

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Joseph J. Nicholas, Jr.  
Altamonte Springs, FL

October 20, 2015

Corpsman

L Company

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion

8<sup>th</sup> Marines

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is October 20, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. Joseph J. Nicholas, Jr. by telephone. His cell phone number is 321-223-6171. His address is 213 Forest Avenue, Altamonte Springs, Florida, 32701. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Joe, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Nicholas:

That didn't amount to much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Everybody's job was important. Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

Mr. Nicholas:

Okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

*"Agreement Read"*

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir, that's fine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Nicholas:

Yeah, my son, my youngest son I usually..., he has my power of attorney and so forth, he can

tend to things and I will give you his address and so forth in just a minute. It's Stephen Nicholas, S-t-e-p-h-e-n. His home phone is 407-388-9782.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where does he live?

Mr. Nicholas:

134 Warbler Lane, Casselberry, Florida, 32707.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay fine, hopefully we'll never need that, but you never know. Okay, what is your birthdate?

Mr. Nicholas:

January the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Nicholas:

In what they now call Florida Hospital in Orlando, Florida.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes, I had seven brothers and sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were any of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Nicholas:

No, I was the only family member in the service at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you the oldest?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Nicholas:

My dad's name was Joseph, J-o-s-e-p-h. My mother's name, which she always went by anyway, was Ola, O-l-a.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Nicholas:

It did not affect us but briefly within our family. We had relatives who had it kind of rough sometimes, pretty rough.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Nicholas:

He was a rural mail carrier.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, so he worked for the Post Office then?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And he was able to keep employed all during the depression?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes, he had that job all the way through.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you all have a garden or anything like that?

Mr. Nicholas:

Oh my dad had a, when I was very small, he had a small garden.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you got along okay then?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir, about the time I was five my dad bought another house and about two, no a few years I guess after that, he bought about ten more acres and we had cows.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had a milk cow?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have chickens?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well during, say 1932, '33 or something like that we had chickens. My dad bought from, mainly depended on a small agricultural endeavor, and he had a couple of hundred chickens. So we ate chicken pretty often.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, where did you go to high school?

Mr. Nicholas:

Orlando Senior High School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you graduate?

Mr. Nicholas:

I didn't graduate. I was failing and I dropped out right near the end of the year. And I went to the draft board and told them I was ready to go. But I didn't go until the other guys from my class went.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So your last year was your senior year?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year was that?

Mr. Nicholas:

1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when did you enter the service?

Mr. Nicholas:

I have it here, it was in June, I'm trying to find it here now on the records. I went with the draftees and it was June of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay and you were drafted?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir. A selective volunteer. *(Laughter)*

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what branch did you go into?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well I was assigned to the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any choice of the branch?

Mr. Nicholas:

We could express a choice. And I had family connections, like my dad was in the Army during World War I, and I expressed my choice as Army. I think I originally asked for the Army Air Force, but a lot of kids wanted that. I think it was based on my psychological outlook. They recommended me Navy and Hospital Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now where did you go for your boot camp?

Mr. Nicholas:

Great Lakes, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how was that?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well, it wasn't so terrible looking back, but I used to look at the fence and consider trying to climb it and I didn't know how I'd get anywhere, but (*laughter*) it wasn't fun for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Nicholas:

Uh, only in one sense. I seemed to have an oily skin and we would have to go out for inspection in whites. And almost as soon I put on something white, it could be clean, but an hour or so later by the time we went to inspection my collar would be dirty. So I did a lot of extra duty because of that. I scrubbed my neck until I thought it was gonna be raw, but it would always turn out greasy. So, you know I got in quite a bit of small difficulties, but I remember getting two hours of what they called, "Happy Hour." And it consisted of push-ups mainly and things like that. By the time I got through the floor under me was wet, a puddle not just damp.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any weapons training in boot camp?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well not really weapons training, I think they gave us a brief lecture and then we fired some worn out .22s. I scored the best in my company, which was a 166 out of a possible 200. But I still was not an expert.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do a lot of marching?

Mr. Nicholas:

Quite a bit. We ran around the drill field of course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the roughest part of boot camp?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well it was failing the inspection was the worst part, you know that's the thing that really got to me. Funny thing that happened there one time, which was typical of the military I guess, but there was some guy there and actually I think he had some nerve control difficulties and he was clumsy. But the Chief bawled him out and made him pull his white hat down over his ears, you know fold it down, and told him to do some laps around the drill field. Well they got about part of the way around and another Chief stopped him for being out of uniform. And of course it was probably all prearranged. So in a way it was funny and too I think the man, the boy I think he really had some control problem, I don't think it was a slouch or a fake.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished boot camp where did you go?

Mr. Nicholas:

After boot camp, I was back to Great Lakes then I went to Hospital Corps School at Great Lakes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now your boot camp, did it have anything to do with the Hospital Corps or not?

Mr. Nicholas:

No sir, we were just interviewed and expressed our desires, you know. But then they placed us according to what they wanted of course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about the Corpsman school.

Mr. Nicholas:

It was pretty brief, it only lasted six weeks. And I really was not a good student. But everybody passed, the only people that got thrown out were people that got caught stealing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were they stealing?



Mr. Nicholas:

I don't remember, probably didn't amount to much, but it got them out of Corps school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some things you learned in Corps school?

Mr. Nicholas.

I don't know. I did learn a little bit you know, but I was not a good student. And so I can't claim that I learned a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you learn how to diagnose a disease or a problem?

Mr. Nicholas:

Oh no, no we were the lowest of the low and we didn't worry about diagnoses. They did instruct us some on....

Mr. Misenhimer:

About treating wounds? Did they teach you how to treat wounds?

Mr. Nicholas:

I don't remember exactly, I'm sure they must have said a little bit about that. I do remember, in fact I don't think I even learned that until I got assigned to a place. But we learned when we were giving medicine to look at the label before we picked it up. Look at it when we picked it up, give it out and then look at it again after we've given the medicine. That was to make sure we'd given the right one. And I remember one instructor there he, that was mainly talk, but he said when you get through here you'll learn to pick up feces and examine it for content and consistency. But he didn't say it'd be in laboratory conditions. *(Laughter)*

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr Nicholas:

Um, I don't really remember much else about that. One of the most memorable things was when we got out and was waiting to, I think we hadn't even been assigned to where we were going at

that time, but we were lined up outside and it was snowing, it was pretty cold.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Nicholas:

When? I think it was November of '43.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And it was cold you say, snowing?

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well, we were told where we were gonna go and I don't remember too much about it. But I knew that I was assigned to the U.S. Naval Hospital, Parris Island, South Carolina. At that time it was right on the Marine base. In the present day it's across the water. Went to the U.S. Naval Hospital, Parris Island, South Carolina. It was on the Marine base at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel down there?

Mr. Nicholas:

We went by train and we got into a little town called, I believe it was Beaufort was right there and I think that's where the train stopped. And although they had a brand new bridge, they still loaded us on a barge and a tugboat pushed us to the island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Nicholas:

It was in November of 1943, I don't remember the day. And I was at the hospital for a couple of three days and then they sent me over to the Post Medical Detachment.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you do there?

Mr. Nicholas:

I was at three different dispensaries during the time I was there. The first one was a Post Medical Detachment, first dispensary they called it. And I worked in what they called a medical clinic, which mainly took care of respiratory and..., well a kind of a general, an area of general practice and then there were other places where people had, you know specialties. But ours was, you might say the doctors there were in general medical practice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what all did you do there?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well mainly gave out APCs, which was a remedy for everything unless you were real sick. We'd spray throats with a..., if they had a sore throat we'd spray them with tincture of merthiolate, which is a mercury compound. That was medicine then, you know. And give out APCs or aspirins or sometimes if they were complaining of joint pain we'd give them methyl salicylate. And if they had a cough we gave them elixir terpinhydrate with codeine in it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else did you do?

Mr. Nicholas:

At that place that pretty much describes what my duties were. I guess in all probability we treated infections too or something like that, you know a skin infection. If someone was really seriously sick they would be sent over to the Naval Hospital. And a doctor would not even give, except in a place where he was absolutely sure, he would not give a diagnosis, he'd just send them over there. He just responded, "Diagnosis undetermined." That was the standard diagnosis in the clinic where I worked, they didn't want to stick their nose out so just about everything was "diagnosis undetermined."

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what outfit were you in at this point?

Mr. Nicholas:

They called it Post Medical Detachment. And I worked at two other dispensaries while I was there, also. You know they would transfer me. And one of them was regimental dispensary they called it. And the main thing, we did have a sick bay for people with minor ailments. But the main thing we did was give inoculations. And I used to..., my main thing was just changing the needle for someone that was doing the shots. We reused them and sharpened needles at that time, not throw them away like they did later. And one time we processed several thousand, at that dispensary we processed, we had three shot lines going and we processed several thousand in one day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Nicholas:

I don't know too much about it. One of the times, I was at Regimental Dispensary two different times. One of those times I developed a temperature of 104° and I still don't know what was the matter, they suspected that I was mainly homesick. But I don't know how I got a temperature of 104° out of it. But they put me in the bed and I was there two or three days and I think they gave me something to render me unconscious and I think a psychologist interviewed me during that time, but I don't know. And then they let me have a leave to go home. And then I came back and later on I was assigned to the Rifle Range Dispensary. And I was there for I guess several months. And I began to feel a little bit guilty because I'd been in the United States for about twenty months and there I was helping send thousands over to fight and get killed and so forth, and I felt a little guilty so I requested that I be sent to the Fleet Marine Force. They did not, I don't think they even sent in anything at that time and a couple of months later I inquired about it and they said, "You sure you want to go?" And I said, "Yes." And so I got my orders in about two weeks after that. And I went to what they called "the old medical school" at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What school was that, what was that school again, I'm sorry?

Mr. Nicholas:

It was called Field Medical School, it was at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. And mainly it consisted of quite a bit of studies, mainly first aid, things like that. And a lot of marching, try to condition us. And after Camp Lejeune I was on what they called the 60<sup>th</sup> Replacement Draft. And they issued us overcoats. I thought maybe we were going to Siberia or somewhere. And when we got out to Camp Pendleton near San Diego they took the overcoats back. And we were there maybe four weeks and then boarded ship for unknown destination. Our sea bags were labeled DUVAUBST and a lot of people said that was Guam and it turned out that's where we stopped temporarily. We went first through Pearl Harbor, I got to be on the ground in Hawaii about two hours. Then the ship went down to Eniwetok and we had been under blackout instructions and here Eniwetok was lit up like a Christmas tree. I think they figured the Japs weren't interested in Eniwetok, anymore. After just a brief stop there, I wasn't off ship at all, I don't remember what they stopped for, maybe supplies or unload some or something. Anyway, then we went to the Transfer Center in Guam. And I was there maybe a couple of weeks until the 8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment came back to Saipan, which was at that time was a permanent base, and I was sent over there. And I was assigned to L Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines. Something might be interesting, we had a Navajo talker with our company. And they thought he was dangerous to other people, other Marines if he got mad, so they warned me not to make him mad. There were a couple of people that had been killed in combat that some people suspected that the Navajo was taking out a grudge against them. And one time he shot a hole through the roof of his tent. And the top Sergeant came around and said, "I'll call him Jones," his name wasn't Jones. "Jones how'd you do that?" He said, "Like this." And he got his gun and pointed it up and the top Sergeant said, "Never mind." I was there probably six weeks, we went out on a field problem or two and some marches. Then they dropped the atom bomb. I had no idea much about the atom bomb, I knew about the atom but I didn't know

anything about atom bombs. And I thought well it must be a twenty-thousand pounder or something. Well it turned out it was..., a twenty-thousand pounder wasn't even a fire cracker compared to it. And about six weeks, I believe it was, after they dropped the bomb we went into the harbor at Nagasaki, Japan. I'd heard rumors, I heard somebody say the Colonel's jeep driver said the Colonel said, in talking to someone else, that we'd be hitting Japan in September. And that was before the bomb dropped, so we thought we'd be an assault, you know. But of course after the bomb dropped we just went into the harbor and got off the ship after a little wait, as in the military. And we marched a few blocks and camped in an area that was all torn up. And got on a train and went right out through the middle of it. And the trees on the hills on either side, which were probably about a mile away some, were red. And it was only September. And Southern Japan in the low-lying areas compare to Florida, in weather. And it was torn up for a long, long space, so I'm pretty sure that's where the atom bomb hit. It seems to me that I had a little bit of joint soreness but nothing about the radiation from atom bombs or anything. They did give us something, I don't know what kind of a pill it was, afterward. And I believe it was to try to help counteract anything like that. We went first to, just for a day or so, waiting other arrangements I guess. We went to Ona Airfield, about twenty miles from Nagasaki. Our Captain was known as a physical culture addict and so he took off from Ona Airfield, just a minute now..., we were going there we got off the train but we had to march quite a way. And the Captain who was a physical culture addict turned off and he left a long string of incapacitated Marines behind him. *(Laughter)* I had to stop and tape one's blisters and I did catch up with him but just as they got to our destination. But I was really pooped I'll tell you. One interesting thing, when we went ashore in Japan they issued us three rounds of ammunition. Everybody was pretty disgusted about that because they figured if they were ambushed you know we wouldn't have much chance. But I think the reason they issued us three rounds was that if the Marines had a hundred rounds apiece it'd have been a lot dead Japanese along the way. So that was a wise thing I guess not to issue us but three rounds. I was not in combat and I did not, mainly I was a supporter of my country but I did feel sorry for the defeated

Japanese too. So I wouldn't have been a danger to them, unless they were shooting at me. Anyway when we got off the train we had to march to Ona Airfield and then there's the time I was talking about that the Captain had taken off almost in double time, not quite double time but a fast paced march, and left a bunch behind him because he was in excellent shape. They had told me that in previous times they'd seen somebody fall out and the Captain had shouldered their pack and maybe there'd be another guy fall out and the Captain shouldered his pack too. Besides carrying his own. I can't vouch for it but that's what they told me. We went to..., got off the train we went to Ona Airfield and then a couple of days later we went around to Sasebo, Japan. And we were assigned to what had been a military school for kids, I believe it was, they called it Kumamoto. And I was there for awhile. Interestingly I had a Chief Pharmacist Mate in charge of me there. And several years later he settled in Orlando, Florida and I was working for a masonry contractor and we built a chimney for him. So that's interesting to me at least. At Kumamoto got on a train and went, I don't know how many miles, maybe forty or fifty down to..., oh man now it skips my mind, near a town called Stoyoshi. And we got on transport trucks and went a few miles to a Japanese military, a former Japanese military encampment. And interestingly I saw a Zero, a real live Zero in the hangar on the airfield when I was there. And then while I was at Stoyoshi we went on a hike one day and went to the Japanese airfield that wasn't far away. I saw a lot of different Japanese military craft there. Of course later on they were bulldozed up and burnt. But I did get to see a bunch of those. Then briefly we were there during the winter and briefly a little later on we went back to Kumamoto, to another area. And I was there for, I don't know how long, for a little while. Then it came time for my discharge or to go back for a discharge. And they put up a notice on the board, "The following men are held over due to military necessity." And of course I wasn't too happy about it. It was probably about ten or fifteen Corpsmen listed on it. And I found out later the probabilities were that it was because the whole division was going to be sent back to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. So a few days after that notice came up we went to Sasebo, Japan and we got on a ship. My ship separated from the several ships that were in our group because we had a Marine

Major on there that had a skin disease apparently. But they had not really diagnosed and so our ship detoured into San Diego and we put him ashore. And then we went on down the coast of Mexico and through the Panama Canal, up between Haiti and Cuba, between Haiti and Cuba I guess it was. And went over through the Bahamas, I don't know which passage we went through. But anyway we passed what the British called Watling Island and the Spanish, now that name skips me, but it's where Columbus first landed in 1492. And we did get a view of that island, San Salvador I guess the Spanish call it. We did get a view of that island from ship board. And we went on north and went in to Norfolk Harbor. And I saw my first battleship in Norfolk harbor after I'd been in the Navy three years. Cause, you know I'd been with the Marines about all the time. And when we got on the docks there I was separated from the Marines and sent to Jacksonville, Florida for discharge. When I got my discharge I was going out the gate and I didn't have any Navy insignia on, I just have my Marine Corps uniform. And so I heard one of the guys at the gate say, "What's that Marine doing getting discharged here?" So he thought I was, you know a regular Marine, but it was just because I was in Marine uniform. We had, of course, drawn when I went to see a medical doctor over at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina where they issued Marine uniform and packs and so forth, including my first aid kit, and an extra canteen, so I was discharged in a Marine Corps uniform. Well some people didn't know the difference. So that just about sums it up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date were you discharged?

Mr. Nicholas:

Let's see. I can look it up here. MPAC I believe it is, Jacksonville, Florida. The exact location of it, but it was a big process, it was where, July the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were in Japan quite awhile then?

Mr. Nicholas:

I was there probably about ten months, from September to probably June. It took us a long time



to get from Japan to Norfolk. It took us twenty-nine days to do that. And then I was put on the train for Jacksonville. And in a couple of days, then I had my discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in Japan did you have much contact with the Japanese people?

Mr. Nicholas:

Oh with some. I ran what they would call a first aid station in the town of Stoyoshi for awhile. And I had a Japanese helper there which actually did much of the work. I just logged them in on the records and saw to it, you know that everything was going alright. So I had contact with him quite a bit and there was an old Japanese man who came over and visited with me a little bit and spoke English and he told me that he used to listen to the radio from the United States. And I often wondered if he was actually an operative for the United States, because if he'd been caught he'd have been killed. So he was risking his life if he just listened to it. And he had been a school teacher, he told me, in China with the Japanese army. I presume they weren't very kind to the Chinese, but he didn't tell me that. And for my noon meal, while I was operating this first aid station, I went across the street to a USO and ate my lunch there. And there were several Japanese women that worked in that. One of them was named Agnes and she had spent time in the United States and spoke pretty fair English. And the other Japanese women there could not speak English, so you know I didn't actually have much contact with them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were the Japanese people friendly enough or how were they?

Mr. Nicholas:

Oh they were not antagonistic, I wouldn't say that very many of them were friendly. But they were not antagonistic then. The Emperor had..., when he gave the surrender message he said we were to be well treated and we were to be treated as guest. And there was only a few die-hards that you know showed any hostility. I remember when we first got there I believe it was, I was riding in a Marine six-by and there was some Japanese that had showed disrespect, he urinated out alongside the road as the trucks went by. So one of the trucks stopped and the Marine there

worked him over a little bit. They didn't kill him but I guess he was a little bit sorry that he'd showed the disrespect. On the whole the Japanese just, you might say, to a great degree they treated us like strangers except for those that had to contact us. You know we had, at one place we had an interpreter you know and so we could talk with him, he had spent several years in the U.S. And something memorable there, I did not really have contact with him but there was a man by the name of Hitoyo Nagashima and he was real friendly with the officers there. And he was a graduate of Oxford in England. And he spoke Oxford English.

*(End of side 1 of tape.)*

*(Begin side 2 of tape.)*

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay now I missed part of that, you said he spoke like Oxford English, then what did you say after that?

Mr. Nicholas:

It was a Japanese man by the name of Hitoyo Nagashima and he was very friendly with the officers, Marine officers, you know just like buddy-buddy. And I really wondered if he might have been working for U.S. Intelligence during the war, rather than being a loyal Jap. He spoke, he was a graduate of Oxford University in England and he spoke Oxford English. You'd of thought he was British just to hear him to him talk. But these things that I have told you are, you know that they're about the main things that might be of any interest, I really don't think of anything else. I do remember one thing, coming back after we left Sasebo we passed something that looked like a, almost like a pole sticking up in the air, a little wider than that, it was an island. But I was told it was a, what was called by English navigators a "locked life." It was a small island in the Pacific. And the Japanese called it Sosugan. So that was something interesting, in passing that. It was interesting going through the Panama Canal also. I remember I was laying on the rail near the stern and there was a vertical wall on one of the cuts. And we came to a turn and the pilot that was guiding us through the canal apparently gave orders that would have us pass pretty close to this side of a rock. And we were probably within four feet of

it on a three-hundred something foot ship. It was a Navy APA, it was a personnel transport, an assault transport. But anyway it looked awful close for a three-hundred foot ship with a stern to come within four feet of that cut. And I saw my first aircraft carrier as we were getting out of that. They said it was the Roosevelt. It was some distance from us, so you know I don't know how accurate it was for a name.

Mr. Misenhimer:

At any time, did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Nicholas:

No, I did buy a radio from a Marine, I don't know how he got it. Maybe he didn't get in the right way, far as I know. But I bought a radio while I was there and I remember they had an English speaking station. But every morning when it went on the air the announcer, who had a golden sounding voice, would say, "Ohayo gozaimasu." That was a very good morning to you. But then they would have English. I did hear some Japanese music some on my radio when I was there, but it didn't sound very musical to me, cause it was oriental. Something interesting too, one time when I was just kind of flipping the dial around I got a hold of this transmission from somebody that was on the island of Saipan. And he said that somebody had gone up on the mountain there on Saipan and he talked to somebody in China with a seven and a half watt backpack. There was freak reception but he got somebody about fifteen-hundred miles away with a seven and a half watt backpack. Which was used you know mainly for combat communication when the war was on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were listening to this Japanese radio station, was that before the war ended?

Mr. Nicholas:

Oh it was after the war ended. I didn't have any radio until after I got to Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any time during when you felt frightened or scared?

Mr. Nicholas:

When I was at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina they had a bivouac and we went out and we were told to dig fox holes and get in them. And then the Marine engineers came in and threw dynamite charges around and that scared me about as much or more than if I'd have been in combat. I remember I just about lost it at that time and I said, "God they're killing each other." I don't think it was allowed, but that was in my mind. So that would compare to combat to me. Another thing that happened or funny thing – there were some old Navy Chiefs had been in battles and they were reassigned to the Marine Corps along with me. But they were combat veterans, they didn't want to dig a fox hole. When the Marine engineers came in and started throwing dynamite around they jumped into the fox hole with us. Went from two to about five in it. And one of them had got his hair singed from a blast. And they also had apparently destroyed a jeep. There was a jeep there that was all messed up. I don't know whether, of course for all I know it might have been just an exhibit. It might have been in a wreck or something and that they were using for a realistic exhibit, you know. After the dynamite was thrown around. They did it at night too. I didn't see this jeep of course until daylight the next morning. But there was sand and pine straw, some of it had been ignited. It wasn't burning when it hit the hole, but it was still hot. They did us a pretty realistic demonstration, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were overseas how was the morale in your outfits?

Mr. Nicholas:

It was not too far above the previous morale. When I first was assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Marines I had learned that a lot of the Marines thought that maybe the next time they would get it. Most of them were veterans of Tarawa and also the fight on Saipan. Their attitude mainly, anyone that I heard say it, was that I don't want to get in another battle but that's what we have to do. There was one that was pretty concerned, he told me and they called a Corpsman "doc", he said, "Doc, if I get in another fight I'm gonna get killed." Of course he didn't get in another one, so he made it. After we got, after the war, after we'd been in Japan awhile, nearly everybody was anxious to get to go home. But they did not..., they were still what..., taking their orders and so

forth you know. That was one good thing, one thing about the Marines they were pretty, pretty disciplined. And the only ones that weren't very disciplined were the new ones that had never been in combat. But the combat men were pretty disciplined, if a PFC said something to a Private he did what he was told. After the war well we got a bunch of raw recruits in and they were not too well disciplined it seemed like. It reminds me of what General Holland M. Smith said about the Marines after some Army troops in the Philippines went on strike and they wanted to go home, so they went on strike. And General Holland M. Smith, whom they called "Howlin' Mad" Smith, said, "A Marine's home is where ever he is." Some of the men got a little bit disgusted about that. But they were a..., the discipline was pretty good. One thing there that was common, when we got to Japan quite a few of them would go under the fence and go out and go on liberty whether it was sanctioned or not. And sometimes there'd be an officer and some military police or something rounding them up. They didn't get in bad trouble for that, it was pretty common and so it was, to a degree it was overlooked.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Nicholas:

Well yes, they went to a Japanese warehouse and I got a brand new Japanese sniper rifle as a souvenir. And regrettably I traded it off for a couple of fishing rods. *(Laughter)* I wish I'd of kept it. It was seven and five tenths millimeter. It apparently was a very, you know a very active rifle cause it was, it was a larger caliber. The standard Japanese rifle was approximately .25 caliber. But this was approximately .31 caliber I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah that'd been worth a lot of money today.

Mr. Nicholas:

Yes sir, I saw a Vietnam veteran's assembly, they had one which I was present there and I'm pretty sure they had one on display there. But they were just setting up and I couldn't talk to anybody about it. But I think I saw one, the best I can remember it looked like it. But I wished

I'd of kept it, it was probably an extremely accurate. And actually I believe, even though it was seven and five-tenths millimeter I found out that you could get or seems like you could get ammunition for about any size gun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else?

Mr. Nicholas:

When I was on an LSM going from Guam to Saipan there were B-29s flying over and if I remember rightly one of them had an engine out. That was part, and then another time I saw some..., that wasn't when I was in Japan I believe it was when I was on Saipan. I saw a couple of airplanes up there in a mock dogfight. I think that they were a..., I think that most of them were Hellcats, F6Fs. But there was one up there with them and he looked like he was almost standing still and being rotated on a spit or something or other. You know they couldn't touch him seemed like. And I suspect it was a Bearcat that was being, the F8F that was being demonstrated, I don't know, F8F of course never got into combat in World War II. But I saw that. And also when, I believe it was when I was on, must have been on Guam, I saw some U.S. military planes taking off in the distance. One of them was a B-24 and it had its nose up at an angle and was just barely gaining a speed. So I think it must have been really heavily loaded. You know they loaded planes to the danger point and beyond during World War II. But then there was another one which was a Douglas, originally called A-26. It was taking off and it just went off like it didn't weigh anything. Later on it was reclassified in designation and they called it a B-26. Which was originally was the..., the B-26 originally was the term for a Martin Marauder. But for some reason they..., the Martin Marauder was regarded as being pretty touchy to handle if you had a, if you had lost an engine on takeoff you're either real quick to remedy it or you were dead. And then the B-26, the Martin B-26 was retired from service and they reclassified the Douglas A-26 as a B-26, I don't know why they did it, a confusing thing like that. But they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Nicholas:

Oh! No, no big time, no big time performers. We did have one USO show when I was on Saipan and they had some wrestling, mainly a demonstration. And I don't really remember too much else about it. I remember that was after the atom bomb and they had some Marines there, dog handlers that were retraining some Doberman Pinschers from being war dogs. They were retraining them. And they were still maybe a little bit dangerous but I think I petted one of them. And this was at the USO show. So we didn't have any big names you know where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Nicholas:

Not really with the Red Cross. The experience I had was with USO, as I mentioned I would go there to eat my lunch when I was running an aid station in Stoyoshi, Japan. Sir could you call me if you need anymore information, could you call me back tomorrow about ten o'clock?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well I think this pretty well covers everything I need.

Mr. Nicholas:

I think so too. Well I enjoyed talking to you, even though I didn't have anything to brag about.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well you did a good job, it was very interesting.

Mr. Nicholas:

Well thank you. The reason I'm wanting to hang up is my grandson is going to pick me up to, in fact he's supposed be here about now, going to pick me up to go to a funeral, a burial. Thank you for talking to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Nicholas:

Thank you sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well I'll keep in contact, bye now.

Mr. Nicholas:

Thank you for serving our country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you, alright.

Mr. Nicholas:

Bye.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bye.

*(End of interview.)*

Transcribed by:

Gayle Misenhimer

Harlingen, Texas

January 8, 2016

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848