Interviewer: My name is Dora. I am interviewing Mr. Patton. It is April 11th. We are in Library Study Room No. 10. Sir, are you aware that our conversation will be recorded and that the tape and transcription will be placed in the Lee College library? Do I have your permission to do that?

Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: What were you doing before you got involved in the war effort?

Veteran: Well, I had dropped out of high school. I lived in Nashville, Tennessee, in the ghetto, so to speak, at that time, and I was working with my father trying to make a living. This was during the depression. I worked with him I guess about a year, or maybe fifteen months or so, and then the war came along. I was 18, and I said it was my duty to go, so I volunteered in 1942. So really I was just a carpenter laborer with my father.

Interviewer: You said you lived in what we call a ghetto today. What was it called back then?

Veteran: It was a poor section of Nashville, Tennessee—the north side, which if you lived on the north side, you had just what everybody else had—nothing. It wasn’t a slum as such. We had a little house that we lived in, but everybody was poor, and when you get five or six kids in a family, you’re really poor. So to take some of the burden off of the family, I thought I’d just get away from home, so I went into the service.

Interviewer: And how old were you then?
Veteran: I was 18 and like two or three months.

Interviewer: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
Veteran: I have one brother, and at that time three sisters and one more since then.

Interviewer: After you got involved in the military, did you go into combat?
Veteran: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: Before combat, what were some of your day-to-day responsibilities?
Veteran: I left Nashville and went into the Marine Corps. Went to South Carolina—Paris Island—and spent I guess six weeks there going through basic training. If you’ve ever heard anybody talk about basic training in the Marine Corps, they put you through a pretty good workout. But it was fair. They fed us three meals a day and run us every day. We had to run everywhere. We went through that, and then they put us on a Pullman railcar and sent us to California, and we spent two weeks in California, and then we went overseas. I was overseas in February of ’43, and I stayed there until October of 1945.

Interviewer: Where was that?
Veteran: The South Pacific.

Interviewer: What did you do while you were in the South Pacific?
Veteran: Of course the main thing we were there for was to defend our country and defeat the Japanese. This was World War II, and they had attacked us, as you are aware of, so we were making beachhead landings on islands that were under the Japs control and taking the islands. We started at Guadalcanal, and that was the first one. We weren’t on the invasion of Guadalcanal, but we went in later and mopped it up. I made three major landings after that.

Interviewer: What were they?
Veteran: Bougainville, Guam, and Okinawa.

Interviewer: Did you ever read the book With the Old Breed by E. B. Sledge?
Veteran: No.

Interviewer: He talks about how he went to Okinawa and Pelilu.
Veteran: We made lots of islands, but the three major ones that I was involved in were Bougainville, Guam, and Okinawa, and we went in the first day and stayed until it was over—whatever that might be—two months, three months, or whatever.

Interviewer: When you were in combat, what was your basic uniform?
Veteran: Dungarees and field gear.

Interviewer: What about your shoes?
Veteran: We had what we called Grogans. They were rough leather high tops, and that was the only shoes we had the whole time we were in there.

Interviewer: You didn’t have boots or anything like that?
Veteran: Not combat boots as such.

Interviewer: Were they comfortable, and were they suited for that climate?
Veteran: I don’t know about that, but that’s all we had, so we wore them. You couldn’t go barefooted, that’s for sure, so we wore them. They were comfortable. They were made good, and were waterproof as long as you didn’t get water on top of them.

Interviewer: I know some people had trouble with jungle foot?
Veteran: Jungle rot.

Interviewer: Did you ever get it?
Veteran: Yes. Everybody had it at least up to their knees.

Interviewer: Are you serious?
Veteran: I’m serious. And if you let it go, it would go on up further, but we used everything you could think of to cure it, but nothing we could find would cure it but salt water. We had an old surgeon that came into the division one time, and like I say everybody lined every morning to get blue stuff or whatever put on
them, and he said every day everybody would go to the ocean for at least an hour. We spent at least thirty or forty-five days doing that, and we lost the jungle rot because of the salt water. After awhile you didn’t have to do it every day, but when it was real bad, you had to do it every day.

Interviewer: And it was really painful?
Veteran: Well, it was painful, but was mainly just sores and scabs. It hurt, but you had to walk around and put up with it. We had white socks we could put on after they finally gave them to us. Other than that, they only put some blue medicine or ocean water on it.

Interviewer: Before you went into battle, what were your daily meals like?
Veteran: Generally we were on ship before we went in, and usually a day or two before you landed they fed you real good. Eggs, bread, bacon, and ham (which was always canned ham). The last meal, we’d generally have a turkey or chicken, or something like that, if we were on a ship that had the facilities. Some facilities we were on didn’t have the accommodations to accommodate all of the people. In those cases, we ate boxed rations.

Interviewer: Is that what you ate when you were in combat, too?
Veteran: We had to.

Interviewer: What was in the rations?
Veteran: They had two or three different kinds. They had C-rations, B-rations, and H-rations. The H-rations was a little box about the size of a carton of cigarettes; had some hard tacks in it and a can of beans or Vienna sausage, and a chocolate bar. Everyone of them had a chocolate bar in it. C-rations were a little better. They had some canned bacon that you could fry, canned chicken, canned beef stew, but they had good saltine crackers with that. They also had dry powdered milk in it. It came in a box about I’d say about 10 inch square, but this was for the whole day. The H-rations, you could get all of them you wanted, because nobody wanted them, so you could have three or four, or as many as you wanted. C-rations were only one a day. Some of the stuff in those H-rations was packaged
in World War I, so it was old when we got it. They’d have pork and beans, and a can of weenies and beans, and beef stew, and hard tack, but you’d eat it.

Interviewer: What was some of the training you had to go through to become a Marine?
Veteran: I guess one of the hardest things to do is you had to get into condition. Whatever you went in as, thirty days later, you were something altogether different, because you eat regular, you work regular, you were on a schedule day in and day out. From ten o’clock at night until five o’clock in the morning you got to sleep, the rest of the time you were busy. So they get into condition, the first thing, and to do this you take hikes, go through obstacle courses, and you’d do all that other training, but while you’re doing this, they also teach you how to do hand-to-hand combat. They also teach you how to use firearms. In our case it was M-1 rifles—that was the going thing. The M-1 Garand was THE rifle in the Marine Corps. Everybody in the Marine Corps is an infantryman to start with—a foot soldier—so you had to know how the M-1 rifle operated. They would teach you to be able to be blindfolded and tear it down and put it back together in case you were in the jungle, where there weren’t lights, and you had to do that. That’s what we were in later—the jungles. After that, they taught you discipline all the time. If they said do something, you said, “Yes, Sir.” They were FAIR—as fair as they could be. It wasn’t like what you see on television where somebody’s standing up cursing somebody and giving them a hard time. No. There was none of that in the Marine Corps I was in. They worked you, and they treated you fair. As long as you did your job, you were treated like a man, and they made a man out of you, but if you crossed them up, you went to the brig.

Interviewer: What’s that?
Veteran: The brig is the same as a jail. They’d give you thirty days of bread and water if you messed up. It all depended on what you did—the severity of your crime, so to speak. There wasn’t none of this bully-bully stuff that you see on television. They just expected you to do your job.

Interviewer: Do you think your training was adequate enough to prepare you for combat, or do you think you learned a lot during combat that they just couldn’t teach you?
Veteran: Well, at that time you knew nothing about jungle warfare. The United States didn’t know anything about jungle warfare, so we had to learn as we went. Of course, after an island or two that information came back to the United States, and I’m sure they trained the people there so they could learn what was out there. The outfit I was in was actually in the second wave of people to go to the South Pacific.

Interviewer: What were some of your responsibilities as a sergeant?
Veteran: Well, it varied. It took me a long time to make sergeant. They didn’t hand out stripes very often. You had private first class, corporal, and then sergeant, and then you have various ranks above sergeant. They didn’t pass out rank very much, because they didn’t have to until you go to combat, and when you lose people, then you replace people with your existing force, so that’s when you begin to get rank as long as you do your job. It varies. If you’re a squad leader or platoon leader, you had to make sure that all of your people were there. You had to make sure they’re all equipped, and they all have the best food that you can supply for them. You’ve got to make sure they stay in training. You didn’t quit training once you left the states. You trained every day. You ran, you hiked, and you physically stayed in condition. Also, if you had some new weapons to come in, you went through the training with those. In my case, a couple of times we had to go through training on machine guns, because we didn’t have machine guns in boot camp. We had rifles, but over there they had machine guns, hand rockets, bazookas, and rifles—whatever. We had an arsenal of weapons, so you had to learn those weapons and how to use them. We didn’t have no R&Rs—we had training periods, so if you went back to the training outlet, you went through the new stuff and if you were moved up or changed to a different category of responsibility, then you had to learn what was necessary. Taking care of the people under you was the main thing.

Interviewer: What made you want to become a sergeant?
Veteran: You don’t have a choice. They gave it to you whether you want it or not. You can keep it as long as you do your job, but if you goof up—like disobey orders—sure they’d bust you and send you to the brig.
Interviewer: Did you ever goof up?
Veteran: No. Never got punished. Got close one time. I never got close to the brig, but I come close to getting busted, but that’s another story that I’ll tell you at the end of the interview. Don’t let me forget it.

Interviewer: Was combat anything like you expected it to be?
Veteran: I suppose, because the only thing we could compare it to was the soldiers of World War I in the trenches of France when they went over the top. We didn’t go over the top because there wasn’t no trenches. We’d just run onto the beach. But that’s the only thing we could relate to that it could be like. The jungles are there, and what the ships and the Air Force didn’t bomb away, then you went through and finished it. Not every island was full of jungles. Some of them were just sandbars. There wasn’t much activity on sandbars, but that’s where we did a lot of our training. There was a couple of islands, like Tarawa, that’s a sandbar and had coconut trees on it. One of the fiercest battles there ever was—Tarawa and Wake Island. Fierce battles, but they’re just sandbars out there in the ocean.

Interviewer: What kind of terrain did you prefer—the sandbar type or the jungle?
Veteran: Well, I’d rather take the sandbar. There’s stuff in the jungle that you don’t want to tangle with.

Interviewer: What kind of stuff would you run into?
Veteran: Snakes, spiders, centipedes, some birds you don’t want to fool with—just jungle warfare. Up to your knees or your belly in the water, and there were snakes, centipedes, some lizards that were four feet long, and this kind of stuff. If you’d leave them alone, they’d leave you alone.

Interviewer: What was the weather like on some of those islands?
Veteran: South Pacific islands were tropical. Rained every day. Would rain for thirty minutes or an hour and then it’d quit, and it was steamy hot. Some of those islands down there would get to 120 degrees.
Interviewer: Was the weather ever a problem?
Veteran: No—never a factor. You got climatized to it real fast.

Interviewer: Did you believe in what you were fighting for? Did you believe that you guys were doing the right thing?
Veteran: Definitely, yes. Totally.

Interviewer: Because I know towards the beginning of World War II, before America was involved, the public opinion was that they wanted to stay neutral and nobody really wanted to go into war, but as a soldier you felt that you were doing the right thing?
Veteran: Yes, I still feel that way today, and I hope that a lot of our young people will take that attitude. You have to stop and think that back it those days—we’re talking about 60-70 years ago—were just coming out of a depression, and weren’t all the way out of it yet, and had just come out of a world war. A lot of people lost their sons in there, and they didn’t want war again. We weren’t prepared for war, because people didn’t want war, but once they saw what was happening they geared up and took it over. We supplied the world not only with manpower but with equipment. I would think that’s what most people were scared of was not only the hurt that they’d had from World War I but also the hurt that they’d had from the depression. They just didn’t want to go through that again, but the young people didn’t know that much about World War I, like I didn’t. I talked to my dad, who’d been in World War I, about going in and he said, “It’s your duty. You make up your own mind.”

Interviewer: Do you think that you made a good decision?
Veteran: The best decision I ever made other than marrying my wife. That’s two decisions that I made that I think turned my life around from what I was to what I am today.

Interviewer: Was there a particular weapon that was just your duty or did you use just a variety of weapons?
Veteran: You had your own weapons assigned to you.
Interviewer: What was yours?
Veteran: Well, to start with, the M-1 rifle. I had various types of weapons while I was in. Sometimes you’d just pick up somebody else’s weapon and help them with it. I had the M-1 rifle; I had a .30-.30 carbine, which we threw away; I had a bazooka for awhile; I was on a machine gun for awhile. But you’re assigned these, and you are duty bound to take care of those weapons. If you don’t then you’re in the brig. If you lose your weapon, you’re gone, and you paid for it. They’d take it out of whatever your salary was, which wasn’t much. You had to know the serial number—like I say, I don’t remember those anymore—but you checked it out and then you checked it out. If they told you to change your weapon and they give you a new one, then you’d better check this old one in. For awhile there I was in charge of the company property. That’s one of the greatest things I did. You checked people in and out of weapons, clothing, medical supplies, whatever. Each company had what’s called a company sergeant, just like they’ve got a cook or a corpsman or a proctor sergeant, so for awhile just before I came home, I was the proctor sergeant for about six months.

Interviewer: Did you like being a proctor sergeant?
Veteran: Oh, it’s a lot of headaches—a lot of paperwork. Paperwork that never was used, so to speak. You do it, give it to the first sergeant, and I don’t know what he did with it. Just like all that paperwork in Washington—they never use it.

Interviewer: Were the enemy fighters strong opponents?

Interviewer: They were scared?
Veteran: We were scared. They were scared.

Interviewer: How were they cruel?
Veteran: Some of the things that they’d do over there was when they would capture a Marine or a Sailor was the treatment they gave them. One of the cruelest things I think that ever happened was the Philippine March. The Death March when they took Corregidor in 1942, and they marched those people for days and days until
they killed most of them, and what they didn’t kill they hauled them to Japan. I have had personal contact with some of those people. They’re dead now, but I worked with one of them for thirty years that made that Death March. Some of the stories that he’d tell you were unbelievable. We saw some of our people they had hung. They would chop them up, and they were cruel, but they were scared that if they didn’t do it they’d get it done to them.

Interviewer: So you think their soldiers were a lot more cruel than the Americans were?
Veteran: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Very seldom did we not take prisoners when we had the opportunity. You had to be on a real special mission not to take prisoners, because you had no way to get them back. You either let them go or you killed them. You had no choice. The Marine Corps was a hit and run. We had big divisions and then we had small groups that we called battalions or brigades. The most famous are the Raider Battalions. They’d go in ahead of a lot of invasions into one small island at night by PT boats and get out on PT boats, or they’d go in by submarine and get out by submarine. A small group of people, and they didn’t take prisoners. I was in the 1st Brigade for about six months, or something like that.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy that brigade?
Veteran: It was tough. I don’t know about enjoy, but it was a job and you do what’s necessary. Regardless of what it is, you do it without question.

Interviewer: Were there any other divisions that you were in besides the 1st Brigade?
Veteran: Yes, I started out in the 3rd Marines. We left California and went to Pago Pago, Samoa, and that’s where they put us in the 3rd Marines, and we started forming the 3rd Marine Division. We stayed there and were protecting that island, too, because it was American soil. American Samoa is our soil just like Hawaii or Puerto Rico—it’s a part of us, and still is today, so we protected that island until they felt like we could move on. They left a small contingent of people there and we moved to Auckland, New Zealand, and there we started putting a division together. {END OF TAPE I, SIDE A}
{TAPE I, SIDE B BEGINS}

{Veteran still speaking}… One artillery group and one headquarters group. That makes up a division—about 20,000 people. Each group of Marines has three infantry companies, or battalions, which was attached to each one of those divisions. I was in the 3rd Marines, the 6th Marines, the 12th Marines, the 1st Marine Brigade. The 6th Marines was the 6th Division, also. What they’d do in those days, they would take one company out of this division if they were going to form another. They’d take that one company, and then move it over here and divide it into, say, three different groups to form three different companies over here. They didn’t take all green people. You used experienced people as much as you could to train these other people that we would call replacements. Your combat-ready people trained your replacements—had to. Wasn’t any other way to do it.

Interviewer: Do you think the replacements were killed more easily because they didn’t have the skills some of the older or more experienced people did?

Veteran: No, I wouldn’t say so. In most cases, the senior or more experienced combat-ready people kind of helped protect these people as much as they could until they got some experience. You never know why you’d get killed or wounded—it just happens, whether you’re old or young or new—whatever. But they put them in places where they’d be more protected for awhile. They didn’t put them out in front every time. You didn’t do that. In fact, your senior people tended to go to the front.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any contact with civilians on any of the islands that you were on?

Veteran: Yes, a few. Samoa wasn’t a big island—maybe a thousand or two thousand people then. They still used hollow logs for communication. Can you believe that? They had communities or villages set up around the island, and there’d be maybe two miles between them, and they had big old hollow logs that they beat on with sticks to send messages around the island. This was their mode of communication. I don’t know what they use today, but they were nice people. Guadalcanal had Pygmies on it—three foot tall people. There wasn’t many of
them. They had little bitty villages. They’d climb a coconut tree before you could turn around. That’s what their job was. They had coconut plantations there, and they would harvest the coconuts for the plantation. Bougainville had some natives on it. They had missionaries there with them, and they were trying to update their population. They were kind of small people, also, and so they were bringing in larger people from other island, like Guam, New Zealand, to go with their people to upgrade them. We were told before you could get married to a young lady, she couldn’t sleep with her husband until she was impregnated by one of these people they brought in, because they were trying to build up their size. The missionaries brought those in.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any trouble with the civilians?
Veteran: No, none whatsoever. Guam was a nice island with nice, civilized people. They had some schools and churches there. Missionaries had been there for years. We had a Marine post at Guam. Nice people. Very pretty people. They had olive skin and black hair, black eyes. Pretty people. The Samoans are pretty. They’re like Oriental, but they’re not us either. They’re not the real squatty people like the Filipinos. They’re short and squatty and brown.

Interviewer: How much impact did the battles that you fought in affect the outcome of the war?
Veteran: Well, every step we made put us closer to Japan, and if we didn’t make these stair steps, we’d have never gotten there. So, not only our invasions that we made, but the people that made the other ones, too, like Iwo Jima was the last big one before Okinawa. Okinawa was the last one before Japan. It impacted pretty much, because this gave them places to move their people closer, cut down on transportation, give you places for supplies. So, every island we took they stair stepped and impacted quite a bit, particularly on transportation. It kept them from having to go from Australia and New Zealand to Japan, and they could go from Guam and Iwo Jima to Japan, which was quite a lot closer, so every island was important—very important.

Interviewer: What was the single most frightening experience that you had?
Veteran: I don’t know. I can think of some things, but the MOST frightening, I don’t know which one that would be. Some of them bomb raids, I think, that they pulled on us were frightening. You’d never know where the bomb was going. They’re falling out of the air, and you could just hide so far. We didn’t have bunkers and stuff like this. We had what they called foxholes that we dug, and you were just on ground level to get away from the shrapnel, but if there was a direct hit, you were gone. That was pretty scary. Running up them beaches was pretty scary, too. They’d drop you off in the water, and you’d have two hundred or three hundred yards to get to the beach in the open, and so that’s scary. That’s probably the most scary part is landing. Once you get on the beach, you can dig a little hole, but landing was probably the most frightening.

Interviewer: And you landed on a couple of islands.
Veteran: Four.

Interviewer: Oh, man. I’ll bet that was just crazy.
Veteran: Well, you didn’t think about that. You just had to move forward—move forward—come on, let’s go.

Interviewer: How did you end up coming home?
Veteran: Well, I was on Guam, and they had dropped those two big bombs. We had our ships loaded, our gear ready, and we were supposed to go to the ship the next week to go to the invasion of Japan. They dropped the bombs, and after the last bomb was dropped, the captains came out and lined us all up and said, “OK, you’ve got a choice. You can go on occupation duty or go home.” Twenty-five of us were the oldest; the rest didn’t have no choice. We were the oldest ones in the outfit and had been there the longest. I’m not talking about in age, I’m talking about in experience and time over there. They used to have a point system, but that didn’t mean anything in the Marine Corps. You stayed as long as they needed you, and then they sent you home. I said, “Man, send me home!” One or two stayed, and they put us in a replacement center on Guam, and then about two or three weeks later a ship came in and hauled us back to California. We were on the ship for about three weeks.
Interviewer: After you got home, did you ever feel like you wanted to go back and fight? Did you ever get that urge or feeling?

Veteran: I never did get that urge. They tried to encourage us or recruit us to ship over, so to speak. I thought about it. At that time, what you’d do is get your choice of duty wherever you wanted it, you got an increase in rank, you got a chance to go to Officer Training School, but I didn’t feel like I could make that. I thought about it for awhile, and I think it took two months or better before I could get out. The first thing they did was put us in quarantine for two weeks because of diseases that we might could bring in, because there was diseases on those islands—yellow fever, malaria, moo-moo. You know what moo-moo is? Well, you’ve heard of elephantitis? Moo-moo is a Samoan word for that. Elephantitis is that disease that you get in your glands and you swell up like an elephant. We were subject to that. In fact, we took vitamin tablets every day while we were over there to keep away from the malaria and yellow fever, but they still put us in quarantine for two weeks. Then they put us on a train and shipped us to the East Coast. I got discharged almost where I went in there in North Carolina.

Interviewer: How were you treated when you returned home? Were you treated different or with hostility at all?

Veteran: No, I was treated like a hero. Everybody was glad to see you back—particularly your family.

Interviewer: Did you have trouble adjusting back to normal everyday life after you’d been fighting over there?

Veteran: You had some adjustment to make—yes. I had a little money in my pocket, and we didn’t have any place to spend it over there, so you’d keep it on the books. I guess for the first thirty or forty-five days, I said I wanted to live like I wanted to live—go where I wanted to go and go chase the girls. I did that until I ran out of the money. {Laughter} Then I went to work, and I did carpenter work in Nashville, and I did right well at it. I didn’t stay there long, though, but that’s another story I’ll tell you about at the end. It had nothing to do with war, but it did, too. I don’t know how much of this you want to hear. When we left South
Carolina by train going to the West Coast, we stopped at a little town in Georgia to get off and eat breakfast. This train didn’t have any facilities, so they just dropped us off at the train station and told us to go eat and they’d pick us up the next train. So, we stopped at this little town and ate. We got back on the train and were waiting for the train to come and pick us up, and as it did a bunch of people came out on the dock at the train station and were passing out fruit, cookies, and whatever, and this one pretty little girl handed me a package. I just put it in my bag, and when I got to California, I opened it up and it was a hand-knitted sleeveless slipover sweater—Army drab color. I said, “Man, that’s nice.” I put it on, and it fit perfectly—just a perfect fit. I got to looking at it, and it had her name and address in it. So, I corresponded with that girl for the whole time I was overseas. I got her picture, and I still remember her name. Jean Dennis out of Athens, Georgia. So one weekend after we got out, a buddy of mine, who was an ex-Marine, we had nothing to do that weekend. It was cold weather in January or February, and he said, “What are we gonna do this weekend?” I said, “I don’t know. I know a girl down in Georgia we need to go see.” “Who is that?” “The girl I corresponded with. I’ve never seen her.” So we got on the highway and started hitchhiking in ten-degree weather. It was cold with snow and ice. Anyway, we finally got to Georgia on a Sunday. I called her on the phone that morning. She was in a girls’ college, and I told her I was in town and wondered if I could come by and visit. She said, yes, but she would have to get permission for me to come in. I told her which hotel I was in, which was an old hotel. She called me back, and said, “OK, you can come out and have Sunday dinner with us.” I said, “OK, I’ve got a buddy with me.” So we went out and met the young lady, and we were glad to see each other. She still had all of my letters. We had a real nice dinner in the cafeteria. Along about four o’clock, I said, “You know, we’d better get back home. We’ve got a job to do tomorrow.” And we were 150-200 miles away from Nashville. We left and went across the highway and caught a ride. He said, “I know some girls in Texas.” I said, “Come on.” He said, “I know a couple of girls in Texas.” So we went on the other side of the highway and started hitchhiking to Texas, and that’s how I got to Texas. We got to Houston about a week later, and he called this girl, and they lived in Beeville. You know where that’s at? You go out of Houston west toward San Antone, get
to Sealy, turn off at Sealy and go north toward Brenham, and that’s halfway
between—Beeville. He called this girl that he knew, and how he knew her was
before the war, he was helping build water towers, and they built a water tower in
Beeville, Texas, and that’s how he met this girl before the war. At that time they
were in high school. He called her from Houston and asked if would be OK to
come up and see her, and she said, “Yeah.” He told her he had a friend with him,
and asked if she could get me somebody he could visit with, and she said,
“Yeah.” So, we went up on that Saturday morning—caught a bus out of
Houston—and that afternoon, that’s how I met my wife on a blind date.

Interviewer: Are you serious? That is really neat!
Veteran: We stayed there about two or three weeks, then had to go back home and go to
work, and I said, “I’ll be back.” Anyway, I went home and made a little money
and hit the road again. I stayed that time and went to work in Houston.

Interviewer: Do you like it here?
Veteran: Oh, I love it—it’s my home. All of my kids live here. That’s been 55 or 56 years
ago—1946. We got married in 1947.

Interviewer: What did you enjoy about being in the service?
Veteran: Meeting people I think is one thing. Seeing the world. I saw a lot of the world
from the Atlantic Coast to the Far Pacific. I’ve been halfway around this world—
est, west, north, and south. I’ve been from the lower Antilles as far as you can
go, and I’ve been as far as you can go north except for the North Pole.

Interviewer: What did you dislike the most about the service?
Veteran: Like I said, I didn’t dislike any part of it. I could have made a career person, but I
didn’t.

Interviewer: So, if anyone asked you about going into the military, would you ever discourage
them?
Veteran: No. I think the military does two or three things, and that’s one of the things I
was hoping you would ask. I’m a flag-waver, and every once in awhile I get on a
soapbox. I’ve been known to do that to build up my country. I think the first thing it does is it protects our country and what it stands for. Our Constitution and our freedom is protected by the military—that’s its sole purpose. The second thing it does is make men out of men and women out of women. There were very few women in there when I was in there, but there were a few. I don’t agree with all the things the military does now—particularly the ladies. I don’t think they should be on the frontline combat. I don’t know why they keep on pushing this, but I don’t think they should do this, but it does make better women out of women. It gets them off the streets, off the corners where they hang out, and whatever kinds of trouble they can get into nowadays. And of course it makes our country stronger. Those are the three main things that I think the military does. And it gives good protection, even though it costs. None of my kids went into the service. It just so happened that the age group they were in, they couldn’t make it. They all went to college, but none of them went into the service. I told them that if they wanted to go, they couldn’t beat it.

Interviewer: So it’s definitely worth it?
Veteran: It’s definitely worth it, not only from the individual standpoint, but from our country’s standpoint. I do have some bad feelings about how the women are wanting to be on the frontline, because I don’t think they belong there, and the training they put men and women together through, I don’t think this is right. They’ve got a lot of problems with it. They know they’ve got them, they see the problems. You put men and women together, particularly at that age, you know what’s going to happen. They go in for six months, and soon they’re coming out with a kid, you know. So, that part I think is wrong. As far as the ladies being nurses and this kind of stuff or secretaries, I have no problem with that. Combat—no.

Interviewer: Why did you choose the Marines? They’re more of a hardcore division. Why did you choose them instead of the Navy?
Veteran: I always said I wanted to be a Navy man if I ever went it. As a kid I thought I’d join the Navy and see the world. We went to some movies before I went in, and they had one that had some islands that had been taken over like Corregidor and
Wake Island and these places, and it was about the Marines. I said, “That’s what I’m going to go in to see the world.” The Marine Corps is part of the Navy. The Corps doesn’t stand on it’s on—it’s a division of the Navy. It’s the Navy’s fighting force—always has been. That’s why they call it the Marine Corps.

Interviewer: Is there anything else I should know?
Veteran: You asked me awhile ago if I ever went to the brig. You’ve heard a lot of the routine stuff. After they dropped the bombs and told us we could go home and go to Seoul, Korea, this group of veterans I was with said we were going to go home and we were going to have a party. We lived all over the country. I was the only one from Tennessee. At the time you could buy a case of beer if you wanted to—Pabst Blue Ribbon. They charged you ten cents a can for hot beer.

Interviewer: Disgusting!
Veteran: No, it’s not. Not if you drink it for three years. Some guys didn’t want the beer, so we’d buy it off of them and give them twenty cents a can. There was about ten or twelve of us—all sergeants, and all had responsibilities, and we had us a party until we ran out of beer. We knew our captain, and he’d been over there ever since we were, so they elected me to go talk to him to see if we could go get some more beer. This was like ten or eleven o’clock at night. I wandered down to the captain’s tent—we lived in tents, by the way. The entire time we weren’t on a ship, we were in tents the whole time I was in the Marine Corps except for about two or three weeks. So I knocked on the captain’s tent and told him who I was and said, “Can we see you, Sir,” and he said, “Yeah. What is it First Sergeant?” I said, “Well, we’re having a little party.” I was about half loaded, too, or I wouldn’t have gone down there. {Laughter} I said, “We’re having a little party and we ran out of beer. I want to see if there’s any more available and if you could help us round up some.” He said, “No, no, I can’t. I don’t really have any beer, but I’ve got some whiskey. Do you want some whiskey?” I said, “Well, I haven’t drank any whiskey in forever.” He said they got a little quota, which we knew they did, and so he gave us a couple of bottles, so we really put on a ‘peg.’ Anyway, there was eight of us in one tent, and the party was in my tent. Finally we went to bed—I don’t know what time it was—but it was way past time lights.
was out. I finally went to bed, but never did wake up at roll call. There were twelve us that didn’t wake up for roll call. About seven o’clock or so, somebody came around to the tent raising hell, and it was the first sergeant. “You people are all on report. Be at the captain’s quarters at eight o’clock in starched khakis, field scarves. You are on report.” We didn’t have no starched khakis. We hadn’t ever had starched khakis. {END OF SIDE B}

{TAPE 2, SIDE A BEGINS}  *First several minutes of tape are blank. When interview resumes, quality of tape is very poor at the beginning. Transcription continues when voices are discernable.*

Veteran: …We hadn’t been in that tent for thirty minutes, and here came the first sergeant and a couple of the natives wanting their bananas. Those were the chief’s bananas. They took their bananas, but they didn’t do anything to us, because we didn’t know it. We could eat all the coconuts we wanted. I got in trouble one time because I took a hand grenade and blew up a stream of water that had fish in it and caught us some fish. We were cooking them and didn’t get them done until here came the people, and we were told we couldn’t eat that fish, and had to throw them away. They’d heard the hand grenade go off, and we were in a training camp then. Those people lived off of the land or the ocean. It was pretty gruesome how they lived off of the ocean. They caught their fish by hand. All they have over there is coral reef, and when the ocean tide goes out there’d be pockets in the coral that had fish in them, and when the tide would go out they’d walk out and get these fish and eat them raw. They loved octopus. What they’d do with the octopus is take it to the chief and he’d get his part first, and each one of them gets a leg and different parts of the body would be divided up.

{TAPE STOPPED—END OF INTERVIEW}