we were always understrength. Uh, we were never quite up to it. Then ... none of this shows on my military record, but ... Lieutenant Dent, Second Lieutenant Dent, who was our ... platoon ... leader ...

Ed Metzler: D-e-n-t?

Mr. Haerther: D-e-n-t.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Haerther: ... uh, he was a southern boy from southeast somewhere ... somewhere. Uh, he came to me one day and he said, "We're down to one medic for the company and we need another medic back up." He said, "Will you go back to the collection hospital, a field hospital, and get a day or so of training and come back and act in that capacity?" Well, it's hard to say no; I said yes I would; went back there; met Lieutenant Samuel Nabel (sp?), uh, Captain Nabel who was a surgeon ... head of that ... I've forgot the designation of it, but ... I ... I got a bag with the medical supplies. I didn't have the whole blood, but I had all of the other ... compression bandages and sulfa without ... we treated and the whole thing was stressed is ... uh, try and stop the bleeding or whatever it took to do it; try and apply sulfa; try to keep them from going into shock, and if they were alert and in pain, had ... give them morphine, you know, and evacuate them. Uhm ...

Ed Metzler: So ... so, you had how long ... how much training here for this?

Mr. Haerther: One day.

Ed Metzler: How did that go? That training?

Mr. Haerther: I guess just plain, common sense. You do what you think you should do and go back up. And ... because so many new fellows coming into the company, they regarded me as ... Doc, they called me. And I wasn't. But..

Ed Metzler: A one-day doctor (laughter)!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. I think in reality, I ... first of all, I'm not trying to boast, but dog gone it, I would make it a point, when they called, "Medic!" to go ... regardless. And consequently, at the ... when ... the war was ... over, uhm, I got a letter from Captain Nabel, and he wanted me to ... receive a medal which I ... eventually got the Bronze Star for. So, he felt that ... I had performed well up there. And I

think, more than anything, I ... helped the morale of the company knowing darned well that somebody was going to come and try and get them ... and help them ... if they were wounded.

Ed Metzler: There was somebody there, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. Yeah, I ... I guess I had the nerve to do it. And I didn't take foolish ... uh, things that ... would cause my death, but I thought if at all possible, I'm going to get it done.

Ed Metzler: Now, how long were you ... rifleman before you converted into the medic role? I mean, was that weeks or ...

Mr. Haerther: It ... it wasn't ... it wasn't a ... convert to; it was a joint thing. I still carried a carbine instead of an M-1 because of the weight; I carried a sidearm, so ... I ...

Ed Metzler: Got it!

Mr. Haerther: ... stood guard with my companion in the foxhole; did my dut ... duty as a rifleman, and somebody called, "Medic!" I ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, then you put your medic hat on (unintelligible).

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah. So, there was no ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Haerther: ... Red Cross arm band or ...

Ed Metzler: Fact, that's the last thing you wanted on you.

Mr. Haerther: That's the last thing, yeah. It wasn't ...

Ed Metzler: That and a Second Lieuey, two little white bars ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... are the two things you would have stayed away from.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. The Japanese went after the officers, the radiomen and the medics; those were prime targets.

Ed Metzler: You bet!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. So, uh, as I said, that doesn't appear on my ... and the other medic, qualified medic, uh, 'cause I was not a medic, I was just a volunteer, uh, he ... was injured and was no longer there, so I was it ... in the company. And ... what Lieutenant Dent said, "We're not going to get any replacements ... for the medical end of it, so somebody's going to have to help out and do this." So ...

Ed Metzler: So, how well did you hold up under this ... role of trying to patch these badly ... wounded?

Mr. Haerther: I ... I can almost to this day still ... smell the blood and gun powder mix; there's a ... certain pungent smell that comes from that, and that I can almost remember that as being ... the thing that impresses me the most. As far as the gore and everything with is, I handled it well. I ... I ... it didn't seem to ... cause me to come unraveled or anything like that. The worst thing was ... to see somebody ... twelve inches from you killed and you ... and I wasn't ... injured. I ... this bothers me up to this day. I had a fellow who was ... uh, eighteen inches in front of me, and ... he had some premonition or something ... above his head was ... a little lower than me, and he said, "You ought to get down," and I did. I moved to the right, and ... I looked down at myself and there was blood all over my ... front of my fatigues. And I ... I said, "Where have I been hit?" I ... I think I said it out loud. And I looked up ... and he ... or he had sustained a wound on ... the left side of his head that took part of his skull away ... which would have been right in my line of fire. He saved my life and never knew it. And I can remember ... I had two guys in a litter and I held that area with compressed bandages ... back to the collection hospital, and ... I sat there and ... cried a little bit. Excuse me.

Ed Metzler: And ... and understandably so. What a ... what an emotional ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And this is still something that bothers me at night. But ... most of these were ... wounds that ... I ... I really ... when I was finally wounded, I thought that I was charmed ... that I was never going to get wounded. I just ... had that feeling; I ... I ... I was in the ... we made an attack on a forward slope; it was a long forward slope and there was no cover, and ... I came to an area ... uh, the front guys said ... were ahead of me a little ways; I was just looking for wounded ... as well as I was armed; ready to protect,

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Haerther: And ... here was a little depression in the ground, and it wasn't ... more than ... oh golly, twelve inches deep and maybe it was an old shell wound, uh, hole or something like that, and two fellows were there ... in that little depression, and

so I thought, "I'm going to stop here and see what's going on." So, uh, I got down in it and these fellows were sitting ... almost half way upright, very exposed, and there was ... one of them was a radioman. The radio was just laying there on the ground, so I picked the radio up; I was going to use it ... to find out if we couldn't get ... some mortars in because there was ... some firing up ahead. And when I did ... extended that antenna, uhm, that's when a machine gunner ... started on ... my position especially. Well, the fellow here to my right ... he started to get up and I grabbed for him, and I said, "Get down, get down!" And he panicked, he must have been ... fairly new and ... well, he was riddled right across the neck and ... uh, died instantly. Well, then the machine gunner ... zeroed in on me, and I can remember I was laying flat on my stomach just as flat as I could get, and my head was turned towards the bank or towards him, and I can remember, "Well, if a round comes through and it's practically all expended, I still don't want to get hit in the face. If I could turn my head ... the other way, the helmet comes farther down on the back ... uhm, I might, you know, be ... be able to deflect." But I was afraid to turn my head; I thought it might be a little high for the ... 'cause he was ... by that time knocking dirt of ... that shelf on me. And ... but I did get my head turned, and ... uh, I think ... eventually he thought that I ... he had killed me because ... the firing stopped ... or else ... it was such sustained fire, and I'm sure his machine might have ... he did ... on ... to the point where he had to quit anyway. And ... was I scared? I didn't seem to be. I was ... I was just in a situation I couldn't control or do anything about it. So, I wasn't ... wailing; I wasn't ... shaking; I was just ... I ... I was resigned that I was going to do whatever I had to do.

Ed Metzler: And you didn't panic.

Mr. Haerther: And I didn't panic, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Like the other guy did.

Mr. Haerther: And ... why I had that built into me, I don't know. This is ... just a different ... in people. Uhm, I don't remember ... uh, being so that I lost my faculties. Uh (chuckle), I didn't pee in my pants and things like that, you know? I just ... uh, you ... you accepted the inevitable ... whatever happened. Uh, a faith God, I

can't say it, you know, you don't pray during battle ... during those kind of conditions ... because there was too much going on; you pray afterwards.

Ed Metzler: Right. Maybe before and maybe after ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... but not during as ...

Mr. Haerther: That's right.

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: So, I'm not saying I'm unique in that way; there had to be a lot of other fellows that were same as that ... that had that ability to ... uh, accept whatever comes.

Ed Metzler: What kind of ... reaction ... did you observe when you were playing your medic role ... of how much the wounded depended on you and appreciated you and what you did? You have any thoughts on that?

Mr. Haerther: They would sometimes ask me questions, "How bad am I wounded," and things like that. I'd just tell them what I saw, and ... and left it at that. I knew I couldn't do anything more than that. Uh, if I could stop the bleeding, they had a pretty good chance. If they were conscious, that was great!

Ed Metzler: How did you get them back to the back of the line? Did you ... you and somebody else (unintelligible) ...

Mr. Haerther: (Throat clearing)

Ed Metzler: ... carry him out on litters or what?

Mr. Haerther: I usually got two other fellows ...

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: ... I was accompanying the wounded person there by ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... by trying to hold the wound or something like that against the vibration.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: So, yes, I ... I had a litter ... with me all the time, and they ... I'd get a couple of guys ... we'd go.

Ed Metzler: Now, where was the ... the action, if I can use that term? The hottest and heaviest? You went through multiple ... I'll use the term campaigns or had multiple hills and ridges and that kind of stuff that you guys were ... pushing

through. When was it the worst? Where was it the worst? What do you remember about that?

Mr. Haerther: Probably when ... Lieutenant Dent was killed. We were on a ridge that was so ... steep and we were so close to the enemy ... that we could hear the little pump of the knee mortar ... when it went ... left the tube. It'd go *thump!* And then we'd look up in the air, and it was like a baseball; you could follow it down, and maybe ... jump a little bit to the side. Uh, that was ... and they were really firing then, and in that case, Lieutenant Dent was killed and others were killed on that.

Ed Metzler: From the mortar; is it mortar fire that was ... or do you know?

Mr. Haerther: I think he got rifle fire on that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, if I remember it correctly. Other times ... it was times like Charlie Hill which is the exposed hill that I was talking about, and ... uh, oh, there are other things that weren't quite as dramatic. Well, one time ... (throat clearing), excuse me, we were set up in a ... a V con ... configuration because of the little trail going through the center of that V, and ... this was ... late afternoon. No! I was ... almost twilight, and ... it looked like civilians ... in the front line, six or eight of them across the front in ... in traditional native clothing ... carrying a white flag. And ... we just let them come. We thought, "Well, here's the first ... that we may take as ... POW, prisoners of war, and when they got real close to us, the front one leaned over, and they had machine guns strapped on their back and the ones behind started firing on us.

Ed Metzler: So, a machine gun on the back ... leaned over ... became a machine gun platform, and got ... and the person behind then started firing the machine gun.

Mr. Haerther: That's correct.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that amazing?!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And then they disbursed out, and of course, there was some fire fight with that. But ... this was a thing ... the mentality you had to understand ... that ... they were ... they were honored to sacrifice their life if they could kill ... one or more of you.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: So, it was a different form. In going back, in 1995, and then I went back ... Betty, my wife, and I ... took our three daughters and their husbands, so there were eight of us ... we went back in 2001, and at that time, we were able to ... see ... many, many of the caves, tunnels that ... we thought when we were behind a ridge ... that we were out of sight; we weren't. They could see us from some ... from somewhere. So, we were able to appreciate how vulnerable we ... we were.

Ed Metzler: And you really didn't appreciate that until you went back.

Mr. Haerther: That's right! Yeah, we didn't know those things.

Ed Metzler: That must have been an eerie feeling.

Mr. Haerther: It ... it was. But at the same time, going back ... not so much in '95, but in 2001 I was able to go to ... to exact spots, although ... the whole island has been transformed and built up and ... Naha is quite modern; Shuri Castle had been restored; we went through it ... and all. Uhm, that's the first that I stood on some of these ridges and could see both oceans because I'd never ... saw them before. We never stood up. And ... and being on some of those spots and seeing ... the beauty that has been restored to the island, by nature and by the ... civilians, the Okinawa people are ver ... very friendly people. And ... it was ... it was very gratifying. And I got a lot of comfort from that, and I think it ... it made it easier for me. And that's only been ... twelve years ago.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: (Unintelligible) I got.

Ed Metzler: Well, you hear a lot about ... Shuri and Shuri Castle and ... uh, combat there. How ... how tough was that for your outfit when you ... 'cause you were part of that, were you not?

Mr. Haerther: Yes, yes we were. Yeah, the 96 was in the ... uh, after the first week of May ... uh, that was ... month ... five weeks after the invasion.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Uh, one of the Marine Divisions came down and joined us on the right. That would be on the Naha side.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And we were next to them, we were the 96th. The 7th was next to us, and then the 77th show ... just somewhere in there. The 77th had made a pre-invasion of two island, Ie-Shima and another one off ... the coast there, and they'd discovered all of these suicide boats, wooden boats, that they were going to ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: The kamikaze boats.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: So, they joined us. And so we were ... uh, we were five divisions then ... on line, I think, four ... four ... four divisions, I think. But anyway, uhm, what was I going to say?

Ed Metzler: Well, we were talking about ... what the combat was like at Shuri.

Mr. Haerther: Oh! At Shuri, yes. Uhm, you probably know this ... or have heard this. See, the 32nd Japanese army, their main headquarters was under ... the Shuri Castle area, that tunnel there. And that tunnel exited down at the ... coast.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And ...

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: ... I walked through that, and they had ... a tremendous facility there – generators, hospital, uh, all of this sort of thing was under there. And ... uh, we never knew it at the time, we just, you know, moved on past it. But Shuri Castle was leveled, of course. It ... because it was a ... a defensive position for them.

Ed Metzler: Absolutely!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And the Cornerstone of Peace is ... south and a little bit ... uh, little bit west of Shuri ... Valley ... down there. And it's ... very beautiful.

Ed Metzler: Did you have any ... interaction with the Marine divisions that came down to help? I mean, were they ...

Mr. Haerther: They were ... we ... we joined them on the ... on the ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... our right, their left, yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And ... I'm sure the command ... was ... uh, communicating.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. So, did that help when you got the extra manpower down there?

Mr. Haerther: Oh, surely! Yes, yes. We had ... more strength then.

Ed Metzler: Because the south end of the island was the toughest part.

Mr. Haerther: (Throat clearing), yes, oh by far! Yeah. The ... north, I read ... I don't know if you've ever read Ernie Pyles ...

Ed Metzler: I've not, but I've heard of it.

Mr. Haerther: The Final ... The Final ... whatever it was, and uhm, because he had spent ... all of his time in Europe with the Army Infantry, he decided to go with the Marines, and he went north with them. And he describes in his book, uh, of the ... the burrough, yeah, I guess ... the ... uh, not mules, the donkeys or something like that ... they had up there and the fun they had riding them, and ... the bicycles they'd find that was ... with ... one pedal off, you know, and ... at ... we never had ... any of that.

Ed Metzler: You didn't have any of those fun times, did you?

Mr. Haerther: And, yeah, (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Haerther: And I've had ... I've heard ... uh, or read books where they talked about candy bars ... that troops had. We never saw ... candy bars.

Ed Metzler: So, you're eating field rations the whole time here, huh?

Mr. Haerther: We were C-rat ... we had one hot meal, and the rest of the time was C-rations. (Cough), at the very ... towards the end, we got a few K-rations which was a dried food in a box, but the rest was ...

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: ... the C-rations – meat and beans was ... most popular, and the others I can't remember ... probably has of some sort.

Ed Metzler: So, you're sleeping in foxholes and ... all during this period or what?

Mr. Haerther: Yes, yes. Uh, because ...

Ed Metzler: Because digging in as you went forward or ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, a lot of times we'd occupy Japanese ... positions.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And ... uh, not all the time, but we would. And it was sometimes hard to make the holes deeper because of shale there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: So, you'd only get ...

Ed Metzler: It's a lot of rocks and stuff.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh huh. And ... but we ... we ... dug some new ones as well. Uh ...

Ed Metzler: What's your feeling about ... the natives and the role that they played – both positive and negative, I guess, in trying to take the island?

Mr. Haerther: Well, there again, the Marines at the north end had a lot of interaction with the ... natives, and it was ... I think good all the way through. Uh, unfortunately, I read ... that the ... headquarter area of the 10th Army which was midway ... up the island or up near the landing area ... there were typically a lot of non-combatants back there, and uh, there was rape of women and things like that going on back there.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: That (unintelligible) bad mark for ... for ... uh, Army to have.

Ed Metzler: Any army, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah. Uhm, we ... we would have taken a prisoner if we were sure that they were a genuine surrender, but we never took one prisoner ... up until the time I ... I was wounded on June 13th; the island was secured on the 23rd. And my company commander, Erik Newman (sp?) came to me after I was wounded that morning and said, "Well, this'll be over in a few days," 'cause we were within ... I don't know, a mile and a half of the south end ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... and he was killed that afternoon.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: So ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: ... uh, as ... up until then, we had never taken a prisoner.

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing), what role did the caves and the ... fact that the ... the Japanese had such a system underground? I mean, how did that impact ... what you had to do? Were you going into caves and that kind of thing, or how did that work?

Mr. Haerther: They had some of us, we called them Tunnel Rats ...

Ed Metzler: Tunnel Rats.

Mr. Haerther: ... that would do that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Uhm, I never did. I did go into one cave, uhm, maybe two of them, something like that ... where there was some ... civilians that were wounded, and I treated some of the ... Okinawa civilians that were wounded.

Ed Metzler: Okay, in your medic role?

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. One of the ... elderly gentlemen, I can remember, had his right arm blown off.

Ed Metzler: Goodness gracious!

Mr. Haerther: And I ...

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Haerther: ... put sulfa on that, and a ... compression wound on it and all ... although it had coagulated pretty much on it's own. And ... observed these ten or twelve people there, ranging from children to old, elderly people. And they were frightened you could tell. But we just ... passed on 'cause I knew ... the other ones behind us would feed them and ... take care of them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And that happened a couple of times. Other than that, we didn't see the other civilians that were ... back of the lines because the Japanese ... uh, had brainwashed them to where ... they ... would have preferred death rather than surrender because of the torture ... would be inflicted upon them. And ... unfortunately, a lot of those were killed because ... as the Japanese retreated, they'd push them out of the caves and then they'd be in the open ... and ... our artillery would get them.

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing), a lot of the caves ... I thought I had read somewhere were ... actually burial caves for, you know, like ... cemeteries (unintelligible).

Mr. Haerther: Oh, the tombs!

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing), right!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, the Turtleback Tombs. Yeah, they had an opening that ... you would have to get on your hands and knees to go through, and once you got inside you could stand because it was built into a hillside. And that's where they got the Turtleback name; they were covered with earth on the top. And in there there would be shelves. There would be ... uh, the first shelf might be ... uh, oh, three ... thirty inch ... three feet off the ground, then there'd be another shelf and there would be an urn with the ashes, and a skull would be placed on top of that urn.

Ed Metzler: Oh! Did you actually go into some of those?

Mr. Haerther: Oh yeah! Yeah. We didn't go in there ... uh, to fight from them because it was a ... dead-end place. I mean, you're going to ... gassed or ... or shrapnel or something like that. But when we had some intense ... uh, storms that nothing was moving, we'd go in for ... a brief period of time.

Ed Metzler: Just for shelter then?

Mr. Haerther: Uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Did the Japanese tend to use those as defensive positions or not?

Mr. Haerther: I can't ... I can't tell you; I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: But most of them were intact; they were standing. And Tombstone Ridge had a whole ... row of those that were there.

Ed Metzler: Was that one of the tougher ridges to take ... Tombstone?

Mr. Haerther: That was ... a tough ridge, yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about it.

Mr. Haerther: Well, it ... there was some sheer ... escarpments there, and ... uh, it ... involved pretty rigorous ... ascent to make those, but we did prevail on that.

Ed Metzler: You must have felt pretty exposed clamoring up ...

Mr. Haerther: Oh, very much so, yes, yeah. Uhm, I don't think that the tombs ... helped the Japanese that much because it was not a place that they wanted to be trapped in.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it was a dead-end and they knew it, so ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. Because they had all of this other tunnel system which ... Okinawa was ... a delaying action as much as possible ... so that they could ... get more time to develop the defenses on ... in ... Japan.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: The homeland.

Ed Metzler: The home islands, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: I don't know ... if I can tell this accurately, but General Ushijima was the commander of the 32nd Japanese army. He had a Colonel Choe, C-h-o-e-e who was ... a ... a real radical, and he was the one that was always one of two ... what ... counter-offense ... counter-offense; let's go on the offense, you know? And Ushijima listened to him, and finally after they had done this ... uhm, I don't know, a couple of them ... multiple times ... their losses were so great. There was a Colonel Yahara who ... tried to talk Ushijima out of it. He said, "You should fight our set up as a defensive ... situation." Well, in the final days, Ushijima and Choe committed hari-kari.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And Ushijima had given ... instructions to Yahara, he said, "Try and dress like a native and pass yourself as a school teacher so that after you're captured, then try and ... this engagements over, try and escape and get to the homeland and tell them how ... the Americans go on the offensive ... "

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Haerther: ... , "as much as you could." And Yahara was discovered then because too many people knew what he looked like. So then, he was identified as such. And after the war was over, uh, I've read this in history ... uh, he ... went to his homeland and he was shunned because he ... did not ...

Ed Metzler: Commit suicide.

Mr. Haerther: ... commit suicide.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Didn't give up his life.

Ed Metzler: Was there any air support ... during any of this operation from fighters, napalm, uh ...

Mr. Haerther: Yes. Yes, we ... we would ... on our own, take some gasoline can ... barrels and put a composition C on them with a fuse, and ... roll them down the hill, and they'd explode and that would be a ... a form of ... napalm ...

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Haerther: ... on ... condition ... uh, situation there. Uhm, our own artillery, they meant well, but they tried to lower their ... well, as they were firing, they were just clearing the ridge, and as the barrel heated, apparently, it would lose a little velocity, and I can hear yet how that swish sound ... started getting weaker. And I ... a couple of times I called to ... fellows that were just within ... fifty feet of me, "Get down off that ridge." And ... the next minute a shell would explode right on the ridge. It's ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... then we got on the radio, you know, and ... raise their fire and things like that. So, that ... that happened on occasion.

Ed Metzler: And what about aircraft?

Mr. Haerther: Uh, aircraft ... there was a movie made, I wish I could ... remember the title of it; it came out ... in the late '40s, before 1950, because I left Iowa in '50 to come to Colorado ... to move to Colorado, and I can remember going to see that and that was where ... the ... Navy dive bombers would ... fly towards us and release bombs on that ... reverse slope, and then pull out.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And that was right where we were.

Ed Metzler: Did you ... and did you see that when you were ...

Mr. Haerther: Oh yeah! Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, the Corsairs ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... they were ... I think they used the, you know, the Corsair ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... in (unintelligible) ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... in particular for that.

Mr. Haerther: We saw them coming and ... release their bombs and ... go on over us.

Ed Metzler: What about ... uhm, armor, tanks, that kind of thing? Was it too rough for that or what?

Mr. Haerther: Very ... very little. If a tank came up ... of our own, uh, it would draw fire, and the conditions were such that ... it just wasn't tank warfare.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: It was ... the mud in May made it difficult; the ... uh, the terrain just didn't ... lend itself to it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Too mountainous it sounds like.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: What was your closest call?

Mr. Haerther: Probably that machine gunner. Or the one where the guy saved my life and said, "Get down." Although, there was another time ... you know (chuckle), uh, I don't know if anyone else is ... your bodily functions ... your ur ... to urinate ... is pretty easy, but to have a bowel movement, you had to get ... you wanted to get away from the people a little bit, and you'd find yourself maybe pretty vulnerable. I was squatted down one time and ... a bullet hit right here, six inches from me on the right, and it just ... you don't hear a whine of a bullet, it just goes thud ... in the soil. And ... before I ... I thought ... I ... we knew it takes about five seconds ... from one ... round until they ... act ...

Ed Metzler: Till the next one (laughter).

Mr. Haerther: Till the next one.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: (Unintelligible), the next one was ... six inches on my left (chuckle), so then ... I was moving from there. But that's ...

Ed Metzler: Time to move on.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), holy mackerel!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you never think about ... those kinds of things.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah! And that ...

Ed Metzler: But I mean, all of that's got to go on (unintelligible).

Mr. Haerther: That's right! It's just ... that's just ... part of living.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about when you got wounded and how that happened.

Mr. Haerther: Well, we were ... uh, make ... ready to kick off ... another offense.

Ed Metzler: So, where were you on the island now at this point? You were ...

Mr. Haerther: Pretty ... pretty close to Ozato (sp?).

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you're getting down towards the end then.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Down on the south.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, way down, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Ozato?

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: O-z-a-t-o, okay.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's shown actually here on this map right here.

Mr. Haerther: Oh it is, okay, yeah, yeah. (Throat clearing), and ... we were just getting ready to move out when they started ... throwing shells down on us, and a piece of shell came and ... uh, hit me.

Ed Metzler: Where?

Mr. Haerther: Uh, I had raised my arm to pick up a litter, and it went acr ... it took all of my fatigue out of here, so it was a pretty big piece, and I have a laceration here and some small fragments in my shoulder and back.

Ed Metzler: Okay, shoulder, back and the underside of your upper arm, then?

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Your right arm?

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. If ... if this had happened ... weeks earlier, I don't think I would have been evacuated.

Ed Metzler: They'd just bandage you up and say, "Get on back (unintelligible) (chuckles)."

Mr. Haerther: I would have probably been back there for ... a matter of days until ... it closed enough so that ... infection wouldn't set in 'cause everything was dirty. We

never ... brushed our teeth; we never washed. It just, you know, same fatigues and all ... it ...

Ed Metzler: You went a while without a shower, didn't you?

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles), quite a lot! Almost two and a half months, yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, so ... anyway, and I think part of this was Captain Nabel, too. He knew I had had ... some pretty harrowing ... experience. I think he might have said, "Well, you've done your share." I ... I don't know ... if that entered into it or not. I knew him, and he had the authority to do that, to evac. We ... it was too muddy to go back. I ... I was ambulatory, so ... uhm, it was too muddy to get any equipment, uh, I mean any vehicle ... up and down the island, north and south. And we went down to the shore, and we got on a little landing craft. I don't know the description of this craft because ... when we were loaded, we only had about ... eight inches of freeboard (?). And we went up the island, and in the vicinity of ...

Ed Metzler: Were there other wounded on the ... on the craft with you?

Mr. Haerther: Oh yeah, we were loaded, yeah, uh hum. And ... I spent one night and ... in a tent hospital ... there ... in mid-Okinawa ... wherever it was, and ... that night the kamikazes came in and the Navy, as you know, took a terrible beating on ... Okinawa. And ... flak was ... our own flak or Jap ... Japanese, anyway, a piece of flak came through the tent; left a hole this big, and went right through the body of the guy ... three feet away from me. And I can remember at that ...

Ed Metzler: Even in ... even when you're wounded (chuckles) ...

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles)

Ed Metzler: ... and you're ... and you're supposedly back behind the lines ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... guys next to you are ... catching it.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. I, at the time, thought, "Well, I ... I think I should just get dressed and go back up the front line where I can ... keep my own protection instead of being on ... like this ... vulnerable to it."

Ed Metzler: Did you think you were going to get through all of this ... alive or what was your mental ... position?

Mr. Haerther: I ... I never thought about dying. It was not something that I was ... I just accepted whatever came, I guess.

Ed Metzler: So, you almost resigned to ...

Mr. Haerther: Whatever will be. Yeah, I ... I ...

Ed Metzler: What about the people around you? Were they that way as well?

Mr. Haerther: (Sigh), I'd say most of them were; there were some that ... had lost their nerve. Uh, we called it battle fatigue. If some of them really came unraveled and went back to the hospital, uh, the ... the field hospital, the collection hospital or whatever you want to call it, they might allow them to stay there or move back a little farther to a facility and be expected to come back on line within ... a week, four or five days, something like that.

Ed Metzler: So, give them a rest ... but not ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah. Uh, I ... know of one fellow who was ... quote ... cleaning his rifle when it went off and shot his foot off, so you know ...

Ed Metzler: Amazing.

Mr. Haerther: ... so, we don't know what ... what it was – deliberate or ... or not, I don't know; only know of one ... out of all the ones that we had.

Ed Metzler: And we don't ... and you don't know whether it ...

Mr. Haerther: No.

Ed Metzler: ... true, but it does sound ... like ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... maybe ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... maybe not.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that's right.

Ed Metzler: What do you think about the Japanese? You've almost done hand to hand with them, and you've seen some of the things they did.

Mr. Haerther: I ... find it ... very hard ... to ... believe that they ... had that much ... desire ... to protect the emperor that they had. It was all ... ingrained around ... the honor to

die for the emperor. So, I can't understand ... how they would have that ... ingrained feeling that they would ... rather than die ... than ... return home.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever figure it out?

Mr. Haerther: No sir. My ... family, we have a company that ... we have a water treatment thing, and we ... do some business around the country, and we were doing ... did business with a company in Oregon and the owner was a ... Japanese man who was probably ... two or three years ... younger than me. So, he was not in the army, but I'm sure he was ... trained to, and ... I got this from ... an American manager there that he was in the company of him, and someone who had been in the U.S. Army said to him, "I treated a lot of your ... uh, civilian people ... for wounds and that sort of thing." I don't know what he's referring to or where, and this man said, "Yes, and you killed a lot of ... our women and children." So, he was bitter yet ... against the U.S.

Ed Metzler: He was still ... stuck with that.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, and was not of that ... front line fighting age. He was prepared to ... and the thing that was ingrained in us ... when we went back to Okinawa, in the museums they showed these spears and the things that every woman and child was prepared ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: ... one life for ... one American. So ... it's ... completely different than our mentality ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... here in the U.S. Unfortunately, uh, fortunately, most of the ... American population was very patriotic at all, but unfortunately, there was some ... black market, profiteers and things like that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, there's always a few bad apples it seems.

Mr. Haerther: Yep, that's right.

Ed Metzler: So, you survived being re-wounded when you were in the hospital (chuckles) ...

Mr. Haerther: Well ...

Ed Metzler: ... tent.

Mr. Haerther: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And ... what happened then?

Mr. Haerther: Uh, I spent just one night there, and then they flew us out to Guam. I was in the ... the 246th ... General Hospital in Guam. I spent ... oh, maybe a month there, three weeks to a month, and then ... went down ... to ... Saipan to a ... casual outfit. We were scheduled to return ... I was scheduled to return back to my outfit which had then ... after Okinawa ... went back to the Philippines. And we were ... or they were getting ready to ... do the invasion of Japan.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! I'm sure you were looking forward to that, weren't you?!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. When I was on Saipan, that's when the A-bomb was dropped, the two of them, and ... the surrender came, and there was no celebration with our groups there.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: How come?

Mr. Haerther: We just ... we ... we ... just relaxed and a big sigh of relief. I don't remember any firearms.

Ed Metzler: You had been, uh, you had rejoined your outfit ...

Mr. Haerther: No.

Ed Metzler: ... at that point or not?

Mr. Haerther: No, I was still ... then I was back to ... a ... I don't know what it was called ... to be reassign ... rejoined to my outfit.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Kind of ...

Mr. Haerther: So, I knew no one really.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Haerther: Living in ... like a six-man tent or an eight-man tent ... something like that ... on Saipan.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. And ... I had no uniform. It was kind of hard to take ... when I was in the hospital at Guam, I had no shaving equipment, no ... toothbrush, nothing at all, and ... I know the Red Cross did an awful lot of good things, but they came by

and wanted me ... to pay for a toothbrush. And I hadn't been paid ... since I got off the ship to go to Okinawa.

Ed Metzler: The Red Cross wanted to sell you a toothbrush?

Mr. Haerther: That's right. I don't know if they ever gave me one then or not.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: And ... got down to Saipan, and the only clothing I had was some shorts, some boots, probably a T-shirt, no ... no headwear, and we were free to roam. Another fellow and I ... caught ... a ... a ride in a jeep, and ... they dropped us off and ... we were waiting for another ride to kind of go around the island. A jeep came down with a Lieutenant, and he said, "What are you guys doing here out of uniform?" And I said, "Well, this ... is all we have. We don't have any other clothing." And he said, "Well, a General's office is right up here; if he sees you, that's going to be a lot of hell to pay." Well, he loaded us up, and took us somewhere; I don't remember where.

Ed Metzler: But they still didn't give you any clothing ...

Mr. Haerther: They still didn't ... (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ... just got you out of sight!

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that's probably ... (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: Then, I got an early out after the war was over. My father was injured, pretty badly, back home and ...

Ed Metzler: What? An accident on the farm or ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Haerther: Uh, I think an animal ... got him, a bull or something like that. And so, that's the first that I was given ... clothing ... that ... was ... presentable. And let's see, oh yeah, came home then on a ... on a ship, non-stop to San Francisco, and came into ... San Francisco Bay.

Ed Metzler: How'd that feel? How did that feel to be coming ...

Mr. Haerther: It ... it felt ... uh, big relief. We did not go ... oh, we could see San Francisco; we went to (pause) Ellis Island.

Ed Metzler: It's probably at Treasure Island.

Mr. Haerther: No, no, no. Huh?

Ed Metzler: Probably Treasure Island.

Mr. Haerther: Treasure Island!

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's in ... that's in the bay there.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, Treasure Island. And we could see the light of San Francisco. We were there, I don't know, for processing or quarantine or what it was. And I noticed the buildings that were there ... had a lot of ... Chinese writing or Japanese writing on the walls, and come to find out later, that was the Ellis Island of the west. So, that was being used ... probably when they were building the Transcontinental Railroad, and from there on.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Haerther: Never knew it at the time.

Ed Metzler: I'll be darned.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah. And then ... I was put on a train; didn't know where I was going; ended up at Denver, at Fort Logan, and that's where I was discharged. And I had a cousin living in Denver; I went to see him.

Ed Metzler: Now, this what ... in '46 or still in '45?

Mr. Haerther: This would have been ... '45.

Ed Metzler: Late.

Mr. Haerther: Right about Christmas time.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, uh huh. And ... then I ... went down and bought a ... oh, well, the processing took a while. And ... oh, I should back up. When I was on Saipan, uh, I ... I couldn't eat; I was just full all the time. Well, I was ... intestinal worms, so they purged me and ... uh, jungle rot; I had jungle rot terrible on my legs.

Ed Metzler: So, that's just like a fungal ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah. And for years, probably five years, in the summertime, my hands would crack and break open and bleed ... in the ... in the joints.

Ed Metzler: In between your fingers?

Mr. Haerther: In between the fingers, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And why is that do you think?

Mr. Haerther: Uh, that was yet ... continuation of the ... skin condition ... that went with that.

Ed Metzler: Did you finally shake that?

Mr. Haerther: Finally went down to ... that hospital in Des Moines, and they ... used UV or something like that. In fact, I ... I should have followed up. When I was at Fort Logan, the doctor there or at the ... give you a physical, and he said, "Do you want ... some treatment?" And I said, "No, I don't think so, I'll get over it."

Ed Metzler: Just get ... just get me home (chuckle).

Mr. Haerther: I didn't get over it, you know?

Ed Metzler: You didn't get over it? Yeah. Now, to go back to Okinawa for ... a minute, the Marines came in and ... joined up with the Army, I mean, you guys didn't join each other, but I mean, they came side by side. I have heard in the past that ... the Army and the Marines, even though you were on the same side, there was a bit of a rivalry there, is that anything you ever observed? I mean, I'll give you an example. I went ... onto the website ... for the 96th, and they had a section there called "Humor," and I read some of the jokes. And it was like ... one of them was a Marine joke, you know, like ... , "Wow, you know, Marines, they ... ," did any of that ever ... come out? And I've talked to Marines and they've got ... observations about the Army ... guys.

Mr. Haerther: You know, I ... I can't ... really relate to that. The 96th received a Presidential Citation for their ... so, we weren't ... a company that didn't do our job.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Haerther: I mean, a division ...

Ed Metzler: No, of course not.

Mr. Haerther: ... to do our job. Uhm, I didn't have that feeling, but maybe it was ... with many of them. Apparently it was.

Ed Metzler: Well, friendly rivalry is fine.

Mr. Haerther: Okay.

Ed Metzler: That's okay, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Okay, yeah. The thing that ... if you go to the library, and I do; I ... I am a great user of the library. Most all of the ... books that are published, not only on Okinawa, but the other area ... Okinawa especially because I read quite a bit about that, uh, they feature ... the Marines. And ... well, I mention Okinawa, “I served on Okinawa.” “Oh, you were in the Marines.” Everybody thinks that was a Marine operation.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And it wasn't.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: It was, I don't know, uh, a third Marines and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: and two-third Army.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: The 7th Army ... uh, 7th Division was a very good outfit. The 77th was also a very good outfit. Uh, there was another division ... that didn't have quite that good a record. I can't remember what it was, but anyway, that's just the way it was.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Haerther: And it all comes back from command. Uh, Colonel May was an outstanding Colonel; he was very good. And ... uh, of course, we lost him, and Easley, General Easley was ... outstanding. I mean, just ...

Ed Metzler: So, you have a ... you have a good feeling about your ... leadership, your officers?

Mr. Haerther: Very much so, yeah, uh hum. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That's important.

Mr. Haerther: We had a company, uh, the C.O. last name was Mitchell ... I've forgotten now; he wasn't in our company, but we were ... next to him or close to him, and during battle he would ... say, “Come on, get with it! You want ... you want to live forever?!” ... you know? (chuckles)

Ed Metzler: (Laughter) ... (unintelligible)

Mr. Haerther: (Laughter)

Ed Metzler: Now, let's talk a ... you and I were talking earlier about how ... after the war, you didn't talk about it.

Mr. Haerther: That's right.

Ed Metzler: Let's talk some more about you're not talking about it (chuckles), and why ... you think that was and how long it took you to kind of, you know, put it behind you and that kind of thing.

Mr. Haerther: Well, certainly didn't talk with my parents about it. As I said earlier, my brother-in-law talked about ... his experiences in England ... was just ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... normal living and all. And ... I just kept quiet, and ... uh, my other friends ... one of them was the best man at my wedding; he was in service. I don't know where he was; never talked about it. And ... the first ... that ... that summer of '46, we went to ... the gathering of a lot of our relatives.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: And ... I was probably with eight or ten guys, including my father, and ... others younger, and a firecracker went off and I was ... (slap sound) ... flat on the ground just like that. And nobody said anything; they just kept walking. I got up and I nearly went ... to my vehicle to get out of there, but I didn't. I stayed with it. So, it was just something that ... I guess, the feeling was, the less we talk about it the better it's going to be.

Ed Metzler: That's really interesting. You hit the ... you hit the deck, the rest of them didn't, and nobody even ... made notice of the fact that you had done that?

Mr. Haerther: That's right, but they knew it.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible) ...

Mr. Haerther: They knew it had happened.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that ... they just knew what it was ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and just kind of ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... isn't that amazing?

Mr. Haerther: And that happened again ... after I'd moved to Denver, four years later ... three years later, and I was at a group and I hit the ... hit the ground on then went ... flat.

Ed Metzler: What about sleeping at night?

Mr. Haerther: I have ... I have some problems. When I awake, it's not the sweat thing and the ... hysteria and all that; it's ... sadness ... for all the ones ... that were lost. And ... I have problems ... uh, if the National Anthem is played and the flags ... with it and all, uh, I ... I'll lose it a little bit. I'll ... I'll ...

Ed Metzler: Sure, sure.

Mr. Haerther: ... tears wil ... tears will come, yeah. And I ... I ...

Ed Metzler: Now, has that changed ... uh, over the years? I mean, have you found that you've been able to ... deal with it more over the years or is it ... or was it ...

Mr. Haerther: It's ...

Ed Metzler: ... was it ... quote ... worse right after you came back or ...

Mr. Haerther: You know, in some ways, it's kind of the reverse. I had some problems the first years ... as I mentioned and then you get busy with your life, and I married and have three children and I'm busy ... supporting them and all, and as you age and things become a little easier, then more of these ... you don't invite them to come back to you, but they do come back to you.

Ed Metzler: You kind of have time to start thinking about it again a little bit.

Mr. Haerther: That's right.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And I don't ... I don't welcome it, but it's there.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Haerther: And ... I really liked ... when I went through yesterday afternoon ... over here at the Museum, because it's educating our future generations on just what took place to keep freedom for this country. And the fact that it was an all-out war, we didn't have to stop at any particular line that was drawn like Korea. I feel so sorry for the ... Korean ... War ... veterans, the Vietnam veterans, and on and on. This stuff what's going on now ...

Ed Metzler: All the rules that keep you from doing this and keep you from doing that.

Mr. Haerther: That's right! You know, these IEDs that they have, uh, we had someone's ... uh, we didn't lose many legs; we lost ... death, shot, you know, and all of that. And it's so different. And I can see where ... (pause) psychologically, it might be harder for these fellows in some ways than what we had because the uncertainty and all, and we were ... all united, the same and ...

Ed Metzler: Total mobilization ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah!

Ed Metzler: ... makes it actually easier, I think, ...

Mr. Haerther: I think so.

Ed Metzler: ... on everybody.

Mr. Haerther: Yes, it does! Uh huh. Uhm, well we always, you know, joked about it, but it's true. Uhm, we were the front line; the guys and the mortars were on another ridge back; they had it easy. The guys in the artillery were a couple of more ridges back; they really had it easy, and it just progressively, you know, but we didn't hold anything against them.

Ed Metzler: You were on a cutting edge, that's for sure.

Mr. Haerther: That's ... that's ... that's just how it was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Have you stayed in contact with any of your ... Army buddies after the war?

Mr. Haerther: Oh yes! My ... 96th Division ... will have ... our reunion this last year was at Fort Carson, Colorado Springs, and the reunion next year will be in San Diego. And there are still World War II guys, like me, show up. But the interesting thing with it ... is many of the children and even grandchildren of those ... of our veterans attend those. And then they ... although the 96th was deactivated after the war, they established a 96th, I'm not sure I can describe this correctly, recon unit. They were based in Salt Lake City, Fort Douglas, and there's a General Collins who headed that up and he attends our ... and we still ... well, in our prime years which is even ... up until ten years ago, we would have eight hundred to our banquet.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Haerther: This is not all veterans.

Ed Metzler: No, but ... families.

Mr. Haerther: Families, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And ... and children.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, that's right.

Ed Metzler: Extended family.

Mr. Haerther: So, we had ... the reunions that ... other cities would come and ... taut their accommodations in trying to get us to come.

Ed Metzler: Sure!

Mr. Haerther: And then we'd vote on it. Well, now it's narrowed down and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... the selection process, yeah. But ... the one at Carson, uh, might have been subdued a little bit because they had just had those fires ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... in that area.

Ed Metzler: Up in the mountains, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And they lost ... that one place, the Flying W dude ranch where it was ... we were going to have a big event there ...

Ed Metzler: Oh dear!

Mr. Haerther: ... and they lost that ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... and some of the other things and all. But the one at San Diego, uhm, let's see, there were ... the photograph that was taken ... it was about thirty-five of us yet.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum ... uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... of ... World War II ...

Ed Metzler: So when's the next one?

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. San Diego ... in, uh, August, well, July, late July.

Ed Metzler: So, coming up here in a couple of months.

Mr. Haerther: Coming up, yeah, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Oh okay.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. I have a ... a friend up here at ... uh, Dallas who has attended most of them, and he signed up twice to go back to Okinawa on the tours that ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... have been offered every ... couple of years.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: And he ... will sign up but then he backs out; he can't ... handle it yet.

Ed Metzler: Can't handle it.

Mr. Haerther: Can't handle it. We've had (unintelligible) story in for our ... for our division ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Haerther: ... uh, Don Danker (sp?) and ... he's been great at organizing these tours and ... making it possible to ... so, it's been a close division.

Ed Metzler: That's good! That's good.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, been very close. At the reunions, at the banquet, why, various companies would set up their flag and (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: Kind of like the political conventions, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: (Chuckles), that's right.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Haerther: That's right.

Ed Metzler: Well, they still got the spirit, that's good.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah; that's right. So ...

Ed Metzler: Well, what else can we talk about, Daryl, about the war years? I'm sure we've left stuff out.

Mr. Haerther: Oh yes.

Ed Metzler: What comes to your mind that we've left out? Or things that you would like to make a point of?

Mr. Haerther: (Pause), I don't know. I think we've ... uh, covered ... the things regarding combat. Uhm, had I gone on to the paratroopers, I probably would have avoided combat because by the time that additional training time took place, I doubt that we might have gone overseas. But they were planning to use some maybe on ... at Japan, on the island.

Ed Metzler: Didn't get used a lot in the Pacific theater.

Mr. Haerther: No, uh uh.

Ed Metzler: Not like the European theater.

Mr. Haerther: That's right, yeah.

Ed Metzler: What ... we're talking about little dots of islands rather than ...

Mr. Haerther: Uhm, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... the whole continent.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. The 82nd and the 101st were very ... strategically used ...

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Haerther: ... in World War II.

Ed Metzler: Didn't always work out, but they were ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... they were right there.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, and the glider troops, you know ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: ... very good. That was all things that the Pacific didn't ... going through the Museum yesterday, you forget all of these little islands that were ... major engagements for the people doing it, but ... the island was small and it didn't last long.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah ... yeah.

Mr. Haerther: And ... uh, you know, the ... the Navajo code break ... uh, talkers were very important. Uh, breaking the Japanese code. Uh, knowing ... that the Japanese were going to hit Midway and our Navy was ready for them.

Ed Metzler: Boy, no kidding! It was critical!

Mr. Haerther: I mean, those were so critical ... that ... it ... it's amazing that a country like Japan which we call a small country, but *huge* in population ... had the armament that they had. You know, those two ships ... Yamato and ... uh ...

Ed Metzler: Musashi.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, well the Yamato was ... uh, ...

Ed Metzler: At Okinawa.

Mr. Haerther: ... oh, at Okinawa. They intend ...

Ed Metzler: She ran a kamikaze mission.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Enough fuel to get down there but not enough to get back.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah. Those sixteen-in guns and the range they had ... they could have stood off from our other ... if it hadn't been for their ... navy ... air ...

Ed Metzler: The aircraft, absolutely!

Mr. Haerther: ... yeah. They ... they could have got there to where ... they'd of been out of range of our artillery, both ground and the ... the Naval artillery ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Haerther: ... and shelled the heck out of them.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah. So, that's where the air power came in.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: I, uh, thinking back, uh, I would have loved to have been in the Air Force; I'm a pilot, licenses pilot.

Ed Metzler: Oh, you are!

Mr. Haerther: Instrument rated; flown ... I got thousands of hours.

Ed Metzler: Really (chuckles)?!

Mr. Haerther: And ... uh, I ... I think I could have been a pilot, a good pilot. In fact, I ... my daughters bought me ... uh, that I could fly the AT-6 ... (unintelligible) ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, the Texan, yeah.

Mr. Haerther: ... yeah, the Texan (chuckles), and ... I flew that and ... uh, it ... it's ... great aircraft!

Ed Metzler: Yeah (laughter).

Mr. Haerther: (Laughter), they always say ...

Ed Metzler: A lot of ... a lot of folks know about the Texan.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: In fact, we have several active that fly around here in ...

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... central Texas.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah, they said ... a sign, "If you could fly that, you could fly anything (unintelligible)."

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: 'Cause it ... it wanted to ground loop on you and, you know, it ... but it ... light on the stick and easy on the controls. And ... I was actually flying in IFR because when you could look at a strange panel, you're constantly seeking ... your heading and all of this sort ... so, the guy ... instructor in the back was giving me headings and altitude changes, you know, and things like that. So, I didn't even know where I was outside; I was just flying ... by the instruments.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Haerther: And ... that's where the instrument training comes in.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Haerther: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. Okay, uh, thank you for spending the time with us, Daryl. We've been going for almost two hours, and ... it's always humbling to hear what you guys did at Okinawa, and ... want to thank you again for what you did for our country.

Mr. Haerther: Well, thank you very much, uh ...

Ed Metzler: We appreciate it.

Mr. Haerther: You've been a good person to visit with because ...

Ed Metzler: Well ... thank you.

Mr. Haerther: ... you understand what it was about. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, we'll go ahead and shut it down here, and you can enjoy the rest of your day (laughter).

Mr. Haerther: Okay, uh, thank you again.

Ed Metzler: Alright.

(end of interview)

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