

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

William Wayne Most  
Vinita, Oklahoma  
December 17, 2019  
U.S. Marine Corps  
6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division  
22<sup>nd</sup> Marines

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is December 17, 2019. I am interviewing Mr. William Wayne Most by telephone. His phone number is 918-256-3114. His cell phone is 918-520-6805. His address is 821 Foreman St., Apt. 115, Vinita, Oklahoma, 74301. 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.

Bill, 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. Most:

I was in the Marine Corps during World War II.

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."*

Were you able to understand that?

Mr. Most:

Not very well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that agreement okay with you?

Mr. Most:

It's gonna have to be, where I can just understand, but over a phone I just cannot understand to be any question.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me just start out, what is your birthdate?

Mr. Most:

October 23, 1926, makes me 93 years old.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Most:

I was born at Chelsea, Oklahoma.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Most:

I had a brother but he was three and a half years younger and he passed away last year.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he in World War II?

Mr. Most:

No. He served, actually it was during a period of peace time, it was after World War II. He had gone to college at, it was Oklahoma A&M at that time, and to make a little money he signed up to go through ROTC while he was in college. So when he got his degree he went in the Army as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and two years later he was discharged as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. He served, just only served in Fort Riley, Kansas. What he did, he had learned to ski years before and he was taking enlisted men over to Colorado where the Army had a ski area and he was teaching them to ski. And that was all during peace time, he wasn't in World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now my next question for you is this, we find out that sometimes several years down the road we can't get back in contact with a veteran. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact if we needed to to find you?

Mr. Most:

Yeah. My daughter in California, her name is Judy Khoury, K-h-o-u-r-y.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Her phone number?

Mr. Most:

Yeah, I'm trying to bring it up. 209 area code, 612-8170.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what date did you enter the service?

Mr. Most:

I enlisted in 1944 right out of high school. It so happened that boot camps were filled at that time. I thought I was going as soon as I enlisted, then would go right on and had even packed a little bag. But they sent me on down, I had enlisted in Tulsa, they sent me down to Oklahoma City for a physical and I was sworn in and then they sent me home to wait until boot camp, there was an opening. And I thought that was pretty strange, but that's what happened. And so I was called in, I forget now just exactly when. I know that it was sometime after October that I went into boot camp in Parris Island, South Carolina. Well, I'll just tell you then, I went to boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina. And when I finished boot camp there was several platoons that had finished at the same time. And we were all transferred to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and where we started through infantry training. And in my case they formed a replacement draft and we were out on bivouac. We'd been sleeping out in those pup tents and everything out in the field and up in them piney woods of North Carolina, where we had to have rattlesnake training before we went (*laughs*) up there. Anyway, they marched us all in one Friday and we were all standing there in our tent, we were at what they call tent camp. It wasn't right attached to, well it was attached to, but it wasn't right at Camp Lejeune, it was just a tent camp just inside the gate at, I think it was Jacksonville, North Carolina. Anyway, we were standing there in this row of tents when they started calling names for the replacement draft. When they got through there was six of us still standing there. I asked why I wasn't called on that replacement draft. And our Sergeant said he had no idea why anyone, the six of us, were not called. But he was sure that it would come up in a few days and for us to move all of our gear up next to the office tent. And just hang loose for a few days and if we left the area to be sure someone knew where we were going to the PX or whatever. And we waited there for a few days and then about the third day, he told me, he said, "Most, you have a dental appointment. The dental clinic has called and you

have an appointment over there.” And so I said, “When was it?” He had told me and I went over there. And I walked in to a dentist and he put me in the chair, and he said, “Well I see here by your record book you have a temporary filling in your teeth.” And I had forgotten all about it, but when I first got to boot camp dentist started drilling my teeth, I’d just had terrible teeth, I didn’t realize it. But he just practically drilled all of my teeth out and filled them. And they called for my platoon to fall out, and he said, “Is that your platoon?” And I said, “Yeah, it is.” He said, “Well I’ve run out of filling,” he said, “I’m going put a temporary filling in, I’ll get you back over here in a few days and we’ll put a good filling in.” And I said, “Okay.” I forgot all about it, and evidently he did too about calling me back over. But he did put it in my record book. So like I say, I forgot all about it and never even thought about even contacting a dentist. And so that’s what he told me, he said, “Well I see by your record book you’ve got a temporary filling in your teeth.” And it took about fifteen minutes for him to correct that, put in a good filling. And I was back out of his office. Before I left I said, “Is this why I wasn’t on that replacement draft list?” He said, “They’re not going to send you overseas with a temporary filling in your teeth.” And I didn’t know whether he was actually joking or whether it was just a, that it had to be done before they would send me overseas. I never knew. Anyway, I went all back through that infantry training again, but this time I’m a fire team leader and kind of helping with the training, all six of us did. And they formed another replacement, that draft went to Quantico, Virginia and went aboard ship and went down and through the Canal to the Pacific. But mine went from across the states in a troop train to Camp Pendleton. And so I spent three weeks at Camp Pendleton and they trucked us down to the docks in San Diego one day and we went aboard ship. And five days later I was at Pearl Harbor and we were at what they call Transit Center, Marine Corps Transit Center. It was just a tent, just hundreds of tents set up. And so we were there for about three weeks. And when we first went aboard ship at San Diego, it would have been probably about a battalion of men. And after we got to Hawaii at this tent camp, three weeks later, there was only about a company of us went aboard ship. And we went on to Guam from Pearl Harbor. Now I got to Guam and I was assigned to the 22th Marines, 6<sup>th</sup>

Marine Division, they were still on Okinawa. But they were in the process of going into North China. After the war Admiral Nimitz had ordered the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division into Tsingtao, China and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, which had been on Okinawa with the 6<sup>th</sup>, ordered the 1<sup>st</sup> into Tientsin, China. Now they had some skirmishes with the Chinese Communists because they were guarding railroad tracks and a coal field. And they even had some detachments all the way up into Peking, where we didn't have anything at the 6<sup>th</sup> Division but the city of Tsingtao. And the Communists had us surrounded and there were a few Nationalists troops there, but I don't know whatever happened to them when we left. But we were in there until about '49 I think, I wasn't there at that time. I spent a little over nine months in Tsingtao, China and I came home and was discharged. But that's about the extent of my service. But most of it was, like I said nine months of it, and I wasn't discharged for a year after the war was over and I'd enlisted for a year and six months. But once you enlist in the Marine Corps, whether it's the Reserves or not, why you're their property. And I understood that there was no draftees had went past Pearl Harbor, that most of them had been shipped back to the States. And the reason then, this Company that we went on to Guam, all of us were enlisted. And so anyway I spent, like I said it was, well I got back to the States, I went aboard a ship the last day of August of '46 in Tsingtao, China. And we went up around the horn there of China. If you looked at a map of China you would see there's kind of a horn that sticks out toward Korea. And Tsingtao was right again the mainland and right at the bottom of that horn. Tientsin was again the mainland and right at the top of the horn. So when I went aboard ship it took us three days to go around that horn and we docked at Tientsin. Actually they call it Takoo Bar because there was so much silt there that big ships couldn't get any further than that and they would use smaller boats to transfer people and material in across the more shallow water. But that night we got there there was fifteen hundred troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division came aboard. Some of them had been in boot camp with me, I saw some guys that I'd been in boot camp with. So then we left, it was a seventeen day trip by ship back to San Diego. And I spent about a week in San Diego and they sent me home on a furlough. At one time they were paying them for their time, instead of having a furlough when

they got back to the States. But I was sent home on furlough and then my discharge was mailed to me. And a ..., I had a thought there that I was trying to recall here while I was talking. Oh, when I went into China, I'd been a rifleman all this time, and when we went into China in early October of '45 and I was, one morning at muster when I fell out for roll call, I was told that I had to report to the Classification Officer at Regimental Headquarters. And so I did that, it was up at the Sergeant Major's office. And I walked up in front of the Sergeant Major's desk and he said, "Can I help you?" And I said, "I was told to come over and see the Classification Officer." Now I'm expecting to see someone with bars or something on their shoulder, an officer, when they said Classification Officer, to me that meant an officer. And he said, "That's him back there by the window." I looked back he's a Staff Sergeant. And I went back and he said, "Can I help you?" And I said, "I was told to come over and see the Classification Officer." And he said, "That's me." And that was kind of a shock, he was just a Staff Sergeant but he was Classification Officer for the whole regiment. And he said, "Sit down." So I sat down in front of his desk and he said, "I see you've had typing in high school." And I said, "Yeah, I did." And he said, "Come over here and sit down at this typewriter." And he give me a little bit of a speed test there and it wasn't even close to passing it, it'd been a long time since I'd sat down to a typewriter. So he said, "Alright, I want you to practice you're typing here all day, the rest of the day." And he said, "You'll go to lunch with these fellows, I'm gonna tell them to make sure they take you." And so I came back after lunch and I continued practicing my typing, just typing things out of a magazine. And so he told me when at five o'clock when they were leaving the office, he said, "You be back over here in the morning, I've already taken care of it with your officers." And I said, "Okay." So I just got up the next morning and I was back over at that office and I sat there and typed all day long. And about the third day it was getting cold in north China and I went across the parade ground and I had some gloves but never thought to put them on. And my hands were cold and when I went in the office and I was blowing on my hands. And he said, "Sit down, I'm going to give you a speed test." And I said, "Not until I get my hands warmed up." And he said, "Sit down! I'm going to give you a speed test." So I sat down

and he give me a piece of paper and I rolled it into the typewriter and he timed me. And when I got through, he said, "Well congratulations, you're now a 405 spec number, you're a clerk-typist." (*Laughs*) And I went to work right there in personnel, in that office. And I relieved a guy, a Corporal that was going home. And I had the duty to make out ration statements for the regiment and give that ration statement to the Quartermaster guys that would come by every morning and wait on me getting that ration statement out and then they would go get rations for the day. And then I had to consolidate all the strength reports from all of the battalions and the two companies, H & S and Weapons Company, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Marines. And I had four guys under me and we were all PFCs and I made PFC about that time. And we were all four had just been, were all new PFCs. I was an acting Tech Sergeant and the three PFCs under me were actually acting Corporals. One was a typist, one was a, oh, he operated the machine where they reproduced, what in the world did we call that thing. The other one was at a card file, he had a card, he had to keep a card on every member and he took care of that. But that's what I had to do. Every morning, that was you know 365 days out of the year. That was 365 days out of the year that I had to make those reports, draw rations because we had to eat every day. And I got to thinking about it here, oh a couple of three years ago, and I thought my God, I was 19 years old, I turned 19 after we went into China and I was 19 years old drawing rations for a regiment, making out a strength report. And the responsibility I had, like I said, by the table of organization I should have been a Tech Sergeant, but I was just a PFC. And I thought, that was quite a responsibility to put on a PFC. But anyway, that's the way it was. And every time I moved I would go right into an office and (*phone ringing in background*). Anyway, that was pretty much my career. And when I came home that was what happened to us. There was a ship load of us and we docked actually right in the compound there at San Diego. And we all fell out and standing there in somewhat of a formation. And this guy was, this Captain was up on a platform and he said, "Now, the first thing I want all of you 405 spec numbers to step forward." And I thought to myself, yeah you want us to discharge all these guys and then we'll have to discharge ourselves. And so I didn't move and neither did anybody else (*laughs*). And he said, "Now if I have to get



the record books out and go through every one of them to get you 405 spec numbers to step forward, I happen to know that there's about fifteen of you. And so I'm going to ask you one more time." And when he did, why I stepped forward and so did the other fourteen. And we did, we discharged that whole shipload of people. So we spent about a week in San Diego longer than they did. And then we started working on the discharges for ourselves. But they didn't give them to us, they said they'd mail them to us later, so we left San Diego and went home on a .... Well I started to say, it flashed across my mind what, it wasn't re-enlistment furlough because we weren't re-enlisting, it was just a ....

Mr. Misenhimer:

A terminal leave?

Mr. Most:

But we went home on furlough. And then we got our discharge and I think mine was dated November the 6<sup>th</sup> of 1946. And I think that when I took my oath, was about the 6<sup>th</sup> of October by the time they called me into the .... We had gone down that summer out of high school. I had gone in with a friend of mine. And one reason we went into the Marine Corps was because he had three older brothers in the Marine Corps, and so he wanted to go in the Marine Corps too. And I kind of was leaning toward the Army Air Corps, I wanted to get around airplanes, but anyway that didn't happen, I finally decided, well I'll just go in the Marine Corps with Jim, this friend of mine, we graduated from high school together. So we went down that summer right out of school and we'd graduated in May, I think. So sometime about in June. But they didn't call us to even get a physical until it was about October the 6<sup>th</sup>. I began to think that I wasn't gonna .... And I was 17, I turned 18 in October and I was sworn in before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. And I would have had to register for the draft if they hadn't of sworn me in before my birthday. So I never did register for the draft until I came home. That was always kind of funny to me. Someone asked me, said, "Did you register for the draft?" And I said, "Why I've been in the Marine Corps, I haven't registered." He said, "Well, I think everyone," someone told me this. Said, "I think everyone's supposed to register." So anyway I went down to Claremore, the

county seat of Rogers county. And so I went down to Claremore and went into register, and they said, "Well how old are you?" And I said, "I'm 20." "Well why haven't, you're supposed to register at 18, where were you when you were 18?" And I laughed and said, "Somewhere in the Pacific with the Marine Corps." And they said, "Oh!" (*Laughs*) But I hadn't thought about registering while I was in the Marine Corps, I mean that was just, never crossed my mind. But anyway, I did register later. So I did all of that, I turned 20 in October the 23<sup>rd</sup> and my discharge was the following November. I did all of my Marine Corps career was always done at 17, 18, 19, and 20. Yeah, I said I had three birthdays in the Marine Corps, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>. And my 19<sup>th</sup> was when we were in China. And we all had to go to this, no one was exempt from this, we all ended up in formation and I had where I could look over the shoulder of a fellow I was standing by, and I could see this table. And General Shepard, our Commanding General of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, was sitting at that table. And then it was a Japanese officer who I took to be a General sitting there beside him. And their staff was switching papers back and forth and they were signing their names. So this was the official surrender of the Japanese troops in North China, in that particular area of North China. So, I never will forget this, what I saw, after they were through signing papers this Japanese General got up from his chair and he took his Samurai sword, which was hanging on his side there in his duty belt. And he unhooked that Samurai sword, laid it on his arms, went around to all his officers, and they all took their Samurai swords off and laid it on his arms. He just cradled all those with his arms. He walked up to the end of that table, General Shepard is still sitting there, and he just straightened out his arms. And I still have that sound of the Samurai swords clattering off onto that table in my head. And I found out later that was the official surrender, when he gave up his Samurai sword now that was it. And I saw that, you know just over this guy's shoulder. Anyway, that happened on the, I turned 19 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, right after we'd gotten in to China and that happened on the 25<sup>th</sup>, the official surrender was in Tsingtao, China was on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October of 1945. And I had turned 19 just two days before. So that's pretty much all I can tell you anyway Rich, even if you were even right here in front of me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, now how was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Most:

Well, it was pretty good. Of course, by that time there was only probably eight of us that went aboard a LST the very next morning, we went into Guam. And we set up a tent that night so that some of us could, we had to set up tents to sleep in. And I was told that very day, said, "You be back down here at the docks, you're going aboard a LST in the morning." And we went right to Okinawa and then right on from Okinawa right on into ..., I went ashore there to my outfit in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. And then we all got on LSTs and other ships and went into Tsingtao, China. And I was on an LST and as we started to leave Okinawa to go into China there was a typhoon, came up out of the South Pacific. And it hit right just close to Okinawa, went by Okinawa. And I never saw the sea so rough in all my life. And going into China we were all ordered to stay below deck, no troops up on the deck, no one up there but the crew, because it was so rough. When I went into having my meals, I could look out through, over the fantail and I remember seeing that number so many times behind me, the 528 LST. You know what an LST was, it was a flat bottom ship and it was just like a cork out there in that rough sea. And that thing looked like it was gonna ..., it wasn't even any water it was so high, it wasn't even any water under it. And then the next thing it's completely out of sight, that's how rough the sea was. And then here it'd come up again and it was so high that I couldn't even hardly see any water under it (*laughing*) and then it was down. And that's how rough. And I heard about later, that a destroyer that had started to leave Okinawa and he had full power and he stayed in the same place for about twenty hours. All that time, the sea was so rough and he was going against the current and he just couldn't get anywhere. But he kept it from getting on the shore I guess. But anyway, that's pretty much my story.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you were overseas did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Most:

I have, yes. And we really enjoyed Tokyo Rose because she would play music that we liked. And she would play this music but then she would tell us, you know propaganda stuff. And it was funny, she knew just about where everyone was. Now the Japanese, I don't know how they did that, but they knew and she would make those remarks about certain outfits and where they were and how many they were. And it was scary at times. But I was told this by some of the guys that had ..., now see the regiment I was in fought as a regiment on Guam when they were taking Guam. And some of these old ..., we called them old salts, you know. They'd tell us stories about the islands, fighting over the islands. And the Japanese had a thing, they were using physiological warfare, I guess you could call it that. They would have loud speakers up and they would play those things a lot of times at night. And the Japanese on the microphone, for the speakers, Japanese's their *r*'s came out like *l*'s when they'd speak. They would say, like this phrase that they would use would come out this way (*in a sing-song voice*), "Tomorrow, all the malines will be dead." You know they'd say things like that on that speaker, those speakers they had set up. So that was kind of their physiological warfare a lot of times. I've never heard that actually, I just heard about it. But I did hear Tokyo Rose a time or two before she was arrested. And another little funny thing that happened to me in Tsingtao, China. We had, it was just kind of a, things were so, they had inflation so that I changed a dollar bill into the Chinese nationalist money and I went to town, downtown Tsingtao, and I had dinner and I don't know if I bought anything, but I had a good steak dinner. And then this guy I was with, we decided to go to a movie, and why we decided that I have no idea because we couldn't understand, it was in Chinese and we couldn't understand it. And I couldn't hardly stand the smell of garlic in that theater (*laughs*). So we just got up and left. But I still had some change left from that dollar bill, that's how inflation was there. But we had fun, we'd go into a store and we would talk pidgin Chinese to these clerks. I'd pick up an item and I'd say, "How much Joe?" And he'd say, "Oh, that's five dollal." I said, "Five dollars! Man, that's stuff not worth five dollars, take tagwilla," that word was too much, it meant too much. I learned some few words in Chinese that I still remember. And he said, "Oh no, no, no take tagwilla, I lose some money, I lose some

money.” (*Laughing*) And I hadn’t even made him an offer yet. But we do that and try and keep a straight face and just almost break down laughing of their excuses. And I walked into a bazar one day and I could tell right off that this wasn’t just your run of the mill store, it was fairly high class. And I was looking at things and I picked up something and I just said, like I had at these other stores to the clerk, I said, “How much Joe?” He said, “Sir, that item sells for \$25,” or something like it. And I said, “My God, you speak better English than I do.” And he laughed and he said, “Well,” he said, “I got a degree from UCLA.” And he said, “As matter of fact I just came back to visit my parents her in Tsingtao just at the wrong time, because I got caught here.”

*(End of side one of tape.)*

*(Beginning of side two of tape.)*

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, go ahead. Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Most:

I’ve heard about it, but I didn’t cross the equator, I got pretty close to it on that trip from Pearl Harbor to Guam. We went to several different ports. At that particular time they were still a little bit leery about submarines that may not have gotten the word that the war was over. And so we were always in a port someplace every night. But I saw places like Kwajalein and Eniwetok and Majuro. Islands that, you know I never even got off of the ship. But I never will forget going into Kwajalein, and Kwajalein was formed, a volcano had come up out from the sea floor and then coral started building up around it. And then it gradually sunk back down under the water and just disappeared, the cone did of the volcano. But it left that coral and it was in a, like an island. And it was still attached to the sea floor, but it was just like a series of little islands in a circle. And we went through, between two of those into the port at Kwajalein. And I’ll just never forget that, I thought, my God he’s going to scrape the sides of this ship getting it to that port, but he didn’t. But I spent a night in Kwajalein, a night at Majuro, and we didn’t stay at Eniwetok, I remember just going by it. Oh we dropped off something at Eniwetok. But we went through several of those small islands like that where fighting had taken place, but of course they

were all secure at that time, and on our way to Guam. And so we got pretty close to the equator but we didn't cross it. But I know these, what do they call them, guys that did cross the equator they'd go through this ceremony of, they called them something or other, I forget now what. But that never happened to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April 12<sup>th</sup> of 1945 President Roosevelt died, did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Most:

Oh yes, yes. I knew about when President Roosevelt died. But I always thought that he had a good man that he had picked for his running mate, Truman. Truman was one of the few that didn't leave the White House a millionaire. And everybody else when they left the White House they usually were flown back to their home, but Truman just got in his car, he and his wife and they drove back to Independence, Missouri. And I always had a lot of respect for Truman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on May the 8<sup>th</sup> of '45 Germany surrendered, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Most:

Yes, May the 8<sup>th</sup>, yes, I remember that. And there were a lot of guys that thought, well they're going to have to go to the Pacific now, but they didn't. But I imagine a few of them did. But the war was over with Japan in August and it was the next August, that was in '45 and it was in the next August, at the last day of August that I went aboard a ship in Tsingtao, China. That had been a year from the date that the war was over, a little past. And so then we got to the States, I think it was the 17<sup>th</sup>, took seventeen days to get back to San Diego and we got back on September the 17<sup>th</sup>, back to the base in San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year was that?

Mr. Most:

That was in '46. See the war had been over a year, because it was over in August of '45. That's when they had the surrender there on the *USS* ....

Mr. Misenhimer:

*Missouri.*

Mr. Most.

Yeah, in Tokyo Bay. You would have thought, we're gonna be home now, we're gonna go home in six months but (*laughs*) it didn't work out that way for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Most:

No. You know what was strange, I've had people say to me, you know that had come back in through San Diego, said, "What'd you think of all them signs they had up around the bay there?" And I've been told that they had big signs on top of buildings, said, "Welcome Home Veterans," and "Job Well Done," and oh, all kinds of stuff like that. And all of that had been taken down by the time I got home. And there wasn't anything like that. And I made the remark, I went on the Honor Flight out of Oklahoma to Washington, D.C. to see the World War II Memorial, now I flew out of Oklahoma City. I went down to Oklahoma City and drove down there, and I spent the night in the hotel that they were going to be leaving from the next morning, and I spent the night there so I was ready the next morning, got up, had breakfast. And we got on the busses, there was three busses, and they transported us to Will Rogers Airfield in Oklahoma City. And we flew out, I can't tell you, I can't remember which, what date this was. And we flew out to Washington, Baltimore Airport, just at Baltimore/Washington Airport. And we got on busses there and we all, even in Washington as well as in Oklahoma City we had police escort and we just sailed right on through stop lights and everything else in those busses. And when we got back that night, that was early in the morning we got up and got on those planes, and it was a whirlwind trip around Washington. Got to see the changing of the guard at the ....

Mr. Misenhimer:

Arlington Cemetery.

Mr. Most:

Yeah. And oh a lot of other sites that they had included in that. And then we got on that plane and flew back to, we were bussed up to Baltimore/Washington Airport and flew back to Oklahoma City. And when we got off of that plane in Oklahoma City, I never saw the like, there was so many people there and I had a step-daughter and her husband were there. And they were just whooping and a hollering and going on and welcoming us back to Oklahoma City. And I said, my god, this is the reception that I never got when I came back from China, you know. Because it was just old stuff, veterans coming back at that time. So I might have missed an opportunity after I was discharged. I went down, I heard that you could sign up for \$20, now I'm talking about in '46, \$20 a month for 52 months, just go down to the unemployment office in Claremore and sign up for that. And I said, you know I was thinking I would do that and I did go down to the unemployment office. And they said, "What did you do in the service?" And I said, "Well I was in personnel." And I never got to explain what I did. But this clerk there at the unemployment office said, "You've got to go down to Tulsa to American Airlines, they're really crying for people with personnel." You know, that come out of service with personnel experience. And I said, "I've been cooped up in an office for the last several months in personnel office (*laughs*), and I don't want any more of that." And I didn't do it and I've often thought I might have missed an opportunity of a lifetime going to work for American Airlines, but I didn't. But that was an offer they had put out. But I had no trouble, of course looking for work was kind of a problem. I was looking for a job and finally I found a job here in Vinita driving a truck for the Vinita Wholesale Grocery Company, which is no longer in business. But I did that for about nine months. I had been married early in my life, before I went overseas. And we had lost a son while I was in China, died at birth. And my wife was pregnant again and I drove that truck until our daughter was born, the one that lives in California. And then I had written some letters and I had wanted to get into refrigeration work. And I found out that Oklahoma A&M was going to start a school at Okmulgee, they were taking over the old Army hospital in Okmulgee and they were making a junior college and a training center out of that. And I went down and found out when the enrollment was. And I went down one day and



spent the night in the hotel there in Okmulgee. And got up the next morning and went out and registered to learn refrigeration. And I spent five semesters at, we called it Okmulgee Tech, but actually it was Oklahoma A&M, Okmulgee Branch, you know. So I spent five semesters there and got a, they didn't have the AA degree at that time, but if they had of I would have come out with an AA degree in refrigeration service and air conditioning service. And that's what I worked at all my working days, doing air conditioning work on a service truck. And I had my own business, I had a job in Springfield, Missouri when I got out of school. And I went up there and we lived in an apartment and then eventually bought a house. But I went to work for a company called John Rhodes Company and John Rhodes owned the company and he was my boss. But he sold the company to a group of engineers that had been working for another company there. And they formed Springfield Engineering, so it just changed. I never did, it just changed the name of the company I was working for. And I worked for, altogether I was in Springfield about five years. And I thought, well I've got enough experience now I ought to be able to operate my own business, which is what I wanted to do in the beginning. So I came back to Vinita here and started my own shop. But the next summer was one of the hottest we'd ever had. And I tell you, it just really set it off. And every summer I would work as many as thirteen weeks without a day off. And I did not have time for my family, all I had to do, I just had service calls to make. And after about five years of that, I thought that's enough of this, I need to find me a job where's there's more than one service man. And I took a vacation at, that was over Christmas of '57, my wife had a brother and a sister that lived in California. And she wanted to go out to see them, she'd mentioned it a time or two. I had a little problem, I did work for Safeway store. And they hadn't paid me for about three or four months. And they'd gotten up to about \$600 that they owed me and I was in the Lion's Club with the manager of the store. And I said to him one night, I said at the Lion's Club, I said, "What's going on at the company you work for?" I said, "You know they haven't paid me for about three months." He said, "They haven't?" I said, "No." And he said, "Well I'll sure find out about that." He called me about two or three weeks, he said, "The district manager is here," said, "he's been just recently

been made district manager, he wants to talk to you.” And I said, “Well, I want to talk to him.” Still hadn’t been paid and so I went down to the store. And he said, “Well you’re charging us too much for your freon.” Which is a gas used in refrigeration. And I said, “Oh?” He said, “Yeah,” I charged a dollar and a half a pound, he said, “We think ninety cents a pound would be adequate.” It kind of irritated me that someone would want to set my prices for me, because all the other service men around the area, we all charged the same, a dollar and a half a pound. So I told him I couldn’t do that. And he said, “Well, we’ll just have to send our service men up from Tulsa.” And I said, “Well, you do what you have to do and I’ll do what I have to do.” And we parted, but I got my money. And we went to, I gave it to my wife, I said, “Put this in our personal account because we’re going to California this Christmas.” Just thrilled her to death. So we did, we drove out to California to spend Christmas with them over ’57, Christmas of ’57. And we were out there on New Years of ’58. And I came on back, well I went in and talked with, at Modesto, California, went in and talked with this shop. We’d stopped there on Saturday and they were closed. So I told her on Monday, we were going to get ready to leave and hit down in southern California. And I said, “I want to go back in and talk to that guy, that I.C. Refrigeration.” She knew what I was up to. She said, “Well you go ahead,” said, “I will get things together and we’ll load up the car when you get back.” So I did, I drove into Modesto about thirty miles away and went into this shop and kind of introduced myself to the boss. His name was Bill Imfeld, and I couldn’t get away from him. We just talked and visited and talked and ate donuts and drank coffee. And I’d say, “Well I’m holding you up from your work.” “Oh, that’s alright, they can work without me looking down their shoulders.” Anyway, I finally told him, you know in our conversation I told him, I said, “Well I’m looking for a job really.” I said, “I’ve got my own shop there in Vinita, Oklahoma.” But I said, “I don’t have any time off in the summer months.” I said, “I’ve worked for the last few years thirteen weeks without a day off. I can’t even take the family to the lake.” And he said, “Well, I’ve got a fellow that’s going to leave me next spring, now he doesn’t know that I know it. But I know that he is, so I’m going to have to replace him.” And I said, “Well I’d sure appreciate you keeping me in mind.” And he

said, "I will." He said, "Yep, get in touch with me next spring." And I said, "Okay, I will."

Well I came back and opened up my shop, I just had a sign in the window. And so I opened it up again and it's just a one-man shop. I had tried hiring people, but I couldn't find anyone that, there's just always a problem developed and so it just never had worked out. And so I opened it up again and I was working. I came in in March of '58 and I don't know, I was really disgusted about something and I said I'm going to sit down and write a letter to that I.C. Refrigeration out in California. And I did and I got a letter right back from him and he said, "Let me know when you can be here." I just picked up the telephone and called him. And he would like for me to be there the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. Well here it is already early March, but I made it. I had a sale at my house, sold my furniture at an auction sale, and sold all my furniture. We were just renting this house, I had sold a house in Springfield that we had and we were just renting, I hadn't bought a house in Vinita. And we took off for California, my wife followed me in the car and I'm driving my service truck. And we got out there and I went to work for I.C. Refrigeration, I worked for them about six years. And all the time I was working for I.C. there was a place, Shell had a research laboratory north of town. They called it Shell Development, it was actually a branch of Shell Chemical. But they were researching agriculture products and there was about 150 people working there. And they would call me every time they, or they would call the shop when they needed refrigeration work. And it just was always a custom of the girl answering the phone, she just give me those calls. I'd go out there and finally the old chief engineer would see my truck and he'd come over and he'd say, he had the idea he'd like to hire me and then he wouldn't have to call I.C. (*laughs*). And he would say, "Bill when you gonna leave that outfit you're working for and go to work for Shell?" And I said, "How much you pay me today, Chuck?" We were on first name basis you know. And he said, "Well I can pay you so much." And I said, "Well I'm union and they're paying me, you know a couple of dollars more." But I got to seeing the benefits of working for Shell because they raised all of these crops out there, just garden stuff, and those people would be able to take that. Go out and pick corn, sweet corn, okra, tomatoes, anything you could think of that you raised in a garden, they'd turn acres of that loose. And we

could just go out there and go through, pick us a few tomatoes and take them home. And so I finally decided I would go to work for Shell. And so one time when he came over there and said, "When you gonna go to work for us?" I said, "Right now if you want to hire me (*laughing*)."

And we went over to the personnel and I went to work there. I told him I said, "I'll have to give my boss a two-week notice." And he said, "Well we'd appreciate that." And so I did and I spent thirteen years with Shell. And the old chief engineer that hired me had a heart attack and died one weekend working in his yard. And they had a guy come in there from back in New York and took over as the engineering department, the service department. And he didn't know anything about the boilers or the chillers, by that time that's what I'm doing. And just mainly was a boiler operator and chillers operator, big hundred ton centrifugal machines. And so he began to pick my brain and I knew he was, but I didn't mind. I didn't mind telling him what all I had to do, what it took to operate these things. And then about six months later he's telling me. And it finally, he didn't know anything, I had a boiler pressure vessel code book that I offered to let him watch and read, and he'd never take it. But he began to tell me things that I should do about that boiler that were against the code. And finally I just got so fed up with it that I, the guy that I worked with it at I.C. had left and had become service manager of another company in Modesto. And he called me I don't know how many times wanting me to quit and come to work for him. So I just got so aggravated out at Shell one day that after thirteen years, and I just went in and picked up the phone on my desk. And I had about a 50/50 job then, 50% of it was with the tool pouch on my hip and the other 50% was at a desk scheduling work for all the other mechanics. And so I went into the desk and got the phone and I called this friend of mine, I said, "Do you still got a job for me?" He said, "I sure have, you about ready to quit out there?" And I said, "Yes I am." And he said, "Well I'll call the union hall and tell them to dispatch you out to us when you come in." And that's what I did and I was back on service trucks. And that's what I did until I retired.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your military outfits?

Mr. Most:

Oh yes. Our 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division has a reunion, but they're only going to have one more next year. Now I went back to Baltimore a year ago, a year ago this past August. My daughter in California went with me, she hadn't seen Washington. She'd never been to Washington. I'd only been there, like I said with the Honor Flight, one day. So we went to Baltimore together and to attend the reunion, but we went three or four days early. And she had a lot of things she'd already researched and so we would go and get on the train in Baltimore and in just a few minutes we're in Washington. And then we'd get off and she already had these tours she'd researched. So we'd get on a tour and go see things around Washington, D.C. So I know we went to the Lincoln Memorial once and you know several things. Went by the Capitol and all that. So I had been to Washington before because my brother had passed away about a year ago or better. He worked for the Department of Interior. And it's over the, what do you call it, the government property mostly. And then he was writing pamphlets for the 4-H Clubs and for the FFA Chapters and all that about wildlife, yeah that's what I was trying to think of, wildlife. At one time he lived in Billings, Montana for about ten years. And he was in charge of all the wildlife on Idaho and Montana and Wyoming and parts of the Dakotas. And he'd gotten involved with this adoption of wild horses. And so then they called him back in to Washington and he moved his family back to Washington and he just worked out of the Department of Interior headquarters there then the rest of his career until he retired.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now another question I've got for you. When you got out did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Most:

Yes, when I went to school at Okmulgee I used my G.I. Bill. And then when I went to work in Springfield, Missouri I still had some of it left and they said well we could just use that and help you that much more. So they did, like on the job training. So I did, I used the G.I. Bill. I used it to buy the house in Springfield, Missouri. And then I bought a home through the G.I. Bill but it

wasn't mine, I mean the guy that owned it had had it built in Modesto, California. And I took over his loan, it was a G.I. Bill loan. And I just paid him, I think it was a thousand dollars or something like that and I took over his loan. But it was owned through the G.I. Bill but it wasn't on my name. And that's about all I ever used it for.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Most:

PFC. The funny thing about it, this friend of mine, we always were together, went to high school down in Chelsea. And we went into the Marine Corps together. We were in different platoons in Parris Island, but we both went to Parris Island. We got together when we were on the train going to Camp Lejeune. And so we were always together then. And he had some reason, and I forget what it was, that he didn't make that first draft. And we were together there then, going through the second one. We were always together, we went into China together. But he was in different regiment, he was in the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment which was an artillery regiment. But we ended up doing the same work, but he ended up coming out as a Sergeant and I was still a PFC. When we turned in our 782 Gear, which was our packs and our web belts and so forth, at San Diego why there was a Sergeant had a booth over in the corner, said, "Join the Reserves." And it was just for people that were being discharged. And he said, "Let's go over and talk to him." And I said, "Jim, he doesn't have anything," I was married. I said, "He doesn't have anything to say to me." And I said, "But you go talk to him." Jim was single. I said, "You go talk to him." And he said, "Oh come on," he said, "We'll just talk to him a few minutes." I said, "Jim," I smoked at that time and I said, "Jim I'm going out that door, that front door there's benches out there, I'm going to sit down and have me a cigarette." I said, "You go and talk to him as long as you want to, we don't have a thing to do until supper chow. So, just take all your time you want." He said, "Well I won't be long." And I said, "Take all the time you want, I'll be out there having my cigarette." And he came out in a little bit and he said, "Well, I joined the Reserves." And I said, "Well that's fine if that's what you wanted to do." He said, "Well I'll have to go to Broken

Arrow, Oklahoma to be in that detachment and have to go to meetings," I think he said every week or something like that, I forget how often. And I said, "Well, they'll pay you for that." "Oh yeah." He said, "Then I'll have to go to camp for two weeks in the summertime." "Well they'll definitely pay you for that." And he said, "Oh yeah." Well he was down there, we kind of lost track of each other. And the next thing I know Korea has opened up. And that detachment at Broken Arrow, Oklahoma was the first one called up, because they were just full of trained Marines, you know. So they pulled them up right off and sent them right on to Korea. And Jim ended up in North Korea up at frozen lake, they call the frozen chosen, or Chosan Lake or whatever name was. And when the Chinese soldiers came in, Chinese Communist soldiers, and they drove them back down into southern Korea. When I was out in California, and about six months before he died, I went down to see him. And he looked kind of hollow chested like. And he had ended up buying a 7-Eleven Store and he'd been working for a grocery store when he was off duty, he'd worked for this grocery store and he'd found out at the end of their parking lot was this 7-Eleven. And he was able to buy that. And so his wife, he married a woman with a couple of boys and they were pretty good size boys. And they ran the store during the summertime in the morning, opened it up at seven.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well Bill, that's all the questions I have unless you've thought of something else.

Mr. Most:

I can't think of anything else, as far as Korea was concerned. We did a few years ago when we were getting slim for actual members that had been in the division. They opened it up for associate membership and so a lot of guys paid for associate membership for their kids, I didn't do that. But they did. And it got to where, as we dwindled down, when I went back a year ago to Baltimore there was twelve of us there and three of them were in wheelchairs. But we really had a nice time, they really treated us royally because that's close to Washington and where the headquarters for the Marine Corps is. We were guests there one night and they had the silent drill team put on a show for us. And the Marine Corps Band was there, played music.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay Bill, thanks again for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Most:

Well I heard a remark about here not long ago and I use. I started to say it just now, and I will tell you. You know people would come up to me and say, "Thank you for your service," because I wear a cap all the time that says 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division. And they know it was World War II. So they'll say, "Thank you for your service." And I didn't have any remark I could make. I said well thank you or something like that, ever since. But someone said, "Well thank you for your service," to a veteran. And he just remarked back, "Well, you were worth it." And I think that fits pretty well you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, well we'll keep in touch.

Mr. Most:

I've bit your ear quite a bit here today. And so, I don't know of anything else I could tell you that was of any interest.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay.

*(End of interview.)*

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