

Louis Pawlinga
Narrator

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Interviewers
Rome Free Academy High School
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KM: Today is Wednesday, January 23, 2002. Myself, Kevin May, and my partner Kristen Scanlon will be conducting the interview of Louis Pawlinga, a World War II Veteran, at Rome Free Academy in Rome, New York. Where would you like to start on this?

LP: Well, let me give you a definition first of what a war is, unless you know what a war is...do you know?

KM: I do, but I am sure you know better.

LP: Okay, shortly defined a war is a conflict between nations, or within states and it is settled by the force of arms. It is just as simple as that. Regarding nations, it is one foreign nation against another. When it comes between states, it would be like a revolution in Russia or when America had our Civil War which would be your own people fighting each other. Now, governments start wars whether you believe it or not, they do.

They have three objectives for doing it. First of all, they want raw materials and natural resources. In order to get those they have to take the territory so they occupy territory. At the same time they will go ahead and subjugate people and dominate them. Now the Japanese, they started running around the Pacific because as a small island, they had very few resources. They needed iron, coal and oil which is why they attacked Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Philippines to get those raw materials because you cannot fight a war without steel, right? In order to make guns, tanks, airplanes and whatever else you have got to have the raw materials. So governments are usually the ones that fall for that need.

Now we will go back to the beginning of World War II. Adolf Hitler came into power in 1933, he was elected Chancellor of Germany in 1934. It was a big election and how he did it was because he had a wonderful gift of gab. You have to give him credit for that no matter how evil a man he was. He was able to persuade people to do things that he wanted. I was going to high school at the time and did not have television. We did have radio which is how you heard him and in the movies they showed Movietone spots [newsreel clips] of Hitler. He was a terrific orator. So he galvanized the German people by telling them how badly they were off after World War I. He complained about the Versailles Treaty. Do they teach you about that in school today?

KM: Yes, war reparation.

LP: Alright, that is what it was. In World War I, strange to say, a lot of people thought Germany started it. Germany did not start WWI. In those days they had what was called a Balance of Power. One nation would have an entangling alliance with another. So if you attacked one, the other would get into it because they would accept they would come to each others aid. So what happened was there was a dual monarchy called Austria-Hungary who had a dispute with a country known as Serbia (an area that included Sarajevo/Belgrade/Yugoslavia). In June of 1914 assassins killed Archduke Ferdinand and his wife who were Austrians and visiting the Mayor of Sarajevo. The assassin stepped onto the fender of their car and killed those two people. So Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia politics for their murders. They set seven conditions they wanted the Serbians to go by but they would not do it. The Austria-Hungary combination, which was bigger than Serbia decided they were really going to give it to them. But what turned out to be was Russia was a friend of Serbia. So if Austria-Hungary hit Serbia, the Russians are going to come in and help Serbia.[Louis laughs] At the same time, Germany-then known as Prussia-had a pact with Austria-Hungary so if someone attacked Austria-Hungary, Germany is going to come in and help them. So you see, everyone is getting into the fray. But Germany did not start World War I.

Well, anyhow, when the war ended they had the Versailles Treaty and Germany got blamed for the whole works and they wanted compensation for it. Germany could not pay it, the economy went to pieces and they could not get loans. The French government was the one pushing Germany for the compensation. In the meantime, the United States had loaned money to the French and the English. We wanted our money, but we were not pressing Germany. The point was that the economy went to pieces in Germany. It would take a bushel full of Deutchmarks (Germany currency) to buy a loaf of bread. So Hitler came along in 1934, had the gift of gab and claimed he was going to take everything back and rebuild Germany.

During World War I, the Ruhr Region [Germany's center of coal, iron and steel production] was taken over by the French because Germany was not paying their debt. Once Hitler got his power, he began building up the military forces and sent troops to take back the Ruhr resource. From that point, Hitler did not stop. It was said if he had stopped there, World War II would not have happened. Hitler saw that the France and Great Britain Allies could not stop him so he continued to build up his war machine. It took off from there with the building of big battleships and air force becoming the dominant power in Europe at that time.

Hitler decided he wanted to take over Europe and began with Czechoslovakia and Austria who did not resist him. When he reached Poland, they would not give up so he crossed the borders and fought them for a month. Hitler was victorious because Poland was still fighting with cavalry horses and what can a horse do against a tank?! So Germany prevailed. In the process, Germany then got into a war with France and Britain because they stood up for Poland. They came in later, but Poland was already down the drain. They figured they were going to be next, so they got involved in the war. It wound up that Hitler got to be friends with Italy's ruler, Benito Mussolini. So Germany went ahead and took over all the countries in Europe. The next step would have been England. But the English Channel was a barrier. So Hitler and Mussolini created an Axis alliance. In the meantime, Japan saw how successful Germany was in their conquests and also joined in the Axis group. Now there are three powerful countries – Germany, Italy, and Japan known as the Axis Powers.

Now the French were already beaten so England did the best they could for two years to hold Hitler back. In the meantime, the United States were isolationists. We did not want to get involved because we remembered how costly World War I was with that loss of casualties. Most of the people in our country did not want to get involved with World War II. Two years passed from Hitler's first attack in 1939 and then Japan's attack of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7th, 1941.

The United States had an agreement with England and France, Germany declared war on us and we declared war on Japan we now had all this going on. Germany was the toughest nut to crack so most of the offense effort was going to be put there. World War II was divided into two phases. The European Theater and it also had the Pacific Theater. Germany also got involved in Africa, so we had troops there as well. They went so far as to fight even in Greece. Slowly, our production is what killed them. In other words, everyone in our country started producing. Women were hired to cover the manufacturing positions of the men who went off to war.

Now I will drop this phase of what happened in the European part of the war because I was involved

strictly in the Pacific front of the war. After World War I, when the Kaiser was almost beaten, Japan took over many islands in the Pacific Ocean that Germany had owned. Germany had purchased these islands from Spain. The islands of Mariana Islands, that I visited – Saipan, Guam, Tinian, Rota and all the rest were named after Queen Mariana. Magellan was the explorer who discovered those islands for Spain. The Japanese took the islands from Germany and began to arm them against the approval of The League of Nations [before going defunct, it was similar to today's United Nations international organization] . The League told Japan they can hold onto those islands, but you cannot fortify them. Of course Japan agreed to that ruling. [Louis laughs]

Have you ever heard of Amelia Earhart? She was an aviatrix who supposedly was on a trip around the world. But others said she was on a secret intelligence airplane trip to get information about what the Japanese were doing on all those captured islands. Supposedly she was shot down. Incidentally, my wife and I visited Saipan in 1994, on the 50th anniversary of the battle. Our guide took us to a marked place he called the “woman's jail where Amelia Earhart was held.” The people who were children at that time told us they saw her. But to this day, we denied that claim, she was just lost in the Pacific Ocean area and no one knows the truth because she never returned.

So the Japs went ahead and did arm all these islands. In some places they put air fields, others they built sea plane bases. The United States was not aware of what was going on there. But we did have possession of the island of Guam. The U.S. took that away from Spain during the Spanish-American War. At the same time we took Cuba and the Philippines from Spain. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th, almost simultaneously they attacked Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines, taking over all those islands. Our people lost that war, General MacArthur was kicked out of there and went to Australia. But he vowed to come back. Now the powers that be in this country did not know where they were going to go as far as attacking the Japanese because of their success.

They had a Vice-Admiral by the name of Chuichi Nagumo who lead the attack on the

Hawaiian Islands. One of his officers, Captain Mitsuo Fuchida [of the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service] was a pilot who was in charge of their air force. They went up to the Northern end, almost up to Alaska and remember, this was in December. It was the least protected area, there were no Merchant Marines nor anyone else, which is why they were successful in attacking Pearl Harbor. No one expected that approach. All those ships that were lined up along Battleship Row were sitting ducks.

So the Japanese left, and we thought they were going to start moving in. My division [the US Army 27th Infantry Division] was down in Fort McClellan, Alabama, when we learned about the attack and were alerted for movement. We did not know where exactly, but we did know we were headed west. We got onto railroad transports, there were seventy-two trains with about six Pullman cars and about twenty flat cars to carry the trucks and provisions. We were dropped off in a place near Corona, California in orange fields because they had no facilities to accommodate us. [Louis laughs]. So we pitched our pup tents next to the orange fields. It was the strangest thing because it was so cold that the farmers had to light smudge pots [small container to burn fuel to protect trees from frost damage] and put canopies over the fields. We never heard of anything like that and thought it was strange.

Anyhow, we kept on moving and went to Camp Haan Army Base near Riverside, California and were joined by a compliment of people. In other words, our Company's normal strength of one hundred and twenty men were increased to war strength of one hundred and ninety six to compensate for the expected casualties incurred during war. At Camp Haan, they sent a bunch of draftees in to join us from Camp Wolters, Texas who only had received thirteen weeks of Basic Training. They were brand new so we had to take them under our wings and teach them some things.

On March 10, 1942, about three months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, we boarded ships. I was on the S.S. Lurline [Steam Ship]. It was a luxury liner that belonged to the Matson Line builders that was converted into a troop transport. It was a very fast ship. We also had a sister ship to it called the RMS Aquitania [British ship Royal Mail Steamer]. So our Division loaded onto these two ships and took off like a bat out of Hell! [excuse my language] across the ocean. We had to use a zigzag motion because we had no ships to protect us. But they said that these two ocean liners moved so fast and zigzagged and could not be hit by a submarine.

My Company got to Hilo, Hawaii which is the largest of the seven islands in the Hawaiian group. We went to a gymnasium for the night and the next day we assumed outpost positions. At that time Japan was already monkeying around in the Philippines which they hit simultaneously with the Pearl Harbor attack as I said. We did not know where their next attack would be so we circled the whole island with our outpost and listening posts [facility established to monitor radio signals]. We were there for a couple of months and then our unit was transferred to Oahu [sic Honolulu] the capital of the Hawaiian Islands where we went to Schofield Barracks where we picked up some more men and got into Ranger Training. In other words, we knew we were going to be going into a jungle somewhere. We learned how to go out into the woods and subsist. We had Hawaiian natives show us different things. For example the mushrooms and berries that you could survive on if it was necessary. So we trained in the islands and worked with one Marine Division in amphibious maneuvers where we got on Higgin Boats which was a long, rectangular boat which had a drop ramp that you

would run off onto the beach. We had this training on the island of Maui and we were all set

Now our government made the strategic decision how they were going to fight the war. General Douglas MacArthur was in the southern sector, the Philippines. He was going to try and retake the Philippines. But there was so many people involved there and so much territory that the powers that be in Washington, D.C. felt it would take too long to do that. Instead, on the advice of Admiral Chester Nimitz, he was the Navy Commander in the Hawaiian Islands, he thought we could take the small islands by island hopping operations. In other words, we could do amphibious maneuvers and land our sea planes on their air strips. We engaged in this island hopping, bypassing some of them.

In the Battle of Midway, the Japanese were bringing up their troops to attack the Hawaiian Islands and take the island of Midway. But the U.S. had broken through the Japanese code which they radioed through and our cryptographers found out what they were up to and learned their target was Midway Island. As a result, we were waiting for them. When the Japanese got there, with our troop transports we sunk four of their aircraft carriers and effectively took control of the air space. And if you have control of the air, you can control everything. So that battle ended in defeat for the Japanese, they took off and never came in with their troops. But we were prepared for it.

It was decided the best and fastest way to defeat the Japanese was through the Central Pacific known as the Central Pacific Theater of Operations. We would bypass certain islands because they could not receive any supplies since we controlled their air space. We also had a tremendous submarine fleet which no one is aware of until this day that were prowling around the Pacific Ocean. They were observing things and sinking troop transports and the like. Our submarines were raising havoc with the Japanese. So we decided we were going to go through the Central Pacific.

Our Division was broken up into smaller units because these islands did not have many people, maybe about one thousand men. You don't need seventeen thousand soldiers to go in there. The strategy to attack an island was a three to one ratio. Let's say there are twenty thousand Japanese defenders, we would put in sixty thousand men..a three to one ratio. If you reduced that to half and half, or less, you are not going to win. You always have to outnumber the enemy by three to one. Our Division took Makin Island, that was the first one, and then Majuro Island in different Regiments. We had three Regiments in our Division, all of them were close to one thousand men each. They were called the 105th Regiment, the 106th Regiment which I was in, and we also had the 165th Regiment which were all rifle units. We also had artillery units with us. We decided we would clear a path through the Central Pacific.

We were going between the captured islands of Makin and Majuro and all our lights had to be out and we were told to keep still. They did not want any noise to be picked up on shore since we were passing so close to the occupied islands. We knew once we had gotten through, their supplies and air support were cut off and they would wither on the vine from lack of supplies.

The first big place our unit, the 106th, were in reserve for an atoll [a ring-shaped coral reef or chain of islands with openings which resembled a string of pearls which had breaks in it] called Kwajalein. We were in reserve for the 2nd Marine Division who were going to take that

atoll. We went through a deep passage and anchored in the middle of the lagoon [shallow lake]. There were in Amphtracks [amphibious tractors] and ships if the Marines needed our help. We were there for about two days and the Marines did not need our help. In battle, you never know what to expect, the Intelligence Reports tell you this and that will happen, but sometimes you get big surprises when there are more people to fight than you expected. So we always had a reserve group held back to throw into the breach to help out, but we were not needed. We were waiting on the USS Neville which was an amphibious tractor ship, it carried seventeen Alligators. They look like a boat with tracks around the wheels like a tank. But instead of being having flat tracks, they had cups in order to churn water. They would hold about fifteen men each. We were all assigned to certain Amphtracks to board.

After Kwajalein, we took off to Eniwetok Atoll as the next landing site. We went through a deep passage and got inside and transferred to an LST which is a Landing Ship Tank which carried these Amphtracks. At about four in the morning when we were getting ready to go in, these horns started blasting and you get into your Amphtracks. These ships were able to lower themselves so you would crawl right out and fall into the ocean. I could not believe it when I saw how this worked for the first time. [Louis laughs] We never did this in our training in Hawaii and only had the Higgin boats with their ramp. But the LST were like big monsters, huge I mean if it could hold fifteen men it has to be big. We would roll off, get into the water and go to the right one after another, following each other and about eight on one side and nine on the other side and then get into a large circle. Each unit would do that. Then when everyone was on the ocean, going in these huge circles we were given the orders to go in and at that time had all kinds of protective fire. The Navy had their destroyers and missile ships, everything was thrown at these islands. We figured by the time we landed there was not going to be too many problems. Unknown to us the enemy had dug themselves in deep holes and caves so unless there was a direct hit on them, they survived our attack.

In the drawings I have given you, you have the maps, we had two beaches -the Red Beach and the Green Beach which are marked there. My Company was going to start at the large end of Eniwetok. We were going about to the middle distance and then swing left and go up because the island was long. It was shaped something like a gourd with the big part on the bottom then up into a point. There were other Companies that went to our right who were going across the island and make a turn with everyone moving upward and going to the other end. That is where we started getting into trouble. [Louis laughs] After all the firing that the Navy did subsided, and obviously when we were in there they are not going to be firing, that is when the enemy started coming out of the holes where they were hiding. They had places covered over with coconut trees. I mean you did not know where they were! So we started fighting them and pushing them up. Hey, what are you going to do? You're fighting, you're fighting, you kill them and you just keep on going.

When we got up to about a third of the way up the island, we ran into a bunch of natives. They were in holes too. They were lucky because if they stayed in those holes they would have been killed with grenades. But some of them stuck their heads out and we recognized them since they were not in uniform. The Japanese had their uniforms including helmets that had protective cloth on the back to prevent their necks from getting burned. So we knew a Jap from a native. There were thirty-three of these natives in the holes, alright? We got them out, gave them medical attention because some had been hurt, and I took the rest of them back. I

have a picture to show you where I am standing with my rifle and bayonet with all these men lined up who I took to the back Battalion area to get them out of the line of fire. We did not want the natives to get hurt. So using basic sign-language which they figured out [Louis gestures with his arm to come along], I took all thirty-three back with me. We were all taller than these little bitty native people, but with all the shelling that had preceded there was no resistance to me by the natives. We said “come” and they would go.

So I took them to the back, and when I got to the Battalion area there was a staff photographer, his name was sergeant John Masheni [?]. He got a rank in the service, but he came from one of the newspapers out west. He took my picture which I have over there [Louis points off camera]. At that time we had what we called a “Yank newspaper”. There was one edition in the European Theater and one in the Pacific. So he took my picture, and after I dropped these people safely off the beaches and returned to the front lines a Japanese mortar landed in this area and John got mortally wounded and died. You will see in this article I am going to let you read that John asked his friends who were with him to make sure his film was developed. I was on the last film that he had taken. I've brought the article about his death for you to see, which made both the European and Pacific newspapers. I have a copy of the European newspaper with our Outfit in it with a write up inside it of what we did. It also appeared in the Pacific edition and that is where the picture was.

KS: How long after he died did you find out that your picture was the last one he took?

LP: I did not know until I got the newspaper. Because when I dropped these natives off, and he took my picture, he was in the rear area. When I saw the article with my picture, it also had a picture of him as well as the story about his death. If I had stayed there five minutes more, I might have also gotten hit. But this is fate, I am a fatalist. I think what is going to happen regardless. So he was in the back line supposedly where it is safe; and I was in the front line where the fighting was going on. He gets killed by a mortar the enemy lobbed over our heads. Our company Commander got the guy in the hole who threw it.

So we went ahead, this was a two-day operation only. At the end of the day we dug foxholes. A foxhole is a hole about the size of the depth you can get into for protection should something like a grenade land next to you. We had our foxholes in a triangle pattern tied together with a man in each one. One man would always be awake so we would not be caught in a surprise attack. He would be on guard duty looking around in the dark. If someone would come along, he would give the alarm call and alert the other two soldiers who were sleeping. We would take turns and wake each other up, we had a luminous watch to see the time. That first night in combat some of the fellows got trigger-happy, they thought they were hearing things and the next thing you know they were throwing grenades all around the place. We were getting ready to kill ourselves. [all laugh] It was hell that first night. We were all scared to death. Let's face it, that first night you are going to be scared because we had never been subjected to anyone shooting at you and so forth.

So, just before the sun was coming up, I was in my foxhole looking at a coconut tree and I see a Japanese helmet. The Japanese at Guadalcanal had climbed into the coconut trees as a sniper position. They knew they would get killed, but also that they would kill a bunch of people first. We had heard about that possibility of attack. So as the sun came up, it shined and reflected off his helmet. I had a Karabiner rifle, which was a newer, lighter rifle with

smaller bullets and more sensitive. It would hold more, about twenty cartridges versus the M1-rifle which held only seven. So I aimed it up to shoot him, and the thing won't work. Here there is a Jap in the tree, I thought at that point. So I don't know what to do, I am in my hole, holding my gun up there [Louis is in his action pose] and as the sun came up it turned out to be just a coconut! [all laugh] A coconut has a hard brown shell, which looked just like a brown helmet. I couldn't see very clearly in the dark at 4:00 in the morning. The moral of this story was when daylight came, I dumped that Karabiner rifle and got myself an M1-rifle which is larger, weighs about ten pounds, shoots about eight shells and will shoot as fast as you can pull the trigger. It is not a machine gun, it is a semi-automatic. You replace the clips as they are used.

KM: What was your main weapon before you got the M1 for combat?

LP: We used the Model 1903 Springfield Rifle from World War I. After that war ended, they had an abundance of this rifle. It was bolt action, are you familiar with that type of gun? It has a receiver which you pull up and back which throws out the used shell. And then a spring action pushes up another shell which goes into the firing chamber. You have to do that each time you fire the rifle. With the M1-Rifle as fast as you can pull the trigger it fires. In World War II, the United States was the only Army that had a semi-automatic rifle. It was invented in 1933 by John Garand. Officially, it is called the U.S. Rifle caliber thirty M1, but we would call it the Garand after its inventor. It was a very, very good rifle. That is what I carried for the rest of the war because I did not trust the Karabiner. [Louis laughs] I mean if you are going to shoot at someone and your weapon doesn't work because of some sand or something gets in there, that is bad.

Well, going on, after we took the island which we secured in two days we boarded ships and we went back to Honolulu to pick up replacements. We had lost a bunch of men and many were wounded. We next went to Sand Island, Hawaii and that is where the picture was taken with Charlie Hall [Louis points off screen] It is right near Pearl Harbor. We got our replacements and then they decided we were going to engage in Operation Forager, this was a big one. In other words, no more Atolls to monkey around with, no more little battles. This was the big one. The idea was, each time we took places we were building up supply areas. Eniwetok, the island that we took, has a bigger harbor for our Navy ships than Pearl Harbor. Pearl was our biggest one in the Pacific.

So we would move all our supplies up forward, the Pacific Ocean had long supply lines versus in Europe which only had the English Channel of about thirty miles. In the Pacific you are talking about six to seven thousand miles to cover. They had to bring all the logistics up to have something to fight with. To begin, you have to have water, ammunition and food. If you don't have those basic things you can't do your job. So we would take these various islands, along with the Marines, and we cleared a path right through the Central Pacific Ocean. We are now bringing up all of the supplies to these bases and hold them. They would also would hold our fighter planes in case any Japanese planes came, they would fly up and do a job on them. Our pilots were better trained and had superior planes. The Japanese aircraft were like World War I planes. They could do the job, but were not as good as ours.

Finally it was decided that they were going to take the whole thrust of Japan through the

Central Pacific while the Southern Pacific, with General MacArthur would wait. It was decided the best way to do this was to take the island of Saipan, which was their crown jewel. It was the second largest island in the Mariana group, Guam was the largest which was ours but had been taken by the enemy. We had Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam. We were only going to take three, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

The reason we went after Saipan was because it was the most easily defensible. It has a mountainous terrain with a ridge from one end of the island to the other. On the top of Mount Tapotchau you could turn around in a complete circle, 360 degrees, and see every part of the island. It was a struggle to climb, so first they were going to have the 2nd and the 4th Marine Divisions take Saipan and send us on to Guadalcanal. But they changed that, they had about eight different changes. Next they said we were going to go and take Guam. We were a floating reserve for the Marines, and of course having just finished fighting on Eniwetok, they weren't going to throw us into another battle right away. They gave us a breather. As we are waiting for them to take Guam, the Japanese learned we were going after Saipan. Saipan is only twelve hundred miles from Japan proper as you can see on my map. Our airplanes could bomb Japan and return to Saipan as a base.

At that point in the war Boeing came out with the B-29 Bomber which was so large it was actually called the Flying Fortress. It had a range of five thousand miles which means it could go the one thousand, two hundred miles each way to Japan and still have plenty of gas. So that is what they were going to do. In the meantime, we decided we would sit out there and wait as the Marines hit the beaches. They had a four mile sector. They went in over the worst parts, over the reefs and through the lagoon which the Japanese were not aware we would come in there. But the Marines were prepared because they had a force up near Garapan, in the western end, that they were going to throw in to help us because no one ever knew who was going to hit what.

So what happened, the 2nd Marine Division was supposed to go in half way and make a left turn. In the meantime, Aselito Air Field, which was on the southern end of the island as you see on my map, is the area they wanted to capture first. This was so they could start bringing in supplies, support and so forth. The 4th Marine Division was going to cross the whole island and make a left turn which would make two Divisions the 2nd and the 4th working their way up the island. As things turned out, the intelligence they had on the island was faulty. We were told there would only be twenty thousand defenders but unknown to us there was another ten thousand, making the enemy thirty thousand. Those soldiers were on troop transports that were sunk by our submarines, but were the survivors who were able to make it to Saipan. Our troop total was sixty-six thousand among the three Divisions to their thirty thousand.

The Marines started going right up the middle of the island of Saipan which were made up of sugar cane fields on a plateau. On the right side were about five or six hills which we named – Easy, Charlie, Fox and things like that so we could easily distinguish each one on a map. On the left was Saipan, overlooking them. So when the 4th Division Marines started going up the middle, they started to get slaughtered. At that point it was decided our Division should go in there and they threw us in the middle of the battle. As it were, we did not have much more success going through the middle than the Marines because it was open cane fields. In other words, they had burned down the sugar cane and we were out in the open. When you are exposed like that and the enemy is up on the hill, they see you and are giving you trouble.

[Louis poses with his imaginary rifle aiming down from above].

Incidentally, we had a fight with a Marine General. I don't know if you ever heard about it, probably not. We had a General by the name of Ralph C. Smith. He was a Major General with two stars and in charge of our Division. He had participated in World War I, so he had combat experience. In the meantime, the Marines had a General by the name of Holland M. Smith [nickname of Howlin' Mad]. Both Generals, both with the last name of Smith! So the Marine General, who had never been in combat or ever had a bullet fired at him, took a disliking to our guy. General Holland Smith wanted to run the attack like a football game. Like "hey, these guys are going too slow". He wanted to line up the two Divisions us and the Marines together all the same time going upward.

The Marine tactics were different from ours. The Marines are taught that they almost impervious to a bullet. They are no different than we are. I mean they are American kids that put a uniform on but they are so brain-washed they think they are invincible. So they were like a bull in a china shop BANG! CRASH! POW! [the kids laugh]. They run by the foxholes and the Japanese shot them in the back. We did not believe in that tactic. The theory that Howlin' Mad Smith had was if you hit the enemy and get them moving and running away from you, then you just keep running after them. But he did not say anything about the guys in the holes.

Whereas the Army's tactics, which go back to the beginning of the United States Army, when you come up against terrific resistance where you can't move and you are being seen you refer to your maps. The maps have grid coordinates and you have an artillery observer with you. The artillery units we had with us would lob shells ahead of our advance. So whenever we ran into a point on a particular hill, our observer would designate a particular grid line and fire shells into that area. We even had the Navy firing in that chosen location. So even if you are in a spot that is defended by ten machine guns, at least you had the coverage of the artillery shells falling that would knock everything apart.

So what we did was swing to the right and at that time Howlin' Mad Smith got mad at our General and said "your men are freezing in the foxholes and not moving with our men, you are done!". He fired our General on the spot! He replaced him with a fellow by the name of Major General Sanderford Jarman who was going to be the Saipan Commander after we secured the island and left. When Jarman came up, he didn't know anything about what the scoop was so our General briefed him. Jarman asked our General what he would suggest, how can we win this battle? Smith tells him "well, if we continue going frontally we are in the open, we have tried that and lost a bunch of men as well as our tank. Let's go to the right, shell that area that has shrubs and trees. They can't see us and we should be able to take them." And that is what we did. So General Jarman followed the same battle plans as our relieved General Smith had come up with on how to be successful here. [all laugh] We then moved up about two hundred yards where the plateau had ended and shot across to the other end. In other words, we went up about six hills, crossed and made contact with our troops coming from the other side. Now we are on line with both our sides. From that point we went faster than the Marines.

When my wife and I took that trip on the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Saipan as you see in my pictures, you could spin around and see in every direction from the top of that hill.

When you can do that, whoever commands that view is in charge. Another thing the Japanese had were caves that they had prearranged artillery holds. The hills were loaded with them. The enemy could wheel out the guns, shoot them, then wheel them back inside. The bad part was for three days before Saipan was attacked, our Navy had battleships and airplanes bombed that area. Three days! One of the Commanders of the airplane got shot down in the lagoon. He survived, was able to get rescued, and gave the intelligence report about the lagoon's underground obstacles such as our ships running into underwater mines. Anyhow, my Company went ahead and moved along swinging to the left. We hit a place called Tanapag Harbor which is where the Japanese had their seaplane base. We cleaned that area out and preceded to move up. By that time the island is getting narrow so it was our Division and the 4th Marine Division who stayed there while we went up to a certain point and then one Division took over.

As it were, the Japanese were lead to believe we were going to rape and kill their people, all kinds of bad things so they were told not to surrender to us, all right? The island was thirteen miles long from one end to the other and about five miles wide. As we pushed them they jumped from caves to caves without anyone coming to help them. Incidentally, at that time, they had General Chuichi Nagumo, remember that name I mentioned earlier? He was the guy who lead the Japanese forces against Pearl Harbor, they assigned him to their Navel units on Saipan after he lost the Battle of Midway. Their Imperial Japanese Army Lieutenant General was Kotoku Sato.

As we are going up against them, the two of them are moving back. Of course, this would be at night when you can't see them move from the caves versus moving during the day when they were visible to your soldiers and aircraft. At the point when these Generals knew they were not going to survive both Nagumo and Sato committed suicide. We found their bodies. As you can see in that 50th Anniversary Book I brought you can see where they are shooting over Sato's grave.

So the thing was this, the Japanese did not want to give up because reason number one is they were taught not to give up. It was considered dishonorable to give up. And reason number two was when these people got to the end of the island, they had nowhere to run. The northern end, Marpi Point, was a high precipice, a high cliff where the people were jumping off the edge committing suicide. Men, women, children, soldiers -everyone.

I mention my brother-in-law was on the USS Neosho which was destroyed in the Battle of the Coral Sea. He was rescued by a destroyer ship called the USS Waller. He was in the party that was helping us by shooting from ship to shore. Tony said when they got up to the top of the island, there were so many bodies floating in the water that their ship was just parting them aside. It was like breaking a surface of ice. So we did prevail in that battle.

But before we did the Japanese placed a last attack attempt. They had about three thousand men gyokusai raid. They came with bamboo sticks as weapons. These are the soldiers that had made it to shore after their ship was sunk. So they tied bayonets or knives onto the end of a bamboo stick and charged us. This was in addition to whatever machine guns they had left. That was their last ditch attempt to battle us. Our 105th Regiment received an awful beating, they got through them and into our headquarters in the back. They also were able to take over

a Marine artillery unit. But then our Division Headquarters stopped them, and that was the end of it, so effectively the island was taken. But the Japanese still played around for years! It was a year later that one of their company commanders turned in his swords to one of our Captains. I will show you the picture I have of that in my book. After we got done with Saipan.....are you still with me? [all laugh]

LP: Saipan was one part of Operation Forager, the second was Tinian, and the third was Guam. After we had secured Saipan- like I said it wasn't completely taken since the enemy still was hiding years later in these caves. But for all practical purposes the island was taken. In the meantime, when we were probably one-third of the way up the island from Aslito Airfield on the southern end, the SeaBees [U.S. Naval Construction Battalions] came in. They had all kinds of equipment, bulldozers, you name it. They started to widen the air strip and made it longer. We did not know why they were doing that. We were still fighting and had only taken one-third of the island.[Louis laughs] And here they are doing all kinds of things behind us. They were using the coral from the island rather than dirt or sand like we have in our country. The SeaBees used the coral to build a landing strip for our B-29s.

When we left Saipan, we boarded a ship. In other words they had a garrison group come in, this was done after each island was taken. An old General would come in and command the operation. Our ship traveled down below the Equator where there was a traditional monkey-business ceremony where we had water poured on us since it was the first time we "went under" the Equator line. We went to an island called Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides archipelago group. It was a British possession at that time. We were there to get replacements and get ready for the battle on Okinawa.

As it were, when we were fighting on Saipan, and it was pretty well done, I got a message from home that my kid brother Hank, the one two years younger than me got killed on D-Day. D-Day in Europe was the 6th of June 1944. Nine days later, the 15th of June we were fighting on the island of Saipan. Word came home that my brother was killed. I believe he would be alive today if he had listened to me. Why I say that is this, he was drafted into the service and placed in a coast artillery unit in Massachusetts. These units are miles and miles behind the front lines and lob shells over. Hank was kind of a competitive kid, he liked to box and such. He wrote a letter to me saying he was thinking of joining the 82nd Airborne Division which were paratroopers who were all volunteers. No one would be forced to become a paratrooper. So I wrote back saying "Don't do it". I said a paratrooper is no more than an infantryman like myself. But at least I got the opportunity to jump into a fox hole or behind a rock or tree for protection. When you jump out of a plane and coming down in a parachute you are a sitting duck so you are going to get killed.

Well, Hank would not listen to me and joined. He went to Europe and fought in Sicily, Anzio, and Northern Italy. From there his unit went to England where he was in the 504th Regiment of the 82nd Division. They needed men to go as Pathfinders with the 105th Regiment who were new boys just coming in from the States. So they asked some of the fellows who already fought in the Battles of Sicily and Anzio if they would go along and shepherd these new recruits. So they ask for Pathfinders, which I did not know about until the last couple of months from a fellow who made a twenty-year study about it.[Their motto was First in-Last out.] Their job was to jump out of an airplane at one in the morning. There were eighteen

men. When they landed, they were to put up radar honing devices for the airplanes and also put up spotlights. So as the other units come in four hours later at five in the morning they were set. The Pathfinders landed in the dark, and set up these drop zones about six to eight miles behind the front lines. Their job was to prevent any reinforcements coming from the back to reach the beaches and attack our boys arriving onto the beaches. So the 82nd and the 105th Divisions were supposed to impede any enemy reinforcements coming up. On the 6th of June, D-Day, Hank lost his life. I understand that he landed alright, but he got killed on the ground. A fellow made a documentary of this and the program was on The History Channel on November 7th where I learned all about what happened. Hank was shot in the head, we have the paperwork which explained his deadly injury.

Anyhow, at the time this happened when Henry [Hank] got killed, I had three other brothers in the service. In other words, there were five of us all in the service, every one of us in combat. When my brother got killed, my mother had a heart attack. You may recall in World War II there were five brothers called the Sullivan brothers from Iowa. They were on the same ship and the ship was sunk. All five of these Sullivan boys died. At that point, our government put in a new program which stated if all family members were in the service, the one who had been in the longest would be brought stateside to ensure all of them would not be killed.

Two of my brothers, Henry [who was killed] and Steve were in Europe. You may have heard of Steve Pawlinga who was at [1:06:25 unclear] for three terms about 1982. Steve was on a bomber and he was shot up as they dropped bombs over Ploiesti Airfields in Romania. So those two boys were there. My brother Max was in the Air Force on a C-130 Cargo planes bringing supplies into the Pacific. My other brother Stanley was in the Coast Artillery in New Guinea, like Henry would have been. All of us were in the service. While we were in the New Hebrides Islands, I received word from the Red Cross that they were going to transport me back to the States.

At that point they made provisions and I left my outfit. They flew me to Guadalcanal during the night to Johnson Island. I will never know in a million years how the pilot found that island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean! It was pitch black out there. He had to reach it to refuel. The distance was too long to fly directly to San Francisco or Hawaii from where we were. You had to have an intermediate stop. So I flew from Guadalcanal to Johnson Island to Honolulu, Hawaii and finally to Seattle, Washington.

I missed going to Okinawa, but my Division went. They were part of the 10th Army. General Buckner was the head of the group that hit Okinawa. He died in that Battle. So I was kind of lucky. As I said I was a fatalist with the philosophy that what was going to happen would happen. But I believe I would have gotten killed because I was the First Sargent and in charge of the company Headquarters. I had a couple of runners and some radiomen. We had walkie-talkies at that time. One of the boys whose name was Bellascyloe [@1:08:41 spelling?] was a little guy-probably one hundred and fifty pounds, who always followed me around. From what I understand, after I left the Outfit and they went to Okinawa and were hiding in some sort of shrine or something as they were being shelled by the Japanese. A shell fell in the doorway of this shrine killing and wounding many of them including Bellascyloe [1:09:12]. Had I been there I may have gotten killed or wounded also. As I say, whatever is in the cards for you is going to happen.

So I beat that and got home. But I was in Seattle for two weeks, I could not get out of there! So I called home and told them I was hung up in Seattle and they wondered why. I told them the orders which would send me back home have not come in yet. Well my sister was with my Mother at that time and said “we have some kind of paperwork here!” So they had sent my paperwork home. My family is sitting on the paperwork at home and I am waiting for it in Seattle! [everyone laughs] Finally, they got the papers to me after being stuck in Seattle for two weeks. Then I was sent to Fort Dix in New Jersey. By that time, the war was winding down. I was put in charge of a separation center/company as a First Sargent. The fellows who had already fought in Europe were being sent home because the European campaign had already ended that May of 1945, while we were in the Pacific still fighting the Japs until August of 1945, after the atom bomb was dropped.

While I was in Fort Dix, some of the fellows from my Outfit started to come through. I said “Hey!” because I had more points than some of them. I went into the National Guard first on December 20, 1938. On the 14th of October 1940, about two years later, we were federalized and became regular Army. I had guys from my Outfit coming through that I was discharging that did not have as many points as I did. To get out of the service at that time, they went by a point system based on the number of years you served, the number of battles and a lot of other things. The ones who had the highest points were the first ones going through. So here I am, stuck again, in Fort Dix doing the discharging to guys in my Outfit! There was a fellow who worked for a New York city paper and he was in the same boat as I was so he went to the Adjutant General [chief administrative officer in the US Army] and complained about this situation of men being discharged before us. They gathered a bunch of us who had the same complaint and grouped us into a Mess Hall [like your cafeteria, a place to eat]. They checked our records and told us “Sure, you fellows should not be here. You have more than enough points to be discharged!” So at that time, I left the service, came home, and that was it. If you want to ask questions now, go ahead, then I will go into my epilogue.

KM: First off, where were you born and educated?

LP: I was born March 18, 1921 in Utica, New York. I was educated in Washington and Kernan Grammar Schools and then graduated from the Utica Free Academy [UFA]. I'll tell you what happened there. In 1938, while I was in my sophomore year at the UFA I met a fellow from the National Guard by the name of John Holdridge [?]. As I mentioned, Hitler was coming into power about four years earlier in 1934. I began to think I may get involved in this conflict because I was young. In late 1930's the government started a military draft. They began taking young kids from eighteen to twenty-four or so. When I graduated from high school, instead of looking for a job, I took my summer vacation then joined the National Guard. I was glad I did because I learned about military life.

The Guard is the same as the United States Army. You receive the same training, the same uniform, pass the same physicals (you have to have the same number of teeth and be in good health), you have to pass an I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient) test. I got 118 on that test, I was fairly good in answering those questions. So I was accepted for the National Guard. We would train at Camp Smith in Peekskill, New York at Company or Battalion levels. At that point we learned how to shoot the guns, go on field trips and learn how to read a compass and maps and so forth. It was Basic Training which amounted to what you would learn in the Army in a thirteen week Basic Training Course.

I felt I was going to be involved in the war and if I had to go I wanted to know something about it. I'm glad I did because I learned a lot. I will tell you one thing I learned that was very important was to hear the artillery shells go over your head. What they did was to take my Company, this was before I became a First Sargent, I was a Squad Leader, a Buck Sargent. I only had three stripes then. They took us out to a big artillery range with two hills. One lined this way and another there [Louis draws an image with his arm off camera] with a big opening of about two thousand yards probably. It was like a big scoop and they would fire the artillery over our heads. They sounded like boxcars on a railroad track going over your head. They were hitting in an area that had paper targets up which were the size of people.

So we watched that action and heard the noise, and two dogs appeared from somewhere and kept running back and forth in that area. To this day, I don't know where the devil they came from. As they kept running back and forth, they never got hit! [everyone laughs]. That taught us that when a shell explodes, it doesn't go left and right it goes up like a cone. In other words, if you are below it the chances are you are not going to get hit. If the shell drops here, the explosion will go upward, not in all directions around it. I learned if I got into combat and had the choice of keeping my head down if I don't need to be running around- that is the best place. I followed that thought through the whole war. Rather than be walking around like I was on a Sunday walk, when people had machine guns, mortars and artillery you keep your tail down! I found this to be true. I went through the whole war without getting a scratch.

But I did get an infection in one of my hands. I had to take sulfur powder for it because the flies were so thick and it was hot country there. I have a picture to give you showing me holding a shovel which I gave you, and I'm wearing all these bandages which kept the flies out. Aside from that, I never got injured. When we used to get replacements for the guys who were killed and injured, it was to replace the newest recruits, with their thirteen-week Basic Training. The old-timers that already got through the fighting knew to keep their tails down.

The first two or three days when you are being shot at are the worst. You can hear the bullets pinging right over your head. But if you are fortunate enough to get through those first days, then you don't even think about it to be honest with you. You take it as a matter of fact and you just keep on pushing. And you are hoping your name is not on one of those bullets that are heading your way. I was very fortunate that I went through the whole thing and never got hit at all.

KM: Your first combat was at Eniwetok?

LP: Yeah. We hit the beaches in the Amphtracks that float around and we spread out in a straight line and went on in. We did have men that got hurt right off the bat because these tractors were so high and you had to jump over the side and down to the ground. The shorter fellows, whose legs were not that long, would get hurt. When we went in, we had bayonets on the end of our rifles. One guy's bayonet went right through his foot! He did not even get into the fight, he was immediately evacuated out to a ship. The next day a hospital ship was brought in which was painted all white. On both sides of it was a big red cross and according to the Geneva Convention, enemies would not shoot at a hospital ship.

KM: Were you credited with any kills at Eniwetok?

LP: I'll tell you [Louis laughs] we were all firing. Whenever we would see a bunch of Japs, we would fire. I don't know who hit who first, but we did kill people, yes. One of the tragic things that broke my heart was that we did kill a bunch of women and children. We did not know they were there. [Louis's face is filled with remorse and tears]. What it was, as we were getting up toward the end of the island, there was all kinds of brush there. It was thick and you could not see anything. We were moving up to take that whole island and heard a lot of gibbering going on in this one area. We did not know who they were, we thought they were Japanese soldiers. We did not recognize the language, you know. So we just cut into there without seeing what we were shooting at. But when we went in, oh it would make you sick to have seen it. But that is one of the things you run into. Another thing that bothered me quite a bit on Eniwetok was that there were a lot of Japanese standing inside these holes they had dug. We had these flame throwers. A guy would have a tank on his back with a hose on it with a spout on the front. He would shoot that thing and it would throw flames about fifteen to twenty feet ahead. When you see people burnt to a crisp, I'm telling you it is really gory. That turned my stomach. I said "look at that, man's inhumanity towards man!" Of course those guys were drafted into battle, just like our people. It was just that they were on the wrong side.

When my wife and I took our trip to Saipan in 1994, by the way Saipan today is a commonwealth like Puerto Rico. In other words they have a government, they have a legislature but it still belongs to the United States and is an outpost for us. While we were there we saw a couple of Navy transports that had Marines from Okinawa on call if they had to be sent to some hot spot. The Governor, who was a native, had been five years old when we attacked Saipan. He was a Chamorro native who were indigent to that area. Like the Japanese, they were jumping from cave to cave to escape our attack.

So this man survived the war and came to America. He must have been from a wealthy family. He married a woman from Michigan or one of those states where he got his college education. He returned to Saipan and became its Governor. He invited World War II Veterans, every branch the Navy, Marines, everyone that took part in the island takeover. He also invited Japanese Veterans who survived the war. Can you image that? So we were kind of puzzled and questioned it. He told us it was a "balance of payment" thing. He said Japan is only twelve hundred miles from here and we get a lot of business from them. It is the same as people going from New York to Florida.

But there are not as many people coming from the States to Saipan. Japan is bringing us American money that they get from selling cars. In other words, they make cars, we buy them and they get our money! The Governor also wanted them to attend and to commemorate their fighting there. The Governor and people of Saipan built a semi-circular marble wall in sections. Each section was engraved with the name of the Unit that fought there – the 2nd Marine Division, the 4th Marine Division, the 27th Army Division, the 708th Air Force and the Navy Units. They included the names of every man who lost his life. There were three thousand men who were killed, and about ten thousand who were wounded. I brought a list to show you. Some were missing, just blown apart and not able to be identified. If a shell falls in your lap you are disintegrated and you are missing in action. That was quite a monument.

I am not glamorizing the war and I do not recommend it to anybody because you are only on the planet for so long and war is bad. No one gains by it except maybe the stockholders in the

war production plants or something like that. What else do I want to say here in my epilogue? Well, if you are going to go in the service and fight the best thing to do is to learn as much as you can. Incidentally, this applies in life too. No matter what you folks do, I recommend you do the best job you can on anything you do.

When I went into the service, I was a private. I took an interest and learned as much as I could and studied the book I brought over there. I proceeded up through all the grades to First Sargent which gave me command of the whole Company of one hundred and ninety six men. I also had others who reported to me. I reported to the Company Commander who was an Officer. I was a Non-Commissioned Officer from the enlisted men and he was an Officer who was appointed through the President's approval. I was accountable to the Company Commander. So in anything you do, try to do the best you can and you are going to raise yourself up. No matter what kind of a job you get, prepare yourself for the next step, that is the idea. You want to better yourself in life, it will bring you more money and privileges. When we were in the Hawaiian Islands, I was the best dressed First Sargent there! [all laugh] New clothes, new shoes, I'm telling you when I used to go out from Schofield Barracks on our weekend passes to eat, or bowl, or to a movie, I looked like I stepped out of some magazine! How I got that was because I had a Supply Sargent who also liked to go to town once in a while so I gave orders to my Mess Sargent (the guy in charge of the food) to give the Supply Sargent whatever he wanted to eat. It's bribery, let's face it! I mean you treat someone well and you expect it back. Just like these politicians and their campaign money. If someone gives you something, they want something in return. But that is one of the perks you get, and when you reach that point you do a lot of things.

The saddest part of the job was I had to keep track of the people and everything that was going on. Each day I had to send to the Regiment what we call a Morning Report. On it I had to list how many people I had it divided by the names of the people who were killed and the ones who were wounded and evacuated in order to get our rations amount. You had to feed everyone there and if you had ten guys who died, they aren't going to have to eat so you don't have to order that many rations. So each day, even in battle, I had to keep track of that. Then I had to keep a running history of the Company. When the actions were over in each case, the Company Commander, Captain Hallden [?] and I got together and we would mark down what happened. That is what those two documents are that I have over there. You do get job satisfaction.

When we were in the Hawaiian Islands, I was promoted to First Sargent. When we left the States I was still a Platoon Leader. My stripes were three and two. When we got to Hawaii I got this job and I had an opportunity to go to O.C.S. (Officer Candidate School) because I already had two years of training. The fellows who were senior, non-commissioner officers like Platoon Sargent or Staff Sargent had the chance to go back to the States, attend O.C.S. and be shipped to different Units. The fact that I had soldiered with all these other men, gave me the opportunity to either go to O.C.S. or become a First Sargent. I elected to become a First Sargent because I knew every man in that Company. I knew their problems, it was like one big family! In fact, you are closer because you leave your family to go to work each day. Here, where one of us goes, the other one goes. We are all going to the same place, so you got to know each man and their families.

I decided I knew all these men, we had even gone through two months of maneuvers in Tennessee together. We also had maneuvers in Arkansas and Louisiana with other divisions for two months. There were three Divisions all together and General Patton, who later became in charge of the 8th Army in Europe. He was an armored Commander with us. This was a big push in three states where we were given a lot of training before we got into the fray. If you stop and think about it, our first combat experience took place in February of 1944. We were only federalized in 1940. We were not equipped to go over and do battle at that point. We would take a truck with a sign that said "Tank" on its side. We used stove-pipe tubes for mortar launch practice simulation. [kids laugh]. But when we were leaving the States in March of 1942 from Camp Haan, California about two and half months after Pearl Harbor they replaced every stitch of clothing, shoes, every gun with brand new items. There were thirty-five new trucks for the Company. Our M-1 rifles had never been shot before, because once you get going, it is harder to provide supplies. So when we boarded the SS Lurline, we were provided with everything that was up to date. But it took years to produce all that stuff. You just don't wave a wand and have all the logistics you need to carry on a war. I'm ready for some more questions.

KM: How was the moral of the men that you commanded during combat?

LP: Well, I'll tell you. You are so busy you don't have a chance to think about it. You are trying to keep alive and you have objectives. They broke the islands up into sections. In other words, they would take a certain amount of distance and say on the first day we are going to proceed this far. The second day we are going to proceed farther. You can see the lines of where they wanted to be on the maps you have there. But when you ran into resistance, and the Japs started firing their machine guns, artillery and mortar shells at you it would be suicide to just go out into the open. So as far as the moral was concerned we had no moral problems at all.

We were just angry when "Howling Mad" Smith relieved our General. That feeling was there the whole time. I'll tell you, one of the reasons for it was because we, as an Army Division, never had any reporters or photographers with us. It seemed like when the Marines went somewhere it almost seemed like each squad had a photographer or someone who would give them all these write-ups! You would think they fought the war and won it alone in the Pacific. And they did not. They were in on the battles, but actually we had the 10th Army which included the 27th, the 77th and several other Divisions that took Okinawa which was the biggest nut to crack in the Pacific. I call the Marines the Storm Troopers. They are good guys, I have no fight with them you know? But their leadership teaches them the wrong thing.

The first day that we were on the line to relieve the Marines, as I told you the 4th Division was getting chewed up in the open. We went up this road, and there was a big hill on the side with a knoll and a Marine sitting there. I walked over to him and I said "What's up? What's going on?" I looked at him and he had a hole right through his helmet into his head. [Louis points to the center of his forehead] He was deader than a door-nail. Even with a helmet unless the bullet hits a glancing blow you have a chance, but if it hits you perpendicular it is going right through. The helmet is too thin. He was a young kid, probably eighteen or nineteen. I thought, "look at what we are up against here". Some sniper apparently whacked him as he was sitting there looking around on the knoll. I thought he was just in a sitting position.

KM: Tell us how you acquired this shovel.

LP: When we were on Eniwetok Island, we had G.I. [Government Issued] issued shovels that we carried on our back packs. [Louis picks up the shovel]. Our shovel was about half the thickness of the diameter of this handle. At the end of our shovel, the handle was like a cross. Rather than this round handle, ours was like a T. In this area, it had a swivel [Louis points to the bottom edge of the shovel in his hands.] When you moved it around and wanted to use it to chop, the thing would want to bend. I had a devil of a time trying to dig my foxhole. We needed those foxholes to stay in to prevent getting hurt each night. When I had trouble on the first day with my shovel, I saw a dead Jap and went over and took his shovel. I carried it the rest of the war and came home with it. This shovel dug a lot of holes for me. I found the quality of this shovel was much better than what was issued to us at that time. I haven't seen today's shovels, they have probably improved on them. If you noticed, there is a little hole at the base of the shovel [near the handle] and near the top of the handle. You could put a cord through and strap it on your back.

There was another thing that bothered me a little bit while we are still talking about Eniwetok. After we had taken the island some of our guys, I don't know how they could do this, but they knocked out the enemies' gold teeth and put them in a little bag to take home. Another guy went back to the First Aid Station, got a bottle of alcohol, chopped off an ear of a dead Japanese soldier and took that home. Those things were considered souvenirs! I did not go for that, I did not like that. Some guys did, man's inhumanity to man- when you reach that point then lives don't mean a thing. I mean if the guy doesn't come out with his hands up, you just shoot him like you would shoot anything. It is a bad feeling.

KM: Did you have any trouble following any of the orders you were given to you?

LP: I never had any trouble following orders my Company Commander gave me. We would do it every time. But when it came to moving under fire, you just couldn't do some things. I'll tell you what I mean, we were on the left side of this opening at the base of a mountain in open territory. We had a Captain, his name was Stoltz [@1:39:30 and @1:39:36 spelling of both names] and Mezzoni who was our Battalion Commander gave Stoltz orders to take a platoon across this open ground and he did not want to do it. He said "this is suicide" but the Captain told him to do it. So Stoltz went, and he was killed right on the spot. He was behind a tank, but the Japs were in the high ground where they could see all our movement. So when your leader gives you a mission and an objective in a war, don't bank on it working out. I guarantee you it is not going to work.

Now when we attacked Saipan, there was a four-mile front and two Marine Divisions the 2nd and the 4th hit it. But they got screwed up somehow, got way up and broke ranks. And the theory is when you are going in together you are supposed to be in contact the whole way. But they had a big gap where the Japs could get through. hey finally straightened it out. When you have a war, they can make all the plans in the world, don't bank they are going to work. You just do the best you can. Even in a football game, how do you know what is going to happen when you run through all the different plays? No one knows, you are just hoping and your training is what brings you through.

KM: Did any of the men under your command resist orders?

LP: Never. They had all kinds of faith in me and I had faith in them. I never had one man refuse to do anything. We did a lot of things. One of them was crossing that field after we went

through the hills. There was a Japanese sniper in the field shooting at us. They were using powder-less shells. When they went off you could not see any powder. Usually when you shoot there would be some powder and a flash and so forth. But he wasn't using that and was well hidden and we had to go and flush him out. I would give my guys orders and they went in and took him. Otherwise he could knock off a lot of people if you don't get him. You had to get all of the snipers out of the way.

KM: You mentioned Charles Hallden [@1:42:00] in your questionnaire. Who was he and did he inspire you in any way?

LP: Charles Hallden was an Officer, a First Lieutenant when I met him. He came from New York City and he was in what they called the Silk Stockings Regiment. It was a Regiment in New York City and they had an Armory there. It was by and large rich kids that joined for a sport. They had nothing else to do, their parents were doctors and lawyers. Wealthy families. We called it the Silk Stocking Regiment. Charlie got into that. Later, after the war we visited him in Florida he said he wasn't rich, he was just able to get in and made it to First Lieutenant. He was sent to our Company when we were in California before we went overseas. When we got to the Hawaiian Islands he was promoted to Captain. Captain White who was in charge at that time retired. He was an older soldier and had served for years and got out. What they did was change over all the Officers. In fact, a lot of the other General Officers were also retired. We had a Battalion Commander by the name of DeDell [@1:43:30 spelling] and due to age they moved him out. Captain Morell [@1:43:35] was also moved out. In getting ready to move overseas they got all new Officers. Young Officers is what I'm speaking of.

I don't know if you are familiar with the ranks? When you become an Officer you are a Second Lieutenant, then First Lieutenant, and then Captain. A Captain is always in charge of a Company of about two hundred men-war strength. So Charlie and I got to be very good friends. He had a lot of faith in me and he knew when he gave me an order, I could get it done. Incidentally, this is another thing, maybe I should not bring it up but I like to box. When I was a kid and going to UFA they used to have boxing lessons at Kiernan School at night where I learned how to box. They had an instructor who was a former pugilist. I already knew how to handle myself when I got into a fight. So when we got down to Fort McClellan, Alabama where we were stationed after we left Utica, NY there were a couple of wise guys who were picking on me. They were bigger than me. One day I told the biggest one "you know I would like to meet you behind the latrine and settle this". [kids laugh] A latrine is the place you go to relieve yourself and behind it was an area no one could see you.

So we went down there and had a pretty good fight. [everybody laughs]. And when I walked away, I never had any problems with those big guys anymore. In that respect, I could handle myself because I liked to box. The Captain learned I was not afraid of a guy even though he was bigger than me. So when we got to the Hawaiian Islands Captain Hallden moved me up. Like I said, I always worked a little bit harder than the others to learn more in case there was ever an opening that I could move into it. So I was his right-hand man. Whatever he wanted, I carried it out to the best of my ability. And we had a Company that we never had any problems with. We never had any dissension, never had a problem at all. If we were going to go, we would go.

Our main thing as an Army unit was to always try to preserve lives. In other words, if we ran up against a tough nut to crack we did not believe in storming them like a wild bull in a china shop. We were going to take a little at a time and overcome it. That was our theory of fighting. I liked that idea better than being a Storm Trooper and having someone shoot you in the back once you pass them.

KM: What was your opinion on President Truman's decision to drop the Atomic Bomb?

LP: I agreed with it one hundred percent. And the reason being that the Japanese fighters were a different breed from the German fighters. When the German fighters were surrounded for instance when they were fighting in Russia, they would surrender by armies. In other words by hundreds of thousands of them because they knew they were surrounded and there was no way out. The Japanese? No sir! The Japanese would fight right to the bitter end. On Eniwetok we did not take one prisoner. I don't know of them taking any prisoners on Kwajalein. When we took Saipan, out of about thirty thousand soldiers, I think there might have been about three hundred captured. They were a different breed, in other words they considered it a disgrace if they gave up and if they went home they would be dishonored. They would fight.

So our people estimated, based on the trouble they ran into in Okinawa, that we could lose up to one million men by storming Japan. When we got the Atom Bomb and they found out it worked, they used it. Now that brings us back to the Islands. As I mentioned, Saipan was the crowned jewel and Japan knew if we took that island, Tokyo would be subjected to bombing. So there was an enemy task force that left the Philippine Islands heading towards us to dislodge us, to throw us out of there. And it was a big task force with a lot of carriers, battleships, the whole works. But one of our submarines spotted them and radioed ahead that there was a big task force headed for the Philippine Sea. That is what the Pacific Ocean is called between Saipan and the Asia mainland, the Philippine Sea. So our Navy was ready for them.

At that time we had an Admiral by the name of Marc Mitscher. He was in charge of the 58th Task Force and they were waiting for the attack. The battle lasted for two days and we shot down at that time over three hundred Japanese airplanes. It was given the name of The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot because we had more experienced men, we had better planes and we just slaughtered them. There is a picture there in the folder I gave you and it mentions that battle. So by the enemy coming up and trying to dislodge us, we would have been in trouble. That is when our men were landed in to help the Marines who were struggling.

KM: Did you receive any decorations or medals for your service?

LP: I have a bunch of them. [Louis holds up his medals and describes each] This is the special one.

This is for Meritorious Service and is called The Bronze Star and my name is engraved on the back. This is my pride and joy and you get it for Meritorious Service in combat.

Then I have five others here. Each one is marked on the box of what they are. There is an Asiatic Pacific Defense Medal. One is an American Defense Service Medal which means I was in the service before the war started. The Asiatic Pacific one has the two battle stars. One indicating Eniwetok and then the Saipan operations.

And while we are talking about it, as I mentioned, the Japs did not want to lose Saipan. At the same time the 2nd Marine Division went next door and took Tinian. Tinian was more or less a flat island and something like the deck of an aircraft carrier so they did not defend it that much. Tinian was the island that the Enola Gay took off from with the Atom Bomb and dropped it on Hiroshima, Japan the first time. Colonel Tibbets was the pilot. Tinian was also where the second airplane took off from with another pilot that bombed Nagasaki, Japan. When that happened, that ended the war effectively. But Tinian was the main island where they took off with the big bombs.

You know, the thing was that the destroyer ship that brought over the Atom Bomb to Tinian was called the Indianapolis. After it dropped the bomb off, it went down heading towards the Philippine Islands where it was supposed to join the task force we had in that area. What happened was that ship was sunk during the night by a Japanese submarine. A bunch of guys were floating on the water for several days and the sharks were just eating them up. An Australian PBY [Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boat] came along and spotted the guys and picked the remainders up, but there were hundreds of men that drowned or were eaten up by sharks. The Captain [Charles McVay] survived and wouldn't you know after the war they took this Captain, court martial-ed him in Honolulu, and the Japanese commander [Hashimoto] that had sunk their ship was a witness against our Captain! So what happened was they drummed him out of the service. He went back to the States, put on his uniform, walked out and sat on his front steps in the front of his house and took his .45 caliber handgun and blew his head off.

Now his son is trying to get his Dad reinstated because the Japanese guy said that no matter what our Commander had done, the ship would have been hit. The U.S. Commander of the ship that went down was not told about the Japanese enemy in that area. Normally, as I mentioned, our ships would zigzag so a torpedo could not hit them square on. It was night time and this guy was not told about a threat and therefore was not doing a zigzag motion. He was accused of dereliction of duty because of his straight on course. Now isn't that something! The irony of it was that they got the Japanese sub-commander to be a witness against the American Commander of the ship. I thought that was the most rotten thing they could have done. But crazy things happen like that.

KM: Was it easy for you to get back to a normal life after your service was over?

LP: It was. There was only one problem that I had. It was getting rid of the yellow color in my skin.

We were in a tropical climate where you had to take Atabrine Tablets to prevent from getting malaria. After you took it every day for so long, your skin actually turned yellow. It took me probably six months to get rid of that. When I got out of the service, I went to work for Lennon's Jewelers. I had met Harold Lennon and knew him, that store was in Utica. A lot of the fellows were not that fortunate. When the war ended, there was a heck of a lot of people released from the service. A lot of them could not find jobs. I mean you are dumping several thousand men in one area and you can't get a job.

So the government came up with what was called The 52-20 Club. I don't know if you ever heard of it? It meant this, if you were unemployed you went and registered as a Veteran. You would get \$20 for fifty-two weeks. So twenty times fifty-two tells you what you would get in a

year. And they figured by that time you should be able to get a job. Well, the fact that I had made arrangements for a job waiting with Lennon's Jewelers meant I went right to work. I never drew a dime of any financial aid at all. I had no trouble there and I had no mental problems or anything else. I will tell you that there were many nights when I would wake up in the middle of the night thinking I was still over there. But after I woke up I would realize "no- I was home". You kind of get your bearings. But things like that get instilled with you and can be hard to get rid of. I had seven years of service altogether. Two in the National Guard and five in the Army. When you do have that lifestyle for so long it kind of wears and gets into your system. I did not have any mental problems like some of the Vietnam Veterans where they turned out to be drunks or something.

We had a different type of war. Our whole country was behind it and all pushing for it. We had an objective which was to defeat the Axis Powers -Germany, Italy, and Japan. And once we did, you know, that was the end of it. I will tell you that I did have men with mental breakdowns that could not stand it. In other words, everyone has got a point where your nerves just go on you. You know what I mean? In fact when we got done fighting on Eniwetok we transferred back to Sand Island. We lived in tents which held four men each. So I was on the end where I had my bulletin board. The second tent next to me had a squad of men and one of boys' name was Howard Fortune [@1:58:57 confirm spelling]. He was a Private and came from Tennessee. I was doing some paperwork in my tent and all of a sudden I heard a shot right next door to me. I thought "what the hell is going on?" I ran next door and here is this kid who had taken his shirt off and took a rifle, like the M-1 I have over there, put it right to his heart and pulled the trigger. He killed himself. In other words the mental stress when you are fighting and getting shot at is intense. He knew we were going to return to battle. He already went through one battle and was not happy with the experience. So when we went back to get replacements and getting for the next fight he figured at some point I would get shot anyway and went ahead and killed himself right there. I was the first guy in his tent, I could not imagine he did it deliberately. I thought maybe he was loading or unloading his rifle. But no, the gun was positioned right at his heart. The blood was just pouring out of the wound. That made me sick to my stomach. But some fellows just did not have the same makeup. Some people are a little weaker, some are stronger.

You find that anywhere. There was one guy during World War II in Italy where he was in this place and he was a mental case. General Patton went there and slapped him across the face. I don't know if you heard of that incident? It got into the papers. [<https://militaryhistorynow.com/2016/09/09/smack-down-how-the-patton-slapping-incident-nearly-cost-america-one-of-its-greatest-generals/>]. General Eisenhower who was the Supreme Commander at that time in Europe went over there and almost fired him. But he knew that Patton was such a good tank commander and did not want to release him. So Eisenhower made Patton go in front of the soldiers there and apologize for doing that. You should look that up and see it is the truth, I am not giving you a line.

KM: I trust you on that. How do you feel and what is your opinion on the recent events of 9-11 and the U.S. reaction to it?

LP: I could tell you, but I don't think you will like what I have to say.

KM: By all means.

LP: I think all of this could have been avoided. It is all because of our flawed foreign policy in the Middle East. We have gone ahead and antagonized the Arabs to the point that they are willing to commit suicide to hurt us. It is all because we have pandered to Israel. We have given Israel the latest airplanes, attack helicopters, tanks, and bulldozers and they keep fighting back and forth. We give the Arabs rocks to throw at them. It has reached the point, in my judgment, that if the U.S. does not change its policy there is going to be more of this terrorism. There is no way you can stop terrorism. If I wanted to be a terrorist I could take a crowbar, go to a railroad track and pull up the spikes. I could do this at night and not be seen and I could derail a train. We have many targets of opportunity. We have reservoirs, tunnels, buildings – everything. So I think until our politicians in Washington D.C. change their foreign policy and treat the Arabs as well as they do Israel, we are going to have this problem.

This goes back a long way. It started in Beirut. Under President Reagan's administration we had a detachment of Marines at an airfield in Beirut, Lebanon. There was an Arab that loaded up a Mercedes Benz with dynamite, or some type of explosives and crashed through the gates and hit the building where our Marines were sleeping. He killed two hundred and forty one of them. Do you remember that incident? So Reagan pulled out the rest of the Marines who had survived and sent two battleships to shell Lebanon but it did not do any good.

We have had eight different attacks on the United States since the Beirut deal. We have had them on the U.S.S. Cole and the guys who did that committed suicide. Then there were the two U.S. Embassy attacks in Tanzania and Nigeria. We lost people there as well as a lot of Blacks. Up until September 11th, and I do have a list of this and each action, we have lost seven hundred and ninety-five American people. Now we have lost close to three thousand more people here in New York. I think as long as we continue to maintain this foreign policy where we pander to Israel at the expense of the Arabs it is not going to work.

I understand it looks like we are going to have to go after Saddam Hussein. I'm talking about the country of Iran. We have bases in Saudi Arabia that have been there ten years. Why are we there? Last week I read an article in the paper that we have one quarter of a million military personnel in one hundred and forty countries. I didn't even know one hundred and forty countries existed! [kids laugh] I can tell you where some of them are. We have a bomber base in England. We have an airbase in Frankfurt, Germany. There is an air base in Aviano, Italy and in Okinawa, Japan. We have bases in Kosovo, Bosnia and Macedonia. We are the only ones building an empire and that is not right. I think what they ought to do is go back to what George Washington said in his farewell address. Do you know what he said?

KM: No entangling of alliances?

LP: Correct...no entangling alliances was one point. Also, not to become emotionally attached to any one particular foreign nation, because if you do it is going to be an evil against some others. And this is what is happening. We have gotten so attached to Israel and have been brainwashed for so many years that when we think about Arabs, we immediately make it synonymous with terrorists right?

KM: True

LP: So anything that happens, like the Oklahoma bombing [the 1995 domestic terror bombing in Oklahoma City, OK] the first accusation was at the Arabs from the Middle East,

but it was actually the American Timothy McVeigh. The government builds up such a psychology in the American people, I have them in my own family that when I just mention Arabs their response is "oh-terrorists!". And that is not right. When I went to school in Utica, I went to UFA, I went with Lebanese and Syrian kids and they were no different from anybody else. They were good families, there were the Chanatrys who own supermarket in Utica, I know the Menders [2:07:05 spelling?], I know John Zogby who is a public opinion pollster now. I know [2:07:10 Shaw Delowski spelling] who came from Palestine, went to school here and became an international lawyer and stayed here and on occasion you can read about him in the papers. So what I am seeing is these people are no different from you and I. They bleed just like us. But we have to be fair to all the parties in the Middle East. Until we do, I expect to see more of this. I don't know how many people have to be killed before the government wakes up. They have to change their foreign policy to treat all nations the same.

For instance, the Palestinians and Israelis are fighting back and forth, right? Whenever there is an attack on the Israelis the next thing you see is [2:08:00 three names unclear] they roll out the red carpet for them and give them all the publicity. I never see an Arab perspective and that is not right. They should get equal treatment. My wife and I voted for and financially supported President George Bush. We even received an invitation to attend his inauguration and got a White House Christmas card. He has been in office for one year and has not once invited Yasser Arafat [President of the Palestinian National Authority 1994-2004] to come over here. That is not right either. I mean we may not like this guy but he was elected by his people. Right? He was legally accepted so he is their leader.

Yesterday, the former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that if he does get to be Prime Minister again he is going to get rid of Arafat. He does not want Arafat in control. Now what kind of foreign relations is that?

George Washington hit it on the head. I will tell you something. I was so upset with this statement that I wrote to eight officials. I wrote to our Vice President [Dick Cheney] the reason why is because the President has so many assistants I did not think it would reach him. I knew that if I wrote to Cheney there is a chance that he will get it and read it. I like Cheney because he is broad-minded. I've never seen him show any arrogance and he is objective. Something we have to be is objective. I wrote to Colin Powell our Secretary of State and I also wrote to John Ashcroft the Attorney General. In fact, I got to know Ashcroft well because when he was running for Senator of Missouri my wife and I helped him financially and we received two thank-you letters from him which I kept. So I wrote to those three men.

In addition to them I picked five Senators who I have followed over the years and believe were very objective. They are willing to listen, they are not vultures or bulls in a china shop. One is Senator Larry Craig [Republican from Idaho] who incidentally is a member of The National Rifle Association that I belong to. I also wrote to Senator Jim Inhoff [Republican from Oklahoma] who is very objective. I wrote to Jesse Helms, he is a Conservative [North Carolina]. Jesse is getting out now, but he still has time to serve. Then I wrote to Fred Thompson [Republican from Tennessee] and I also wrote to a young guy by the name of Rick Santorum [Republican from Pennsylvania].

Now over the years as I listened to them on television, they impressed me that they are willing

to listen and hear both sides of the story. I like people like that because like a coin, there are always two sides to it. That is the same situation with any disputes.

So I am just hoping that one day the powers that be in Washington D.C. will wake up. If they don't we are going to have more terrorism and it will never end. This war on terrorism is not going to work. As I mentioned, one person can go and do damage. And as long as we keep on pandering to Israel, which is to the detriment to the Arabs, it is not going to work. They have got to be treated all equally.

If you go back in history, in the 1700s France was a nation who was out to take over all of Europe. Are you familiar with that? They had three kings in a row Louis the fourteenth, the fifteenth, and the sixteenth. Louis the fourteenth started to build that elaborate Palace in Versailles. That cost a fortune because they built it on a swamp and made it the most elaborate place in Europe. He was spending a lot of money and he was getting into wars. He wanted to put someone on the throne in Spain. In those days countries would have entangling alliances and did not want any one particular nation to get stronger than the other. So they had what they called a balance of power. France began engaging in all kinds of wars, getting beat along the way until they finally bankrupted their nation. Then they went to the common people to bail them out. The people rose up against the royalty.

Queen Marie Antoinette, of Austrian decent, was the wife of Louis the sixteenth. She was so extravagant she slid down on hills of sugar in the summer because there was no snow. [@2:12:18 unconfirmed] In the meantime the people were starving. So the French Revolution occurred and that was where the guillotine first appeared. Have you ever heard of it? It is a big knife that comes down and chops the head off the body.

What I'm saying is we are not going to eliminate terrorism. It is going to be too expensive to begin with and we do not have the money now. Look at all the people who are out of work. We don't have the money to carry on a protracted thing and the American people will not stand for it. You are going to have an endless war. And as young people, [Louis points to the kids] I don't want to go and fight a war that is not to our interest. I mean if our safety is in jeopardy for our country, then yes. But to just go for sport, no. Right now everyone is very upset about the bombing of the Twin Towers and I am too. I hope whoever sponsored it is caught and punished. But that does not go ahead and change the fact that there were nineteen men who were willing to commit suicide, which they all did. I am sure when they overpowered those people on the airplanes that they knew what they were doing.

The one point I want to make today is this... as I wrote in my letters, to this date no one has asked the question "why are these terrorists doing this?" No one has answered it. They will tell us what they are going to do to beat them and all that but they are afraid to get to the nitty-gritty of why they are doing it. It is because the Arabs are mad that their brethren are being pushed around and the United States is supporting one of the biggest pushers. And that is the way I see today's situation. I hate to say it and I may not sound patriotic. But let's face it. Until Israel became a State in 1948, we never had a bit of trouble with any Arab-speaking people overseas or otherwise. During World War II we had troops in all those countries in Africa and never had any problems.

In 1948 President Harry Truman and Clark Clifford [White House Counselor] pushed through the United Nations the creation of Israel. When they did that they took Palestinian lands away from them and ever since then we have had troubles. One side hits the other, the other retaliates and there is no end to it. I do not see any way to end it unless everyone is treated equally.

KM: That finishes our questions unless you have anything else to share?

LP: I am now eighty years old. I have grandchildren and I just hope that the powers that be in Washington realize that they have to treat everyone equally otherwise there will be no end to the fighting. A lot of our young people will be killed. Our government makes blunders, things happen that they call “friendly fire” when someone gets killed. I don't believe in “friendly fire”. If a bullet kills me I don't call that my friend. It is accidental. Now when my kid brother went to fight in Sicily there were three or four Douglas C-47 Aircrafts with paratroopers. My brother was fortunate because these airplanes were shot down by our Navy by mistake. Three planes and several hundred men were lost. They called it “friendly fire”. When your own people kills you it is not “friendly” it is “deadly fire.” So we have to stop that term.

I am more or less a fatalist and a pacifist because I do not think wars accomplish anything. We did beat the daylights out of Japan. Today they are our ally. We do have some units over in Afghanistan. We fought with the Russians during World War II. We have had the Cold War and today we are all friends so things seem to change. When you stop and think about Iraq, we supplied them with weapons when they were fighting Iran. Iran took hostages from our Embassy when Jimmy Carter was President. Saddam Hussein [President of Iraq] had a war with Iran which went back and forth until they quit. But we had provided Hussein with a lot of weapons. While Hussein was fighting Iran, Kuwait tapped into his oil supplies and was stealing his oil. Hussein estimated how much was stolen and told them he wanted reimbursement for it. Kuwait refused to pay. At that time we had an Ambassador to Iraq named April Glaspie who met with Hussein. He asked her “what does America think about Kuwait stealing my oil?” She talked with George Bush, Sr. and word got back to Hussein that America did not want to interfere in neighbors squabbles. So that gave Hussein the green light to march into Kuwait and take it over. Then the United Nations told Iraq to get out of Kuwait which resulted in the Persian Gulf War. And there you are. Wars do not accomplish a thing. They only kill a lot of people. The people with money in factories and stockholders are the ones who benefit. I am against wars. That's about it.

KM: That concludes our interview, we are all set.