

Latham Hq-1/4/2001-

Interviewer- Lt. Colonel Robert Bonasa.

I was born in Germany, KeLienukui- 1.3.1921-landed in NYC in '28 I was only seven years old and don't remember anything. I forgot all the German I ever knew. We moved in with my uncle, he is the one who sponsored my mother, father and myself. Of course, you had to have a job or the promise of a job before you could come into the country. Things have changed since then.

I went to public school on Second Avenue. And, of course, I spoke strictly German and I remember I was called up a few times to speak the alphabet in German because I was a novelty or something. Anyway I graduated from High School in 1940. Oh I am jumping the gun here. Went to Hackett, school 24 first, no school 7, no I don't remember what it was, I remember school 24 by Lincoln Park and then Albany High and graduated in 1940.

In 1939 there was John O'Brien and Dominic DeFlorio and I. We joined the 53rd Infantry Brigade HQ, HQ Company. We went, uh October 15th, 1940, Roosevelt federalized the National Guard and we were shipped down to Ft. McClellan, Alabama for one year supposedly. When the one year was up, he extended it and everybody started yelling Ohio, Ohio, for Over the hill in October. Nothing happened; it was just something to yell about. Then the war broke out in December 7th, in fact I had my train tickets for my furlough from Dec. 15th until Jan. 15th, 30 days. Had my train tickets all bought but the Japs did me in when they bombed Pearl Harbor and they shipped us to California, Ft. Ord and Camp Hahn, where we got a few replacements, draftees. After Hahn, they put us on the SS Lurline which was the flagship of the Matson line. We had state rooms, dinners, the whole nine yards. We were passengers, deluxe passengers with this thing. When they got a hold of them they made troop transports out of this thing. Anyway, we went to Kiska and Attu and picked up some troops from the 7th Division, I don't know where they were but they were headed for the Philippines and when the Philippines fell, they sent us to Hilo, Hawaii, the big Island. Oh about a week after we got to Hawaii everybody got sick including me. We got a bad batch of Attabrin for malaria. It wasn't where you took in your mouth. They actually threw it in your mouth. Anyway about 15 or 30 of us wound up in the Mountain view Hospital in Hawaii near Hilo which is the capital of Hawaii. I remember they were digging trenches outside. You could see them through the window. Digging trenches because they expected the Japs to invade the Hawaiian Islands. Anyway, after I got out of the hospital, they moved us to the Volcano House (now located in the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park) and we had cabins there, no barracks, and Mt. Kilauea erupted and it was like daylight almost, night and day and we couldn't write home because it was like a beacon for the Japanese, the whole island lit up.

Anyway, that died down and while we were in Hawaii we got pith helmets, we got durrants, the new helmets, and they shipped us to Oahu. We went to Coconut Grove(the grove contained as many as 10,000 coconut trees). That was good duty. We had a movie screen, had movies every night. I am trying to remember when we got the armored cars and the motorcycles. Oh yeah, we got them, 45 mile Harleys and 4 M8 armored cars (M8 Greyhounds), the greyhounds. And the halftracks(M3s). We got a

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Duck (DKUW) too, one of these floating 2 and a half ton truck. We took it into Pearl Harbor just because it was still devastated; the ships were all lying on their sides, pumping them out and doing what they could to revive them. We brought the Duck back and the captain asked me what I thought of it and I said what do we need ducks for so we left that.

While we were there J. Kersog was our commanding officer. I don't know if you know him. He is a gentleman. He had us build the obstacle course. We called it Herzog Military Institute. Everybody had to graduate from HMI. It was pretty rough to go through basic training, not basic training, you know machine guns over your head, the whole bit, crawling under barbed wire, crawling, swimming, swinging and whatnot and walking on the rope with another guy over you. We all survived, oh and we all had to take key, you know Morse code. Which went in here and came out there [points to his ears] I just couldn't do it dit, dit, dit, dot, dot, SOS. Will any way from there we went to Schofield Barracks. I went to automotive school and on Oahu I had my 4th stripe, master, not master, staff Sgt. I was a corporal on the big island and made Buck and Staff when we went to Schofield Barracks. I, also, got a black belt in karate. Had to take that which I can't do now and motor school.

From there anyway, from there we had more training and they wanted some of us to go to Makin. I don't know why they took Makin because what was there? I could see Saipan because the airport was there. Anyway the 165th which was the old fighting 69th regiment went there. Some of us went as observers. I don't remember going ashore. I remember advancing with, I don't even remember what company we were assigned to, we made that, we lost quite a few, not a great amount but everybody has casualties when you go into battle like that.

Then we went back to Hawaii. Then we got rubber boats and outboard motors in the recon troop. Oh wait a minute did I tell you? I didn't tell you. They made us the 27th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop out of the 53rd Infantry Brigade Company and the 54th. This is on the big island. See I just woke up. They made us the 27th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop Mechanized and they trianglized the division. In other words, all you had left was the 105th, the 106th infantry regiments and the 165th. That was the three and we had the air force, we had the air force, the medics and everything else. The air force left us. The 108th left us. I don't know who was in the 54th brigade, which regiments. I know the 108th was because they went somewhere else. Anyway getting back to Hawaii, when we come back from Makin, they gave us these rubber boats and we were in training with them where the blowhole is on Oahu. I don't know if you ever heard of it but it is where the waves come in and it blows and we lost an officer. A shark got him. We all got the hell out of there real quick. We went out and we saw a bloody mess down there. We never found him but a couple of weeks later one of his feet washed up and big headline in the Honolulu paper that they found part of a foot. We knew what it was but nobody else did you know like it was a big mystery.

Anyway, we were getting ready for, well we didn't know it would be Saipan but they put our outfit on a destroyer and we went to Lanai, the island, I think it was Lanai, it might have been Kauai. We were supposed to make a beach head landing and what a fiasco that was. The boats got torn up; we landed

on the reefs, all the equipment went down to the deep six. We didn't lose anybody thank God. That was the training. Recon was supposed to go in and see what's what. Anyway we went back to our Schofield barracks. We were in I quadrangle, my outfit, 27th Recon. I don't know if you are familiar with Schofield but it is squares, quadrangle.

From there they put us on a ship and we went to Saipan. We were in the first wave. Now that is hairy because we were the first ones to get in the boats and those boats just circled, the Higgins boats, just circled, circled, circled for hours and hours until the whole division got in the boats, you know it takes time to climb down the nets and get in these boats. A lot of fellas got deathly sick. Anyway we landed on the beach, there were quite a few dead there. We landed with the marines and we were held up for a while by a sniper in a smokestack. Not like the one at the VA hospital that goes halfway up to heaven. But we could see him up there and I don't know who it was but someone in the 105th or 106th got a 37[37-MM.Gun M3A1] and put a couple of shots in the middle of it and down he came. After we cleaned up the rest, we moved ahead. It was constant killing where the killing had to be done. It doesn't sound good but that is the facts. We went on and finally we had to take the airport, As Lito Airport. That is why I say I don't know why Makin was taken when it could have been, this is my opinion, I am not one of these guys to figure out what we gotta do, but they had Aslito Airport and that was taken and we were cleaning out the snipers, all around. The minute we got near the Seabees, I think it was the Seabees, boy they were riding where they could get shot at. Boy it took a lot of guts you know they were a big target sitting in those graders and the dump trucks and everything. We got that cleaned up and then we had to take Garapan, the capital. That was just house to house, what was left of the houses. There weren't too many but we cleaned that up. I was there when they blew the bank apart and money was flying around and everybody grabbed souvenirs you know money, money, money stacks of it. I should have brought some I have at home-

Interviewer: Japanese currency?

Yeah Japanese. Oh in Hawaii they issued us American money that had Hawaii stamped on it. I have some of that left too. So in case the Islands fell it could only be used in Hawaii itself. Some had just Hawaii stamped across the face. Did you ever see it?

Interviewer: Yep.

Oh and some had Hawaii TH, Hawaii Territory of Hawaii, I have some of that.

Anyway, getting back to Saipan, we took Garapan and then we went on recon a couple of times and we had two or three pump shotguns I think they were Winchesters double O buckshot that was my favorite. We didn't go out that much maybe three times. We go out for ambush at night .You hit someone with buckshot, it is kind of gory. We had Very pistols too which were short and brass. Some of the guys blew took the powder out, the shotgun shells fit the Very pistol. The Very pistols were only made of brass and if you put a full load in you would blow the gun apart. So they blew some of the powder out, about a quarter of it, and reloaded them and carried them. I don't think anybody ever used them. We had three

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of those. We were supposed to make a recon landing on Magicienne Bay on Saipan. Now I am going back again. That is what the training was for on Lanai and Kauai with rubber boats. So it is a good thing we didn't do that because it was heavily infested with the Japanese, they were up there.

Anyway, after it quieted down we lined up across; the marines, the 105th, the 106th, us, you know man to man right across the island. Oops I missed something. One of our platoons went out. I can't remember the Sgt.'s name, he was the squad leader. But he was a true squad leader, he didn't send a point man out, he went himself. We went in this gully that was maybe five or six feet high and all filled with caves. They shot him in the ankles. We lost a lot of guys. Now you talk about medics. When I hear medic I hear hero. You call a medic and he was right there boy. We lost one or two killed and quite a few wounded trying to get him out. They did that on purpose trying to get him out. They shot him. We finally got him out and Sgt. Murphy, I don't know if he was a Staff or a Buck, he was a big guy, bigger than me. And we were shooting in these caves, you had to stand up to shoot in them because they were a little higher, you know what I mean. If you sat down all you hit was the top of the hole in the cave. Anyway Murphy was bigger than me and he got shot right through here (points to his neck). We got the stretcher, oh, after that we all ducked down and called for flame throwers. I don't know where they were from, I thought they were combat engineers but I found out they were from our own division. The flamethrowers came and they burned out all the caves and some bounced back and I got burned on my arm and my wrist watch. I mean these were only drops, a few drops not a full blast. If it had been a full blast I would have lost a lot more than my watch. You can see it here (point to his left wrist) It fuses it right to the skin. I got a spot here and some spots on my arm. So we are carrying him out and there was Joe Palookas, here was the stretcher, Joe was here and I was here, I don't remember who the other two guys were but we were pushing this stretcher up to get it to the top of the gully and here is the Navy guy(demonstrates guy bending over) taking my picture. The photographer was on top of the caves. Where the ground was level not in the gully. And I told him to get that blanket, blanket thing out of my face. We got him up and I know Murphy was dead but we finally got him up. We were walking and the photographer was there again and that is the part they printed. Me, Palookas and the other guys carrying Murphy. They blipped out the other one cause I told him to get it out of my face. Heh, Heh. But that is on the newsreel. It took me four years to find that thing. Every time they had the thing I would punch in the VCR and I finally got it. Anyway, we got Murphy back up and the Catholic Chaplin was there, Father Yarwood, I swear to God Murphy came back to life when they gave him the last rites, he moaned. I will never forget that.

Then we went back to Hawaii. Well you saw the picture, me with the long underwear on. Everybody was sick. The Japanese were worse off than us, we had medical supplies. They didn't have nothing there.

Interviewer: After Saipan you went back to Hawaii?

Yes! No, no, no what am I saying. No we went to Espiritu Santo. Oh that's right. Yeah, I blanked out. Thank you. We got on the Kota Baroe (7,200 ton Dutch ship taken over by the US A and used as troopship). When you are sick or slightly wounded there is no place to go on those islands. There is no hospital back there. I was in my foxhole. Oh one more thing. On Saipan after they had the banzai charge,

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I am forgetting, when we were all lined up, we went back in the valley, we were all advancing and one of our platoons, one of the Dolan brothers, they were platoon Sgts. They were twins, one had the second and one had the third platoon. I don't know which one it was but he reported to Division, G-2, that there was something going on up, north or south, I don't know what it was, but the Japs were congregating up there. They all got liquored up, that is when they demolished the 1st Battalion of the 105th Infantry, and they wiped them out almost to the man. Sgt. Baker and Colonel Ryan got Congressional Medals of Honor during that engagement. We were running a gauntlet with our half tracks taking out their wounded and bringing up water and ammunition. Always someone there shooting at you. Always, constant. There was no consideration for the living or the dead. A couple of times we had to go to the beach to get water because the navy or the engineers or somebody had filtration plants to de-salt the water or whatever they did. Always took a halftrack and a trailer with a two hundred and fifty gallon tank. This one time we were going, the roads were so ground up there was about 18 inches of dust spewing. And we went towards the beach and there is dead Japanese lying there on the edge of the road. We went down and got our water and on our way down I heard a tat, tat, tat, on the side of the half track. It was a machine gun and I saw the flashes and I got up on the 50. We had 50 rings on the half tracks and let go with a belt and I didn't see any more flashes. We got our water and came back where the Jap was and all you saw was a wet spot. You just kept on running over him.

So I was in sick bay or sick in my foxhole and we boarded the Kota Baroe, the USAT Kota Baroe which is a Dutch registry ship. I wound up in sick bay on the ship. A Dutch captain, oh and the CO gets all the guys out for exercise. Need exercise and they are half dead. So this Captain goes up to the CO, this is what I heard, he said these men half dead, you give them exercise I throw your ass in the brig. That was the end of the exercise. We crossed the equator and they initiated the guys that were still half alive. Course I was in sick bay and all they did was cut my hair off. That was my first haircut, oh you saw the picture; I had a full beard and rotten clothes. Everyone was in the same boat. So we were going to Espiritu Santo, supposed to be a rest island which it was. No Japanese there, this was south of the equator across the equator when we got initiated.

Interviewer: What do you mean by initiated? You were initiated as

A shellback! You get the shellback is different. When you cross the equator you become a shellback. I have my calendar (reaching for his wallet) with my date and everything. No it is not there. I keep pictures of my presidents in that wallet (reaches for another wallet). Anyway the navy used to throw the sailors overboard and make them swim for awhile when they got initiated cause my son was in the navy during the Korean uh Vietnamese war and he says it was something else that initiation. (Finds his calendar and hands it to interviewer) I am wasting your time, huh?

Interviewer: No

Here it is, I have a big certificate at home.

Interviewer: holds calendar up to camera

Did it pick up? It is kinda beat up. What is the date on there?

Interviewer: September '44. So after you crossed the equator and were initiated as a shellback, next stop was Espiritu Santo.

Yes but first, the Kota Baroe broke down. It just stopped dead in the water. The rest of the convoy just left us. They did leave us a destroyer that circled us for a couple of days. We were sitting ducks out there. You know waiting to get that thing going. Finally, made Espiritu Santo. In Garapan we got so many souvenirs. I had two pistols, three Japanese flags and a bayonet and I had a samurai sword which stuck in my duffel bag. I don't know which magically disappeared because it was sticking out of my duffel bag when I was in sick bay. Anyway, I went right in the navy hospital there because a lot of us were really sick, we had the dengue fever. In fact that is in my magazine, my army magazine; most of the guys had jungle rot too. You have open sores all over your hands and your finger nails, they ooze and if there is any sickness it is over in the islands, you know.

Interviewer: Uh huh!

Anyway, after I got out of the hospital there and I went back to my unit. Like I said we had tons of Japanese money and there was a big navy base there. Well there was no training, at 6 O'clock we had our breakfast and at 10 you were done with your training. So we got beer off the navy, we got ice off the navy. I got wood off the navy and made myself a boat because we had outboard motors and we had rubber boats. I got a picture of the boat too. I took it out in the bay. We were right near the water. That was pretty good there. There were cockadeneeze there that worked for the Colgate, Palmolive, Peet Co. They had a big copra plantation you know for the copra, for the soap. One of these guys, we were sitting in the tent, and they came around, the women were topless but they chewed that beautiful beadle nut and they gave you the big black smile. This guy comes in the tent and I hand him a beer out of the ice bucket. Well he didn't know what to do with it. He dropped it and ran like hell. He had never felt anything cold in his life. This is right on the equator, Espiritu Santo. He dropped that bottle of beer and took off like a big bird. Oh God he ran. Had to bring him back and, you couldn't, they didn't speak English and we didn't speak whatever they spoke. That was one of the funny things that happened. Ha, Ha.

From there we went to Okinawa. On Saipan we didn't take our M8s, we didn't take our motorcycles. All we took was our halftracks. On Espiritu Santo we got our M8s back but not our motorcycles. They were never used in combat. We just had them in Hawaii. After we landed on Okinawa, I was in Naha that was the capital, we took that. Like I say most of this stuff was destroyed anyway. There wasn't too much mopping up. We had our M8s by our camp, naturally. John Nagy was on guard duty and he had a Thompson Sub (Thompson submachine gun). We got Thompson Subs on Hawaii too. They were issued with the new helmets and Garands. And these Japs came and he got nine of them. Nine of them. I don't know how many he killed. The ones he didn't kill they blew themselves up. That is another thing about the Japanese. Our hand grenades, when you pull the pin, nothing happens, you have got that safety on there. That grenade is not activated until you throw it, the pin flies off and the hammer strikes the primer. The Japanese, they pull the pin and there is nothing to hang onto. They either had to use their rifle to strike the thing or their helmet. (He demonstrates striking the grenade against the side of head) and you hear the clack. You could always tell the clack when a grenade was coming. I told that to my group a little while ago, of course all of them were in Europe except one he was in the Solomons, a Marine.

We took Naha and there was an airstrip there. Actually, there wasn't too much combat, I think they were getting wise and they started surrendering. Of course, you always had the die hards. It wasn't like Saipan where I saw thousands of them commit suicide. I mean hundreds, not thousands, hundreds of them. Women, children and guys would blow themselves up. I saw one man, one Japanese; you know it was all the propaganda that did a lot of damage too. Like we were told that the Japs were going to do

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us in and whatnot. They were told that we killed our mothers and fathers to get into the service and all that. I saw this guy, he was in the last throes, and he committed hari-kari with a file, with a file. He tore his guts. Such a waste of humanity.

They take a break.

Grinder gets all the troops out in a big field. He says I know you guys have been overseas almost for four years. But I want you to be patriotic and go to Japan for occupation duty. All you hear is a big moan. I mean you probably heard it in the States. But the order came through the War Department. These men with so many points, the original guys, no ifs ands or buts, they are going home. My pistol was replaced and we got new draftees and we had to paint all the vehicles and make them look like new. Then the ship came, the Buckner, I remember the Buckner. We got on the Buckner, SS Buckner, he was a General. He got killed on Okinawa, (Lt. Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., Commander of the 10th Army on Okinawa, was killed by Japanese artillery, making him the highest ranking U.S. military officer to have been killed by enemy fire in WWII).

Oh when Grinder got us out there he said you guys are not patriotic if you don't go to Japan and reup, don't go home.

We went home. Let's see what am I missing, oh, we had to wait for the typhoon to get over. There was a big typhoon right after the battle, (In early October 1945, shortly after the end of WWII, Typhoon Louise struck Okinawa and sank 12 U.S. ships, damaged 32 vessels beyond repair and grounded 222 others. 36 Navy personnel lost their lives.) I gave you people the photograph of the peace plane that came over from Japan to set up the surrender. It's on the one sheet of paper and then we knew the war was over.

So on the way home, we got home and landed, I don't know where we landed, either Washington or where the Japanese current keeps the water warm, is it Oregon in the Northwest?

Interviewer: Washington

Yeah Washington. Now we got new fatigues. Brand new fatigues. We were wearing our rotten old uniforms and they had German POWs there in the mess hall. I don't know who was ahead of me but they gave a bottle of milk, no cartons yet, and he went to take another and the POW took it away from him and the guy went boom and he demonstrates a punch.

We came home and went to Ft. Dix and got my discharge. I had a tooth infection and they had the old sewing machine pedal for the drill. They drilled it out and gave me a pink filling. So I got my discharge and it was all wrong. I said where are my combat, my battle stars. He said you only get the arrowhead. I said what are you talking about. We got new dress uniforms and I had 7 overseas stripes, 2 hash marks, the Tech Sgt. Stripes, the Division stripes and the patch with the arrow and the stars. The southern cross was it?

Interviewer: Yes for service in the Pacific.

It was red, white and blue. You guys want it, you can have it.

He said it was going to cost me to sew the stuff on. I said what? They were shaking us down. Heh, Heh!

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Anyway, I came home or I went to New York for the train. Some Lt. saw the stuff on my arm and he said, "Oh you have been around Sarge." I said, "Yeah". He said come on and I will buy you a drink and I got drunker than a skunk, I got drunker than a skunk. I don't know how in hell I found the train. But I made it home and that was it. Then I started to look around for my papers and try to get straighten out. This was after a while. Oh no your stuff got all burned up. After years and years and years, I mean... I told Wayne here . I don't think you were here. But it took me 50 years to the month, 50 years to get my Army records. I got out, discharged October 3rd, 1945. I got my records October 15, 1995. 50 years to the month. And they are all screwed up. They got me down for a wife, American/Mexican born in NY City. Heh, Heh. Honest to God!

Interviewer: So what happened after the war? What did you do?

Ahhh! I went down to unemployment a week later. Down to state unemployment on State and I told them that I went to automotive school and I can't get Morse code. I couldn't understand that. I could understand it but it wouldn't sink in. So he said Autocars are looking for mechanics. So I went with Autocar Company and rebuilt engines, bored out engines and crankshafts and all that. I worked there for six years. That was a good job, 75 cents an hour.

Then I went into business for myself. I bought out a delivery service. Oh, I had enough money to put down on a house when I got out of the service. Because there was no place on earth in those islands to spend money. Everything went home and I still have the script that we got. You couldn't get rid of it. I bought a house on Clinton Avenue. I got married in '48. Well, anyway, getting back to Autocar I worked there until '51. I got married in '48. We are going on 53 years married, my wife and I. I bought the delivery service from the guy next door. I delivered typewriters, elevator weights and US mail, IBM parts, Firestone tires, I delivered those by the ton. I got rid of that business in '77. I had a couple of guys working for me that were robbing me blind. The government wouldn't leave me alone with the forms and all. My wife was working on the books constantly. So I just folded and retired. Got a part time job at Key Bank Noon to 5. I retired in '77. Yeah that is when I quit. I got rammy after a year and got a part time job with Key Bank as a courier. That was a good job. I liked that job. Got a little car to drive. Not to take home. Bring the mail to different branches. I had about 25 branches I serviced. Bring the mail to them and pick up their check deposits. When that craze went on for gold in the early '80s. The gold Krugerrands from South Africa, I delivered by the truckloads. People were buying them, and lost their shirts I think, after they bought them. I worked there six years. As part time, you weren't supposed to get any benefits but I got a pension. It is not much but it all adds up. I was in profit sharing and maybe I shouldn't tell this, if it is going to be broadcast. In profit sharing I contributed 600 dollars; I got 8 grand when I left. I got an IRA. The banks are not like that today. You can't even get a calendar out of them or a pencil. Even the pocket calendar you can't get. You know the little plastic cards. They don't have them anymore.

Interviewer: Have you kept up with your fellow soldiers from the 27th?

Oh yes, we those pictures I brought in, the paintings, we have had a reunion since '45, no, the first one was in '46 here in Albany. The 1st Sgt. ran it. He went home from Hawaii on the Cadre. He started in Europe; they started another, a lot of guys left. We got a lot of replacements. But we always had a reunion until about three years ago. Every single year, most of them were in Albany. I had them for about 25 years, the reunions. I don't know if you went through my letters but they are about reunions and what not. Those plaques, those paintings always hung up on my wall. I finally boxed them up and

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put them in the cellar. That is why I brought them to you because they are all going to get dumped. Nobody is going to know what they are.

Interviewer: We will take care of them.

I know you will and that is why I brought them in.

Interviewer: Did you have any children after you married?

Yeah, three, two boys and a girl. My son, the youngest one, he got smart and moved down to Florida about 23 years ago. My daughter moved down there two years ago. My oldest son is still working up here in Stirling-Winthrop Research. I don't know what the name is since it changes every year. He is going to retire in a year or two. He is going to take it early.

Interviewer: When you look back now what is the thing that stands out most in your mind about the time you served?

I am not sorry I joined. I did what I had to do. I think everyone feels the same way. It was something that had to be done or else we wouldn't be here today under these circumstances if everyone didn't feel that way.

Interviewer: So you are proud of what you did?

Oh, absolutely! I have no qualms. I did what I had to do.

Interviewer: How do you think your service changed your life?

I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you feel like there is anything you learned such as lessons of life?

Well, being in the Pacific there was no respect for life whatsoever. That made me feel bad. It was just a waste. I couldn't see why they had to take these little rinky, dink islands which meant nothing, which you couldn't use for anything. Unless it was for somebody else's glory. Do you follow what I am trying to say? I don't remember Makin too much, but there was nothing there. There was nothing on Iwo Jima that I could figure out except Mt. Suribachi with the flag on top. I don't know. I better shut up.

Interviewer: Let's go back to 1939.

Ok

Interviewer: When you joined the National Guard, why did you join?

Because the three of us, we were real buddies, DeFlorio, O'Brien and myself, we were in the same grade in High School. We graduated in '40. We knew what was going on and that there was going to be a war, Because of all the saber rattling, Mussolini going nuts first with Ethiopia and then Hitler invading. So we decided to join the Guard and at least we would be together and that is why we joined.

Interviewer: What was it like when you joined? You joined in 1939 and that was year before the call up.

Yeah, right!

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Interviewer: So what was it like to be in the guard in those days?

Well in '39 there wasn't much training.

Interviewer: What did you do?

We had close order drill and that is about it. We went to; I don't remember if it was Drum, I know it wasn't Camp Smith.

Interviewer: Plattsburgh, 1939?

Speaking of Plattsburgh, in Albany High, I went to CMTC (Citizens Military Training Camps, 1921-1940) camps for two summers up in Plattsburgh.

Interviewer: What were those like?

You got a lot of training there. I got more than I did when I joined the Guard in Albany. Like I say the only thing I learned in the Guard was the close order drill. How to do left face, right face, about face and how to salute officers. It was good and there was a lot of camaraderie in the unit.

Interviewer: You drilled on Tues. nights?

Yes. It was upstairs and it was booklearning. Once we got down to McClellan they gave me an old motorcycle, an old Harley, a 74, not the year, the model, with a sidecar. We learned how to work the switch board. We learned how to run a wire and urinate on the ground wire; you know what I am talking about?

Interviewer: Yeah I do.

Yeah, once you drove that stake down you wet it and that was the nearest thing. Like I say I didn't get the code but it was a lot of telephone stuff. I remember if you ran a wire across the road you took the negative and you split them and you put about 8 same wires on this side of the road, you know on this one coming off and one down here so there wouldn't be only the two where a car would run over it and cut it right away. They had to cut the whole, you understand what I am saying, the whole, I learned that. That came in handy.

Interviewer: You were drilling with the guard on Tuesday nights. Did you go away to a summer camp with them?

Yes.

Interviewer: That was an extra long summer camp wasn't it? Instead of two weeks it was three weeks?

I don't remember.

Interviewer: Well what was summer camp like? Were you out in the woods? What did you do?

Well we went on maneuvers a lot. We went to Louisiana, oh, I was a prisoner of war down to Lake Charles. I don't know who caught me, the Blue Army or the Red Army.

Interviewer: During the Louisiana maneuvers?

Yeah, yeah. That was a mess. In fact I woke up, it was rather cool at night, I woke up and there was a rattlesnake keeping itself warm on my body. He wasn't big but it was a rattler. I think he had one or two little rattles on his tail.

Interviewer: What did you do?

I ran like hell I can tell you. Heh, Heh! The ticks were awful down there. You had to burn them off you. Put the cigarette near them and they would back out. They told us not to tear the heads off because it would get infected. Make them come out yourself.

Interviewer: So you didn't expect to be called up in 1940. October of 1940 you got the word that the guard was going to be called up for a year. What was that like? How did that affect you?

I think we expected it. I really do. That is why we joined. At least we knew we were and we would be together.

Interviewer: Did it seem to cause any problems for other members of the unit?

Not that I know of, no. Because I think we were the only three guys that did join. The rest were regulars. Old guard regulars. Cause you had General Ross, Col. Van Antwerp, Col. Tool, these were all like you, Light Colonels. Do they call you Light Colonel? Then we had Captain Harry P. Jones and Paul Smith, he was a Sgt. Major. He is the guy that gave me the picture that is framed; his wife gave it to me. Mine was rolled up and ruined. That is why I gave it to you guys. McCard was, Drake was 1st Sgt. Now why do I remember that, that is older and I forget some of the other stuff. Drake was 1st Sgt., McCard was clerk. Farley was Tech Sgt. I took his place. Most of these guys left when we were federalized. If you were over 28 but they grabbed them again later I guess.

Interviewer: So when you were federalized in October 1940

Fifteenth.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of activity at the armory? Busy packing? What was it like?

Uhhh. After I graduated from school, I was the guard at the Armory. They gave me a job. All I had to do was answer the doorbell. You know that big clang that they had there. It was just the non-coms coming in. There was nothing really going on until the war happened. I don't know who took them, the officers where but started packing up and they shipped us.

Interviewer: You went by train to McClellan?

Train to McClellan in the mud hole. It was virgin ground where they put the tents up and it was all red clay and we had wonderful IC (Inspection Condemned) equipment by the Armory, tents that all had ICs on them, Heh, Heh.

Interviewer: The tents weren't in good shape.

No they were inspection condemned by the regular army. We got the pot bellied stoves. Used to have a fire watch where the guy would go into these tents with the little pot-bellied and feed them. Of course

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we had the soft coal down there and once in a while you would get the sparks coming through the spark arresters anyway and burn little holes in the tents which were dried out.

Interviewer: Cold?

It was coke, yeah coke. That what you said coke?

Interviewer: No was it cold?

Oh yes, it was cold. It was very cold.

Interviewer: What was a typical day like for you at McClellan?

Well there was a lot of training and drilling. They had pole climbing and you know for wire. It was mostly the old WWI stuff. That is all we had then. There was a rifle range we did a little bit.

Interviewer: Were you short of any particular equipment or did you have all you needed?

We didn't know what we were supposed to have so you were satisfied with what you had. We didn't know what was to be had. You understand?

Interviewer: Did you get any time off and get a chance to go into any of the local towns?

Oh yeah, we went to Anniston but Anniston was dry, a dry county. There was a bootlegger there and for half a buck you would get a pint of what we called "Stump juice". I fell for this once. He wasn't there. For half a buck he would tell you where to go and look for it on this stump in a vacant lot. Well I drank this stuff and, oh my God, it would burn your insides out. We went to the movies in Anniston and we first went down there, we drove in command cars. This little old black woman, she must have been a former slave, she must have been 150 years old. She came out with a cane beating on the truck, yelling, "Goddamn Yankees, Goddamn Yankees". I can see her yet. Heh, heh. Used to go to Gaston. Nobody actually drank ? that I can remember. It wasn't like you had to have a drink.

Interviewer: So your days were busy training?

Yeah, it wasn't severe that I could see.

Interviewer: And then came the maneuvers. What were they like?

I don't remember which army I was in, the red or the blue. Like I say, I got captured with an officer in a command car. I used to be a messenger. They had the motor pool, wire section and the messenger section. This is all WWI training. Do you know what I mean? This is all we had and we did not know what else was available. But I was on this old motorcycle and I remember the guys with the truck that said Tank on it. I didn't see it but I have seen it on TV, the machine gun that was a stovepipe. Especially the guys lying in the gutter along the road. That is asinine to show that because who is going to lay there shooting at a truck as it is going by and the truck doesn't see them. You know what I mean?

But I was going somewhere on the motorcycle and they were shooting blanks out of a machine gun, water cooled. So I got killed or wounded and wound up at Lake Charles, Louisiana as a POW.

Interviewer: At the time, did you think it was realistic training.

Yeah, we didn't know any different.

Interviewer: Looking back now, do you think you were naïve a bit about what you would be facing.

No, I didn't think about it

Interviewer: So you were at McClellan when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Yes, as I say I had my tickets bought to come home for the furlough.

Interviewer: Do you remember that Sunday? What was it like?

Yes. I had bunk fatigue. You know what bunk fatigue was?

Interviewer: No.

It was where you crapped out, it was a Sunday, so you lay in your bunk and you rest. That was an old expression, bunk fatigue. Crapped out in your bunk and did nothing. Somebody had the radio on and Pearl Harbor was bombed. Nobody thought where Pearl Harbor was. Of course, you heard about these other Japanese, where they were going. When they said Pearl Harbor we were going what, and where was Pearl Harbor. Then we found out it was ours and then we said uh oh! It didn't take long, uh, I had to take Colonel Tool to Georgia or someplace, it was Tool. Oh, Herzog, I took him on my motorcycle because it had a sidecar. Herzog was in it. It wasn't Col. Tool, it was Herzog (Major Jacob Herzog, Asst. G-2) and I had to meet him in a certain spot on the border between I think it was Alabama and Georgia. And the MPs picked him up because they knew where he had to go. So I dropped Herzog off and he went off on another motor, he crashed and broke his neck, Jake did. He broke his neck but he pulled out of it all right. He was our CO, he rejoined us after awhile. This was, had to be before the war.

Interviewer: Good officer you said?

Oh he was fantastic. He did what he expected us to do. He was right there all the time. His favorite expression was, "If you can't walk, run awhile." He was always the point man. If we had to run, he was running in front of us, always. The best officer *I ever knew*.

Interviewer: Ok I think we are going to stop now and take a break.

Interviewer: Irwin Marrquardt on 1/4/2001

Interviewer: Mark lets go back to McClellan again, You all expected that you were only going to be called up for a year.

Right!

Interviewer: And then about a month before you were to go home, Congress extended you for another year.

Yes, in October.

Interviewer: How did everyone feel about that?

Oh, I didn't feel anything about it because maybe I expected it.

Interviewer: What about the other guys?

As I say, Ohio came up, Over the hill in October, everyone was yelling it. But it was just an expression. Nobody went over the hill that I know of. Not in my outfit anyway.

Interviewer: Ok so Pearl Harbor is attacked and you are at Ft. McClellan and in a matter of days you guys start shipping out to California.

I don't know if it was days or not. I know the officers went here, hither and yon. I don't know where they went. They were being briefed I imagine. Then we started shipping out.

Interviewer: What was that like getting ready? Did they tell you, you were going to California? Did you know where you were going?

No, no.

Interviewer: Just packing up the equipment. Were there rumors as to where you were going?

No.

Interviewer: When you got to California, your 1st stop was?

We were in, my outfit the 53rd Infantry Brigade; we were stationed in an American Legion hall. I don't know where it was, it wasn't in San Francisco. I don't know where it was, we were only there for a little while. We had the wool uniforms there because it was cold in Alabama. I rode a motorcycle and I had to buy gloves. Riding those handlebars, they weren't issued. We were in this American Legion hall where we stayed for I don't know how long. Then they shipped us to Ft. Ord and then Camp Hahn in California and I think we got some more men there. Then they put us on the SS Lureline like I said. It was a flag ship, it was beautiful ocean liner. (The Matson Line's four liners completed a wartime total of 119 voyages, covered one and half million miles and carried a total of 736,000 troops. Wikipedia)

Interviewer: When you were in California, why did you think you were there? This was early 1942, very early in 1942.

Yeah but it was after war had been declared.

Interviewer: Uhm, um, did you feel you might be there to protect the west coast against the Japanese?

No, no! We had an inkling that we were going to go overseas. We did get passes and I remember going to Carmel by the sea. What was the other one, north or south of it? That is where I had my first borscht, Russian soup. There was a big Russian population there. Carmel and old God what was the other one. Beautiful there and they welcomed us with open arms. They were the only places I went to on pass and Frisco.

Interviewer: What was life like in Camp Hahn? Was it an established camp?

Oh yeah, they had gas heaters there. Ord had the old pot-bellied stoves. I remember going through San Francisco that is where I saw my first palm trees right in the islands in the road, beautiful. It snowed. Remember it snowed there when we went through in '41.

Interviewer: What were you doing basically while you were at Ord and Hahn?

Just waiting I guess.

Interviewer: Training?

I don't remember too much training. Probably there were too many guys there. Probably close order, yeah, we did close order drill. I remember doing that because somebody really goofed up. He was trying to make an impression in front of some nurses. He said squads right instead of left and everybody ran up, into a wall. Heh, Heh!

Interviewer: So you basically thought you were getting ready to ship out?

Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Did you have any idea where you would be going?

No. We had no idea. Who heard of, I didn't know, well they told us after but Pearl Harbor was strange to us. Who heard of Saipan, Okinawa or any of those islands? That was all Greek to me anyway.

Interviewer: But you knew you were going overseas. Did you personally or any of your friends do anything especially to prepare for going overseas? Any kind of special arrangements you made, letters home?

No, we just said we were on the West Coast, I think it was all censored anyway. Cause I still have a V mail letter which must have been sent from Hawaii and a lot of stuff is blacked out.

Interviewer: As a young man, you are thinking, I maybe going into combat soon.

I expected it.

Interviewer: Did you do anything to prepare for the eventuality of going into combat soon? Did you fill out your will?

No! I guess everybody thought they were invincible. Is that the right word, nothing can happen to you?

Interviewer: While you were in California, did you see any of the relocation of the Japanese Americans?

No, no, no!

Interviewer: What seem to be the general attitude towards the Japanese at the time?

Naturally, everybody hated them. Every time you turned on the radio there was anti-Japanese propaganda spewing it out, how dastardly they were and everything, which they were.

Interviewer: Feelings were somewhat higher against the Japanese than they were towards the Germans?

Oh yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: Did you run into any problems having been born in Germany?

Nope, not a one!

Interviewer: Tell me about the Lureline, you went down to San Francisco?

Well the Lureline was the flagship of the Matson Line that went from Hawaii to Frisco all the time. Did you ever hear of the cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai?

Interviewer: No.

Remember who played Dr. Mudd in the Civil War, Warner Baxter. (Warner Baxter played Dr. Samuel Mudd in the 1936 film, "The Prisoner of Shark Island") He was the cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai. Whenever he wasn't making a movie he would go to that village, Kaunakakai, and raise hell. That was a ritual. He was the cockeyed mayor of Kaunakakai, a Hawaiian song.

Interviewer: What made you think of that?

I don't know, I don't know

Interviewer: Something about the Lureline?

Yeah, yeah I think it might have been brought up there. Of course, that was the only way to travel then, was by water. You didn't have airplanes going to Hawaii and all those exotic places.

Interviewer: So you all got on the Lureline and it was like 1st class passengers?

It was, it was, we had cabins, and we had waiters! Everything was top rate. They didn't get a chance to gut it and put in hammocks, the cots not the cots, what am I trying to say with pipes and the canvas bags?

Interviewer: Bunks?

Yeah!

Interviewer: When you got to, you didn't know where you were going?

No, no.

Interviewer: When you got to Hawaii, what happened? I mean they off loaded you, where did you go, what were you told?

I don't remember being told anything.

Interviewer: When you arrived in Hawaii they sent you out to where?

We went to Kiska and Attu first and we picked up some guys from the 7th Division. And we were headed to the Philippines and the Philippines fell and they dumped us on Hawaii. On the big island and that is where I got the attabrin, acute hepatitis we had. When I wound up in the hospital, I remember them digging the trenches around the hospital. Cause they were waiting for the Japanese to invade us. Invade the Hawaiian Islands.

Interviewer: Your basic duties then on Hawaii initially were to provide for the defense of the Islands?

Right! After I got out of the hospital we got the new jeeps then with the square backs. I gave you a picture of that and we used to patrol in them. They put 30s mounts on them and some had 50s. You know a post with a machine gun. Every time we went through the pineapple fields they were so glad to see us they would load the jeep up completely with pineapples to go back to the unit. We made sure we went by there every once in awhile. About the sugar cane, I don't know if it is known but before we got there, I guess the sugar cane cutters wanted more money. Whoever owned the sugar fields said no so the workers set the fields on fire. They thought they were gonna fix these guys. The fire was beneficial. You didn't have to chop all the leaves off and it did something to the sugar inside that made it simpler, you know. In fact some of them lost their lives because they didn't need so many cutters. When we went to Oola which I never got to because I wound up in the hospital. But in Oola they had a sugar crusher, a little train that brought the cane to the crusher that squeezed the juice out of it. After I got out of the hospital we wound up in the Volcano House(The Volcano House Hotel is the only hotel in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park?. This was a resort, fancy, had horses there, cottages. Good duty!

Interviewer: By this time, you were no longer concerned about the possibility of the Japanese invading the Islands?

Ahhh, no it was always in our mind that they would. Like I say when Kilauea (Mauna Loa erupted in April, 1942) erupted they told us not to write about it. If we did they blocked it out. They told us not to write about it. Of course there was no TV then but I brought that picture. It was bright at night. Between, there were two mountains on the big Island, Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa and there is a saddle between them .And every animal that was brought to the Hawaii and escaped is in there. There are wild horses, pigs, goats, turkeys, everything. If there was an animal that was imported to Hawaii, it is there in the wild. We went hunting there a couple of times. One of the guys shot a goat and brought it back and buried it because it stunk so.

Interviewer: At this time, you were still the 53rd Brigade, right?

On Hawaii, yes.

Interviewer: And what kinds of defensive position were set up by the brigade? Were they down by the shore?

No, we were right in the mountain by the Volcano house. That is where we were stationed. Oola came first but that is when I was in the hospital. When I joined my unit they had moved to the Volcano House.

Interviewer: Trench lines?

No, nothing. This was right up in the mountains in the middle of the Island. No we didn't make any preparations whatsoever there. Nope, none.

Interviewer: Then came the move to Oahu? What were you doing on Oahu? What was the mission?

I guess it was a stepping stone. On Hawaii when they trianglized the division they made us the 27th Recon Troop, Cavalry. Some general in Scofield Barracks sent a letter to our CO saying, "Oh I see the cavalry is on Hawaii. Send a squad of your men to the Parker ranch and have them help round up the cows." Parker ranch is the third largest cattle ranch in the world. Did you know that? All we took was our jeeps and all we did was get in the way. The duty was easy but we had to have interpreters. The cowboys were either Hawaiian or Portuguese. They didn't speak any English at all.

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Interviewer: So were you lassoing cows?

We didn't do nothing except get in the way. We didn't have ropes or horses. We rode around in the Jeeps and goofed off.

Interviewer: That was on Hawaii?

Yes, that was on Hawaii. From there we went to Oahu. Hawaii was where we got the Thompsons, Garands, new helmets and pith helmets. Why we got pith helmets, this is not the equator; Hawaii is 88 degrees year round. You know what I mean? And it is not humid or anything. You got the pictures there. ? even, Ross with his Thompson. The Thompsons we got were drums, first. 50; you wind them like a clock after you load them.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to train on the weapon?

Oh yeah! Yeah we took them out. You know, it is ironic now, because my motor officer, I was a pretty good shot, I am not bragging but I was. We were training with the gas masks too. He says OK Mark get your Garand there, they put up some kind of a target maybe 200 yards away, he says now shoot at that. I hit it pretty good. And he says now troops Mark is going to put on a gas mask and you will see the difference. I did better with the gas mask because I took longer. Heh, heh, heh!

Interviewer: How did you feel about the Garand vs. the Springfield and the new helmet vs. the old helmet?

No comparison. No comparison. Wonderful! I was issued a carbine and I didn't take it. I wanted a Garand. For the wallop.

Interviewer: Now on Oahu and Hawaii, did you get a chance to mix it up with the Hawaiians, get to meet them, what was that like?

Yeah, I kinda got tangled up with a girl, there at the Volcano House. She worked there. Nothing serious, took her down to Hilo to the movies. Nothing else. Kimeo Endo was her name. I remember her. I wonder what she is doing now. Probably owns half of Hawaii.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to go into Honolulu?

Oh yeah, every weekend. It was wild. You would go in and they would limit your drinking. I went in this place once and nobody was an alcoholic then. Yeah we had one in the outfit. I ordered a drink and it was all watered down stuff anyway. And I drank it and ordered another one and oh you had your limit. You had your three. I said what in hell are talking about I had three, I had one. So we went down to see the Kamehameha statue in front of city hall/ capitol bldg. whatever it was. It was nice. We would goof off; get the hell away from camp for a couple of hours. They had a truck to take you in and pick you up at a certain hour.

Interviewer: Did you go through the Division Jungle Training School while you were on Oahu?

I don't know what you mean.

Interviewer: There was a special school run by run by the 27th Division, a jungle training school run by

Oh yes, yes, yes! I got a picture, didn't I bring that too, there is supposed to be Japanese writing on the building, and yeah I went through that.

Interviewer: What was that school like?

I t was all right, it was nothing. You crawled through mud and shot and what not but I don't think you learned anything different.

Interviewer: How about any special amphibious training?

I told you what happened with that when we got on the reef and spilled over and lost all the rifles and helmets. We didn't lose any guys but the boats got all tore up. We were training for Magicienne Bay on Saipan, which I didn't know. That is what they told us later. And we trained where the blowhole is and lost the Lieutenant.

Interviewer: Your first mission in combat was Makin? And you were attached to the 165th?

Yes, the 165th, but I don't remember that.

Interviewer: Weren't you supposed to be an observer for them?

Yeah, observer, there were about a half a dozen of us. But I don't remember it. I don't remember how, like on Okinawa to this day I don't know how I got ashore. I remember Saipan, boy, for hours and hours going around and around and then we made the mad dash. A couple of the boats got direct hits from mortars. Boy, whew!

Interviewer: Where you observing for artillery, mortars?

No, you mean on Makin, no we just went in, we were one of the troops that is all.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about once you were on Makin?

No I don't! I think it is on my discharge, it's got all the islands I was on. They don't call it Makin and Okinawa is called Ryukyus, I don't know what Saipan was, yeah the Marianas. And there is another one, I don't know, probably Makin. All I got was a brown arrowhead on my discharge. That is why I said when I got my discharge this is all wrong. And they said to stay a couple of weeks and we will get it all straighten out. I said baloney, you know.

Interviewer: On Saipan you went ashore with the Marines?

Yes.

Interviewer: So your company was the first of the division to get on shore at Saipan.

Well the whole division; that is why we circled in the ocean for hours and hours so the whole division got loaded. Then we made the mad dash for the beach. But the marines were in there too. I don't know what side they were on.

Interviewer: Saipan, physically, the geography of Saipan was very different from Makin?

Uhm, I don't know.

Interviewer: What about the beachhead at Saipan? What was that like?

Well we all made it as far as I know. And I saw, not one of our officers, they got a hold of a Jap and he just picked him up and blew him away (he makes shooting a pistol to the head motions). Like I say, lives meant nothing. Took his .45 out and blew the back of his head right out.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of shelling on the beach when you got there?

No! They did the shelling before. There were a lot of dead bodies. They were our guys, not my outfit, Marines and everything.

Interviewer: And so from the beach you moved into the south end of the island towards Aslito airfield?

I think so but we were held up there for a while with that smokestack and there were Japs ahead of us. After we cleared it out I think we went to Aslito. Like I say those Seabees they started grading that out while the army and the marines cleared out the Japanese.

Interviewer: Moving down to Asalito did you run into any Japanese tanks?

No I didn't see any, yes I did, I saw two that were knocked out. They were tin cans compared to what we had.

Interviewer: Were you working with any of our tanks at the time?

No it was just our division as far as I remember. We were right in the middle of any mopping up.

Interviewer: What were the Japanese defensive positions like? Were there spider holes down towards the southern end by Aslito? Any problems rooting out the Japanese?

We got them out of there. The only one I saw was where the guy was in the hole where he stood up. They didn't have the foxholes like we did. They had holes where they hunkered down. That is the only holes that I remembered seeing on Saipan. Of course they used everything else when they kept on being pushed back.

Interviewer: After the airfield was captured did you go on to Nafutan Point? What was that like?

I think that was when we lined up, regiments and everybody, shoulder to shoulder and you were jus SOL if you hit a pocket of Japs. Our outfit really didn't hit a whole bunch of them.

Interviewer: Did you hear it on the left or the right as you were going forward?

Yeah, you could hear shooting. Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Then after Nafutan you were pulled out and sent towards the northern end of the island?

I don't remember just where we went but I do remember it rained like the devil that one night we were sitting in a foxhole. And like I say we had jumpsuits and we had ponchos and I am sitting there kinda asleep which is kinda stupid because my head, everybody's, the foxhole was full of water, we had a regular deluge there. Of course it was warm but I felt something crawling around me in my jumpsuit. So I ripped it open and here was a centipede about 18" long. And he got me twice. I got two big lumps now; I

am a humpback from that. I got my old army knife out and I sliced him in two. But it burned like hell the first bite. I got the most of whatever he had. The second one was just minor. Someone says to me when I went to the VA you got two lumps on your back. I said I do. He said yeah and that is the only thing I figure out what it's from; the venom in there.

Interviewer: You weren't evacuated after you were bit by the centipede.

No, no, no! That just came with the, you know, normal. There was no evacuation. If you were sick or something, you stayed in your foxhole. You did. I spent, I betcha, a week in my foxhole with the dengue fever and everything.

Interviewer: Why the jump suits? Why not the regular fatigues?

Because we had the armored cars. Which we didn't have on Saipan, we left them in Hawaii.

Interviewer: Are the jump suits a little more difficult to live in in the jungle?

No. On that picture there, it shows a few of us in jump suits and the rest have on buttoned fatigues.

Interviewer: So what was it like at night in a foxhole?

You didn't get much sleep. When you were in the foxhole, you had your .45 out and you had your knife sticking up on your belly and you slept like that. Oh yeah! On Saipan, they had them hermit crabs and every once in a while one would fall into your foxhole and you didn't know what the hell in was, a grenade or what, you know. You were alert.

Interviewer: Did you get a lot of Japanese activity at night?

No, not too much. I told you about John Nagy when he was on guard and got nine of them.

Interviewer: Now I know you said you were up around Garapan. But before you moved up to Garapan were you involved in the movement through Death Valley.

Yes.

Interviewer: What was that like?

I know there were a lot of casualties that is all I know. That was just before the banzai charge wasn't it?

Interviewer: Well Death Valley, Garapan and then the banzai attack.

Yeah.

Interviewer: Death Valley was the area in the middle of the island between the two heights. The 106th and the 105th going up through.

Yeah, I think we were in the middle. Yes we were. And the irony of it was they were stretched out and as the island got wider, which meant, you were almost by yourself. Your other men are out of sight. Oh that was bad news.

Interviewer: Was there a problem with the Japanese positions there in the cliffs?

No I got pictures home from the Albany paper where we were blowing them out with phosphorous grenades. The guys went up there, I didn't myself but our outfit did. I don't know where I was. I was probably sick in bed, in my foxhole. Heh, heh. Shows the phosphorous coming out.

Did you run across any of the natives?

Yeah.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Scared to death. They stayed shy of us because of the propaganda. We were going to butcher them, you know.

Interviewer: Did you recall hearing about the mass suicides?

I saw it. I saw it. Yeah I saw one woman, she threw her kid off, a couple of them did. Even guys. I told you about the guy that committed suicide with a file. Horrible! As we got near them, you could hear them blow themselves up. And they were blowing up the civilians too. They were so afraid of us, they just did themselves in.

Interviewer: What must you have been thinking when you watched civilian women throw themselves off the cliff?

To me it was such a waste because it was unnecessary. The propaganda, I don't know, you can't outlaw it.

Interviewer: In Garapan, this was the first city in

There wasn't much left of it. There wasn't. There weren't too many houses.

Interviewer: Did the Japanese fight from the houses?

Some of them did. Actually, I saw some but the other guys got them. I don't think I fired a shot in Garapan. Maybe I did but I don't think I really did. It didn't take too long if I remember right.

Interviewer: And it was north of Garapan where the 105th was hit by the banzai charge?

Yeah right. You see one of our platoons, one of the twins, I don't know which one it was either Tom or the other, I don't remember his name. He warned them in the Division G-2 or we did, our unit, that something was going to happen. They were getting all their soldiers together in this one location for something. Herzog said there were 6,000 that came down in that banzai charge. All liquored up and anything they used in defense they had, rifles, clubs, sticks of sharpened bamboo, whatever, anything. But they got mowed down by the thousand.

Break at 1:39:01

This ends the interview.