

**Adam F. Weasack**  
**Veteran**

**Michael Aikey**  
**Interviewer**

**Wayne Clarke**  
**Videographer**

**Interviewed on August 22, 2001**  
**Latham, New York**

**MA:** We're interviewing Mr. Adam F. Weasack at Latham Headquarters. It's August 22, 2001. Michael Aikey, Interviewer and Wayne Clarke, Videographer.

Mr. Weasack, Where were you born?

**AFW:** South Troy, New York.

**MA:** Did you grow up in South Troy?

**AFW:** Yes, all my life.

**MA:** What was that like?

**AFW:** Well, it was a poor section where everybody worked in the mills—Burden Iron Company and the coal plant, and I pailed beer for my father three times a day until I was 21 years old.

**MA:** Where did he work?

**AFW:** He worked in Burden Iron Company and I would run home from St. Michael's School to Tyler Street, pick up my father's beer can and his lunch, and at this time he was working in the rail joint, and I'd go down the tracks, get his beer can filled up, and go, and I'd eat lunch with my father, and many a day I went to school a little tipsy-topsy myself.

**MA:** So, you'd dip into the beer?

**AFW:** Oh yeah, sure. Everybody did in those days.

**MA:** So, you went to school all the way through in Troy?

**AFW:** Yes, I went to St. Michael's School, then went to Catholic High for a year, then went to Troy High School.

**MA:** What was Troy High like back then?

**AFW:** Troy High was a good school.

**MA:** Now, you joined the National Guard?

**AFW:** I joined the National Guard October 3, 1940.

**MA:** 1940. Was this after they were called up?

**AFW:** No, before.

**MA:** What was the Guard like back then?

**AFW:** When I joined the Guard and I went in to get my outfit, they sent me out on the drill floor. There was a big pile of shoes there, a big pile of clothes. The shoes, worn shoes, I got one size 8 and one size 8 1/2, my clothes fit on me like flub-a-dub. My mother had to alter the uniform.

**MA:** Now what armory was that?

**AFW:** The Troy Armory.

**MA:** The one that's now up at RPI?

**AFW:** RPI, yes.

**MA:** Now who was your commanding officer at that point?

**AFW:** I don't remember.

**MA:** Why did you decide to join the Guard?

**AFW:** Because I wanted to get my year of conscription in.

**MA:** And then they changed the rules.

**AFW:** Then they changed the rules.

**MA:** Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**AFW:** Sure. Down in Anniston, Alabama, down at Fort McClellan at about 3:30 in the afternoon when the news came over that Pearl Harbor was bombed.

**MA:** Well, I'm going to back up a little bit. You joined the Guard—you didn't do any summer drills at all, you didn't get down to Peekskill, at all?

**AFW:** No, I didn't.

**MA:** When they nationalized the Guard, what went through your mind?

**AFW:** Nothing. I was there.

**MA:** Where did you go once you were federalized?

**AFW:** We went to Fort McClellan.

**MA:** What was that like?

**AFW:** Well, when we arrived there, there were no tents, no nothing, but about a foot of red clay dust, and I'm in the middle of the company street, and they lost my papers. They don't know what to do with me. So, then what they did was

they got new papers for me, and I signed them and then I was in Company D. Now you want to hear some more about that?

**MA:** Sure.

**AFW:** Well, when the year's time was up, in October, everybody's going home but I'm still staying there. So, I go up and ask them, "What's the problem that I'm not going home?" And they look it up in the records. Now when they lost the records, they were white sheets; then when I signed up the second time, the blue sheets, I signed up to the National Guard for three years. I was stuck for three years.

**MA:** How did that make you feel?

**AFW:** How would it make anybody feel? Well, then when they told me I was going to be in there for three years, I tried to join the Navy. I'd rather stay in the Navy for six years than three years... you know I was already in there for two years... The National Guard wouldn't let anybody out of their companies because they couldn't get replacements.

**MA:** What was training like at Fort McClellan?

**AFW:** Well, let me think. I was on the shit list. So, I didn't get too much training out there—I was KP, guard, latrine, coal depot—and when we went down on depot duty, the sergeant down there says, "Okay fellas," he says, "A whole car of carnation milk." He said, "Okay fellas, get this and load it in half a day and you get the rest of the day off to yourself." It took us three days to unload it.

**MA:** So how did you get this honor of being on this list you were referring to?

**AFW:** You mean on the...?

**MA:** Yes, list.

**AFW:** Well, we were out in a drill field, and the officer was telling us about how you address everybody, you know, the Captain by "Captain", and all, and saluting and all that stuff, so when he got through finishing talking like that—you call everybody by their rank—so, when he got through speaking, he said, "Okay, Dixie, continue on with what you were doing." And I raised my hand up again, and I said, "Well, if it's good enough for us to call everybody by their rank, how come you called Sergeant Close, Dixie?" And that was it. [Laughs] When we were going back into camp, he said, "Weasack, you're going to pay for this. Weasack, you're going to pay for this, Weasack." I paid for it.

**MA:** It's that South Troy upbringing. So, what happened after Camp McClellan?

**AFW:** Well, when we were down there, we went on maneuvers to Tennessee.

**MA:** What were they like?

**AFW:** The maneuvers were all right, and then we had to pay when we got through with the maneuvers, everybody in our company had to pay a dollar for the watermelons that were stolen down there. That the guys used in the fields.

**MA:** Now, were you in a rifle squad?

**AFW:** No, a machine gun.

**MA:** Heavy weapons?

**AFW:** Heavy weapons.

**MA:** So, you trained on what—an air-cooled, water-cooled 30?

**AFW:** Water-cooled.

**MA:** Now what did you think of the South?

**AFW:** I didn't think too much of them because when we were down there, they hated the North and we didn't like them either, you know. So, there were always fights at the commissary. There were always fights—the 69<sup>th</sup> would come down and they'd have real battles, real fights.

**MA:** After the maneuvers, what happened?

**AFW:** We trained some more and then we went on the Arkansas maneuvers.

**MA:** What were they like? Same?

**AFW:** The same thing. In Hope, Arkansas they had paper mills there, and they put us right in where all their slush was, and, boy, I'm telling you, mosquitos by the billions.

**MA:** What was the equipment like?

**AFW:** When we were down there, we had sticks for guns.

**MA:** Looking back, was your training any good?

**AFW:** Oh, yeah, training was good. When we got our first draftees from New York City, they came in, and then all the old timers that went away with the National Guard, they very seldom ever got to be Corporal or anything, because the ones from National Guard were buying beer and giving money to the non-coms. And at that time, they would go up to the company kitchen, and they would nominate and vote on it, to make a Corporal. So, here a guy would only be in the Army less than six months, here you are in there two years or so or longer, and he would be commanding over you.

**MA:** So, there was a bias against the Guardsman, you think?

**AFW:** No, they bought the non-coms off to become...

**MA:** The new guys coming in.

**AFW:** Yes, the new guys coming in.

**MA:** Now, does the term Ohio ring a bell?

**AFW:** Yes.

**MA:** What was that all about?

**AFW:** This Bernie Gavin, he started it, because over the hill in October—that's when the year was supposed to be up, I guess.

**MA:** Did they really think that was going to happen, or just sour grapes?

**AFW:** I think it was just sour grapes.

**MA:** In that you're from Troy, there's one question I always ask guys from Troy. There's a particular name I'm going to mention. First name is Mame, and the second name is Fay. Does that ring a bell?

**AFW:** Oh yeah, sure [Laughs] Sixth Avenue. Sure. She was the Madam. Oh yeah, she was well known all over the world.

**MA:** That I'm finding out.

**AFW:** South Troy against the world was known all over the world.

**MA:** Really, tell me about that. What does that actually mean?

**AFW:** Well, South Troy was the toughest place around, and no matter where you went, they always mentioned Mame Fay's and South Troy against the world.

**MA:** Really. That's kind of interesting. Now, after the Tennessee maneuvers, what happened?

**AFW:** Then December 7<sup>th</sup>, when the war began, the following next couple of days we went to guard Huntersville Dam. That's where we were and it rained all the time we were there.

**MA:** And when did you first hear that you were going to be going overseas?

**AFW:** Then we went to Fort Ord. We were there and then we were in March Field.

**MA:** How was that?

**AFW:** It was just ordinary. We got up in the morning there and they always played reveille and they always had the band there, and one morning we got up and the band was playing, "They'll always be an England". I got a big kick out of that.

**MA:** So, how long were you there?

**AFW:** We weren't there too long.

**MA:** And then you moved to?

**AFW:** That's the first time that Emmet Catlan was the Captain of the company, so he sent the First Sergeant Butler down to tell me that the Captain wanted to see me, and I told him that I didn't want to see the Captain—he was going to give me a promotion. I said I didn't want it. So, he went up and told the Captain, and he came back and he said, "You better get up there or you're going to get court-martialed". So, when I went up there he made me Buck Sergeant of Communications—Communications Sergeant.

**MA:** So, what did that job entail?

**AFW:** Well, I went to school for training—Morse Code, semaphore, radio and the wires, telephones.

**MA:** Well, they must have thought fairly well of you to make you a sergeant.

**AFW:** He realized the old members knew their business.

**MA:** So, how long were you in Communications School?

**AFW:** Oh, I don't know. Maybe six weeks or so.

**MA:** Would you be assigned to headquarters company?

**AFW:** No, no, I was assigned to R Company. Then I had communications with headquarters and with A, B and C Company.

**MA:** After that experience where did the unit go? You were in the 105<sup>th</sup>, right?

**AFW:** Yes, then we went to March Field. That's when we found out that we were going to go overseas.

**MA:** Any idea where?

**AFW:** No. We went down to San Francisco. We went in one night, stayed there one night, and on the boat the next day. I didn't have any idea.

**MA:** What was the ship like?

**AFW:** It was the Aquitania. It was the biggest ship that England had at that time, a four stacker.

**MA:** Pretty luxurious?

**AFW:** [Laughs] No, it wasn't luxurious, no.

**MA:** And you set sail and ended up where?

**AFW:** We left on March 10<sup>th</sup>, and we zig-zagged over to Hawaii. Did you ever see Hawaii Five-0? Did you ever see that big clock there, they got? Well that's Pier 8, that's where we landed.

**MA:** Was it a pretty good trip over?

**AFW:** A crowd of people—five bunks, I think there were five instead of three—no, three I guess. Crowded down in F Deck—that’s where I was. So, that’s pretty far down under the water.

**MA:** Make you nervous down there?

**AFW:** No.

**MA:** What were your first impressions of Hawaii?

**AFW:** Beautiful place.

**MA:** Where did they end up putting you?

**AFW:** Then they put us on the outskirts. The Army and the Marines, they all got good duty, and they put the 27<sup>th</sup> division on the outskirts. Then, when we got there, Colonel Haskell... And every time we moved into an area, he would get ahold of me and I would map out the area and all the gun positions and all that.

**MA:** That’s an interesting job.

**AFW:** Well, every time we moved, he called me, but he must have liked it.

**MA:** What did you think of him?

**AFW:** Haskell was all right.

**MA:** An old guardsman?

**AFW:** Yes, an old guardsman.

**MA:** Once you were encamped in Hawaii, was it more training?

**AFW:** Yes, we were getting more training. Mostly guard, we were down guarding the beaches, and that’s where... We weren’t guarding buildings or anything like that. We were on the beach.

**MA:** In tents, or did you have barracks?

**AFW:** The only time—every two weeks of six weeks you’d come back to the Schofield Barracks and we only stayed there—not too long. All the rest of the time, we were always in tents, pup tents, we were always out. We never had good barracks except Schofield was the only one there.

**MA:** Did you get much liberty in Hawaii?

**AFW:** No.

**MA:** How long were you in Hawaii?

**AFW:** Two years, I guess.

**MA:** What kind of duty was it overall? Was it boring...

**AFW:** No, there was always something going on.

**MA:** Much recreation?

**AFW:** Well they had... No, we didn't have hardly any recreation at all.

**MA:** Did a lot of guarding?

**AFW:** All guarding.

**MA:** When did you hear that you were going to be shipped out?

**AFW:** You mean to combat?

**MA:** Yes.

**AFW:** Oh, we didn't hear that until we just went down to Pearl Harbor and got on the boats.

**MA:** Did you have any idea of where you were going?

**AFW:** No.

**MA:** Where did you end up?

**AFW:** When we were half-way out, then Colonel O'Brien got on the microphone and told us that we were going to Saipan.

**MA:** What was Colonel O'Brien like?

**AFW:** Well, he was a real soldier because when the saki raid, the banzai attack, then he said, "As long as one of my men is up there fighting, I'm going to be with him." Now, he could have taken a powder the same way as the others did, and when that broke loose, the radioman and I are there and I get up and look around, and there's our company commander taking off like a big-ass bird in the opposite direction, and I said to the radioman, "This is no place for us. Let's go". Then we started back.

**MA:** Now you first heard you were going to go to Saipan—did anybody have an idea of what that was?

**AFW:** No. The first time we heard it, we were out at sea.

**MA:** You arrived off of Saipan—what were you seeing when you first arrived in Saipan? Was the Navy already bombarding the place?

**AFW:** Yes, that's all you saw was ships and landing craft and all the landing craft circling around, you know, to get on there and when we got on land, we went up to Aslito Airfield and that's where we started.

**MA:** What was the landing like?

**AFW:** Not much to the landing. We went up on the landing craft and everybody got off. And Aslito Airfield changed hands two or three times; the Japs got it,



then we got it. And then, going up and Marines are there also, and they're all in position and we're moving up ahead, and I'm saying, "What's the matter with those guys? They're not moving." They were all dead. The Japs had 55-gallon drums they used to put on the chutes, and that's what they used—they killed everybody with concussion. Then we watched them. You looked up and you could see them going like a big boxcar.

**MA:** So, you were engaged around the Airfield?

**AFW:** Oh, yeah, we were engaged.

**MA:** And you were a radioman?

**AFW:** Yes.

**MA:** And you had somebody with you carrying the radio?

**AFW:** Yes.

**MA:** What kind of radio was it?

**AFW:** Big, heavy thing. Frank [unclear]—is he coming?

**MA:** Later on, this afternoon.

**AFW:** He'll tell you about that—he was the one carrying the radio. He was my radioman.

**MA:** What was it like being in combat the first time?

**AFW:** Didn't bother me, I don't think.

**MA:** You were just too busy doing your job?

**AFW:** Just doing the job.

**MA:** So, as a radioman, you were near the Colonel or near the Captain?

**AFW:** Near the Captain.

**MA:** Who was the Captain at that point?

**AFW:** Captain Ryan.

**MA:** So, the Field changed hands a couple of times?

**AFW:** Yes, Aslito Airfield.

**MA:** After you finally secured the Airfield...

**AFW:** Well, they were still fighting down there, and then they took us out and we started fighting going up north, and then on the way up when—we were up there—they moved us. O'Brien got orders to move the troops up and he said it was at dusk. He said, "It's a mistake, but orders are orders," and that's when we got into the saki raid.

**MA:** Now what was the terrain like around that area?

**AFW:** Core rock, and in the middle was the mountains.

**MA:** So, you're off to the left at this point?

**AFW:** Yes, at this point we were off to the left, but we were also on the right when we went up, and then the two Smiths, Howlin' Mad Smith and Ralph Smith, and Howlin' gave us the center to go up and down the mountains, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> were the Marines and they had all the shorelines. All the Japs went up into the hills. So, we weren't going fast enough for Howlin' Mad Smith and that's where the controversy came in, because he just pushed the troops, he didn't care for personnel, their safety or anything. Where the 105<sup>th</sup> maneuvered into...

**MA:** Now, how were your general relations with the Marines, the average Marine?

**AFW:** The average Marine, I didn't like any of them. They had their PR, you know, and they thought they were everything. We had a few scrapes with them over in Hawaii.

**MA:** The 105<sup>th</sup> is moved over to the left now. This is the day of the banzai charge. Where were you that particular day?

**AFW:** I was to the left. Our company was there.

**MA:** Company headquarters was... Were you in foxholes?

**AFW:** We didn't have any company headquarters. When we went up there, we didn't even have the mortars—they weren't set up or anything because we went there the night before. It was dark when we moved up. That's what O'Brien said, "It was a mistake going up, but," he said, "Orders are orders," and that's when we went up. So, the machine guns and the mortars weren't set up.

**MA:** Did you have a sense of where everybody was, or was it a little confused at that point?

**AFW:** Well, we knew there were troops on the right of us, but then when hell broke loose in the morning, the Japs came circling around up the hill there, like a stampede of cows, coming around to encircle us, and that's when everybody took off.

**MA:** What was the first indication that there was trouble for you?

**AFW:** When we woke up. Not waking up, we were up, but right at the break of dawn the fireworks all started and then when you looked up, you saw this whole mass of people and soldiers trying to encircle us.

**MA:** How long was it before the company commander decided it wasn't a good place to be?

**AFW:** As soon as the fireworks started.

**MA:** Oh really.

**AFW:** He didn't give any commands or anything. I just looked up and he was gone.

**MA:** Who was second in command?

**AFW:** Oh, I don't know who was second in command at that time.

**MA:** So, he moves out and you decided it wasn't a good place to be?

**AFW:** I don't know what he was thinking, but when we overtook him he was going down, and he was singing, "God Bless America", so he must have been out of his nut, he must have been crazy.

**MA:** Now where did he end up going?

**AFW:** I don't know, but he just passed away here a short while ago.

**MA:** Where did you end up?

**AFW:** I ended up on the beach and the Navy was firing in on us, and, you're going to have Joe Meaghan—he's going to be here—and I told him that he tried to kill me because he was in the mortar platoon also. He was firing area fire. So, every seventh shell was where I was. I would get down and try to get as small as you can and then you'd relax. Then he'd go to eight, nine, and then back and then seven and you'd tighten up again, and then six, five, four, go all the way down and then he'd come back up again so that number seven shell was the one I'd...

**MA:** So, you were counting really carefully?

**AFW:** I guess so.

**MA:** That St Michael's math class came in handy. Was there a perimeter set up on the beach at all?

**AFW:** No, it was all confusion. I went out with the semaphore and I was going to tell the ships out there that they were firing on us and to bring their fire up north of us. But when I went out there, everybody—all the troops and everything—so I couldn't send a message. So again, I came back and then when it was all over with, you could take five people and hold their hands and go down for maybe less than a thousand yards, or about a thousand yards, and never get off a dead body. That's how many dead people were there.

**MA:** How close did the Japanese get to the beach?

**AFW:** Oh, they were close. Then a couple of days later, I went down and they had signs there, sticks, so many Japs buried here, so many buried here, so many buried here... There were 4200 Japs buried in the beach.

**MA:** They were all just sort of intermingled with the GIs?

**AFW:** No, they didn't bury the GIs there.

**MA:** No, when the fighting was going on.

**AFW:** Yes, when the fighting was going on. It was hand-to-hand combat, more or less.

**MA:** What kind of a weapon did you have, being a radio operator?

**AFW:** I had an M-1.

**MA:** Who was next in command for the company after the... I assume the Captain was—did he go back in command after the...

**AFW:** No, he was injured and I never saw him again.

**MA:** Who took over command?

**AFW:** When it was over with and we regrouped, there wasn't enough people left from the battalion to make a company. We went in with 121 personnel, and 52 were injured or killed, or 51—I don't remember which one, but it was even-steven. Fifty-one were killed or 52 were killed, and the same amount, 51 or 52, were injured. And there were only 18 guys left in our company, and I came in [unclear] after us, I was number 17 and one little Jewish kid from New York came in number 18, and that was all that was left of the company.

**MA:** What was the morale like after that attack and you realized the casualties were so high?

**AFW:** I don't think anybody gave too much thought about that because that's all you did was eat and get ready to ship out.

**MA:** After the attack, the company, what's left of it, re-formed. Did you begin to get replacements?

**AFW:** Then we left Saipan and we got on the [unclear] and the [unclear] brought us to Espiritu Santo.

**MA:** What was that like?

**AFW:** Well, we were down in a coconut field and that's when we started getting new people.

**MA:** How were the replacements generally treated?

**AFW:** Well, the first draftees that came in, they were all brown-nosers, and then when we started regrouping, then we were training again down there and Ralph

[unclear]—he got a Japanese machine gun and he brought that down to Espiritu Santo, so they had it out in the company [unclear] all apart and they were trying to put it back together again. I'm going by for a couple of days. I said, "Well, when you want that put back together," I said, "Let me know and I'll put it back in five minutes." So, a couple of days later they came to me. "All right, wise guy, put it together." I put it together in about ten or fifteen minutes because I was always mechanically inclined. I always took things apart and it's just like a jigsaw puzzle. So, we took the machine gun and we went on a march, a nine-mile march, down there, Espiritu Santo in the jungle there, and they fired that Japanese machine gun all day long and it never stopped—air-cooled—and they could fire our ammunition in their guns but we couldn't fire our ammunition in their guns.

**MA:** So, you trained at Espiritu Santo for about how long?

**AFW:** Maybe a year or so.

**MA:** Then what was your next duty going to be?

**AFW:** Okinawa.

**MA:** What did you think about that?

**AFW:** Well, that was quite a battle too. That was quite a battle.

**MA:** When did you land in Okinawa? Was that another [unclear] landing for you?

**AFW:** No, the same way, on a landing craft. Then, when we went in, at that time I was a Mortar Sergeant in charge of a mortar section.

**MA:** 60 or 81?

**AFW:** 81 mortars. And when we got on Okinawa and were going up, Lieutenant Gilley—he was quite a soldier, too, so he was in charge of the platoon, the 81's—so he went up and just for a second, he went up instead of diving into the hole, he stood up for a second. He was dead as a doornail in about two seconds.

**MA:** Sniper?

**AFW:** No, the line, we were at the line.

**MA:** How many mortars in a section?

**AFW:** There were six mortars all told. There were three sections with two mortars apiece. Ralph [unclear] was in charge of one and Lee Carrier was in charge of another one. And I was in charge of the platoon after Lieutenant Gilley was killed.

**MA:** Now, what was your first action in Okinawa?

**AFW:** When we went up—that's when Lieutenant Gilley got killed. A, B and C Company—Lee Carrier was A, and Ralph [unclear] was in B and I was with C

Company. A section is assigned to each company. Then the rifle, when they spotted a target, then the mortars would come in to knock the targets out, and the field artillery was up there and they had their C-scopes, and there were targets that they couldn't hit, so when they'd see a target that they couldn't hit, they would call up our company and then I would go up and look through the C-scope and see the target, and have the six mortars fire.

**MA:** How would you compare Okinawa to Saipan?

**AFW:** I'd say that Saipan was tougher.

**MA:** Why?

**AFW:** Well, because probably of all the troops that were on there. There were more troops; you were more confined. It was a smaller area.

**MA:** How long were you on Okinawa?

**AFW:** Oh, I don't remember that.

**MA:** Any particular experiences in Okinawa that stick in your mind?

**AFW:** When Ralph [unclear] was up, and a bullet went in here [points to the middle of his forehead] and it came out the back of his helmet [points to the back of his head]. I don't know how he didn't get killed. He was all shook-up. He went back to headquarters, came back in two days and started right back again. Amazing man.

**MA:** Any other experiences?

**AFW:** Well, I probably had, but can't think of them now.

**MA:** Now, you were a forward observer for a while.

**AFW:** Well, that's what we were, the three of us were forward observers attached to each company, and we'd go with them, and then we'd be right up there on the front lines with them. When they spotted the targets, then they would give it to whichever one of us... And that's all mountains, too, up and down, so I lined up on the ridge. I lined up the six mortars and the day after, in the afternoon, it was quiet there for about two days. About the second day, I had the guns zeroed in on the ridge, and the Japanese with their machine guns were running across the ridge and I gave the section that was there, "Fire off twenty rounds," and they fired off twenty rounds, and the Japs got their guns lined up and just started to fire, and that was the end of them.

**MA:** So, you were pretty good at your job?

**AFW:** Well, it was my job and I don't try to put any feathers in my cap or anything. There was a job to do, and I hope I did it right.

**MA:** Was your equipment pretty good?

**AFW:** Yes, our equipment was good. And the Japs' equipment was good too, you know. They both killed. Your equipment was only as good as the operator—if you had a good piece of equipment and you had somebody that didn't know how to operate it, what good is it? And a guy with a lousy piece of equipment that knew how to operate it could do more damage.

**MA:** You got sick on Okinawa? Was it dengue fever?

**AFW:** Yes, a mosquito on the arm, and I went to the hospital for about a week and then came back. And that was the only time that I can remember being sick in the Army.

**MA:** How was the treatment at the hospital?

**AFW:** The treatment was good. Nurses. First time you got a chance to look at some women.

**MA:** Did you get pulled out of the line at all for any rest?

**AFW:** No.

**MA:** No USO shows?

**AFW:** No.

**MA:** Pretty much front line all the time? So, did the old guard guys stick together pretty much?

**AFW:** Well, what they did, the old guard, what they did, they started taking them out and starting cadres with them. They were the trainers for the draftees coming in. A lot of them were transferred.

**MA:** Did you think that was a good system or not?

**AFW:** Oh, sure, sure. Because the guards really knew what they were doing. They were real soldiers.

**MA:** What do you think of Howlin' Smith?

**AFW:** [Laughs] I don't think anything of him.

**MA:** So, you think Ralph Smith got a pretty raw deal?

**AFW:** Oh sure, and when the war ended with the dropping of the bomb on August the sixth, was the first one of them and about a week or so later they dropped the second one on Nagasaki, so the war ended and we started mopping up. So, on a mop-up, then I think it was Stilwell gave Greiner the orders to send everybody, all the old men home, and he didn't. Here's guys with 85 points and they're all going home, and we've got all over 100 points—I think I had something like 132 points—and we're on mop-up. So, General Stilwell, I'm pretty sure it was him, is coming up, so one of the guys that was resting there said, "General, when the hell are we going to go home?" He said, "What do you mean?" He said,

“We’re here. They’re sending people back home and we’re still here.” We were getting ready to go to Japan. He said, “What’s the matter, soldier?” So, he told him, you know, and he gave Greiner the orders to send all the old guys home. So, he went up to Greiner and he said, “Get these men out within forty-eight hours or ...” Boy, you want to see them move. And that was August 20<sup>th</sup>. I’ll never forget it because that was the time I say I was liberated from the 27<sup>th</sup> Division.

**MA:** So, what was your opinion of Greiner? I understand there was a little song about Greiner.

**AFW:** I don’t know the song; I never heard of it. When we were in Hawaii—when I first went over there I was driving a truck also. I don’t know how the hell I got that job. We used to drive the Jewish guys down to Honolulu from the Schofield barracks on all their holidays. So, this Bernie Gavern—on Christmas Day, we’re out on a hike, and he’s rubbing it in to us, “Jew boy knows how to get things done, Jew boy knows.” So, we got on Saipan. I don’t know if he’s still around or what. I think he got blown up; they couldn’t find him. But knowing him, he might be somewhere if he’s still alive.

**MA:** What did you think of Truman dropping the bomb?

**AFW:** He did the right thing.

**MA:** Why’s that?

**AFW:** Ended the war. I mean it saved a lot of American troops.

**MA:** You weren’t looking forward to going to mainland Japan?

**AFW:** Oh, we were ready to go. Sure, we were looking forward to it. We were polishing shoes and getting clothes, and we were getting everything ready.

**MA:** Now when you finally got shipped back where did you go?

**AFW:** Under General Butler, right from Okinawa right to Seattle, Washington. Passed Saipan on the way—it was lit up like a big Christmas tree.

**MA:** I’m sure you were glad to see that go by the way side. Now, were you mustered out in Seattle?

**AFW:** In Dix, Fort Dix. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, they took our overcoats and everything—it was really cold. Just out and got on a train to New York and came up to Albany, at 2:00 in the morning.

**MA:** Anything you wanted to do when you got back to the States that you hadn’t done?

**AFW:** Well, when you’re in combat, I said, “Dear Lord, if I ever get out of this, I’ll never complain in my life,” and I never did either. Never complain about anything. Just take every day; thank the Lord I got every day in.



**MA:** What did you do when you got back to Troy?

**AFW:** I went to Cluett's for about six months or so. Then I started an oil business with a partner. He was a thief. Then I got into partnership with another one and he was a thief. He went down to Florida, down there, and I had papers and he couldn't come to New York State because they'd lock him up. He's down there and he got married down there and I guess he's having a good time at a nightclub, and he gets up to go to the bathroom and drops dead. And it was in the obituaries in Troy, and I didn't believe it that he was dead because he was the type of guy that would put his own obituary in, you know? But then I met a guy that was down there, and he verified it that he was dead.

**MA:** What is your general impression of your military experience, any way of summing it up?

**AFW:** Well, the training was good. We had good training. But, I didn't like the officers and they didn't like me. You can probably see why.

**MA:** That South Troy thing?

**AFW:** South Troy against the world. I didn't have any problems or anything with anybody in the Army. I didn't associate too much with the officers, and I'll tell you some reasons why I don't like the officers. Because we had draftees from the south and they didn't go to school, and they didn't know how to write, so some of the guys in the company would write for them. So, I'm on guard, guarding the officers' tents and the Lieutenant censored the letters, and they get the letters from the guys from the south and there they are, mocking them and laughing. They had nurses in there with them, and they're mocking them. If you felt like shooting somebody, that was it, right there. And another officer on Saipan wouldn't get out of his foxhole, and O'Brien relieved him of his command and told him, "I'll take care of you when this battle is over," but it never materialized because O'Brien got killed. And then, the same way with our company commander, taking off like a big-assed bird. So, how can you... But we did have some good officers. Emmet Catlan was a good officer. Colonel Miller, he was in charge of the battalion and everybody was scared of him, even the officers. So, when we were down training with the 81 mortars, after we got through, we fired on an island, after we got through, a lot of shells wouldn't go in, with the water. Then service company would go out with the little weasels, and they'd pick up all the dead fish and they'd have some good meals. I said to the company commander, "Why don't you say something about it so we can get some fish?" He said, "No, no." I said, "Okay, I will". He said, "No don't do it". So, when Miller came by, I said to the Colonel... He said, "Does anybody have any questions?" I said, "Yeah, I have one. How come we don't get any of the fish that we kill and service company gets it all?" He said, "Weasack, the next time, you'll have fish." And the next time, we got our fish.

**MA:** So, you certainly weren't shy?

**AFW:** Well, no, I wasn't shy, why should I be? But I paid for it.

**MA:** South Troy against the world. Well, thank you very much, Sir. That was a very good interview.

**AFW:** If I knew what you wanted to talk about, if you gave me a day or two to think about it, we'd be here for two days.

**MA:** We can always have you back.

**AFW:** I'm on KP down at Fort McClellan. The chicken trays come in and they're iced. They didn't have refrigeration at that time. So, I'm taking the chickens out. I'm looking at the crates, and I'm in the Army for six months and the chicken is in the Army for a whole year. Six months before I was in it.

**MA:** What did you think of that?

**AFW:** It made me feel better.

**MA:** Any other story you can think of?

**WC:** Did you know Thomas Baker at all?

**AFW:** Oh sure. Yeah.

**MA:** What was he like?

**AFW:** He was a terrific soldier and he well deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor. I'll tell you a story about him. In Hawaii, the officers went up the mountain, hunting goats. One of the officers knocked a goat off. Two days later they gave Sergeant Baker the duty with a couple of guys to go up and get the goat. So, they go up the mountain with the jeep, they get the goat and bring the goat back, and bring it to A company, right into the kitchen. And stink, oh boy, they did stink and the Mess Sergeant said, "Get that thing out of here," and Sergeant Baker argued, "No, the officer wanted it here, so it's here." "Get it out, get it out." He went down and he got his rifle and he came up and he put his foot on the goat and said, "Well, somebody's going to eat this goat." They broke his rank.

**MA:** Did you know Baker before, in Troy?

**AFW:** No, I didn't know him in Troy. I met him a couple of times. I suppose you've heard about him—about putting him up against the tree there and killing the Japs. No, he was.... Sergeant Baker, he and George [unclear] on maneuvers, so while we're on maneuvers what they did was they cut their hair up and painted their bodies, and they looked like Indians, and then when the soldiers were going by, they hopped out from behind a tree with a hatchet [Laugh]—they got court-martialed.

**MA:** Was Baker from South Troy?

**AFW:** He was, I think, from Wynantskill.

**MA:** He was a card, then?

**AFW:** Yes.

**MA:** Any other personalities that stick out in your mind, guys that were a little different?

**AFW:** Oh, yes, sure. [Laughs] Up in Schofield, the guys used to go to the movies every night, and then when they'd come home, they'd stop and they'd come up to the officers they'd feel [unclear] and give them a blow job. I didn't go for that. Then we had one guy in the company, he made friends with the Sergeant. He's in taking a shower, powdering up... I said, "Watch that guy," and about two weeks later they shipped him the hell out. He turned fruit.

**MA:** You didn't get into the reserves afterward?

**AFW:** No. I probably should have stayed in, you know, but I just wanted to get out, get married, and have a family and...

**MA:** You go to the reunions after the war?

**AFW:** No, I didn't go, and after I got married I found out that the Army wasn't as bad as getting married. Married fifty-four years. Four daughters.

**MA:** So, what do you think of your experience in the National Guard?

**AFW:** It was good.

**MA:** A good group of guys?

**AFW:** Yes, you couldn't beat them. You know, for a little skirmish they'd walk for twenty miles to get in a little skirmish with the enemy, with the reds and the blues. I'm driving the company commander on the maneuvers, and we were the blues and they were the reds, and he takes my rifle and he shoots it, shoots the blanks. I wasn't going to clean it, and I didn't and I didn't say anything to him because he'd have me in the brig. Driving a weapons carrier, you're not supposed to have two weapons in the Army at all. Because I was the driver, I was in charge of the Browning Automatic and one rifle. It was the O3's then, not the M1s, O3's. That's when I started to put him on a shit list. He wasn't our company commander then, he was just...

**MA:** Now the company officers were old guardsmen?

**AFW:** Some of them were, but as soon as we got overseas, then we had Albanese. He wasn't an old national guard. He was a little small guy scared shitless of officers. I'll tell you another one. Down in the coconut field down there, we got our beer ration. That was the first in six months that we got our beer ration, a six-pack. My brother was on the Liscome Bay, and he was transferred off the Liscome Bay and they went to Midway, and the Liscome Bay was sunk. So, I met my brother down in Espiritu Santo. He was in the Navy, he

was a machinist mate—he worked on the nose of the airplanes. So, I met my brother down there.

**MA:** What was that like?

**AFW:** He was allowed 45-50 miles away and I take it. So, we had the rubberized bags—I got two of them—and I went up to my brother and they had a machine that made snow. It came out thin, it looked like snow. So, I got the ice, came down to the company there and we had a wooden barrel there. So, I threw the ice in the barrel and I said, “Okay, two cold ones for three warm ones.” I threw my six-pack in there. I said, “Give me the three.” They’d get the three and give it to me. They’d reach down in that cold water. I’d just put them in there. Boy, they’d circle around... So, a Duquesne beer—I’ll never forget it, it’s from Pennsylvania—and boy what a head I had on Saturday. Lieutenant Gilley—the one I said that he was in charge of our platoon—and I came out and we were having a general inspection. I was out there and he comes by me and he said, “Weasack, you smell like a brewery.” I said, “Lieutenant, I feel like one.” He said, “Go in your tent, go back out and go down to the jungle down there.” So, I did. I went out the back of the tent, went down into the coconut field. Oh, I never had a hangover like that one. Duquesne beer, I’ll never forget it.

**MA:** Had any since?

**AFW:** No, not Duquesne. The only thing I drank was Ballantine Ale. When Ballantine Ale went out, I quit drinking.

**MA:** Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

**AFW:** You’re entirely welcome.