

Veteran: RAWLINSON, A. B.
Service Branch: ARMY
Interviewer: Collins, Kim
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Transcriptionist: Terry Moore
Highlights of Service: **World War II; Luzon in the Philippines; Machine gunner; Went to Hiroshima after the atomic bomb was dropped**

Interviewer: We are doing a veteran interview for History 1302. Can you state your name?

Veteran: A. B. Rawlinson.

Interviewer: And you are aware that our conversation will be recorded and placed in the Lee College library?

Veteran: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: How and why did you join the service?

Veteran: I was drafted.

Interviewer: What year?

Veteran: 1944.

Interviewer: What was the process? Did you get a letter in the mail? Did they call you?

Veteran: Yes, I got a notice to appear at the draft board.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Veteran: Twenty-two.

Interviewer: Were you excited or nervous, or what was your reaction?

Veteran: No more than anything else, not knowing what was ahead. I'd only been married six months.

Interviewer: Where did they send you at first?

Veteran: We were sent to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio and processed from there out. Some went to different states for basic training. I went to Fort Hood up at Killeen and took seventeen weeks of basic training, and then shipped out to Manila to the replacement depot. From there we would be called out to whatever division needed replacements. There was divisions all over the different islands, because there was fighting going on. Some of the companies would get short or lose men that day, and they'd always come to the replacement depot. It was just like a warehouse. I was picked up from there and sent to the 25th Division, 35th Regiment, and they were at Tarlack-Luzon at the time. They'd already beachheaded when I got with the company. Our area of responsibility was to go to Balete Pass, which was the gateway from the Tregara Valley to the ocean. It was very mountainous country. Our objective was to meet at the Tregara Valley some other division coming from other directions, and when we met there that would declare that the campaign was over, and we'd all go back the way we come from. We'd already got our orders that we were going to go to Japan and beachhead the homeland. We were setting up a little tent camp getting ready to take amphibious training, and they had already scouted out where we were gonna land. We knew exactly where we were going to land. While we there getting ready to take our amphibious training, we'd been up in the hills about eight weeks and eating K-rations. It was so rugged that trucks couldn't get up there to bring us something to eat.

Interviewer: So what did ya'll eat?

Veteran: K-rations, and they dropped them from a helicopter. K-rations is just like the dried stuff we eat now. In World War II, they dry-powdered stuff.

Interviewer: It didn't taste very good?

Veteran: Oh, yeah. It might have been because we were hungry, but take for instance the cereal. It was a round patty that looked like a can of Skoal. There was about three or four of them in a can. It was about a half inch thick, and you'd heat your water with canned heat. You'd light it, and it would just burn a blue flame. You'd put water in your canteen cup and hold it over that flame until the water

got hot, put it back in your duffle bag, and you'd put that cereal patty in that cup of hot water. It had milk, sugar, and everything in it. When you put it in there, it would swell up, and it would make a whole cup full.

Interviewer: It tasted pretty good?

Veteran: And it tasted good. It was sweet, had the milk in it, and it was just like you'd make it now. We had gone back and set up, and we had been up there a good while, and they started giving us some R&R to go into Manila. I was sergeant at the time, and I had about eight to ten men with me, and they sent us to Manila. They had set up some little tents up there or what not, and we were on vacation, but while we were there, the war ended. It ended the day we went up there, because they dropped the bomb up there on Hiroshima in Japan.

Interviewer: Was that an atomic bomb?

Veteran: Yes, that's what ended the war. We were already scheduled to go to Manila on our R&R, and we were up there the day the Japs came out to Yokohama to sign a peace treaty. That day, we were already up there at this camp, and the town went wild up there shooting guns and having a good time because it was over. I told my men, "Let's stay here. If we go down there, we'll get killed, so we'd better stay here." The next morning, we cut our day short and I brought them back to camp. I called for a sixty-six to come and get us, because the guys were crazy up there. They were drinking all that old stuff, and you could have easily gotten killed. It would have been terrible to have gone through the war and get killed on our R&R. But anyway, we went on back and were shipped out from down at White Beach, and went out to the ship on LCIs—that's the Landing Craft Infantry, where you'd run up on the beach and the front end would open up, and you'd come out with your guns, you know, to make the beachhead. We had to go out there and get on a ship on those LCIs, because there was no harbor there. We loaded up and went on to occupy Japan, we circled through where we were supposed to land just to see, and it was a rugged place to have to land to make the beachhead. Wasn't no beach to it. We were gonna have to go up a high wall, like a cliff. You know you have to outsmart 'em. They figured you'd go through the easy place, but we were gonna go through the hard place, because they

weren't gonna be expecting us. Anyway, we went on to Yokohama and got off of the ship at night. I guess the Jap civilians never had seen us, and late in the night you could see 'em peaking out of those little old shacks. We went right down through town with full field packs, guns, and everything, going out to an old Japanese army camp that had been vacated by them, so we cleaned up that old camp and made it nice. We lived there until we had to go on to another place. Our job there was to destroy all ammunition dumps, deactivate everything, and make sure they weren't setting up any armies. I was sent out from the camp on a detail with about thirty men to guard one ammunition dump for about two months, and when we got rid of it I came back to camp. I was there in Occupation about, I guess, maybe a year before I came home. By that time, I was promoted to first sergeant and had a decision to make then.

Interviewer: Well, let's go back to sergeant. How did you get moved up from just being a serviceman to a sergeant?

Veteran: In combat, I was the number one gunner on a 30-caliber water cooled machine gun. I was a private. People got killed, some got rotated home on points, and you advanced. I didn't even know what I was until the war was over, and I was staff sergeant. I was a gunner the whole time. When you got back into the Occupation, you had the regular Army, and I was promoted up. I had a chance to reenlist and get to come home for thirty days, but I'd have to go back, and I wanted to come home real bad, and I reenlisted. Well, I thought about it and thought about it, and later I didn't sleep all night. The next morning I went right at the last minute and cancelled. I knew I wanted to come home, but I just couldn't see going back for another year. I was tech sergeant then, but I promoted to first sergeant. I got the pay for it, but I never did put the stripes on, because I was coming home.

Interviewer: Was that after the war?

Veteran: Oh, yes. That's after we went on to Japan on what they called Occupation—occupying Japan, and then I was rotated home after two years.

Interviewer: Did you ever get to come home during that two years?

Veteran: No, no—only after that seventeen weeks in basic training. The wife and another lady from Anahuac came up and worked in a laundry and had an apartment. Her husband and me would come out on Saturday at noon, and we'd have to go back on Sunday night. Well, one weekend we would use the apartment; the next weekend, they would.

Interviewer: Well, that worked out good.

Veteran: Yeah. Then when I came home and went back for the last time, we shipped out from Camp Stoneman—I like to tell this—and got almost to Hawaii, and they told us the boiler blew up, but the real word got out that the Japs blew a hole on the side of the ship. They torpedoed us. They'd just bombed Santa Barbara, California with submarines, but we figured they told us a boiler blew up to keep us from panicking. Blew the whole side of the ship out, and we hobbled back to California. While we were there, one of guys got sick and got quarantined, so we were there for awhile. Me and this other boy went to a telephone booth—you weren't supposed to call or nothing—but I called Mama and them, and they came out there. We couldn't tell them where we were. I told her to come to Camp Stoneman to the main Hospitality House. One of the guys that was sick, his wife was upstairs, and I said, "Go there and describe yourself," and they did. Me and that old boy went AWOL every night. We'd go down there and crawl over the fence and over the road, and went to that apartment where they were, and then come in the next morning in the daylight and get to bed, and fall out for Reveille.

Interviewer: You never got caught doing that?

Veteran: No, and there was a whole bunch of boys out there in the stockade, and they were still in there when we marched out of there headed for overseas. They said, "You'll be sorry!" I left out of there on our first wedding anniversary. When I looked up, there was Mama standing there on a hill. Of course, all of us looked just alike, so she didn't know which one was me.

Interviewer: That's pretty neat that you got to be with her. That would have been more difficult.

Veteran: Yeah.

Interviewer: What branch are we talking about?

Veteran: Army infantry. That's the dogface boys—the ones that went right up to the frontline and kicked them on the shin.

Interviewer: So you were mainly trained in shooting—that was your expertise?

Veteran: No, you were trained in everything. {Tape stopped then restarted} We were ambushed at night, and I was on the machine gun. Where we would say “Charge!” they used the word, “Banzai!” and it was usually done at night. The whole bunch would charge the machine gun, and their theory was that if everyone of them got killed, if one man got to the machine gun, they thought they were successful. I was setting the machine gun up, and this little old road that went around kind of a short mountain, and I set mine up facing the road, and tried to head the way the enemy was gonna come. You always used a booby trap at night to help you know that something's coming. A booby trap's made out of hand grenades. They come in a little tube about so big—about like what biscuits comes in—with one hand grenade in it. You'd take the hand grenade out, and it's got a pin and a handle. You had to pull the pin, and you'd throw it, and it would go off in ten seconds. The way you set up for a booby trap, you pulled the pin out and pushed it back in there. As long as it's in there, the handle won't come up. You tied this box on one side of the road to a bush or a 'stob' and tie a sling on the hand grenade going across the road and tie it to something over there, so when he'd come over, he'd trip and jerk it out of that box, and it would blow up in ten seconds. We'd always set that, so this night it was set, and when it would go off it popped like a cap pistol. Well that thing went off, and man I started, and they came out there running so fast until I just laid them down like shooting dominoes, and they stopped. The last man fell about three foot from my foxhole, and that's his bayonet right there {showing gun to Interviewer}.

Interviewer: So you were actually in a foxhole. Is that like a small ditch?

Veteran: Well, you'd dig your foxhole at night. Everybody digs a foxhole. I'd set my machine gun up out of the foxhole right even with the ground, and all you've got sticking up is head or your eyes. When you're behind a machine gun, you feel

like you're behind a wall. When this was over, I took this gun, and the officer that was with them, I got him, too, and I took the stars off of his shoulder. I've got them in yonder. The Rotary had this deal the other day, and they wanted us to bring any souvenirs that we had, so I took this.

Interviewer: Did you ever get hand grenades or bombs real close to you while you were in the foxhole?

Veteran: Bombs but not grenades. Just artillery.

Interviewer: I guess you were saying your prayers.

Veteran: I was converted.

{Tape stopped, then restarted}

Veteran: We were digging in—making a foxhole is what you called ‘digging in.’ It was still daylight, just before dark, and a big artillery piece across the valley over there was shooting, and he shot about three times, and he was lined up right at his. We were right in the line of it, but we didn't think much of it, but what he was doing with those spy glasses, he was getting us in his line, and he'd keep dropping back. Well, after it got dark and you can't get out of your foxhole and run, every time he would shoot, he'd see where it landed and it left a big ball of fire and a big hole, you know. You could hear him shoot from way across the valley---RRROOOOOOM! You'd peak up, and you were right in line, and he'd keep dropping it the same distance every time. We were all in this big perimeter, and from the distance the rest of them dropped, the next one was gonna drop right on us. That's when the cold sweat started pouring. It hit so close it shook the ground, but it didn't go off. I was in the bottom of that hole, and I said, “Lord, I've been married six months. I need to go home.” Cold sweat was pouring. When I heard him shoot again over there, this one never had gone off, and I thought it might have been a delayed action. If it did, it would blow the whole hole out, you know. When the next one came in and it fell short, I was kind of relieved, but that was a long night. When it got daylight, there was a big artillery piece sticking in the ground out there about this deep, and it was a dud and didn't go off.

Interviewer: It never went off. Isn't that something? Well that's a story in itself. That was probably your most memorable moment in your whole experience?

Veteran: Well, I guess it would be one of them, but there was several of them. I had gotten another souvenir that I wanted to keep, but I already had a big load with that machine gun, but I had a saber, and that night I had shot an officer and he was still holding to it. But I shot it in two, and I carried that thing for the longest, and finally I just threw it away because I couldn't carry it any longer. At that time at Balete Pass, I was on the machine gun, and we were attacked pretty heavy, and somebody tapped me on the shoulder, and it was our general—Dusty Dalton was his name, and he was a one star general. He was over the whole thing. He tapped me on the shoulder and says, "You're doing a good job, soldier," and he went on. He didn't go far until a sniper shot him right between the eyes. Well, when they declared the war was over and we came back the same way, engineers had already come up there and started a monument in his honor. A couple of years ago, there was a missionary couple that visited our church from over there in the Philippines. He made some remark in his sermon about Tarlack Luzon, Philippines. Well, that was familiar, so after it was over I got to talking with him, and I told him that's where I went through some of the worst fighting. I said, "The best I remember there was a little old highway up there called Highway 6," and he said, "Yeah, Tarlack now has a population of about 35,000, and that little highway you're talking about is a four-lane highway." He said, "I could see the signs of war." I said, "Up there at Balete Pass, do you remember seeing a monument?", and he said, "Yeah, it had a fella named Dalton on it." That missionary's folks are here in Hardin. He thought that was something, too. I asked him if he could get a map of that area, and he did, and he sent me a great big map from over there. I can just pinpoint everything on there.

Interviewer: Talking about the machine gun and stuff, how was it? What was the quality of the equipment? Was it top-notch quality?

Veteran: Top-notch quality.

Interviewer: I guess you pretty much mastered that.

Veteran: Well, yeah.

Interviewer: What about your clothing. When ya'll were out like that, you pretty much just had to wear the same thing, or did you have different uniforms?

Veteran: Well, that was bad. I'll give a plug to the Red Cross here in a minute. We had two suits of clothes, but they stayed wet all the time, because it was so hot and sweltery over there, you know. Sweating, sweating, sweating. You had your water canteens, and you had to fill them up wherever you could find water. You had purification tablets, and if you put it in water, it purified it. It was very common to fill up your canteen and then go a little farther up and see a dead Jap in the water. It was very common to see that, but you soon got used to such as that, because they never did pick up their people. You'd just walk over them. The clothes—if we got a chance, we'd wade out in the water and wash our clothes, and get wet like that. This particular time, things were beginning to slow down, because it was getting near the end, and we didn't have nothing to eat, and we were waiting on the helicopters to make a drop. We looked way behind us toward the valley and saw one man coming walking. We didn't know if it was a Jap or who it was, but it was on our side. We got on up there, and it was an old feller. He was too old to be in the war, but he was with the Red Cross, and he had a five-gallon Army can on his back full of coffee and some pork chop sandwiches. A pork chop between two pieces of bread, and that was all, and he fed everybody in my section. Then he'd go to another section the next day. He also gave us some dry socks and some dry shorts.

Interviewer: You probably hadn't had none of that in awhile.

Veteran: No, no, we sure hadn't. I tell Mama I think of that every time we eat pork chop sandwiches.

Interviewer: What did you think of the quality of the leadership—your generals?

Veteran: Great—great.

Interviewer: It was all good. Did you ever see any brutality from the leadership to the officers or anything like that?

Veteran: No.

Interviewer: There was enough of that going on between everybody else.

Veteran: In peacetime you probably had some of that, but in wartime you didn't. Some things that amaze me about it now—you know, time heals a lot of stuff, but you get to thinking. I get to thinking now about some things that took place, and I didn't think nothing of it at the time. You take a bunch of twenty-two year old boys and get them out like that, they're just crazy anyhow, and they're all in good physical condition, and when I think of some things that was done. As always, no matter how hard, how tough, and how rugged somebody is, there'd be somebody that would make some remark they thought was funny. Well, the time I'm think about we were eating K-rations, and there was a lot of water buffalo over there—caribou. We sat on this little old hill over here on the side of the road, and a big old water buffalo down there on the road and he was dead and swelled up tighter than a drum, you know. Old Chuck, he was my leader and he was the guy that I spent the first night on the frontline with in his foxhole. He hurried up and ate his K-rations, and got him two sticks, and got up on that old caribou, and started drumming on him.

Interviewer: Oh, my goodness. Playing the drums and making everybody laugh.

Veteran: And you'd hear those guns shooting, and we're laughing at old Chuck over there. When we saw him at that reunion, I mentioned that to him, and he said, "Yeah, I'm gonna tell something on you, too." He said, "You know when we were coming back from up there and we spent the night, and you said, 'I ain't gonna dig in,' and there was little old shed there—four poles with a little old top on it. You said, 'Jim, let's just stay out in this old thing; it'll keep the dew off of us.' And there was an old Jap in there though." So, I went in there and rolled that Jap over on an old sheet he had there and drug him out there a-ways, and we laid there where that Jap was. Anyway, we didn't dig in, and it was good to lay there. That digging was hard, but you knew you were gonna need that hole.

Interviewer: You said the Japanese people didn't pick up their casualties. They just left them everywhere.

Veteran: At least over where we were. This was the Luzon Islands.

Interviewer: Did ya'll try to pick up your own people?

Veteran: The medics came up and got ours. The troops would come up as far as they could, and then the medics would come up there and get them.

Interviewer: Were you actually ever wounded at anytime?

Veteran: No. I had malaria real bad, and I wasn't able to work for about a year after I came home.

Interviewer: What was your opinion of the atomic bomb before its use? Had you heard rumors, or what is your recollection of the atomic bomb?

Veteran: When it shook the tent, that was the first I knew about it. When we went on to Japan and we went out there to Hiroshima, it looked just like where a house burned up only it was a whole town. What was something to remember about that, and I don't know what made it, but we walked all over the place. The air was just as dead—there wasn't a bit of wind moving—nothing. Just like dead. Even then. I don't know how long that lasted, but it was just like a house had burned up flat.

Interviewer: Did you initially agree with the use of the atomic bomb?

Veteran: Oh, yes!

Interviewer: Do you still now?

Veteran: Yes, yes. The way they did us in Hawaii and started this thing, somebody's gonna have to suffer, and they had all the chances in the world to come forward. We dropped leaflets when we went into Balet Pass, and gave them every opportunity to surrender. Those little planes came over and dropped those leaflets, and I could kick myself now for not keeping one of them. I don't remember what it said, and I had somebody interpret it. That had an opportunity to surrender and they didn't, so we pulled back up on the hillside and called up the Air Force to come in and strafe it. We sat up on the side of the hill, and they strafed the valley ahead of us. When we got down in there, there was a lot of

them in the caves, because they were fortified. They had been getting ready for this for years. They had some big artillery pieces on tracks, and those tracks went way back in those big old rock mountains, and that thing would come out there and shoot and go back in. We couldn't do nothing with it, so we called up M-7s, which was the tank with the great big gun on it that shot point blank, and they'd shoot it right in the mouth of them caves, and the fragmentation canister set would knock them things out. When we got down in there by foot, and we had hand grenades, and we'd throw them up in those caves, and man, them Japs would come out of there coughing and a spewing. You didn't have any choice but to shoot 'em. Yeah, but I agree with the bomb.

Interviewer: Did you personally experience or know anyone else that experienced what they call shell shock or physiological stress from combat?

Veteran: I didn't see it happen on the field, and I don't know if it was after we got to Japan or in Luzon, but some of us got to go to Tokyo, and that train was a military train. It was all kinds of guys, and they were all crazy. Some of those big, high guys with lots of rank on them along with some privates, and they were all together. We went all the way through the train, and every one of them was like that. They were on their way back to Tokyo to be shipped home. That's the only ones I saw.

Interviewer: So, you've had a pretty, I wouldn't say easy time adjusting, but like you said, over twenty something years it's still just something you never forget.

Veteran: No, even right now I kick Mama and hit her or slap her. {Laughter}

Interviewer: Oh, Lord. I know you don't do that!

Veteran: No, really I do. At night I have bad dreams, and it's always a Jap coming in the foxhole with me, and I come up slapping Mama or kicking her.

Interviewer: So, when were you told that you could actually go home after the war?

Veteran: In Japan. There was a point system based on how many months and different things counted points, and so I came home on the point system. There was a lot of them ahead of me, but when my number of points come up, they put us on a truck—I think there was about six out of my company that particular day—and

they put us on a six-by-six truck and took us to Yokohama, and then put us on a ship coming back to the states. There was boys coming home from every division all over. We landed at Seattle, and it was something I just told Mama that I hadn't told her before. We've got some pictures here—just soldiers all over. Down at the bottom of that ramp, there was three sweet old ladies in white dresses with a red star on them handing out a quart or a pint of milk.

Interviewer: Gave it to all the soldiers when they got off.

Veteran: Yes, and I told Mama that made an impression on me. They had some phones set up, and every one of them was busy and there was a line by every one of them, but off over here was a telephone booth with nobody in it. I ran over there and got in that thing, and I called home and talked to her and told her my feet were on the land, and I said, "They've told us we're going to get on a train here, and we'll be in San Antonio so and so." I told Mama that, and she was in San Antonio when I got there. I went to the Hospitality House, and they said, "We'll find her if she's in San Antonio," and they called all the hotels and what-not. I went back up there, and they told me where she was. I went out that night in downtown and found her.

Interviewer: Did ya'll have any children at that point?

Veteran: No. Not until a long time later.

Interviewer: What type of veteran benefits have you been able to use since you got out? Did you use the G.I. Bill?

Veteran: No.

Interviewer: Do they pay for your medical?

Veteran: No.

Interviewer: What did you do when you got home job-wise?

Veteran: I wasn't able to work for the first year because I had malaria. After that I began to do light work. The church was building an annex to the building, and I worked up there for about six months to a year—me and two other fellas. Then I helped

build some houses, and I got well and went to work contracting myself building houses. I built this house. I returned from out at Dow Chemical working for Mundy Service Company.

Interviewer: And you have a grandson that's in the service?

Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you have a big part in encouraging him to join?

Veteran: No, no.

Interviewer: You just kind of let him make that decision himself.

Veteran: He'd already done it before we knew it.

Interviewer: Were you happy about that?

Veteran: Oh, yeah, because that's what he wanted.

Interviewer: So you would encourage people to do that if they wanted to.

Veteran: Well, that's a good thing for any young man to do—to put in some time in the service. I don't necessarily agree with four years, but the benefits they can get now is worth the four years of their life they put in there, because they can get lots of benefits now.

Interviewer: Like school.

Veteran: Well, they could then, because a lot of guys went to college on the G.I. Bill.

{END OF SIDE A...SIDE B BEGINS}

Interviewer: Have you kept in contact with some of the people you were in the service with?

Veteran: Used to have quite a few of them, but now then just Christmas cards is about all, and not many of them. Just about three or four. We've gone to a couple of Army reunions.

Interviewer: Here locally?

Veteran: One of them was in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, and one was somewhere in Iowa. It was very enjoyable.

Interviewer: And you just got to reminisce with the other people?

Veteran: Yes. We didn't know anything about these reunions until one night we were in bed and just about asleep and the phone rang. I picked it up and a guy said, "Hey, A. B.! You know who this is?" I said, "Yes! This is Jim Shucken(?)" I said, "Shucken, how did you get my number?" He said, "I knew you were from Texas, down near Houston somewhere, and I called around until I got your number."

Interviewer: You hadn't seen him since the war?

Veteran: No, but I recognized his voice just that quick. Since then he's died. And there's not many of them left. I think the last one we went to there wasn't but about twenty of us.

Interviewer: Is there anything else—a story or just anything else you might want to share? Did you ever ride in a submarine in the war?

Veteran: No, no. The only time I was in the water was on LCIs and ships. Up there in the hills, people lived up there and they were called Igaroots, and they were little bitty people.

Interviewer: Japanese people?

Veteran: No, native people of the Philippines. They weren't but about three feet tall. They're teeth were red, and they ate comodies—that's wild sweet potatoes and figs. We'd watch them go down in the water, and they had some kind of little arrow with something that stretched. They'd get down under that water and follow that fish, and just seems like they must have had gills, and they'd shoot that fish in the head, and then they'd come up to the top and hold that fish up. They'd sit down on the rocks—they just had G-strings on—men and women—and they had skin like alligators. They'd want to tell you stuff.

Interviewer: And they didn't have anything to do with the war?

Veteran: No. Of course, we'd give them something to eat. K-rations were something new to them.

Interviewer: So they were just a tribe of people that were really little people.

Veteran: Everywhere you'd go you'd see some. They didn't live in town. And you saw lots of monkeys. They were entertaining chasing each other through the woods, and they weren't that big. I never did see any snakes. The terrain was very, very rough. Some places, it's so straight up that we'd have to pull limbs to move the equipment up. Either that or go way around, and we knew if we went way around that's where the enemy was sitting. And the Japs were funny—they were crazy. They would try to infiltrate through your lines at night. They'd drive them caribou down the road at night, and they'd get in amongst them caribou. It didn't take long till we knew we'd have to shoot to kill all of them caribou because there was somebody hiding in them.

Interviewer: Did ya'll ever sneak in on them? Did you ever do that?

Veteran: Oh, no, but to get back to what I was telling you awhile ago. A bunch of twenty-two year old boys are crazy! One particular time I'm thinking about now, we weren't going to go around into that little neck up in there. We were gonna go up this way. But we were killing some time, and two or three of us decided we were gonna go and see what was in there. Three of us went way down there and there was a bunch of Japs in a grass shack. We just shot a few times, and we came back. {Laughter} We were going the other way, and they never did come after us.

Interviewer: That was good.

Veteran: Well, yeah. We're lucky we saw them before we got up in there and got pinned in. Crazy things like that. But you know, I've often thought that they were human beings, just like anybody else, but when you were over there, you had it built up in you that it was no more than shooting a dog. But that's one of the things that bothers me even till yet now that you see Japanese are fine, cultured people, and we killed a lot of them. One thing I sent home to Mama, a Jap I rolled over just to see what was in his hip pocket and got his wallet out a little bit

of change that I have in a jar. I looked in his wallet, and he had a picture of a soldier and his wife, I guess, or girlfriend, and I said, “Mama, this old boy won’t ever see this gal anymore, because I just let him have it.” Stuff like that. Things like that hurt looking back, but then you just had a different feeling toward them.

Interviewer: Well, you really didn’t have a choice being drafted in there.

Veteran: But you didn’t think nothing of it.

Interviewer: But you’re defending your country.

Veteran: But now we buy everything they make, and they make good stuff, too.

Interviewer: I guess that’s all I have to ask. As far as the medical attention, you personally were never hurt, but from you could tell of the medical help, it was all real good. If people got hurt, they would go into these medical tents?

Veteran: Oh, yes. They were evacuated quick and taken to the general hospital.

Interviewer: And the care there?

Veteran: It was very good—very good. No question about that.

Interviewer: You said they had an Army chaplain?

Veteran: He stayed close. It wasn’t long after this happened, and we were getting close to the war, and we came back and set up a little place there, and the chaplain came around. I told him I wanted to talk to him and told him the situation, and he said, “Great, great!” He asked me where I was from, what church and what-not, and he said he would get a letter to them and let them know your situation. I never did see the letter, but Mama said the preacher got it and read it.

Interviewer: So he would actually send letters to your hometown?

Veteran: He did on this occasion. Real nice letters. His name was John L. Johns, and he went to Baptist seminary in Fort Worth.

Interviewer: That was probably real helpful to everyone to know a chaplain was there.

Veteran: During the Occupation, I went to church every Sunday, and my men would all go with me.

Interviewer: Would you make them?

Veteran: No. They'd go and sit right with me?

Interviewer: How many men did you say you had?

Veteran: Twelve.

Interviewer: Did you ever have trouble with any of them?

Veteran: No, except when I was on an outpost before I ever made first sergeant on that ammunition dump. A Mexican was asleep on guard, and I got him and brought him back to the little CP we had set up. Called the company, and they sent a driver and a jeep to come and get him. He agreed to go back with them. He got back and they were going to put him in the stockade, and they let him sleep the rest of the night there at the barracks, and that boy slipped out that night and left. He lived out there with the Japanese civilians. Some of the boys would see him when they would be on leave, and he would always tell them, "I'm going to kill Sergeant Rawlinson for doing what he did." Well, I was scared to go on leave. They tried him and sent him to the stockade, so he was in the stockade when I left.

Interviewer: What is the stockade?

Veteran: Jailhouse. He was a Mexican named Vasquez.

Interviewer: In my book, I was reading up on blacks, Hispanics, and women during World War II, so apparently he was a Mexican, but he was a legal Mexican.

Interviewer: Oh, yes—American. But they weren't all like that.

Interviewer: Did you have all races in your company?

Veteran: No blacks.

Interviewer: That's what I read, too. They had their own separate camps and everything at the time. What did you feel about that?

Veteran: I didn't see any black people during the war. I heard there was one division somewhere over Germany, but I never came in contact with them, but there were some. I seen some, but there wasn't any in my outfit, and those black servicemen captured the women over there. Japanese women liked them, because when I got on the ship to come home, man there was a bunch of women that followed them old nigger boys to the docks. Them niggers had them brainwashed and told them they were special—they were night fighters. {Laughter} They were trained for night fighting.

Interviewer: So when you actually got to come home and she met you in San Antonio, I guess you remember that clear as a bell the first time you saw her.

Veteran: Oh, yes. They were coming down the stairway at the hotel.

{TAPE STOPPED—END OF INTERVIEW}