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**Service Branch:** Marine Corps  
**Interviewer:** Childers, D.  
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Interviewer: Is it OK with you that the transcription of this interview is kept in the Lee College Library?

Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: I need to know what branch of the service you were in?

Veteran: Marine Corps.

Interviewer: What years did you serve?

Veteran: I went in in June 1941 and come out in 1946.

Interviewer: The highest rank you achieved?

Veteran: I was promoted to corporal but I never did get it. I came out of the service.

Interviewer: Were you drafted, or did you join?

Veteran: No, I joined.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Veteran: I was just barely sixteen years old, so I had to get my mother to sign for me.

Interviewer: What did you do in the service?

Veteran: I was in the infantry—different branches, because there was a lot of branches, you know.

Interviewer: What were you in specifically?

Veteran: Recon.

Interviewer: Where all were you stationed?

Veteran: We had a base out of San Diego, and I went through anti-aircraft school, and mortar and artillery schools, and machine guns. Then they needed somebody in guard duty, so I went to Seattle, Washington, to Bremerton Navy Yard. From there I went to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, in a guard capacity. That's where I seen my first combat. About the middle of January, the Japs bombed Dutch Harbor, and they killed two Marines. From there they sent me back to the states, and I trained at Camp Elliott, and then when they opened Camp Pendleton up I went there and trained for more anti-aircraft and seagoing duty, and for a period of time I stayed at Camp Pendleton. They transferred me to the South Pacific. I went in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division Recon Company. I don't remember the date that was. We went to Wellington, New Zealand and done a lot of training for hitting the beach. After awhile I went to the little islands of Tarawa. We secured Tarawa in about four weeks, and then I went back to Wellington, New Zealand and done some more learning how to hit the beach. Then we started toward Iwo Jima, but we didn't make Iwo Jima. We went to Saipan, and did a little recon work on the beaches there. They were told that right off the beaches, about two hundred yards, there was a coral reef about four feet under the water, and that Higgins boat couldn't over it, but they tried to get over it anyway. They lowered the ramp, and them Marines hit the water with heavy marching gear and full packs of ammunition—bandoleers of ammunition—and the BAR men, which I was a BAR man (Bradley automatic rifle—a machine rifle), and I just happened to get rid of that thing. I had my pack on and before I hit that ramp I swam ashore, and I found me another rifle. A little bit later, I found me another BAR. It took us about three months to secure Saipan, then the Seabees come in there.

Interviewer: What is a Seabee?

Veteran: That's a carpenter outfit. They do maintenance work on airfields. They built airfields, they'd run bulldozers—just all kinds of machines. Of course we didn't have time to run machinery. They did all the construction. After we secured Saipan, we stayed there a couple of weeks fixing to go back aboard ship, and after those Seabees got two runways fixed to where the bombers could come in there,

they moved over on the west side of Saipan, and the Japs come in there and chopped them up with sabers, so we had to make another sweep. The recon company had to go in there and see if we could find them Japs, and we found them in bunkers. Of course we come back after a dog team. We had three dog teams—thirty dogs in a dog team—and they turned them dogs loose in there, and they got ‘em out of there. That’s the only way we could get ‘em out.

Interviewer: I had never heard about that.

Veteran: Oh, yeah. The Marine Corps has everything, but I’ll tell you one thing. The Marine Corps is more equipped than what we were when I was in the service. They’ve got helicopters now—we didn’t have nothing like that. And they can get a platoon of men ten miles where it would take us weeks to walk. Of course those helicopters get shown down. I was in combat an awful lot, and I learned an awful lot about combat. I learned that you couldn’t trust nobody—not even a kid, not even a woman, not a man. You go in there to win; you don’t go in there to lose. Marines are trained different than that. They say, “Oh, my goodness—you killed that kid.” What are you going to do? Let him stand up there and kill you? No! I ain’t gonna do that. You’re trained that way. The Army is not trained like the Marine Corps. The Army is in there to take over, but the Marines are in there to secure a base, and they do it in the hardest, the best, and the fastest way. If they’ve got to kill everybody on the island, that’s what they do. I went over after a period of time, and I thought we was gonna have to re-run Saipan again. We took a couple of dog teams up in the mountains with us. Them guys got up there, and we couldn’t find nobody. Later on we found out there was a few snipers up there that we couldn’t find on the south side of the isle, which is a few rolling hills. Where the airplanes would go between those mountains taking off, the mountains were cut out, and that made the runways longer. Those snipers would get up there and shoot the pilot when he went by, so we had to do something about it. We were on Tinian at the time, and they had to send us back to Saipan to secure those snipers. We went over there and got those snipers, and then we went on back to Tinian.

Interviewer: Were they in trees or hiding in bunkers?

Veteran: No, they was in bunkers and caves, and things of that nature. They'd kill a pilot or hurt him, or hit the airplane, and then they had to shut it down. If an airplane got a bullet hole through there, they can't reach altitude, so they've got to stop and fix that hole. If it's too late, they take off and make a circle, then land. They can't go on their bomb runs like they're supposed to. We secured Tinian. It took longer than Saipan because it was a bigger island. We come back to Saipan to another tent area. Some Seabees had come in there and built another tent area for us, so we came back and stayed about six months. Then when Okinawa come out, we took out to Okinawa. They didn't need us over there, because Army had three or four recon companies. There was four or five little islands around Okinawa, and we run in those little islands. They was getting Naval gunfire from those islands, so we went in there on one of those little islands. I had to laugh, because this full Japanese colonel was standing there waving this American flag. He showed our commanding officer his drivers license and said he was an American citizen that had got caught in Japan because he'd gone over to see his mother-in-law, and they put a uniform on that sucker. {Laughter} It's a wonder somebody hadn't shot him. Just why did you marry that Jap? Married her in the United States; she was an American citizen. I'll always say that that's our downfall. We let too many people in this United States. I don't know how many Iraqis we have here, but we've got a bunch of 'em, and they could do some damage here if they just wanted to, but I don't think they want to, because we didn't go over there and act like a bunch of idiots and hurt everybody. We went over there to get Saddam Hussein. I'm glad they used airplanes, because there'd have really been some casualties if they hadn't bombed that town.

Interviewer: Is Dutch Harbor, Alaska near the Aleutians?

Veteran: That's in the Aleutian Islands.

Interviewer: Because the other veteran I talked to was actually stationed in the Aleutians.

Veteran: There was two more islands further out than I was. There was Attu and Kiska. The Japs came in there and like to have froze to death {Laughter}. Three fighters came flying down through there, and we didn't have but two or three 20

milometer antiaircraft guns, and they was up on the hills firing at them. Didn't want to fire too low, because we had airplanes sitting over there—PBYS. They said I shot one of those airplanes down, but what happened was I cut the main gas line, and any kind of bullet could have cut that gas line. There was 20mm, 40mm shooting at those three airplanes. They were about 200 feet high—they were strafing the airfield. When they're strafing, they're strafing right in front of me, so that airplane got right there, I led the airplane a little bit, and I hit the engine. I was shooting at the pilot, and hit that gas line and cut it. It went over and landed on a little island about two or three hundred yards out there, because it didn't have no power. They went out there and picked that airplane up, got the pilot out of it, didn't hurt him, and set that plane on a barge. They took it over to the airport and let the gear down, overhauled the engine, and started it up and got it to running real good. They flew that airplane from Seattle all the way to New York, and there was not but one battery that seen that airplane, and they was over the main batteries of the nation—antiaircraft batteries—and they just flew right over them. They flew at sixteen hundred feet all the way from Seattle to New York City, and this one battery, just before they got into New York, said, "We've got an unidentified plane coming in. What do you want to do...shoot it down? No! We know all about it, just let it come on in." Well, that crew got decorated, but that bunch of nuts back here—I said, "What kind of guard do we have here over our country?" A zero was a popular airplane, because they United States used that zero for one of our carrier planes, and the pilots didn't like it because it was too light for them. Wouldn't fly fast enough, so they came out with these F-40F Grummans, which flew like a log. They'd get up and just fall off on the wing when it got up so high, and these little zeros would just come in there and tear 'em up—they'd shoot 'em down. Navy got rid of it and sent it to Japan to see if they wanted that airplane, so they took it. That airplane was designed for the United States Navy, and they turned it down because most of the pilots didn't like it, because it didn't have any armor on it. But you get one of them up about five or six thousand feet, that zero'd eat it up because it maneuvered so much better. But they come out in the middle of the war with an F-6F Grumman and then F-4 Corsair, that's that gull wing—that fighter. Boy, that thing got 2500 horsepower, it had an eighteen foot prop with four blades on that little feller.

Interviewer: You were telling me about Dutch Harbor and when that plane came it and you shot it down.

Veteran: Yeah, and when that plane hit the water it didn't even bend the prop, which is unusual.

Interviewer: Were there lots of airplanes that came in and attacked Dutch Harbor?

Veteran: There were no zeros. That was a zero—a Japanese airplane. It had Japanese insignias and everything on it, and nobody saw it. That doesn't sound right, does it? That's it as far as the Pacific. When we left New Zealand, we got onboard ship and went toward Iwo Jima, and then they turned us and sent us on toward Okinawa. They didn't need us there, so they unloaded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, but they just put 'em aside and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Recon Company went to these islands, and we secured them little islands.

Interviewer: When did you come home from the war?

Veteran: In December 1947, because that's when I went to work for the light company. I started with them in June 1947.

Interviewer: What was daily life like during the war?

Veteran: Just routine guard duty, practicing firing at targets, and staying on your toes. I was in a 105 outfit, and that's when we were learning how to fire big rifles, like 150s, 155s, and things like that. Those people over there raise sheep, and our rifle range was sheep ranches, so a couple of days ahead of time they'd tell the people we needed for them to get their sheep out of these pastures, because we were going to put targets up there and fire at 'em. But where are you going to put 'em? Everybody's a sheep farmer, so where do you put three or four thousand sheep? You could look at the sides of the mountains there and they'd be white with sheep, and I want to tell you something—it was hard to fire a 155 or a 105 into that target up there. You'd blow that target all to pieces, but you'd kill a hundred sheep.

Interviewer: Never short of mutton. {Laughter}

Veteran: I'll tell you, we really got our bellies full of mutton. We had some old boys from Massachusetts, and them suckers knew how to skin them sheep, because they raised them themselves. When they got through, we had a bunch of trucks come up with five or six men on each of 'em, and we had to go up there and pick up all those sheep and bring 'em down. I don't know how much they paid them farmers for them sheep, because they paid for 'em. But I'll guarantee you one thing, we had some meat, and them cooks know how to cook them sheep

Interviewer: Did you receive mail?

Veteran: Oh, yeah, but not during an operation. It was probably about two or three months at a time that you'd get a mail call, and everybody'd fly in there when they'd holler "Mail Call." You didn't have to holler it twice. On Saipan we got mail pretty frequently. I think about every two weeks we got mail. I always wanted to hear from Mama, because I knew Mama was praying for me. That's the reason I got through all of that. When we first hit Saipan, we moved in about a thousand yards, and the Seabees come off a ship and brought their cats and pulled ammunition off of the LSTs—that's that ship that the front opens up, and it's like a raft. They'd put the ammunition and stuff on that and load 'em on ramps and let the Seabees pull it out, and it'd take them a couple of days to unload all that stuff. At night, we had to guard this because the Japs would come down there and blow it up, and we had to fight 'em off. One time, it might have been six or seven o'clock in the evening, I heard them Screaming 88s a-coming, and I said, "Ya'll stand fast, boys. You'd better get down." An 88 is a Japanese artillery piece, and they just shelled and shelled, but never did hit that ammunition stuff. Me and another feller were sitting in this big hole where a shell had gone off, and I told him, "You get down there, and I'm gonna sit right here, and don't you get up," and then I heard that shell coming. I just got down and leaned back like this, and that shell hit about five feet on the other side of that hole, and it took all the front end out of that hole. The shell glanced and went back on the beach and exploded in the palm trees.

Interviewer: So it just ricocheted out?

Veteran: Yeah. If it had exploded there, it would have gotten me and my buddy there.

Interviewer: That was Mama's prayers.

Veteran: Yes, sir! I thought to myself, "I don't want none of that no more." I'll tell you another place that I should've been killed. We were making an island sweep, and we got up on this mountain that had level ground way up on it. I had to stop, because I just couldn't stand it no longer, and I passed it on up to this sergeant that I had to stop. They kind of slowed down and waited on me, and I got back in ranks and sent this message on up there that I was back in the ranks. They got fired on a little ways up there, and everybody got down and kind of spread out so they could see what was going on. This master gunnery sergeant seen somebody stick a rifle out of this little bitty hole about as big as your fist, and he was firing at us, and he said, "Dick, come here. Can you hit that hole yonder?" And I said, "Yes sir," and so I laid down there with that BAR, and I put about three rounds in that hole, and them Japs came out of there like flies, because those bullets were just ricocheting around inside that cave, so they come out of there. That was necessary, but it wasn't just a few minutes until that dog team came along and they put them in there and drove out more of them. You can imagine all kinds of things. Why didn't they let that outfit go on by, and here come me down through there catching up. That clip didn't hold but thirty rounds, and you could fire thirty rounds through a BAR pretty quick. They'd a had a fight on their hands, because I was good with that BAR—I'm not bragging, but I could hit with that thing, because I was used to it.

Interviewer: So that was your chosen weapon.

Veteran: Yeah, that was my weapon.

Interviewer: What does BAR stand for?

Veteran: Browning automatic rifle. I think they had a Remington BAR, but it was mostly Browning.

Interviewer: Was that standard Marine issue at that item?

Veteran: Yes. It used to worry me, but it doesn't any more, because I know that the Lord had other plans for me.



Interviewer: Why did it worry you? Because you felt like, ‘why did I survive and they didn’t?’

Veteran: Well, no. It would bother me mostly at night wondering how come I didn’t get killed. They would have cut me up with knives, like they did those Seabees over there. They carried sabers—or some of them did—on their hips. An officer didn’t last no time. I tried to get the highest ranked man, so it would mess up the rest of their troops. You could tell if it was an NCO or a commissioned officer. You could get either one of them and it would mess up the privates and the lower ranks, because they won’t do anything if there’s no one to tell them what to do. We’d capture Japanese soldiers and they’d tell us, “I wish we hadn’t never fought you people, because we didn’t have nothing against ya’ll. You helped us a lot.” But you’ve got to fight or your commissioned officer is going to kill you, because he has that right. If you run, you’re a deserter. I caught myself going to see an Army friend of mine, walking up through the woods by myself on Saipan where that Army tent area was, but I stopped real quick and went back to my area, because somebody could have gotten me there. You had to have 61 points to go back to the states, and I think I had about 110 points.

Interviewer: How did you gain so many points?

Veteran: Campaigns and different things that happened.

Interviewer: So participating in certain campaigns gained you so many points?

Veteran: That’s right. Taking prisoners, recon outfits, and different things like this.

Interviewer: They feel like you’ve survived so much that it’s your turn to go home.

Veteran: That’s right. After we finished at Tinian and came back to Saipan, they had a lot of old men that couldn’t hardly do the work of a twenty year old kid. Some of them were forty years old, like your big sergeants and commissioned officers.

Interviewer: How old were you when you were in Saipan?

Veteran: I was about eighteen years old. I stayed on this little island out of Okinawa. We hit about six little islands around Okinawa, and we come back to this big island,

but it was just a rock. All of ‘em were just a rock—that’s all they are in just volcanic rocks. We stayed there about three months until they had half-way secured Okinawa. After the war was over, we stayed about three months.

Interviewer: Even after they dropped the atom bomb?

Veteran: Uh-huh. Our general said, “What about these men you got hanging around over here that’s building all these points up? They’ve got so many points, you’re gonna have to discharge them when they get back to the states.” Well, they wanted to discharge me in Honolulu. I told them I didn’t come to Honolulu to enlist, I came to Houston, Texas, and that’s where they were gonna send me back. My goodness, Honolulu’s two or three thousand miles from Houston, and that’s a long way to swim because I didn’t have no money. {Laughter}

Interviewer: You weren’t married?

Veteran: No. I didn’t get married until I was about 24 years old. {END OF SIDE A} {BEGINNING OF SIDE B} After I retired, I bought this house, and this is where I’m at—1409 Lacy Drive in Baytown.

Interviewer: How did you view the enemy when you were there? What was your feeling toward the enemy? Was it hate?

Veteran: Oh, no, because so many of ‘em told us that they didn’t want to fight us. Some of ‘em did, though. You had to take care of yourself. Naturally, if they had their rifle shouldered, you didn’t fire at ‘em, because they didn’t want to fight at all. They will flat sit down on the ground and put their hands over their heads. You couldn’t shoot that man—that would have been murder. I wouldn’t shoot him. But they pulled so many tricks on us. They had these light machine guns, and they’d tie it on a man’s back, and then four or five of ‘em would raise their hands and come toward our guards that were gettin’ off duty, and that boy with that 30 caliber machine gun would just mow them troops down. You’ve got to watch things like that. Them Japs had a head on them. They’d get you someway. That was a tough war. We weren’t as mechanized as we are now. We had fighter planes and bombers and battleships. They would sit off those islands, and they’d pound those islands with sixteen inch shells for two or three weeks at a time. The

one they were going to hit is the one they'd pound. But they were so dug in that you couldn't get to 'em with shells unless you hit their bunker with a direct hit. They used palm trees with deep holes dug around them, then laid real close together and put something on top of them and then cover them with sand, well you couldn't see them. You'd get right on top of them before you knew they was there. I looked up one time, and there was a Jap laying up on a pole. I put that BAR in his face, and he didn't have a weapon, and I made him get down. My commanding officer told us if we took prisoners we had to shoot them, and I thought to myself, "I'm not gonna shoot that kid." He was just a kid like me, you know. I took him to the commanding officer, and he said to take him the command post, so I let them have him over there. We didn't take many prisoners, though. They shot 'em, because they pulled too many tricks on us and couldn't be trusted. It's hard for me to remember everything, because it was over fifty years ago.

Interviewer: I bet it's hard to forget.

Veteran: I wouldn't forget it. I was talking to a friend of mine I used to go to church with over at Trinity Tabernacle Assembly of God Church, and there was a feller that come up to us and was talking, and he said, "I wish Dick would get over that World War II." You can't get over it. It's there; you went through it. Them guys over in Iraq are a lot more mechanized than we are. They've got those tanks with a rear end that opens up, and a squad of men can get in there, and that tank could take them wherever they want to go in just minutes. Then they get out and take off again.

Interviewer: Not like you guys trucking on with your boots.

Veteran: Yeah—we had to walk. We didn't have no truck or anything like that to ride in. All we had was Sherman tanks, and it was just a three-man tank. Of course, we used those flamethrower tanks, and they would go up to those holes and squirt those holes full of diesel fuel and then set it afire. {Laughter} Did you ever see that? You hadn't ever seen a flamethrower tank? Do you remember that outfit up in Fort Worth, or wherever it was at, that old boy had that church out there.

Interviewer: Oh, Waco.

Veteran: Waco, yeah. Did you see that tank out there? It had a frame on the back of it, and that was a flamethrower tank, because when that tank got in there and started pushing that building down and it turned around, I seen that igniter go off, and it squirted that building full of diesel fuel, and then set it afire. I saw that with my own eyes. Nobody else could see it, because it was so skinny.

Interviewer: I guess you'd have to be military to know that.

Veteran: That's right. Them FBI men didn't even know that. But that tank burned that building down, and they said the people inside set the fire, but they didn't.

Interviewer: And you saw that?

Veteran: I saw that. It was a flamethrower tank.

Interviewer: I guess the American people as a whole wouldn't know that.

Veteran: I'd hate to have that on tape, but I might have to prove it sometime. {Laughter} It has a little igniter coming out of it, and when that thing gets to shooting that fuel, they ignite that. It can bake you, I'll tell you. They used to fill those holes up, and there'd be an awful lot of men in there. I didn't find out about this until later that there was a corporal that went up on a hillside where he found out there was Japanese in this BIG bunker—probably maybe a company of men—and he went in there with his rifle, and he asked them men to take him to their company commander. They took him to the company commander, and, you know those Japs could speak better English than we could, and said, "Would you take your men down on the side of the mountain and surrender them. They're not going to hurt you, because I'll be in the front." So he thought about it for a little while, and they all come out of the bunker and left all their weapons right there—he was the only one that had a weapon, and they followed him all the way down there and surrendered all them men. I didn't hear about that until I left Saipan, but that was something. I can remember a lot of things that happened on those islands over there. Dutch Harbor, Alaska, is where I seen my first combat. July 6<sup>th</sup> or so is when they bombed Dutch Harbor with B-25 Billy Mitchell bombers, which was U.S. bombers that they stole from China, and who's gonna shoot at 'em because they're American planes?

Interviewer: So, they bombed Dutch Harbor with American planes?

Veteran: Yes, sir. You looked up at 'em, and here come the bombs. Naturally they started antiaircraft fire, but they didn't shoot none of 'em down, but they tried. They got away, but I understand the Navy got 'em further out at sea, but I couldn't get over that. Then we found out that they stole them from China.

Interviewer: Did we have a base in China that they stole them from?

Veteran: Yeah. But this is what will really shake you up. The Japs was out on the end where you are [evidently looking at a map], and why they didn't come in there at Dutch Harbor, because they were freezing to death out there? Why they didn't get on a ship and come on in and take Dutch Harbor? I had five rounds of ammunition to go to my old Springfield rifle (the one I had from boot camp—a 30 caliber rifle), and that's what I shot that plane down with.

Interviewer: How many people were lost in all that bombing?

Veteran: About ten or fifteen men. Then we had a civilian construction company named Sims and Drago Construction Company from New York City, and several of those civilians got killed, because they came down there strafing, and they'd get them guys in their bunks. We got up a lot earlier than they did, because the military always got up at five o'clock. We got our breakfast, and then we fell out for drills and first one thing and then another, and then we found out that they was coming. We went up about two or three weeks before that and dug these trenches in the hillside so we could get in there for protection. We went up there and had gotten in those trenches, and a bomb came out of one of those B-25s, and this little feller hadn't been up there but two days, and it hit him direct. He wasn't but about sixteen or seventeen years old. That little boy was black headed, and when they dug that little man up, that blast made him as gray headed. He looked like he was ninety years old when they drug him out.

Interviewer: Was his hair just white from the dust?

Veteran: I don't know what it was from. Must have been from that shock when that bomb hit where he was at. It's a wonder it hadn't killed two or three, because we were

all pretty close together. Those trenches weren't too long, because we couldn't dig them bigger with a shovel. We'd have needed a backhoe to get in there and dig 'em any bigger. That really did amaze me. I asked a friend of mine that was corpsman what made that little feller gray. I said, "He had the prettiest black, wavy hair you ever saw." And he said, "Yes, I knew him. He reported in to me when he got here and I had to get his paperwork. I really don't know." And he was a four-striper—he was almost a doctor. Boy, I'll tell you, he sure taught me a lot. Those natives over there had all kinds of diseases and things of that nature, and he said, "If you want to come up here and see this little boy, he's coming in with a venereal disease. I want to show you what happens."

Interviewer: He gave you an education, and you didn't want any of that. {Laughter}

Veteran: Laid him up on a table and hit him with a rubber hammer, and blood flies. That sucker felt like going through the roof, and I said, "You'd better stay at home, buddy." And he said, "Yeah." There was things that went on over in them places you wouldn't even dream of.

Interviewer: Where were you when the atom bomb was dropped, and what did you think of it?

Veteran: I was on Saipan, and we had just gotten through with Tinian and we had come back. That airplane was on Tinian when we was there. It was an A-square 35—the *Enola Gay*. I thought I'd seen the airplane, but they were lined up so you didn't know which one it was. It took off about three o'clock that morning, and the runway was east and west. It took straight off across our tent area. Boy you could hear that thing, and I held on to my head and thought, "My goodness, get some altitude, man!" {Laughter} But it was low, and I know that was the *Enola Gay*, because it was heavy, and it went out to see for miles. I'll tell you how wasteful the United States is. Those jeeps, trucks, Sherman tanks, were taken to a hillside down by the water, and they put one man in there to put that truck in gear and let it go. He'd jump out of it, and it'd go over that cliff. They destroyed 'em right there. B-29s, after they took the two outboard motors off, and took all the guns off, they put a pilot in there. He took off, and he'd get up about a thousand foot and set that automatic pilot, and it would go out there a little ways, then he'd

bail out over the end of that fighter strip and they'd come get him. They done that for thirty-four days, just destroying B-29s, B-24s, and B-25s.

Interviewer: It was less expensive to destroy them than to bring them home?

Veteran: They didn't have no place for 'em. At that desert in New Mexico or Arizona, they've got what they called a "boneyard." They've got every kind of airplane you could dream of. I could've got a P-51 Mustang and flown it home for \$500. They stripped it and took the motors and guns off of it, and just let it sit out there and deteriorate. You know, they have races with these P-51s today, and you can see them on TV sometime. There's a place in Galveston that has those bombers.

Interviewer: How did being in the war change your perspective? I know you seemed real excited to go, apparently, since you went in at sixteen.

Veteran: My brother was in the Marine Corps, and I thought maybe we'd see each other, so that's what made me join the Marine Corps. I went to the Navy first, and they turned me down because I had a cavity, so I walked around the corner to the Marine Corps, and told them I wanted to join because my brother was in the Marine Corps. He told me to fill my papers out, and I was in the Marine Corps. They had a whole bunch of us lined up, and they sent us right straight to San Diego. I didn't even get to go home. The next time Mama heard from me I was in San Diego. I didn't know they were gonna send me that quick. That Marine Corps training will either break you or break your back, but you've just got to take it. I was in real good shape, because I'd been helping Mama and her old man farming. I thought I might get in the Navy after all, because they have Marines on the battle wagons and aircraft carriers, and after we got about half through with our training, our D.I. told us, "This is gonna be a seagoing platoon." We got a two-day leave in San Diego, and we got paid and went to town, and spent the night in town. All of us got back the next morning, and the sergeant got all of us out in front, and a Navy captain and a first lieutenant were standing there with our D.I. and two master gunnery sergeants. And this captain came out and said, "I need so many seagoing Marines," and that gunnery sergeant said, "I want you to do left step-one step, and this bunch do right step-one step, and I was right there or I'd have been on the *Arizona*, and that ship was sunk in Pearl Harbor.

One man got off of the *Arizona*, and that was the mailman. He was in Pearl Harbor getting the mail for the men, and when he got back that ship was laying on the bottom, and the *Oklahoma* was turned over on it. The *Pennsylvania* was right behind there. They had sunk those two and the *Arizona*. They had come in there with some kind of a dry dock, and they put the *Oklahoma* in and pumped the air out and welded the holes up in it. I've been there.

Interviewer: Where were you when you heard about it?

Veteran: Dutch Harbor. The Navy came over and told our commanding officer that Pearl Harbor was being bombed by Japanese. A friend of mine was a radio communication officer, and we had a jeep with a big radio on it, so he ran out there and turned his radio on and we could hear it going on over there. They said after it was over that the *Arizona*, the *Oklahoma*, and the *Pennsylvania* was sunk. They put four bombs right down the smoke stack on that battle wagon and it blew it half in two—blew the whole bottom out.

Interviewer: Have you ever been back to the islands?

Veteran: No, I haven't. I'd like to go back to Saipan. After I retired I went over to Pearl Harbor on a vacation and went out and seen the names of a bunch of the old boys I was in the service with. Mine would have been right there...

Interviewer: If it hadn't been for your commanding officer's hand cutting you in half.

Veteran: I said the Lord's hand. They shipped us to Seattle, Washington, and then we came back to San Diego and started overseas training, and then sent me right straight to New Zealand. Our master gunnery sergeant was an old Indian, and he told that officer in charge, "I need so many men for recon." I had a friend standing right there and I asked him what in the world was recon. That old master sergeant heard that and said, "Who said that?" I thought I was gonna get it, and I held my hand up and said, "I said that, sir." He said, "All the rest of these men can go. I want that man right there. He doesn't know nothing, and I can teach him what I want. I don't want a man that knows it all." But he sure took care of me. He taught me everything. He said, "They're gonna strap that BAR on you. The life of a BAR man in combat is about three to eight seconds.



Don't fire that BAR a burst or two bursts and sit there. Get out of there! Move!" I done that several times, because a mortar shell or a hand grenade would be right there where I was at. I guarantee you I'm sitting here today because of him. There was also a professional rifleman; his name was Butcher. He taught me how to fire a BAR. He said, "Just fire two rounds and a burst—BAP-BAP—just like that. Just touch the trigger, or put that thing on single fire and fire one round at a time. You can fire it any way you want to, so you won't get your brains blown out." That weapon requires you to use some sense in combat. I figure them two guys saved my life. I was trained for the BAR. There's a lot of things I could tell you if only I could remember. I can still see that old tent area by the fighter strip. They put tents up for us, but we had to fix our own bunks or cots. About a week later we had to move those cots out, because they come in there and put floors in. They built us showers. The cold showers felt good, too, because the heat over there was like no heat I've ever felt anywhere else. You didn't sweat, because it was a dry heat like in San Diego. {RANDOM EXCHANGE WITH SOMEONE IN THE ROOM UNTIL SIDE B OF TAPE 1 ENDS}

{TAPE 2, SIDE A BEGINS}

Veteran: There was a Baytown civilian fireman working at Dutch Harbor, Alaska, that I really didn't get acquainted with, but I knew him. He was from Pelly, near the old City Hall. He wrote the *Baytown Sun* a letter and told them all about me and what I was doing. He told them about what I did when I shot that plane down during the attack. The only reason they figured it was me was that I was the only one with a 30 caliber rifle that was firing at that plane. It was about six o'clock one morning and I didn't get off duty until eight. The plane I shot down was so close to me I could see the pupils in that pilot's eyes. They weren't but 150 foot high. Uncle Bill told the firemen over in Pelly that he used to take me fishing, and we'd throw pecans out in the water and he'd bust them with my .22 rifle. {Laughter}

{TAPE STOPPED—END OF INTERVIEW}