

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Joseph C. Baumbach
Pasadena, Texas
March 18, 2019
U.S. Marine Corps
1st Armored Amphibious Battalion
Company D
Guam, Okinawa

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is March 18, 2019. I am interviewing Mr. Joseph C. Baumbach by telephone. His phone number is 281-991-3777. His address is 6504 Stone Briar Drive, Pasadena, Texas, 77505. 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. Baumbach :

Well you're more than welcome and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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.

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Baumbach:

I have no problem with that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Baumbach:

I have one son, he was born in '59, 1959.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's his name?

Mr. Baumbach:

His name is Joel Craig Baumbach, he goes by Craig though.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Baumbach:

It's on this phone too, I'll have to write down who (*laughing*), I have it in another phone book.

But I keep all these phone numbers on this phone so if I want to talk to them I just don't have to look up the phone number. His number is 713-542-6028.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is this a cell phone you're on?

Mr. Baumbach:

My son has a cell phone, he doesn't have a

Mr. Misenhimer:

Landline? But this is a landline we're on, right?

Mr. Baumbach:

We're on a landline now, yeah. I have a cell phone number too, but I don't use it that much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what is your birthdate?

Mr. Baumbach:

October the 27th, 1922.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Baumbach:

I was born in Houston, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Baumbach:

I had an older brother, his name was Emmett Baumbach. He was born in 1906.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh my goodness, considerably older.

Mr. Baumbach:

Well, there's you know, he was born in '06 and I had an older sister that was born in 1912. And then ten years later I was born.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So were your brother or your sister involved in World War II at all?

Mr. Baumbach:

No. My brother was killed in a truck accident in 1932. And my sister was married to a man that was in World War II, but he was in the European Theater.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Baumbach:

No he died in '82, 1982.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well we do our interviews, Pacific, Europe, anything involved with World War II we do these interviews, it doesn't have to just be the Pacific.

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh, okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Baumbach:

My father's first name was William. My mother's maiden name was Lenora.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Her first name?

Mr. Baumbach:

Lenora.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Baumbach:

I don't think it affected too much. I can remember my father was a, he was a blacksmith. And I never missed a meal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you live in town or in the country?

Mr. Baumbach:

I lived in town. I was born in, I wasn't born in a hospital, I was born in the front bedroom of the house. I got recalled in Korea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh did you, okay we'll cover that later.

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah I did. Okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Baumbach:

In Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you graduate?

Mr. Baumbach:

1941.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In May?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah, May or June, I don't remember which one it was, but in those days I think we got out of school on the 30th of May.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, that's about when we did, yes. What did you do when you got out of high school?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well I had a summertime job. And then in the fall I enrolled at Texas A&M.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In the Fall of '41?

Mr. Baumbach:

In the Fall of '41. And I first learned of World War II, the beginning, when I hitchhiked a ride back up to Texas A&M and the man had a radio in his car. You know every car didn't have radios in them at that time. And he said, "Did you hear the latest news?" And I said, "No sir." You know we were always trained to be, as Aggies we were trained to be polite to people that helped us so. He turned it on and it was news about the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think when you heard that? How did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Baumbach:

At that time I didn't think that much about it. I was going up to A&M and at that time A&M was kind of like ROTC. I didn't go to ROTC when I was in high school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you were in the Corps at A&M?

Mr. Baumbach:

I was in the Corps, everybody was in the Corps at A&M. There was one student that was handicapped that couldn't participate that I knew of or that I heard of, I didn't know of. But I think that everybody else was in the Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after you heard about that what happened next?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well I stayed at A&M until, in late January before midterm I broke my, I think it was my right, the bone on my foot that controls a big tendon that the muscle is. And I was subject to a walking cast or a pair of crutches, which was real unhandy to be in the Corps because everybody marched to dinner, breakfast, dinner, and supper. We didn't have any cars on the campus that I knew of.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what foot was this, left or right?

Mr. Baumbach:

I'm not sure, I think it was the right foot.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how did you break it, what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh me and a couple of other guys were just did a little scuffling and I hit my heel on the curb.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Then I had to go to the infirmary at Texas A&M and they, I'm not real sure what happened after that. Whether they tried to reattach the bone or whether I went someplace else. But I do know

that I was in a walking cast for, I don't know how many months, I can't recall that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you stay on at A&M?

Mr. Baumbach:

No I couldn't because I couldn't walk to chow or walk to class. It was a handicap for me. So I just dropped out at midterm.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went through one semester only then?

Mr. Baumbach:

That's all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well when I finally got out of the cast I'm going to say it was probably around May or June. I didn't try to go back to summer school or anything, I took a job, went to work for Hughes Tool Company. And I worked there until the fall. And for some reason and I cannot recall this, I didn't try to go back. And I got a draft notice. And I talked my father into signing me, okaying for me to go into the service of my choice, you know. When you went in the draft they would put you, I guess I never went that far, but I guess they would tell you, "Well you're going in the Navy," "You're going in the Army," "You're going in the Merchant Marine," or whatever. I don't know how they did that, but I never did get to that point, I just went ahead and joined. And I went into the service with a thousand other men that they recruited for the replacement crew of the cruiser *Houston* that was sunk prior to that. And they had this big recruiting deal about Marines and or Navy men. And it was a big thing in Houston in those days. But a lot of guys like me that graduated from high school, they went into the service in December and January.

And of course I was going to a military school then and I didn't join then but I did join later.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have the date you actually went in?

Mr. Baumbach:

I do have the date, I went into the Marines on November the 10th, 1942. November the 10th being the Marine Corps birthday.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes, that's right and you went into the Marines?

Mr. Baumbach:

Went in the Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you chose the Marines, right?

Mr. Baumbach:

I did choose the Marines, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And why did you choose the Marines?

Mr. Baumbach:

I just thought it was the service I wanted to join. And I was six-foot five and a quarter inches tall when I joined here in Houston, but I never had a physical until I went to San Antonio. And when I took the physical in San Antonio the guy says, "Well you can't go in the Marines, you're too tall." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well six-foot four is the limit." I said, "Well I'll go back to Houston." He said, "No, I think we're going to send you on." So I went in, I was six-foot four and a quarter inches, five and quarter inches I mean.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

I went to boot camp.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for that?

Mr. Baumbach:

I went to boot camp at San Diego, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about boot camp, how was it?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well boot camp was kind of like going to A&M in a way. I had somebody hollering at me all the time. When I was at A&M the upper classmen, especially the sophomores, they kind of ruled the freshmen. We lived in barracks up there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Go ahead.

Mr. Baumbach:

And I remember I was in the, I'm trying to think now, post artillery barracks. God it was an old building then, Bizzell Hall.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was this part of your boot camp?

Mr. Baumbach:

No, that was part of going to A&M. In boot camp we lived in Quonset huts. There were a lot of Marines going through San Diego and I imagine some of the guys that ended up in my outfit were from the east coast. They went to wherever the damn training camp was there, I can't think of that one. Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in boot camp were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well they were. And I never realized this until I had, when I got recalled in Korea. And that's jumping ahead almost ten years. Because then instead of me going to Korea, they put me at Camp Pendleton as a training instructor. So I spent a year and a day up there, but we're getting ahead of our time now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now back to your boot camp there at San Diego, what kind of weapons

Mr. Baumbach:

After boot camp they, I don't know how I ended up in the radio battalion, but I did. I think it was one of these times when they lined us all up and they counted off one, two, three, four and then, "Okay, all the one's are going to radio school, all the two's are going to the infantry, and the three's are going someplace else, and the four's." They just, you're it. I don't know how it was when you went in the service, but I didn't get a particular choice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right I didn't either, they just said, "This is where you're going," and that's it.

Mr. Baumbach:

(Laughing) It was. I went to radio school there. And after radio school we went to, of course you know during boot camp we had to go to the rifle range. And we practiced aiming but not shooting for a period of time, I'm going to say a couple of days or so about the different positions you have to go in when you're at the rifle range. And then you get live fire and you have to fire at a target. And I know I made sharpshooter, that was a grade below expert. And then after that they said, "Well okay." They picked a bunch of guys out, "We're going to send you to tank, over to tank, the Tank Group." And if you can imagine a six-foot five guy getting into a little old light tank that the Marine Corps had in those days, or that anybody had in those

days. It was kind of one of them positions where you just get in and you're in (*laughs*). And I was a radio operator in a tank.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now was this part of basic training, or what was this?

Mr. Baumbach:

This was part of my training prior to joining the 1st Armored Amphib Battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is this before or after the radio school?

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh that was after the radio school. I was a radio operator in a tank and I didn't know what was forthcoming at that time. And then the next thing you know they said we're going to send you, I guess after I stayed at tank school and we drove tanks over the boondocks and talked on the radio, which wasn't very efficient in those days. But I don't even remember how long we stayed at tank school, but we did. I just wonder if y'all have a book up there at the Nimitz library with the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion?

Mr. Misenhimer:

I don't know, I'm two hundred miles from the museum so I don't know what all they have there.

Mr. Baumbach:

Okay, the reason I'm asking you that because I received another book from a Marine that passed away early and his sister sent me all his stuff. Which was a lot of pictures and among it was another book of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now let me kind of get this straight. After boot camp you went to radio school, is that right?

Mr. Baumbach:

I went to radio school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what all did you learn in radio school, what did you do there?

Mr. Baumbach:

Learned the Morse code.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that Morse code to learn?

Mr. Baumbach:

(Laugh) It was difficult.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And about how long was that radio school?

Mr. Baumbach:

I think it was about six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Besides the Morse code what else did you learn?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well I just learned, we still marched on the compound like every other Marine on that base I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now this was after your foot got well, right?

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh yeah, my foot got well in June or July and I'm going to say of 1942. And then I received a draft notice later, I can't even tell you exactly when I received it, but I did. And that's when I decided I wanted to go into the Marine Corps. I talked to some of my friends that had already gone in the service and they were sent to the Navy or the Army. And they didn't have any choice, just took what come.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now let's go back to this tank group you went into. And how long were you in that group?

Mr. Baumbach:

I think about six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In the tank group is all.

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah we learned how to drive the tanks and operate them. Because it's kind of like driving a, I don't know if you're familiar with the way the old Caterpillar tractors were driven, but you had two levers and the right lever would turn to the right and the left lever would turn to the left.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes, I know how that works (*laughs*).

Mr. Baumbach:

(*Laughing*) We all learned to do that, tried to climb the hill and all that stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now let me see if I've got this straight. After boot camp you went to the radio school first, is that correct?

Mr. Baumbach:

That's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And from there you went to the tank group?

Mr. Baumbach:

Went to the tank group.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then from the tank group where did you go?

Mr. Baumbach:

I think we went into the beginning of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, which was in August of 1943. Yeah. I didn't get out of boot camp until, seemed like boot camp was about six weeks. So I went in November the 10th and January or February, I don't recall how long boot camp was, it seems like it was six weeks. Then we started the rest of that tank corps and I don't know what we did. I know we did a lot of marching.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In August of '43 you went into the Armored Amphibious, then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well we started training in what they called amphibious vehicles. And they put a light tank turret, which was like on the tanks that we had when I was going to the tank group, trained in that. They put a light tank turret on top of an amphibious vehicle, which we used to call "alligators." They were big old cumbersome vehicles that would, they'd go three miles an hour on water. They were propelled by the track.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well we just trained on those until the following January when we were sent overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was January of what year?

Mr. Baumbach:

January of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Overseas?

Mr. Baumbach:

Let's see, no wait a minute. Was it '44? Hold on, I'm getting ahead of myself. Yeah, because '42 I was out of A&M and I joined in '42. In '43 I did training and we trained in the ocean at San Clemente, California. That's where the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion trained, at Camp Pendleton, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So it would have been January of '44 you went overseas.

Mr. Baumbach:

It would have been January of '44 when I went overseas, that's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where did you leave from?

Mr. Baumbach:

We left from San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where did you go to?

Mr. Baumbach:

We went from San Diego to Kauai, Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

And we stayed there for a few days and then we went on our first mission from there. And I don't remember the month of that. But we went to what I found out later was part of the Kwajalein Atoll. And this was a big atoll, it was a deep water atoll, inside the atoll. And I never knew about that thing, the water was so clear you could just see almost to the bottom.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The battle of Kwajalein started in February of '44.

Mr. Baumbach:

Yep, Roi-Namur. We went to two islands and we were supposed to be the first wave on the islands. And these so called armored vehicles, they weren't too well armored we found out later. But the particular tank that I was in, we called them tanks then. The tank that I was in when we neared the shore we got caught in a big wave. And our particular tank got picked up on this wave and when we went in all the way to the shore we were at an angle and we hit the beach kind of like at a thirty degree angle. And when we did we broke the final drive on the tank. And we couldn't move. So we had to get out of that thing and took our weapons and I don't know what else we took. Mostly we took our weapons and got up on the shore and by that time other tanks and the commanding officer that landed on this particular site told us where to go to get up on the dunes or whatever. And the rest went and secured the two islands so to speak that made up this atoll. These atolls were huge and the little islands that are around the atolls were all connected by coral. There are coral reefs all in there and they had entry ways where they could bring big ships in. And our vehicles were made to go on the sand or on the coral. Well we found out that we didn't know about the waves in, but the waves were big behind us and we got knocked out of any further riding in a tank. Our tank commander, he was an old Marine, he had gotten recalled. He had been in the Marines before the war and he got recalled and he joined us later as the battalion was forming. He was a Corporal at that time. He managed to get on another tank as a machine gunner. I don't know if you're familiar with these tanks but they were about thirty-foot long, but they had, maybe I should explain this to you. They had two guys sitting down on what we called the lower deck and that was the driver and the radio operator. And then we had the tank commander that was up in the turret and the gunner and ammo passer. The ammunition had to be passed up from the lower deck up to the turret, there wasn't room up there. And on the back of the tank behind the turret, one on either side, there was an open machine gunner there with a swivel machine gun that could shoot off of that portion.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you carry troops ashore too or not?

Mr. Baumbach:

No we did not carry troops ashore. The troops went ashore in the alligators that they used, I think they started using them on the Guadalcanal. But they were open deck, they just had a, I don't even know what they had. They probably had a radio operator too but we never did train in them. When we first started in those things, we had the tanks with the turrets on them, I mean the vehicles with the turrets on them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So actually you're was a fighting vehicle not a transporting vehicle.

Mr. Baumbach:

It wasn't a troop carrier, I don't even know if a troop carrier had a machine gun on them or not, they could have.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Some of them did.

Mr. Baumbach:

I imagine they did. But the rear of the troop carriers was all open. And they had a, I don't even know if the first one had a ramp in the back that they could drop or whether they just had to bail over the sides.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you got ashore then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well we got up on there and took positions. But there wasn't any Japs on this particular area where we were. And I never fired a shot. Never had anything to shoot at.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well after that particular little foray was over we went back aboard ship. All these tractors and tanks, amphibious tanks were transported on a vehicle called LST. And you, I don't remember how many tanks or tractors they held but we had to back them into these LSTs. They had a ramp in the front that let down into the water and then the vehicles would drive on to them. Whether they was loading trucks off shore or whatever they were doing. They all had to go in like that, so when they come off they were ready to go.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you go back to your ship, then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

We sailed and ended up on Guadalcanal. And Guadalcanal was by that time secured. There were Japs way up in the mountains or what we called mountains, they were, well they were big hills. And we started training there. And Guadalcanal had a coral reef where our training was. And we got to ride around on that reef and then most of the reef was submerged enough so when a tide was high well we could almost float into the beach, the last few feet were on the coral. And we trained like that, we'd go out and maneuver and then come back in. Line up out there and all come in a group, hit the beach. Slow going, three miles an hour when you think about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well after that we sailed and we ended up in the Marshall Islands. And our battalion was assigned to the first wave again. And this time the Japs had been on Guam and Saipan and also on Tinian, which were three islands right up there at part of the Marshall Islands. And the Japs were prepared. And we had to go in and the Japs, we had to go in on landing sites that were

separated by projections into the sea. So we were kind of got eighteen, we had two rows of eighteen tanks. That'd be thirty-six tanks all the way across this atoll, this landing beach where we were heading. And the rest of the battalion was another two ranks of thirty-six amphibious tanks, they hit in there. And the Japs had armed, all these arms that went out in the sea and they shot the hell out of us. And we lost, I don't know how many men. If I could find that old book I wouldn't, it's pretty well recorded how many. I could of probably have read out of that book right there. Well I'm handicapped now, I have to get around with a walker and so I don't know where all this stuff is, it's somewhere in this house.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what island was this you were landing on?

Mr. Baumbach:

Guam.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was Guam, okay.

Mr. Baumbach:

In the Marianas Islands. We landed on Guam in the battle. And these tanks had a 37 mm cannon on them, 37 mm cannon. It's about 1½ inches in diameter, something like that. And of course we went in firing, I don't know what we were firing at. But I was busy looking through the periscope that the driver and the radio man had, trying to keep up with the rest of the guys. Some of them got on the coral out there and the Japs blasted the hell out of them. Found it out it wasn't armor proof anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Go ahead, what happened.

Mr. Baumbach:

Well we stayed on Guam for, I guess we were supporting fire for some reason.

(End of side 1 of tape.)

(Beginning of side 2 of tape.)

Mr. Baumbach:

A whole bunch of us got sick with malaria on Guam. It was the highlight of my Guam trip other than the fact that we all made it, everybody on my crew made it. We did lose a bunch of men to rifle fire and killed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do any combat there?

Mr. Baumbach:

Only combat I did was through a machine gun and I don't know what I was firing at. You know everybody was firing at those times. When we got in, especially after we hit the beach, just kind of raked the machine guns around. We didn't know where the damn Japs were because you can't see much out of a little old periscope.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right. Then what happened?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well I think we just stayed there for, I don't know how long we stayed on Guam to be honest with you. I can remember that they had a hospital tent with a bunch of wounded Marines in it and when we got malaria we had to dig a fox hole because the hospital tent was full. And the Japs came in there one night and killed a bunch of guys that were in the hospital tent. And I can remember being at the sick bay at the time in a fox hole and it rained, and rain in those islands is torrential. And I had to keep my head above water because the fox hole filled up. Hell to say isn't it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Baumbach:

So anyhow after Guam, after we were on Guam and whatever, after the landing whatever vehicle that we were able to take we took and went back to Guadalcanal where we replaced all the tanks with new tanks that had a 75 mm gun on them, which was a much bigger shell. And we trained in those things, we didn't do a whole lot of firing, but we did train on them. And from there we went to Okinawa which was a long way on board another LST. Landed on Okinawa on Easter Sunday, April the 1st of 1945. Didn't fire a shot. We landed on a beach to take the airfield and the Japanese had deserted this airfield and had moved to the south end of the island, which they had been fortifying in tunnels and through the mountains and the rock and every damn thing. And so our guys took the airport without much fighting, I don't think there were many Japs there. They all went to the south end of the island. They'd been waiting. And I think we were there a couple of months. And we maintained artillery fire, we really turned into artillery on Okinawa. And you know we'd get calls to fire salvos, whatever. And I'm trying to think if we were still on Okinawa. Let's see (*counting months*), I don't know where we went. Yeah, we did go back to, we went back, we didn't go back to Guadalcanal, we went back to Saipan, which was north of Guam. And we went back to Saipan and we were living in tents there training for the attack on Japan. And then the war was declared over before we had to go, we never even went aboard ship to go to Japan. And we stayed there until they got transports. And they brought transports in and we got loaded up on transports and came back to San Diego. Landed at San Diego and were discharged from San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what date did you land in San Diego, do you know?

Mr. Baumbach:

No, I don't know but I know the date that we got discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, what date were you discharged?

Mr. Baumbach:

I got discharged on the 5th of December.

Mr. Misenhimer:

'45.

Mr. Baumbach:

1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long had you been back in the States before you got discharged?

Mr. Baumbach:

I can't tell you that. It wasn't long, it wasn't long.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you didn't leave over there until probably the middle of November.

Mr. Baumbach:

Probably didn't. We stayed on Okinawa, well you know we were training, we were training.

We wasn't idle while we were there, we were training in these tanks and replacement tanks of the ones we lost. When you lose something like that they don't try to bring it back they just let it stay there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now Japan actually surrendered in August of '45. And you all came back in November, so you were there about two and a half months after the surrender?

Mr. Baumbach:

Probably. April, May, and June, we were there from June until I guess probably November. By the time we got aboard ship to come back it must have been, we went aboard ship and we landed in California in probably late November or early December. And of course they had to process

you out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas what would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Baumbach:

My most frightening time?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir.

Mr. Baumbach:

Heading towards the beach not knowing what was going to happen. And then the first night on Guam, many nights on Guam we were beach bound. We trained in those tanks for the invasion of Japan and then by the time we got aboard a transport to come back, I don't think we did too damn much when we got back. But I do remember December the 5th.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now how was the morale in your outfit overseas?

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh the morale was always good. I think it was, other than being scared shitless on Guam. And as far as that goes on the first landing on Roi or Namur whichever one we beached on. You know we didn't know what was hit, we didn't know what was ahead. And we were supposed to make it safe for the troops coming in behind us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time overseas?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well the constant training we did most of the time, we had a lot of free times though. And they'd find something for us to do. We had some recreation, we played softball, yeah we didn't have any basketballs. But we did play a lot of softball when we were on Guadalcanal. And on

Okinawa, I mean when we come back from Okinawa to Saipan they had basketball courts and handball, had a handball deal. They had some troops back there working, converting for the returning troops I guess. Had the camp all set up, all the tents were up. We didn't have to erect them at that time, which we did on the Canal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas what did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Baumbach:

I thought the officers were, the first two landings we made were under a Captain McDowell, he was our commanding officer on D Company. I was in D Company 1st Armored. And of course they were A, B, C, and D and Headquarters Battalion, which was a small one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So the officers were pretty good then?

Mr. Baumbach:

The officers were pretty good, they were strict, they were strict, you know they had to keep everybody in line. And they pretty well did, they pretty well did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Baumbach:

I'm sure we did, I'm sure we did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You know who she was of course.

Mr. Baumbach:

(Laughs) Yeah, yeah. She chastised the troops for fighting against her homeland and all that bullshit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on April the 12th President Roosevelt died, did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Baumbach:

Heard about it, heard about it. I think we were on Guam, I don't remember when he died.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April 12th, April 12th of '45. So it would have been

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh April 12th, well that's right after we landed on Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right after Okinawa, right. Did y'all hear about that or not?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah we heard about it, sure we heard about it. And we also heard another big news item, have you ever heard of Ernie Pyle was a war correspondent over there?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes I know of him real well, know about him, right.

Mr. Baumbach:

Ernie Pyle, he was killed on an island off of Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Ie Shima.

Mr. Baumbach:

Yep. Yeah he got around, he got around you know. Seemed like a nice man.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you know him?

Mr. Baumbach:

I just knew him, I'd seen him. He went through our battalion or went over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

May the 8th of 1945 Germany surrendered. Did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah, I'm sure we did. We were still on Okinawa then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right you were. Now on August the 6th of '45 they dropped the first atomic bomb. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Baumbach:

We heard about that, we were on Saipan at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think of that?

Mr. Baumbach:

I thought it was good, I thought it was a good deal. You know I didn't know that it killed so many thousands of civilians and everything but they didn't have any remorse when they attacked us at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well if we would have landed on Japan every one of those civilians would have fought against us.

Mr. Baumbach:

I'm telling you, they were armed to the, everybody had to have some kind of weapon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on August the 15th Japan surrendered. Did y'all have a celebration, a party then?

Mr. Baumbach:

We probably did. Beer was available to us (*laughing*). And I happened to be in a crew that only two of us drank beer, so we'd get, I don't know what we got but we'd get some beer. Yep. I don't remember where we got the sake.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah. We had that little crossing the equator deal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had you a little celebration there, huh?

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh yeah, war time or not they had it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever in any typhoons?

Mr. Baumbach:

We were in a typhoon on the way to Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that?

Mr. Baumbach:

Early 1945 I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I say how was that typhoon, was it pretty bad?

Mr. Baumbach:

It was rough. You may not be familiar with a LST but the LST, we always called them a floating bathtub. They were flat bottomed. They were flat bottomed so they could actually if there wasn't a coral reef there they could run up to the beach and drop the ramp, or as far as it could get up there, depending on how the contour of the ocean was off these islands.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, I've toured on a couple of LSTs.

Mr. Baumbach:

What a nice deal, huh? I can remember the bumps on the LST, gawd.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Baumbach:

Well not a heck of a lot because I had a, by the time that I got home my brother being over in Germany or France, or Germany where he was, by the time I got home he was back home and he was working. He was what they call a "lease hound" in the oil fields. And he was working over in Mississippi, he and my sister lived in Biloxi. And he managed to get me a job over in Mississippi. So I wasn't home too long. I was home long enough to do a little celebrating and that's when I met my first wife. Met her on a blind date. She came over to Mississippi and we stayed over there while I worked in the oil fields, ninety-nine cents an hour man.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Baumbach:

Oh yeah, we've had twenty some odd now. We had a lot of reunions, a lot of reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You've gone to a lot of them have you?

Mr. Baumbach:

All, I didn't go to the first one and it wasn't but about ten or fifteen guys that went to the first one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Baumbach:

Did I use the G.I. Bill, I went to the University of Houston, I certainly did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you graduate from there?

Mr. Baumbach:

No I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did you go there?

Mr. Baumbach:

I went there for a couple of years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to when you were in the service?

Mr. Baumbach:

Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you say you were recalled later?

Mr. Baumbach:

I was ushered out as a Corporal and when I went back, when I went back in 1950 I was a Corporal with a whole bunch of Sergeants, Staff Sergeants, Master Sergeants. And they didn't know what to do with all the non-coms I guess. Anyhow I ended up in a boot camp at Camp Pendleton.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you stay in the Reserves when you got out of World War II?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah, I went back in Reserves in '46, but I was in what they call Inactive Reserves. I didn't go to practice every month like the Active Reserves did. And when I got recalled I was astonished because I was already working, went to work for Shell in 1948.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were recalled how long did you stay in?

Mr. Baumbach:

Stayed in a year and a day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You stayed in the States the whole time?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yep at Camp Pendleton at the boat basin in Camp Pendleton, California. Didn't have to live in a tent anymore, they already had big dormitories like they had in all. They must of, they made the ones that Ellington Field here in Houston, they had an Army Air Base there. And I think the dormitories there were just like the dormitories we had at Camp Pendleton in 1950.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Baumbach:

I got Pacific deal with three stars, for three campaigns. I got a Good Conduct and a Presidential Citation, I think we got two of those, along with the, got one for the Okinawa and one for the Guam. You know I just now realized that I got a card here sent by, well I'm kind of off the subject now. I got a card from the, not the American Legion but the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. Misenhimer:

VFW, yeah.

Mr. Baumbach:

Telling me how I can get whatever medals that I may have accrued. But I had enough for two ribbons worth, that's three across, so that was six. And don't ask me what they were all for, I don't know. I know I had a Victory, V for Victory.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now have you been on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Baumbach:

Have I been on the what in Washington?

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Baumbach:

No I never have.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You've heard of it have you?

Mr. Baumbach:

Yeah I had a good friend of mine that was in, he was in the service, he went in in, I think he went in '44, '45. He was over in Germany when the war was over. But they had an Honor Flight from up in Conroe. He went up there. We had a reunion in D.C., matter of fact we had two of them. And real interesting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Baumbach:

Well I can recall a lot of marching on the grinder. (*Laughs*) That's what they used to call the parade ground at boot camp. It really wasn't, it really wasn't, it was a boot camp but they did a lot of training there before.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well Joe that's all the questions I have unless you've thought of anything else.

Mr. Baumbach:

Okay. Well I tried to remember to give them to you as I remembered them. And of course you know a lot of that stuff, a lot of stuff has been, well seventy-five years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I know what you mean.

Mr. Baumbach:

(Laughs)

Mr. Misenhimer:

I want to thank you for all your service to our country.

Mr. Baumbach:

Whenever November the 10th comes around I can remember the Marine Corps birthday, hell that's when I went in in '42 *(laughing)*. Okay nice talking to you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you again for your service and thank you for your time today.

Mr. Baumbach:

Thank you for your service, I'll talk to you later, okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay fine, bye now.

Mr. Baumbach:

Bye, bye.

(End of interview.)

Transcribed by:

Gayle Misenhimer

Harlingen, Texas

April 5, 2019

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848