

Grinaldo, Nicholas H. Interview  
September 26, 2001

Interviewer Michael Aikey  
Videographer Wayne Clarke  
at Latham Headquarters.

*Transcribed from video disk by Ben Stoline on June 12, 2013, in Chesapeake, Virginia.*

A: Mr. Grinaldo, where were you born and where did you go to school?

G: Troy, New York

A: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked, how did you feel?

G: I was at Ft. McClellan Alabama. I was shook up. We were going to get stuck fighting. I was in the mess hall for breakfast. We were moving that same day.

A: When did you join the National Guard?

G: I joined the Guard about three months before we were federalized, October 15, 1940.

A: Why did you decide to join the National Guard?

G: My friend joined, Frank Soudo (sp), he later joined the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne (Division), I was going with his sister at the time. I joined C Company, 105<sup>th</sup> Infantry, in Troy.

A: Who was CO at the time?

G: (thinking) So long ago, it was Captain Fletcher.

A: Was it a good group of guys?

G: There had to be 60 of us in C Company at the time, but back then you just could not go up and join. You had to have a sponsor. My sponsor was Frankie Soudo .

A: What was the Guard like back then?

G: It was like a family gathering, everyone was congenial, we had a lot of fun. We drilled about once a month, then we went to camp. I only had one camp. We went up to DeKalb Junction. We did maneuvers in the field. (Candid)I don't know if I should say this or not. The night before we left, one of the guys went to, shall I say, 'a house of ill-repute' in Troy, he picked up a dose of crabs, (smirking, laughing) he spread it through the whole 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, because we shared latrines. But they were good guys back then (smiling).

A: So it was a pretty close group?

G: Yes, a good group. Unfortunately, a lot of them wound up going OCS in later years. Matter of fact, my company commander wanted me to go. I had a meager education, just graduated from grammar school, could not go to high school because back then, everyone needed that extra buck, to help the family. I figured I could not make it. Later, in Schofield Barracks, Colonel (William) O'Brien, he sent to Ft. Benning for all these test papers. He made every buck sergeant and up take the test. I was a staff sergeant at the time, I got an 82 on it. I turned it into my company commander, Lee G. Brown, an attorney from California, he blew his stack. He said, 'You could have done it (passed the test easily).' I said, 'I would just as soon stay with the company'. These were the guys I was with all these years. I did not want to leave. You never knew where you were going. A lot of them who did sign up, John Shehay,(sp) got killed in Europe.

A: Now, you were federalized in October, 1940?

G: October 15, 1940. I will remember that day like my own birthday.

A: What was the feeling, when the regiment got federalized, did you expect it?

G: Yeah, we knew it was coming. A week before they told us to get all our business finalized. Then we knew something was in the air. We were quarantined for a week in the Troy National Guard armory, we could not go home. It's near the fieldhouse. We marched down Avenue B, past the campus, to the central (rail) station.

A: Were there well-wishers there, people to see you off?

G: Yeah, families all saying goodbye. We hopped on a train to Fort McClellan. I was very desolate there. When we first got down there, we slept in pup tents. They had no quarters for us. They had platforms for pyramid tents, but they did not have those type of tents. We were killing rattlesnakes and copperheads, and a lot of the guys got bitten by them. It was desolate, very desolate. Then they moved us into better quarters, pyramid tents, it was a lot better living (than pup tents). I was a private back then. I moved up (got promoted) when we got to Fort Ord, California, I became a corporal back then.

A: So living at Fort McClellan was rugged?

G: It was in the initial phase of it, but after that they brought us over to this new area, I got a picture of it at home, it was pretty decent but still pyramid tents.

A: What was training like?

G: It was pretty rugged, pretty tough. We had a Colonel by the name of Hopkins. He was long-legged individual. Every step he took was over a yard. Thirty five, forty mile hikes was nothing to him.

A: What were the officers like in general?

G: They were good. Except my company commander, he was an Irishman. He hated Italians. He did not like us. He did not like me in particular because I was not taking any of his 'gump'. He volunteered me twice, in the Makin Island deal, with the 106<sup>th</sup>, giving critiques in the field (War Department Observer?). Later, he volunteered me to go to Eniwetok. Oh, yeah, he really loved me! When I got back to Schofield Barracks, he offered me a scotch, because I was shaking pretty bad. You get shot at enough, you start to shake. I said, 'I will take that scotch, but I will tell you one thing, don't volunteer me again, because before I leave, I'm gonna come up and blow your brains out (smirking, smiling).' Honest to God! He wanted to court martial me (for threatening him). I looked around and said, 'Well, I don't see anyone else around here. My word is as good as yours.'

A: You did not get volunteered again?

G: No. We did not get a chance, we shoved off for down under. I should not say this but I'm gonna say it, he turned yellow under fire. And I stood exactly 20 feet away from where Colonel O'Brien turned around and lashed at him. He (O'Brien) says, 'You better hope I don't make it because if I do I'm gonna throw the book at you and make sure every god-darned page is open when I throw it.' This was on Saipan. I stood twenty feet away. Unfortunately, O'Brien didn't make it.

A: What did you think of Alabama?

G: I used to go to Aniston on pass. We marched through the streets of Aniston to go to Fort McClellan. And they were up on the rooftops and out of the windows throwing bricks at us. They yelled, 'Yankee Go Home!' They had a regiment of southern troops down at the old Ft. McClellan. And they moved in a colored (African American soldiers) regiment, and oh Jesus Christ like was murder down there. They moved the southerners right out of there.

A: What did you think of the South, I wasn't quite like Troy?

G: I didn't care for it really, I'd rather be back home.

A: Now you were involved in major maneuvers?

G: I was in two of them. Tennessee was all right, after that was the big one. They claimed they had 400,000 men in that Arkansas Louisiana deal.

A: Explain what you did on a maneuver.

G: A lot of walking. We were the Blue Army, against the Red Army, seemed like all you done was walk!(chuckles) As far as tactics was concerned I guess the upper brass knew what the hell they were doing, but to me it was nothing but a hike all the time. We did not have blanks then. We used to steal chickens on the farm. We used to roast pigs over the spit. It was like a picnic. You did learn about taking advantage of the terrain, all that stuff.

A: How were you NCOs?

G: Good. They were Troy men.

A: Did you get replacements?

G: When we got to Fort McClellan. There were 67 men who left Troy in C Company. The picture I got at home, believe it or not, it was hanging in the National Guard Armory. It's got 165 or 166 men in it. It was all small pictures (individual ones). It's about 3 foot by 4 foot, it was in the Troy Armory. A friend of mine that joined the Guard after the war, turned around and said to me one day, he says, 'I saw your picture up there, it's a big picture; unfortunately they're using it as a door stop.' I says, 'You gotta be kidding me.' Hell, the guys didn't mean nothing to them. So I says, 'Any chance you can nail that (bring it to me)?' He says, 'You got it.' And I do have it.

A: How did they fit in?

G: Alright. The first draftees were from New York City. They had a spattering of every nationality: Italian, Polish, Jewish. They were all good people.

A: After Fort McClellan, where did you go?

G: That was right after they bombed Pearl Harbor. We went to the TVA Project in northern Alabama. We had to guard what they call the Wilson Dam. We were there about two weeks. Then all of a sudden we packed up and moved back to Fort McClellan. We stayed there for about 3 or 4 days, then get on board trains to California.

A: This was the first time you were away from home, what was the train ride like across country?

G: It was alright. Seeing different things, it was interesting. We rode in regular coaches.

A: Where did you end up, in California?

G: Camp Haan. There was a big airfield, Marsh Field. We were guarding the bomb dumps. They had them stacked in like cordwood, 500 pounder, 1000 pounders. We had double guards. We were there a couple weeks, then we moved up to Fort Ord.

A: What was your feeling, marching next to all of these explosives?

G: Scary, it was scary.

A: You then moved to Fort Ord, what did you do up there?

G: We were not there long, we filled up more replacements and got all new equipment. And the next thing you know we were on board the ... (thinking) HMS Aquitania, sister ship of the Luisitania. Then we went to Hawaii.

A: What was your first ship ride like?

G: Very fortunately I never got seasick but I was on the verge. It was terrible. We were way down in the bottom of the hold. I used to sneak up at night. The British used to coil this big heavy rope in a big circle, about this high (gestures 3 or 4 feet tall). It was hollow. I used to sneak up at night, I'd get inside. That's where I slept until daybreak. That stench down there, of vomit, was terrible. Vomit was swishing back and forth across the floor. They claimed we were fired on by a torpedo. I was laying in the bunk that day, the ship lurched, damn-near threw me right out of the bunk. And they said later we had been fired on by a torpedo. We got to Honolulu. We stayed on the ship for better than half a day. Then we took a tramp steamer, a smaller ship, took us over to the Big Island. We did guard duty over there, that was about it.

A: Did you get to do any sightseeing in Hawaii? Did you get to see Pearl Harbor?

G: I went to school at Pearl Harbor, for airplane spotter school. Then, I did not realize what the hell I was getting into, but I volunteered for ( video garbled- believe he says 'Reconnaissance'). They taught us how to get out of a sub, you know, reconnoiter enemy-held islands, you know. After the school was over, which was about two weeks, in Pearl Harbor, we got on board this sub. We cruised for about three or four days, and all of a sudden, we surfaced. And we went right through the whole routine, got in the rubber rafts, and headed for shore. And this lieutenant that was in charge, he turned around and said, 'Well, we got azimuth to go by...'. We all had compasses in case somebody got lost, we knew where the hell we were going. I don't think we were three or four hundred yards in from the beach, when they announced, 'VERY WELL DONE GUYS!!' What they done is they circled the island of Hawaii, to make us believe that we were going into enemy territory.

A: What did you think of riding in the submarine?

G: It was all right, a little scary, close.

A: You were trained as basic infantryman?

G: I was a squad leader, then I moved up to platoon guide, which is second-in-command of the platoon. That's what I was when we were over in Saipan. I went from corporal to buck sergeant, then from buck sergeant to staff sergeant. When I was squad leader, I had 12 men under me, then after I went to platoon guide I was in charge of a whole platoon, 32 men. A regular platoon sergeant was a tech (Technical) sergeant.

A: How long were you in Hawaii?

G: Oh Jesus, (thinking) three and half years. When we first got there, we set up barbed wire, dug trenches, set up pillboxes, stuff like that. And mostly it was beach duty, regular outposts. And we'd man them sometimes three or four months at a stretch. We were to report activity like ship, airplanes, give the direction they were going, take an azimuth, call it in. It was boring, we played pinnacle, enjoyed being alive I guess. (smiling, laughing)

A: Then you were volunteered to go to Makin?

G: I was supposed to go as an observer. I had to take orders from the platoon sergeant I was assigned to and I fought along just like the rest of them. I was assigned to the 165<sup>th</sup> (Regiment). The 105<sup>th</sup> did not go on that. I was on detached service with them.

A: What was the landing like?

G: Very calm, we shelled the hell out of it before we went in, but we were fired on a little bit but not like at Saipan. There were only 500 Imperial Japanese marines. It was three days, that's it. We had the island in 3 days. In basic training, we were told that the Japanese were very short people, short arms. And they had to have a longer rifle and bayonet in order to get to us because of their shortness. And the first dead jap I saw, an Imperial marine. And he had shoulders on him about that wide (gestures with hands and arms outstretched), and he was all of 6 foot some, believe me. And I looked at him, I says, 'Holy shit, what have got here?'(laughing, astonished). Later, they said that these people were from northern Japan, a lot of Russian blood in them, that's why they were so big.

A: Did you learn any lessons that you were able to bring back?

G: Oh yeah. I learned a lot of lessons, believe me. Don't touch nothing you don't have to because of booby-traps, rule number one. And then just don't get foolish and try to win the war by yourself because you can't do it. It's got to be a group effort. Some guys, I seen that on Saipan, went berserk and never come home.

A: So then you went to Eniwetok?

G: Yeah. He didn't like me that's for sure!(laughing).

A: Who were you attached to ?

G: Same group, 165<sup>th</sup>, but different guys. (Editor Note- 106<sup>th</sup> Regiment fought at Eniwetok, not 165<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Grinaldo is correct that this was a different unit).

A: What was the landing like there?

G: That was a little bit heavier. We did get fired at pretty good there. I did not make the initial landing there, I went in on the second wave. The guys that went in the first wave, they took a hell of a beating. They (Japanese) used to leave bottles of *sake* around half full, it was poisoned. They used to booby trap the steps on the shacks.

A: What did you do after Eniwetok?

G: We returned to Hawaii. They said, 'Get ready to move out, we are headed for Saipan.' We didn't know(our destination), everything was sealed orders. When we got to Saipan, we didn't go in on the initial beach landing. I think it was Purple Beach 2. We were supposed to hit right there at *Charan Konoa*. The marines went in first and took Aslito Airfield. Twice they got knocked off of it, twice they took it. Their losses were so high, we got called in. We were the reserve, the 27<sup>th</sup>. We

went in late in the afternoon on the second day. I will tell you I stepped over more god-darned dead marines than I did anything else. They were all over the place. They took a shellacking.

A: What were you told about Saipan before you hit it?

G: Nothing, really. We didn't even know we were going to it. We opened the orders when we were almost there. We hit the beach late in the afternoon, and we dug in. That night, I can remember, a couple of jap airplanes flew over the fleet. I never saw anything so beautiful as those tracers that night. They lit up the sky. Believe it or not, neither one of the planes were touched. They missed both planes, and the following morning, we jumped off. We were supposed to take the airfield, Aslito Field, they wanted that for the bombers. Very fortunately, we walked right across that field, skirmish line, not a damn shot was fired. We got to the other side and were told to dig in again because they figured the counterattack, and it never developed. And that was right close to what called Mount *Tapotchau*. Fortunately, my company was in reserve. The rest of the battalion attacked, boy that was slaughter. They were just waiting for us up there. [Editor Note: Mr. Grinaldo may be referring to Mount *Nafutan*, in the south east corner of Saipan, east of the Aslito Airfield. Mount *Nafutan* was attacked at high cost to 1/105 Infantry after the airfield was captured. Mount *Tapotchau* was located farther north, in the center of Saipan.]

A: Did that attack succeed?

G: No. Half the companies rolled down that mountain dead for Christ's sake. They had, from what I was told, a German 88. Where they got it I don't know, but they were firing these short overhead bursts at guys and really did a number on them.

A: So they withdrew ?

G: Yeah we regrouped. They put the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines (division) on the left going up toward Garapan, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines (division) were on the opposite side. They had all the level ground. The 27<sup>th</sup> division got stuck in the mountains fighting. We had to fight cave to cave, hand to hand sometimes. And we had a General Smith, Ralph Smith, one hell of a good man. And he was relieved by this marine General Howlin' Mad Smith. From what I understood back then the reason he was relieved of his command was that the marines said we could not keep up with them. Well Jesus Christ they had tank support down in the lowlands which we didn't have. They confiscated half of the 27<sup>th</sup> artillery, the 104<sup>th</sup> and the 105<sup>th</sup> (FA BNs), and we were supposed to keep up with them. The best we had was 60 and 81 mm mortars. Half the time you could not use them because of the terrain. There were mountains, gulches, hillsides, caves dug into them. One cave, you could drive six 10-wheelers side by side into it, and that one was loaded with food. Canned tangerines, shrimp, tuna, all kinds of stuff. We gorged. That's the way it was, it was really rough going up through them goddamn mountains. As much as you tried, you could not keep up with them. You go past a cave, so small you never noticed the opening. The next thing you know you're getting shot at from behind.

A: Did you get to see the Japanese? Often in island fighting you did not see the Japanese?

G: Yeah, we saw them alright. We saw them alright. (somber).

A: So you drove up the center of the island?

G: We drove up about two-thirds of the way, then swung to the northwest. We came down off the ridges, and we headed for *Tanapag*, that was a jap naval base there at *Tanapag* Harbor. We had one day's relief (rest), the only day we had to clean up, do what we want. And the following morning, we jumped off again, moved up to...(thinking)...I think *Marpí* Point, I think it was. And we got as far as there. And we dug in that night, formed a perimeter (terrain). It was hilly, level in spots. And where we dug in, right on the side of this big slope. And I remember it rained like hell that night, and the water was running down the slope into our foxholes. I had to use my helmet to keep bailing out, you know. The night before the Banzai, I woke up that morning and oh Jesus Christ, they got above us (the Japanese). And they were giving us plunging fire, that was shooting right down into the foxholes because they were high enough to look down. Small arms mostly. Lt. Gower, he was my platoon leader, he was Regular Army. And he went to Officers Candidate School, he was a good man. He called us together, the squad leaders. He said, 'I think we're getting hit with a Banzai. We're gonna have to pull back.' Holy Jesus, there was howling and screaming. They had naked women, with spears like, stark naked. They took bayonets and strapped them on the end of a pole. And they come screaming at us figuring, 'Hey, the good-hearted American ain't gonna shoot a woman, you know, (Mr. Grinaldo says "Horseshit"?) Under his breath). There were so many of them. That clip in the newspaper, I just gave it to Wayne. Me and Sam DiNova(sp), that I saved his ass on Saipan. Like cockroaches coming out of the woodwork. We had to pull back. And I was with the lieutenant and a few of the men that was with me. And all of a sudden I turn around and I see the lieutenant go down. He took one right across the (gestures to his jaw), blew the whole bottom of his jaw right off. I went to grab him, to take him with us. And he said, (shaking his head) 'Get back to the Japanese trenches.' There were trenches at the point, that's where we headed.

A: Was the fallback orderly, or...

G: No, no, it was general rout, a general rout. We had them running right alongside of us. I had one running right alongside of me. Christ he wasn't five feet from me. I don't know whether he was 'sakeed' up or what the hell was wrong with him, but I put him down quickly, I tell you! They were right with us!

A: So you withdrew to the Japanese trenches. Were you getting any support at this point, in these trenches?

G: No. That's when I got shot through the shoulder. When we fell back to the trenches, my rifle fell out of my hand. And I went to pick it up and I could not close my hand. And I looked and I seen a trickle of blood on my right shoulder. And then we had a guy by the name of Tony Simonds. He was in C Company before he went to medical detachment. And he was running with us and he turned around he says, 'Let me fix your arm sergeant.' I says, 'Not here, Jesus Christ not here.' He says, 'Here, you're hurt bad!' He took care of me. While he's standing in front of me, he took one(



bullet) right in the back, that was intended from me. Maybe, I don't know, but he took it, nice guy, real nice guy. We got to the Jap trenches alright, and all of sudden we started to get hit with artillery fire. Real bad, and it was our own. They had to be 155 (mm) howitzers, and they poured them into us, trying to break up the jap banzai. That's what they tried, to break up the attack. Unfortunately, we had made it back there and they didn't know we were there, and they killed - half of the casualties suffered - was right there.

A: When you got to the Japanese trenches, was your squad intact, or was it just...

G: No, you didn't know anybody. There were people I never knew.

A: But you were able to form a defense?

G: Yeah. They were up in the coconut trees, they were all over shooting down on us.

A: At about what time did you sense that the attack had been broken?

G: Yeah, it was, had to be after one o'clock, it started after daybreak.

A: Any reinforcements?

G: Yeah, the 106<sup>th</sup> tried to get up to us. They couldn't, they got stopped. The Japanese were behind us. We were cut off, surrounded, like the First Battalion, and the Second Battalion, 105<sup>th</sup>, right at that point. They couldn't make it up to us. Matter of fact, one of our lieutenants, him and another lad, got into this jeep. They tried to make it back for reinforcements. They hit a land mine on the way. Blew right up, killed them both.

A: Now, did you see (Colonel) O'Brien during any of this?

G: I seen O'Brien the day before, and just before we moved up. And then I seen him on that jeep, with the 30 caliber machine gun.

A: Where was that in relation to the Japanese trenches?

G: Way up front, up when we first got hit. I can remember his last words. He said, 'Don't give them lousy bastards an inch of ground.' That's all he kept hollering. There was about four or five officers tried to get him, they tried to drag him off the jeep but he would not. He stayed right there, took the officers with them, got them all ( enemy officers trying to kill O'Brien?).

A: Did you know Baker(Sgt. Tom Baker, MOH) at all?

G: I knew Tommy Baker. Yes, I knew him well, because we used to drink a little bit together, you know. He was a nice guy, he was real good people. And he was a good soldier. He was in A Company.

A: So you withdrew to the Japanese trenches, and things had kind of stabilized?

G: So in the afternoon, I spotted these landing craft, coming up the shore , there was about, it was about 4:00 (PM) , or 4:30. If they did not take us off that night, none of us would have made it back. They would have had us all that night. No buts about it. There were about eight or ten Alligators (LVT). I spotted them and turned around and shouted to the guys, 'Here comes our salvation, were gonna be taken out.' And this lieutenant, I guess he was a lieutenant, he started blowing the hell out of me : ' What do you mean giving these guys false hope? What's the matter with you? Keep your mouth shut!' I said, ' Who the hell are you?' He said 'I'm lieutenant so and so.' Well, let me tell you lieutenant, if you can't tell the difference between an American Alligator and a jap landing craft, you don't deserve to have bars on your shoulder.' Right after that, they had it in for sure. I went down that morning, Sammy, pulled Sammy out of the water. He was wounded and laying in the water. I saved his life on Saipan. I noticed all these tits sticking up out of the sand. I knew they were land mines. And when these guys were coming in with the Alligators, I wanted to get the hell out of there. I didn't want to see them blown up. So I turned around and I ran down to the beach. And I started waving them off. And the guy, coxswain I guess, he had a horn. He said, 'What's wrong?' I says, ' The mines are all over the place, back off.' He says, 'Can you guide me in?' 'Yeah, I can guide you in.' So I did , I guided him in, and they went right in behind him. He turned around and said,' My God, man, you're wounded. ' And I says, 'Yeah, ...' He says, 'You're the first man out of here. Get on the Alligator. I want your name, rank and serial number. I'm putting you in for the Silver Star.' I never got it. I got the Bronze Star.

A: How many fellows were evacuated?

G: I really could not tell you because like I said, I was the first one getting the hell out of there. I wound up in the marine field hospital, for wounds. For at least three days, then it got so bad. I could not take the pain anymore. So I had a lad with me that was from Melrose(NY?), Jack Henry. And he called the medic over, 'You better come with me.' Gangrene had set in. They operated on me there. The next day I flew back to Hawaii, for another operation back there. Then I got discharged from the hospital. And wound up in what they called the 13<sup>th</sup> Replacement Center, just outside of Schofield. They classed me non-combatant. Next thing you know, I get called by this major, and he wanted to speak to me. I walked in, and he started to hit me with Italian. He spoke to me in Italian. I answered him back in English. He says, ' I spoke to you in Italian, I understand you speak Italian. I want you to answer me in Italian.' So I did. I said, 'What's it all about sir?' He says, ' We're bringing in 3000 Italian Prisoners of War from the States. We're forming three different compounds. We need Italian Americans that can speak the language and act as interpreters and first sergeants.' I got stationed in Compound One, which was right in the middle of Honolulu Harbor. And that's where I stayed for about a year, after Saipan.

A: It must have been one happy group of Italians to be POWs, stationed in Hawaii?

G: (shaking his head, disgusted) They were considerable bastards. they were real bastards, very arrogant, disrespectful. Tried to make it mean for us every chance they got. They were 'Blackshirts', die-hard Blackshirts. The first night they were there, they moved in a bunch to work with the Americans. With the blacks (African American soldiers?) When they found out holy Jesus

they killed about 15 or 18 of them. I had one come at me that night. I was bare to the waist. You could not go in with a weapon, it was taboo, even though I had a 45 (pistol). This guy didn't know that I was American. He came at me with a 2x4. I hollered to him in English. I says, (pointing) 'Swing that you son-of-a-bitch and you're dead!' He says, "*Excuse us, Excuse me*". He backed off. Then the MPs come in and we quelled them. That was hectic for a while, but I stayed there with them for about a year. I guess what I went through started catching up with me, and I got the shakes pretty good. I could not even hold a canteen cup in my hand. I would spill it. I turned in to the medics. They put me in a hospital, they put me behind bars. I was there one night. And they are yelling and screaming. These guys were 'coo coo', you know. I said to this colonel the next morning, 'You better get me the hell out of here, I will be worse than these guys if you don't.' I did not sleep all night, they put me in another ward. I was there until the Japanese capitulated.

A: What kind of treatment did you get there?

G: Very good treatment. They got me down for "Tension, state, severe, and combat fatigue", they called it back then. Right now I'm shaking pretty good, just thinking about that. It's been a long time, 55 or 60, almost 60 years. I was a tough boy when I first got back, I could not hold a job. I sure as hell was not that way when I went away. My wife put up with me for years. I'd go into these fits and spasms, rip sheets, pillow cases. I told her, 'Don't come near me, if I go into a tantrum, get the hell away from me fast.' And I nearly killed her. When I guarded the prisoners, a medic grabbed me. I grabbed him, it took four guys to break the hold I had on him. I almost killed him. I almost strangled him.

A: So you were discharged when?

G: September, 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Came back to Troy. It was great. I pulled up on the bus from Albany, got off the train from Fort Dix. My dad used to go to this gin mill over on Hill Street. He used to play cards (card games called) Boss and Under Boss for drinks. And it's on a Saturday, I'll see if I can catch the old man. Unfortunately he wasn't there. But Sammy DiNova, and his old man (were there). And I sneaked up behind him, cupped my hands over his eyes, and I said, 'The least you could do was buy an old buddy a drink you cheap bastard!(smiling)' I put a ten dollar bill on the bar, I remember that. And I woke up the next morning, home. My mother is looking over me, and I says to her, 'How the hell did I get home?' She says, 'They brought you home in a taxi, cockeyed drunk.' I get dressed that morning, the ten dollar bill was stuck in my shirt pocket( smirking). Sammy's good people. I will never forget that morning, when he, during the attack, the japs started coming along, the beach. And I started to holler for some BAR fire from down there. There were a lot of them. While I was hollering, he recognized my voice. He was behind a tar barrel. He had a big chunk taken out of his thigh, look like a horse bit him. And he way laying, right in the goddamn ocean water. Saltwater. That must have hurt like hell. A couple other times I said to him, 'Who is it?' "Bimbo!" I says, 'Sammy, stay where you are!' The fire was too heavy. I started down, I had to go back. They were kicking up the sand around me. I tried twice to get to him. I could not get to him until later on. Finally when I did get to him, he started crying, 'I'm not gonna make it, I'm gonna die, tell my father and mother...' So, I says, 'You're not going anywhere, you're too friggin'!

miserable to die.’ So I says ‘ I’m shot in the shoulder, I’m hit in the hip, I’ve got one good ankle, grab ahold of it.’ And I dragged him up the beach. I left him under a coconut tree. I gave Wayne an article. They threw a surprise party for me at the Italian Community Center, back home in Troy. That’s when I got all my decorations, 55 years later. I argued with the US Government for the goddamned medals which I didn’t even want! The only reason was for my grandson. He wanted the decorations. For three years I fought with the military, then I finally got in touch with Congressman (inaudible: McNulty?). And he went to bat for me , got them all. Two Purple Hearts, Bronze Star, Asiatic Pacific, Good Conduct. I got the New York State Cross, and I got a medal that was sent to me by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, while I was at Fort McClellan. At age twelve I was elected first commander of sons of Veterans of Foreign Wars, Trojan Post, in Troy. And they sent this decoration, which I still have. I really think a lot of that. I got a couple others. The first Purple Heart I got in Hawaii, I got the general orders that go along with that. A bunch of us got Purple Hearts. Some general, shook hands, pinned it on our shirts.

A: What is your general impression of your military experience, come away with any lesson, general feeling?

G: Well, like I said, in that application, I had to kill guys, might as been just as nice a guy as myself. However they were on the wrong side. And this is one thing I have always regretted because I have known Japanese people and they are nice people. When I was stationed in Hawaii, we had to guard this railroad trestle. I had about eleven or twelve men under me there. And a Japanese family right across the way, and they worked in the sugar cane mill there. They used to bring breakfast over to me in the morning, (saying) ‘Sergeant Nick! Sergeant Nick!’ I used to let them sneak down at night to fish, which was strictly taboo under the bridge. And used to go with them. And they were real nice people. And that kinda hurt. Today I was asked, ‘What do you think of the situation now?’ (after September 11 Twin Towers Bombing) My answer was. ‘ Load up a couple of goddamn big bombers with atoms bombs, go over and just drop them. This way you know damn well you’re gonna get that sucker.’ (some will say) ‘What about the men, women, and children?’ Hey, they didn’t think about that when they bombed the Twin Towers. They killed over 6000 people, and they was kids there too. This is gonna be worse, it hasn’t stopped yet.

A: While on Saipan, did you take any civilian prisoners?

G; Yeah , they were hiding out in these caves, I guess they called them *Chamorros*. They were Catholic, very religious people, very quiet. They hated the Jap. The Jap used them as slaves, making them dig all the emplacements.

A: Did you ever hear of ‘Makin Mary’?

G: No. Tokyo Rose, we used to get her when we were in Hawaii. She would name ships that went down. She would say (things like), you lost your buddies, don’t you wish you were home with your girlfriends, wives, what are you doing over here. We laughed at her. We liked the music she played, all American music. It was the 40’s, which was good music.

A: Did you have any USO shows?

G: No. We had Red Cross over there, is that what you mean? I would not give a dime (to the Red Cross). When I was in the hospital, after I got the shakes and trauma. This lieutenant nurse, they had a big to-do in Honolulu, she said to me, 'You are going with them, Sergeant.' I says, 'I ain't going with them. I'm staying here, I want to be left alone, I am glad it is all over with.' She said, 'You're going, that's an order.' I got into a wheelchair, put us in a van, took us down to the shindig. We are sitting there and she says, 'How would you like a coke and a hotdog?' They had the Red Cross set up there. She come back and she was flippin' her lid. I says 'What's the problem?' She says, 'They charged me 10 cents for the hotdog and 10 cents for the coke! That's supposed to be free!' I never forgot that. And another thing, we were on Saipan, our chaplain found out they had a load of cigarettes, tobacco you know. And we were all out of cigarettes. And he comes back with a duffle bag or a musette bag. He had about six cartons of cigarettes for the whole goddamn battalion (laughing). That's all they would give him. That was Red Cross. And they had stacks and cardboard boxes full of cigarettes, which was donated by Reynolds. They never had to pay for them.

A: You mentioned the Smith vs. Smith controversy. Do you think that Ralph Smith got a raw deal?

G: I know he did, I know he did. Right now that battle is still going on. They want the Marines to apologize for what happened over there. They have been fighting for years over that. We will succeed eventually. They will capitulate.

A: Do you remember the general who took over after Ralph Smith?

G: I seen his name yesterday (thinking), but I cannot remember it. Griner. Sounds like it. I served under him a week and a half, two weeks at the most. The Marines loved him for some reason. Ralph Smith was a good man. I know that one incident, when our battalion hit Mount *Tapotchau*, that was part of the headache between the two Smiths. Howling Mad wanted us to attack that ridge, Mount *Tapotchau*, and (Ralph)Smith gave him a little flak. He says 'How do you expect me to send them to their death without any artillery support!' They had confiscated all our artillery. He (Holland Smith) says, 'You got 81 mm mortars, 60 mm mortars, use them.' That was one of the reasons, for the relief, I heard, because he would not go along. We fought altogether different kind of fighting than the Marines. The Marines are gung-ho, go get to the other side of the island, forget what you left behind. The Army always had to mop up after them. Is that a Marine insignia you got on there?

A: No.

G: (laughing) Here I am knocking the hell out of the Marines!

A: Anything else you want to share?

G: I can't think...they said I could write a book, I start to think about it, I just shake. Then I try to forget.

A: Any humorous thing happen on Saipan you can think of?

G: On Saipan, humorous, not really. No humor there, no. The humor was on maneuvers, especially that Arkansas-Louisiana maneuver, that's where I got busted. We had just completed a sixty mile hike, from Arkansas to Louisiana, and we were supposed to guard Shreveport. We got down there, we were beat. We did twenty miles a day, for three days, and I wanted to get the hell away from everything. There were four or five others, we were all non-coms. We found out the Mardi-Gras was on Tuesday. We went to Baton Rouge first. We got there late, everything was battened down. Christ they rolled up the sidewalks, so we continued on to New Orleans. We wound up with these defense workers. Nice broads. We got in good with them. They wined and dined us. The next thing you know we were staying with them. We had a ball. We stayed with them for a week, until one of them says 'Well, time to part, we got one more week, then we go to Miami Beach.' So we all said, 'Let's go!(laughing)' ' We were AWOL for two weeks. We stayed with them all the way through Miami, until one morning. We woke up, and I says to the guys, ' Who's got any money?' We were broke, didn't have a damn dime. So Papa Joe Furullo (?) from New York, says to me, 'What are we gonna do Nick?' I says, ' We just passed an MP station, we'll head for that and turn ourselves in.' We did and very fortunately, my unit wasn't too far away. This one guy, had us under armed guard, and I says, ' I got one call to make, you can't deny me that call. I want to get in touch with my company commander, Lee G. (Brown)' So we got a hold of him. He sent a jeep right down. The lieutenant come down, got us out of there. We walked up, saluted him. I said, 'Reporting as ordered, sir.' He says, 'At ease, Private. Did you enjoy yourself? (laughing)' I says, 'Very much sir.' He says, 'Would you do it again?' I says, 'Yes Sir.' He says, 'Thirty days KP.' I scrubbed pots and pans for thirty days. It wasn't two or three weeks after that I got back to staff sergeant. I had a ball.

A: Well, Nick, we appreciate you coming in.

G: I did not know how I would hold up. I shook a little bit. I just don't like to think too much about it. For the simple reason, that I get these shakes, and I'm afraid that I'll have repercussions. But I have been holding up pretty good. Get a little bit off my chest after all these years.

A: If you want to speak again let us know.

G: Well, you have had it.

A: Do you remember the Tibbits Cadets?

G: Yeah, I got a call from Sandra Goldman (?). He says come to the Tibbits meeting. They suckered me into the board of directors up there. And also got stuck with the secretary's job.(laughing)

A: Thank you again.

G: You're welcome.