

**Thomas Joseph Smith Jr.
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

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WC: Today is the 15th of November, 2013. We're at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. My name is Wayne Clarke. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name and date and place of birth, please?

TJS: Yes, Thomas J. Smith Jr., born June 4th, 1924.

WC: And where were you born?

TJS: I was born in Schenectady, New York.

WC: Did you attend school in Schenectady?

TJS: No, I didn't. I attended school in Albany, New York, a school called Vincentian Institute High School, Catholic school.

WC: What year did you graduate?

TJS: 1942.

WC: Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

TJS: Yes, I remember it very well. My brother, myself, and my cousin were hanging out with a few girlfriends of ours in high school. We'd been to a show and went back home and sat around, listened to the radio, Glenn Miller and all that stuff. All of a sudden, they were screaming, Pearl Harbor was bombed! Pearl Harbor was bombed! [gets emotional] Well, we got emotional, as kids would. We swore vengeance at the time. Of course, we didn't graduate at that time. We were still in school. We decided we would enlist after high school. While we were in high school and graduating, I found out I had another half a year of eligibility. High school requirements were different then, I guess, and I had already played three years there. So, I decided I'd finish that season out and then join the

Marines. In the meantime, I'd been rejected from the Marines because of my poor eyesight. My mother, as I said, God bless her, fed me carrots and carrot juice and everything. I actually turned a little jaundiced from it, but I still didn't pass the test. One day I was in high school and I saw the Snellen eye chart. So, I memorized the chart and I passed the test. Then my cousin John [unclear], 2.09 enlisted with me. He decided to go with us. Then, on November 28th, we joined the Marines and were shipped to Parris Island.

WC: Now, let me ask you, why did you pick the Marines?

TJS: I don't know. I just kept hearing and reading stories about the Marines and the kind of soldiers they were. Of course, at that age, you were eighteen and you were sometimes naïve and whatnot. The spirit was there. I remember as a kid in Schenectady, things had happened. We met some Marines at parades and whatnot. It was different than it is today. I remember playing sandlot ball, and at noon Memorial Day, the whistles blew, trains stopped, everyone stood at attention for five minutes in honor. [gets emotional] We were taught to be loyal to our country and love our country. It was embedded in us. Anyway, to continue, I decided to get a job. My dad worked for the American Locomotive Company.

WC: Had he been a veteran of World War I?

TJS: No, he wasn't. His brother was in World War I. I decided I'd like to do something. He was in charge of the motor shop, which they converted to tank making. He was in charge of three shifts. I got a job at night. from eleven p.m. to seven a.m. and then I went to school during the day. The pay was pretty good in those days. I remember my first check was one hundred twenty five dollars, which was pretty good in those days.

WC: Sure.

TJS: For three years we had been the championship team, but the fourth year was the worst season we ever had. We didn't do a thing. Once we enlisted, we were sent down from Albany down to Parris Island, South Carolina.

WC: Was that your first time away from home?

TJS: Yes, it was. First time. I always remember that. We got down to Parris Island and they loaded us up in trucks and we entered the gates. They were all yelling, you'll be sorry. You'll be sorry. We found out why ten minutes later. They drove us over to the barbershop and they took our hair off just like they were shearing sheep. We were bald-headed. Then, of course, you learned a new language and everything else. Pogey bait was candy, scuttlebutt was talk and coffee was joe. Your boots were boom dockers. It was a

new language to us. We had quite an experience there learning all the arts of warfare, rifles, machine guns, pistols, grenades.

WC: How long was that training?

TJS: It was about, as I remember, about eighteen, nineteen weeks at the time.

WC: How was it?

TJS: It was tough. It really was. They took you out to the rifle range and you had to snap in, as they called it. We spent two weeks out there practicing all the weaponry. Then you had to qualify. At the end of that time, we were given jobs to do. My platoon was sent to the kitchen. My buddies ended up peeling potatoes and carrots and serving as busboys. I ended up being in the steam room washing all the dishes. So, we got through there.

Everyone was given leave. I remember, twenty, twenty five of us that weren't given leave. I asked why we weren't getting leave. They said the Raiders need replacements. They'd gone through Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Makin. I said, okay. They shipped us to North Carolina where they all went. We never got a leave in all the three years I was in the service.

WC: Wow.

TJS: But, that was a new experience too because it was cold then. I remember February and there were thin layers of ice on the creeks. They had us up at five thirty in the morning. We had our cardboard huts, they called them. It was so cold and they had a little kerosene lamp light. We took our clothes and lined them up in the bunks with newspaper, everything to keep warm. We came up with the idea one day at five thirty a.m., no one could see anything, so we made a deal. When we fell out, you couldn't see anyone. We'd yell, here, here, here. We decided a couple of them could sleep in for an extra hour. We took turns beating the system. It was pretty good. While I was there, I was surprised, there were parachuters. I didn't know they had them in the Marines at the time. The parachuters were running all over and they were practicing landings off New River, North Carolina. While I was there, getting ready to ship out, the Raiders were disbanded. I was assigned to the 4th Marine Division.

WC: Now, you completed the Raider training?

TJS: I completed the training. I was all ready to go to California.

WC: How intense was that training?

TJS: That was pretty intense. It really was. They got us up, marched us to the chow hall. When we got back, we had hand-to-hand fighting, knife fighting, bayonet fighting,

grenades, crawling under barbed wire fences while machine guns were going over your head. I remember running out. We had to run a couple miles. At the creeks, they had ropes hanging from trees swinging out. If you couldn't get over to the other side you dropped in the cold water. It was intense. The phrase came out, kill or be killed. That's what we were there for. It was quite interesting. As a young kid, truly, you didn't know what you're looking for, but we enjoyed it. We had a good time doing it. It was something, how physically fit we were.

WC: Were you issued one of those Raider-type knives?

TJS: I had two knives, yes. As a matter of fact, my dad sent one. A KA-BAR, I remember the name. I was the only one in the outfit that had two knives. It was interesting training. As I said, we were heading out to California. They started the 24th Marines, they were organized there on the way out to California. We arrived there and we went to Camp Pendleton. Then, of course, at that time, the Raiders were disbanded. A lot of people might not know this, but President Roosevelt's son, [James] was the executive officer for the Carlson Raiders. Before they were disbanded, they had five Raider outfits. He became the colonel in charge of the 5th Raider outfit. Of course, they disbanded us and they dispersed them all. [Evans] Carson became the executive planning officer for the 4th Marine Division. I have a little story later about him. We got good training again at Camp Pendleton. We had to do the same thing over again. The only difference was that we had marches out there. Camp Pendleton was a ranch that a family out there owned. It was like thirty miles long. The Marines took twenty miles of that. They had their landings there, boat training. Our marches were five, ten, fifteen and twenty [miles]. We had a forced march one time. We'd gone on maneuvers. It sticks in my mind, our company commander Frank [E.] Garrison, hell of a good Marine. He said, we're going to break the record. It was twenty eight miles away. Now, we'd been on the maneuvers. We had a double knapsack on. I was a machine gunner at the time, an assistant really. I had to carry that machine gun on my back.

WC: What kind of machine gun was it?

TJS: It was air-cooled, .30 caliber

WC: The heavy one.

TJS: It was heavy. We made that, as I remember, in something like a little over nine and a half hours. Twenty eight miles. Of course, they were trying to get two to three miles an hour with a full pack. We got back. He said, I got a surprise for you. You all have Friday, Saturday, and Sunday off. I don't think there were fifteen of us who went on liberty because everyone had blisters and everything else. We were tired. It was interesting. The

Penn Line was between San Diego and Los Angeles. Of course, we liked to go to Los Angeles. The train started in San Diego. By the time it got through Oceanside, there weren't any rooms, you had to use your thumb. That is another story. I went up to Los Angeles two or three times. Three of my buddies were married. We visited the wives and they cooked meals for us. One time, we couldn't get a ride back. We were using our thumb. I know three of us got back. Roll call was at eight a.m. We got back about nine thirty a.m. We had to go before the captain. Prior to that, we had had our maneuvers. While we were out on maneuvers, I was out doing some scouting work and came back. My group was standing around a stranger to me. He was asking questions. They were giving the questions. I walked up to them and said, what the hell are you doing spilling your guts out to that guy? I didn't know who he was. It turned out he was our battalion commander. Truthfully, I never paid any attention to the officers. My officer, my company commander, and the platoon leader, I'd never met them before. Recapping the next day, everybody was laughing about the story. My company commander came to my rescue. He knew my name was Thomas Joseph, so he called me TJ. He said, that's okay, TJ. You did right. You didn't know him. These guys were spilling their guts out, so I commend you for it. Now, going back to the trip, that was our first relationship. He said, I'm not going to write you fellas up, but I'm going to give you a duty. You want to police the area for an hour? Well, policing the area meant picking up cigarette butts. It was spotless. So, for an hour we took a walk around, came back, and reported back. He said, okay, get back to your platoon. But he was that kind of a man.

WC: When you were on these weekend passes, did you get to go to any USO shows?

TJS: Yeah, I went to one USO. There were two incidents that happened where I met my family. I never got a leave. My cousin, Johnny [unclear] 12.08 was in ordnance and was somewhere in California working on artillery pieces. We contacted each other. We met at the USO show there. I remember seeing Dinah Shore. She was a star then. There were a lot of stars. I don't remember their names. They waved at us and served us drinks. That was nice. There was only one other time I was there with another friend of mine, Johnny [unclear] 12.39 from Brooklyn. He was killed later in action. We sat there. I'm trying to think of some of those names, but they don't come back to me. The young lady who waited on us invited us to her home with her mother and father. He said, take them to this restaurant. In Hollywood, they had their special restaurants. I can't remember all the names. She took us to one of the famous ones. There were a couple of stars in there. We had a nice night meeting them. One time, I met Tony Curtis.

WC: Oh, really? Wow!

TJS: Wow. Trying to think. I think one of them was John Wayne at one time. And Powell.

WC: Dick Powell?

TJS: Yeah, Dick Powell. There were some pretty nice stars there. They were very good to us. That was the last trip after that. My one buddy who was an ammunition carrier for me. In Oceanside there was a little motel. He had his wife there. The owner of the motel didn't have any legs. He had lost both legs and he was on a scooter board. They invited me down. We went down and played pinochle with them. They fixed a meal for us. We laid on the beach. It was a nice experience with them. After that, of course, then we were assigned to action. Our 4th Marine Division at that time set three records. It was the first unit to go directly from the United States into combat. We were going to the Marshall Islands. They had four major operations in thirteen months, including Iwo Jima. They were the first ones out of the Pacific, incidentally, too. It did set some good records that way. The boys were good. The men I served with, they were a good class of men, straight. One thing I'd like to say that I can't understand is, I see all the movies, you know, the heroes are up there charging. I watched that *Pacific* show that was on TV. I heard a lot of swearing words, cursing. I couldn't understand that because in my three years, I never heard a Marine swear.

WC: Really?

TJS: All I heard them say was damn it. That was the most I ever heard. They were all those kinds of people. They were good and religious. I watched that show and it upset me because I heard words that you never hear in the street here. [gets emotional] Not one Marine that I heard through the years use the Lord's name or use a swear word, the F-word, let alone. They were good boys.

WC: When did you end up going overseas?

TJS: That was February 1st and 2nd of 1944.

WC: You went directly to the Marianas?

TJS: Yeah. The Kwajalein Atoll, as I mentioned earlier, was a refueling station for the Pacific. It ran sixty miles long by twenty miles wide. They had something like eight hundred reefs in it and it was shaped like a horseshoe. And at the end of the curve at the horseshoe was Roi, Namur. There was an airfield in Roi. Namur had the ammunition dumps and the barracks for the men. So the 23rd Marines took the airfield. The 24th, the outfit I was in, was the first to land on mandated Japanese territory. In the first wave, I hit the beach. There was not a blockhouse, but an ammunition supply building. It was quite

large. I was sent with my machine gun out to the right flank because the ocean was there and no one could come around. As we were working on it, that ammunition building blew up. You could put half an LST in it. That's how deep it was, full of water before. I'd say about a quarter of my company was killed right there. I got hit in the back with a piece of shrapnel. I was there and I felt a bang and felt hurt. My buddy Garrett said to me, are you all right? I said, why? He said, your blouse is torn. Well, it ricocheted. It turned black and it swelled, but we stayed there that night. General [Clifton B.] Case was our commanding general, and he said, stay where you are tonight, dig in. So we dug in. The next morning, his words, let's get the hell off this island. So we finished the island, and on the way, we were held up by a machine gun. I ran into one of the other Marines by the name of Tom [unclear]. 17.09 He was quite a Marine. We were going forward and he mentioned the fact that there was a machine gun there. It was holding up the line, so we decided to take it out. I said, you go to the left, I'll go to the right. So we did. Took out some riflemen and threw grenades there. That released the front lines to go forward. He ended up getting a Silver Star for that. Medals were given out. I was naïve as a young fellow. I never put in for a medal. My big medals would be coming out alive. I know we had an opportunity to do that. Marines deserved it, a lot of them. I remember the company commander saying, anybody who did these things, write it up. The group I was with, we never wrote anything up. We just decided, what did the medal mean. We were that naive. We were just there to fight for our country.

After that, we went back to Maui, our advanced station for training. Beautiful island. We trained there for a while, and then our replacements came. The next operation was going to be Saipan and Tinian in the Mariana Islands. The way the Pacific was, you had Hawaii, you had Midway up here, and then you had straight across the Marshall Islands, the Mariana Islands, Guam, Tinian, Saipan, and then Iwo Jima. That was our course. Of course, the other guys went the southern route, God bless them. They had more hell than we did, I think. We left there after a few months of training and went to the Marianas. Saipan was the capital at the time. About four miles to one side was Tinian. They were coexisting together. Saipan had twenty thousand Japanese on it. Garapan was a big town and Chalan Kanoa was another town. We were in reserves in that operation. Actually, the beach was miles long. The left side, as I remember it, got in three or four hundred yards. Back to where we landed, it was right in the water. We had to spend the day there. We got in about four in the afternoon. Well, we couldn't advance because they were bombing the shore. We went in maybe thirty, forty yards. We couldn't figure out how accurate they were. We dug in and had to spend the night there. They were just devastating my company. As a matter of fact, I remember two kids again. One boy's name was Gravina.[?] He dug a foxhole about four or five feet away from me. He and his buddy,

they were both from Brooklyn. They were always arguing about the ball teams. One like the Giants, one like the Dodgers. They were that close. I'll tell you how accurate it was. They put a shell right in their foxhole. There was nothing left. We stayed there that night, took the punishment, and found out that the sugar factory had a big stack up there, a chimney. They had an observation tower there. He was directing the shells for the artillery straight into our foxholes. We lost about a third of our company there. After we got word to move in, we did. Of course, Saipan had to be divided in half. They had an airfield, Aslio Airfield, on the right side. We were on the right side, and the 3rd on the left. No, I guess it was the 2nd. The 2nd went up the left side. We went up to the right side. When we cut the island in half, they brought in the 27th Army. They were in the middle. So as we moved up Saipan, we had two Marine divisions with the 27th in the middle.

Well, as I mentioned, when you can imagine this, you had a straight line across the island regardless of what it is, and you pushed forward. When you stopped for the night, you dug in. Well, my radar training came in handy because I was with the Raiders, as I said. I was sent out to establish what they called outposts. Between our lines and their lines, I went out maybe one to two hundred yards to sit for the Japanese and spent three or four hours out there. Many times, like near Chalan Kanoa or Garapan, I heard the people talking, raising Cain, drinking, and everything else.

WC: You didn't have anybody that spoke Japanese with you, did you?

TJS: We had one or two interpreters, but not in my group. We put in that first night. The first time I went out, the group next to me was tired and they did their work. They were asked to go out through the outpost. One kid was wounded and they were reluctant. So I said, well, I'll take my group out. We went out about one, two hundred yards. It was flat in the town. We laid in a row that had the vegetables and whatnot. We heard them talking. Finally, we were out for about three hours and I said, well, let's go back. On the way back, about halfway, my rifleman said to me, TJ, who's behind me? We were in a diamond-shaped formation. I said, well, I'm in front, so-and-so's on the left, so-and-so's on the right, you're in the back. He said, I hear something. I keep hearing something. I said, well, if they hit us, we'll just have to have it, so just keep moving. Well, before we went out, it was getting dark. Of course, if you were out there and came back, the worry was your own men were going to shoot you. I was worried about it. There was a 37mm sitting over there. I walked up to him and said, look, I've got to go out here and I'm going to come back here. I want you to know this. This is the password tonight, but I'm going to add something to it. So if anybody uses that after I come in, you know they're not with us. He said, what are you going to say? You won't believe this. I forgot the first part of the

password. I said, I'm going to add Schenectady. The kid said, how do you say that? I did this. [gestures to body parts] I said, skin-neck titty. He said, Oh, okay. So we went out. We came back, gave the password, and they dug a foxhole next to them so we got in our foxhole. About an hour later, wham, wham, a 30mm was going off. Got up the next morning. There was a little road that came into the area. On the road, there were over twenty Japanese dead. They had followed us in. They must have known we were there because they knew where we were. One of those things, they could have killed us anytime if they had wanted to. They had gasoline cans. They were trying to get back to our lines, I guess, and get at our tanks. That was another story there. We moved on from there. As we went up to Bain [Bird] Island, Saipan, there's a magnificent bay they called it. We got word that they might have a contingent of reinforcements. Our lieutenant commander, [unclear] 24.14, and I took the group out and set up a perimeter waiting for them, but they never showed up.

The next thing I remember going up Saipan was, we had made pretty good progress. We got up in about the middle of Saipan. Mount Tapachou was up there overlooking the mountain. I think it was fifteen hundred feet tall, something like that. Before you reached it, there was what they called Purple Heart Ridge, Death Valley. Death Valley was like a horseshoe, all vegetation and trees. Now, part of the island was flat for farming, cane and whatnot. That ridge was Purple Heart Ridge. Well, I was asked to tie in our outfit to find them because they lagged behind. The 27th was coming off, they took care of that peninsula. I took my group over. I was the tie-in with that group, and the rest of the division was to the right. As we sat there talking to them, everything was fine. Well, the next day we pushed off, and up on the ridge there were some machine gun nests in our zone, and my group took them out. Looked down into the valley, the 27th went in, and I couldn't believe my eyes. Of course, you only saw partially. But they went in and charged. They ran in and all hell broke loose. Machine guns, mortars, and everything else. It was really a death trap there. They got trapped. Well, you saw them carrying the men out. My men were up at the top. I said, cover us as best as you can. I went back down to see what we could do. I went down and sure enough, a lot of wounded and dead. I happened to see a couple Army boys, maybe twenty yards in. So I went in and tried to get in there and you couldn't. There was machine gun fire. So I got on my belly and I wiggled my way up there, truthfully. I managed to catch one of the Army boys who was wounded in the shoulder. I dragged him out and took him back down. I started back up again and a couple of Army boys came along with me. There was an outcropping. You couldn't get through. You had to crawl. I said, why don't you sit here in this area and see if you can't just shoot like hell to draw some attention away. So, they did. This other

fellow and I went and got the other two out. They thanked me. Then I joined my company again. That was just one incident.

After that, we did the same thing over and over. It was routine. It was the same thing every day. We finally got on the other side where Tapochau was. Down on our side was pretty flat. And we were tying in again, and Frank Garrison called me over and said, Tom, TJ, take your group out and see what you can find out again, but be careful because that's a tough area with mountains. It's going to be an objective very shortly. So anyway, we started out, about four again. Started up the mountain. We found the mountain trail, went up, Now, I'm going to backtrack.

For a number of days while we were fighting on Saipan, we saw the Japanese and we shot them. We got there and there were no Japanese. We got to Chalan Kanoa and we were street fighting. No Japanese. We saw them fall. One of the guys happened to look down in the cistern. They were dropping the Jap dead in the cistern. They were pulling them back. Playing psychological war with us. When I started up Mount Tamochau, now, this is a varied story. There are two or three different versions with different people, but you see it as you see it. I started up the path with my group, and the place stunk. There were hundreds of dead Japs full of maggots and everything else laying on the side of the mountain, the trail. We tipped through the thing. I'm not exaggerating. There must have been two or three hundred Japanese laying all over the mountain. I guess they thought the mountain was their god or whatever, a sacred mountain. We managed to get to the top before it got dark. It was twilight. It was peaceful. It was quiet, just like in a church. You couldn't dig a hole to spend the night. It was already dark. I said, here we are, we're stuck again. We had to spend the night up there. The Japanese controlled that mountain on the other side, and we were on this side. We spent the night there. About six or seven in the morning, as I remember, shells started dropping in on us. I said, that's coming from the rear. Let's get out of here. We ran into where the shells were coming from. Sure enough, the 27th Army was there. I ran into a lieutenant and said, what the hell's going on? He said, that's our objective today. I said to him, I got a surprise for you. We've been up there all night, and we were getting shelled. He said to me, well, how the hell did I know you were up there? You're right, you didn't. Anyway, that was their objective that day. We moved on from there.

WC: What did you think of the 27th Division? I know there was bad blood between the two divisions.

TJS: Everybody has their own opinion of that. It was tough. I guess maybe I'm one of the odd ones. I have eight buddies I meet with, not buddies, but I met one here. After the war,

I moved back to Schenectady and Glenville. I ran into a fellow who was in the Marines. He was on Iwo Jima. He was wounded. Eventually, it turned out there were eight of us in this area. We meet for coffee now and then. Most of them feel that the 27th did a lousy job. That means they didn't advance because they had a banzai attack going on. But when I tied in with them, what they seemed to forget was that we were in flatland. You had Purple Heart Ridge, which was a big ridge. It had to be three or four hundred feet high. You had the valley, and they were in that area. They could not advance like we advanced. Most Marines were two, three or four hundred yards ahead of them, sometimes half a mile. But tying in with them, I had a different view of it. They could have advanced, I suppose, but they didn't. In the meantime, their terrain was more rugged than we had. During one of the escapades, we lost a lot of men, but they had a banzai attack. The banzai attack came straight through the 27th. They ended up a mile or two back to the artillery. That was how bad it was. Everybody was getting shot and killed. I see it in a different place. They had a tougher job than we did at that moment. We had tougher jobs than them at other places. My buddies take the other viewpoint. They say they should have gone, they should have done this and that. I give them credit. We could go here, the other side could go there, but here they were in the middle like an inverted horseshoe. They couldn't go through a mountain, they had to skirt and go into these valleys. I appreciated what they did. But, that was a different version.

Anyway, when we got through Saipan, we were near the end. We'd already taken everything. I remember I got to the end with my group before most people did. There were cliffs hanging there. We got around one side. We tried to talk to some women that were there. They had soldiers with big cleavers and everything else. The soldiers were forcing them to jump off the cliff.

WC: The Japanese soldiers?

TJS: The Japanese. They were throwing babies over the side and everything else. I was screaming at them. Some other Marines came over, they had a megaphone. They tried to convince them not to do it. Hundreds went over the cliff. They were throwing babies all over, women. Then the soldiers were committing their harakiri. That was Saipan. We had a week off from Saipan and recuperated. I've got a few pictures, I should have brought them. After playing football, I went in at one hundred seventy five pounds. They took a picture of me, I weighed one hundred twenty at the time. I lost that much weight. But we rested and then we got word that our company again was going to be the first wave the second time.

We went over to Tinian and it was just like Tarawa. There were only sixty yards of beach. They've had a feigning exercise at the other end of the island, but what they picked out was about sixty yards, a little cliff and vegetation. But when they dropped us off, we were maybe half a football field from the land. And as you jumped in the water, you couldn't get in because of coral rock and whatnot. I remember jumping in with water up to my ankles, up to my waist, up to my armpits, and finally hit the bottom. I got pictures of Marines holding their rifles up like this [gestures raised hands above his head] because you were up to here in water. We had to wade in. We didn't have any opposition. We got in and established our front line and moved forward. Again, I was sent out as an outpost, and found a nice comfortable place, vegetation. We were there for about three or four hours and I heard trains, everything coming. I had to report back and say we were going to get enemies. We did about an hour after I got back. We had a banzai attack. We lived through that. Then we started up. We didn't have much ammunition.

WC: How bad was that attack?

TJS: It wasn't bad. There were about three or four hundred dead Japanese the next morning when we got up.

WC: Were there any civilians mixed in with the lines?

TJS: There were no civilians at that time. At the other banzai attacks, they did have them. Like in Saipan, there were a couple hundred civilians first. They put them in front of them and made them go. Of course, it was dark when they did it. So, you were shooting civilians. You didn't realize that. We advanced to a point where, again, I had to go out a couple more times to establish these outposts.

This is a true story. I hate to say it, but I'll say it. After three or four times on Tinian, the problem I had was when we fought all day long. I went out for three or four hours. I came back and no one ever said, go to the back and sleep. You grabbed two hours of sleep and you went again. So it went on that way. I was tired. I don't mind saying it, a couple operations I slept on the Higgins boat going into the landings. I got back and I reported what was going on and didn't hear anything. I got in the foxhole with four Marines. This was a habit I had, I said, I'll take the first watch. If I come back, whoever's there will relieve me. Because if I put in an hour and it's your turn, I'm not going to get up. So I did. I reported in, spent about thirty minutes, I'm tired, you take over. I slept. Next morning I woke up, and I'm not exaggerating, there were one, two hundred dead Japanese all over the field out in front of us. I looked up and said, what the hell happened? The guy looked at me and said, we thought you were dead. I said, why didn't you wake me up? He said,

we really thought you were dead. All the shooting going on and we kicked you once and you never woke up. It was a true story.

WC: Wow. Oh my God. You slept through it.

TJS: Anyway, my company commander said after that it was a cakewalk. We got to the end. I don't remember the distance, but let's say it was maybe half a mile to a mile. He said TJ, take your group out. Be careful and see if you can find anything out. Well, I did. The Saipanians had the beach and the water. We were in that area. Then you went in about fifty, sixty yards and there was a cliff, then it was level, then another cliff. The Marines up there were looking down on us. I took my group out and got to the end of the island. On the way out, I noticed one of the cliffs seemed to have a lot of trees. I said to him, on the way back, we'll check that out. Well, we got to the end, and didn't see any Japanese, any enemy. Came back, and lo and behold, this immaculately dressed man was standing there with a pair of field glasses looking out at the sea. When he turned and saw me, I had my rifle up, I was going to shoot him. He indicated I could have the glasses. He wanted to swap his life, I guess. I motioned to him to get down on the ground. He got down. I walked up to him and asked if he spoke English. He said, yes. I said, where'd you learn it? He said, Southern California. Now, I don't know if that was true or not, but that was what he told me. So I said to him, there's a cave there. Tell your men to come out. He said, they're going to die for the Emperor. I asked him, why don't you die for the Emperor? He told me, you think I'm a damn fool. Just like that. I said, all right, you stay on your stomach, and if you move an inch, I'm going to shoot you. So we had a battle there for the cave. Grenades were going back and forth. One of them came out and fell on the Marine I was next to. Hit right above his head, went back into the cave. Well, they committed harakiri or we killed them. I went into the cave. Of course, you're looking for souvenirs and that. I never looked for many souvenirs. I didn't care for them. There were two suitcases. One of the fellows picked the suitcases up, took them out and opened them up. What was in them? They were full of Japanese yen. We took and looked at him. He said, I'm the paymaster for the Central Pacific. Wait a minute. First, you're Vice Admiral Kakuji Kakuta, the commanding officer for the First Air Fleet. All your airplanes were defeated at Saipan, the big battle out there with the Navy, and you're defeated here. [He said] That money's mine. I said it's not yours anymore. So, we took him back, turned them into my company commander.

WC: Now, you had a photograph of that man. Yeah.

TJS: I ruined it by putting the operations I was on. [shows photograph]

WC: If you'll take and hold those photos up right in front of you, I think I can zoom in on Okay, got it. And then you've got a picture of the fellow you captured. Did you take his documents?

TJS: I have to tell you a story with that. When I took him back and turned him in, I had the suitcases. I gave them to the guys at the front lines. I said, listen, I know you want souvenirs.

WC: Yeah, I can't get the print, but I got the picture of them.

TJS: I said, you know, you're afraid of taking souvenirs and whatnot. I said, here's something that's safe. You can take it. I kept one. A runner came over and said, TJ, they want you back at command post. They want the money. I took the two suitcases back and said to Captain Garrison, what's up? He says, he's a very high official, as you know, and we're sending him back to Pearl Harbor. That's what I was told by the battalion commander. He wants the money and he says he'll cooperate one hundred percent if we give him the money. General Gilbertson [?] came to me and said, he thinks he's going to take the money and deposit it in Switzerland. We're going to work with him so after the war he can have the money. That was a crazy story, but that's what they told me. Well, anyway, that was the end of the story until I found out he tried to get off the island five times. Truly. It's in his record. Five times they tried to get him off, and they had subs out there waiting for him. But he couldn't get through our lines. So that was his last attempt. He was trying to find out if the subs were out there. So that was the story of Japanese Navy Vice Admiral Kakuji Kakuta.

WC: Do you know if he survived?

TJS: This is true. After years since then, I've tried for thirty years or better to try and find out what happened to him. I sent for my records. My records were lost a couple of times. When I was in Marshalls, I went out to the hospital ship and they treated me. They were taking me back to Pearl Harbor and I asked them, doctor, can I go back to my company? He says, sure, as long as you report back to the battalion aid station when you get home to Maui. So I did. In the meantime, somehow they transferred my records. And when they got back, they didn't have the records of Maui. And as a matter of fact, I didn't get paid for three months. My buddies were taking care of me as far as getting beer or whatnot. But it was strange. And on top of this record I have, I got three different records. And each of them had staples in them. The staples' holes were there, but nothing behind the record. One said confidentiality on it and one said caution on it. I couldn't figure out why that would be. I've been trying for over thirty years to find out what was behind it and I get the runaround. I don't know what happened to that.

But, I tried to find out about him and I finally got together with my general. He said, when I talked to you, I tried to find out. And I can't find out for myself what happened to him. So something happened when they sent him back to Pearl Harbor. But that's the story of the Vice Admiral. But another story, and it's here in this little article. When they were cleaning up Tinian, a group was going out cleaning after we left. And it says here in the article that one of his aides was leading a group out around the island or scouting the island. I don't know where his aides were, if they were in that cave when we killed them. They [aids] were looking for him. They said he was out at a cave. They came out of that cave and it was silent, so they just blew the cave up. They didn't say they went in or whatnot, but that's in the article about this Vice Admiral. I've tried to find out about him.

Well, after Tinian, we went back to Maui again and did our training prior to going to Iwo Jima. After a few months there, we set sail for Iwo. In the meantime, as I said, I'd been a machine gunner. I was a rifleman, a group leader. Did a lot of scouting work. I got a promotion. They decided to make me a recreation officer, so to speak, in charge of mail and stuff like that. I had my own tent. Had all the mail sacks. I had a good time doing it. Of course, my buddies were there. Nothing to do with the war. I got ptomaine poison [bacterial food poisoning] once back at the camp. A little side story. They were serving Spam, believe it or not. They warmed it up. I talked to the company commander one day. I said, why are we eating C-rations? They're warming C-rations up for us, which had beans and Spam. Across the gully was a Navy unit. I went over there one day. They were having steak. They were having stew. He said, well, all I can tell you, Tom, is we're under the Navy and they're training us for combat. Anyway, I ate that one day and I ended up with ptomaine poison. Ran to the battalion. They shipped me to a hospital. There must have been fifty, sixty beds in the ward. I was the only one there. With ptomaine poisoning, you ran to the bathroom. Well, they finally put me to sleep. I woke up the next morning, every bed was filled with my company. They all got the same thing. So I didn't eat in the mess hall anymore, but the cooks and I were friends. When they served the officer's mess, on the way back, they stopped at my tent and they gave me maybe a hamburger or something fresh.

One time, another story on the back gate to Maui. We were up on half the volcano there in Maui. It's the largest active volcano in the world. There was a little village, about ten stores, which I walked into one day and there was a lot of dust all over these canned goods. I looked, there was a jar of pickled pixie from the United States. I said to the owner, how long have you had these? [He said] Oh, about four or five years. No one wanted the pickled pixie. Well, it was after my ptomaine poisoning thing. I said, I'll buy it. I gave him a quarter for it. So, I had [a can of] pickled pixie on Maui.

WC: And they were still good?

TJS: Yeah. Anyway, we headed out to Iwo Jima. We had a stop at Saipan. Meantime, I got a letter from my mother that said that my uncle was in World War I on a destroyer. He had a kid who was serving in World War II. He wanted to serve in the service. He tried to enroll in the Navy. They wouldn't take him, but he joined the Seabees. They took him. He ended up being on Saipan doing the construction work there. The battalion mail clerk was going by and we were looking at the island. I said to him, where are you going, Paul? He said, I have to take the mail back. He had four sacks. I said it took two men to carry those four sacks, so I grabbed two of them. We went inside, and they told us we had a half hour to deliver the mail and come back. We got to the post office, and I asked the clerk there, if he knew Ed Miller? He said, yeah, he's about a half mile down the road, there's a barracks there. Here's my keys, take the Jeep. So, I drove down. Sure enough, Uncle Ed was there. He got hurt in the back and was laying in a sack. We talked for a little while. He looked at me. He dragged me down to the mess hall. He had the cooks put a goodie bag together, fresh bread and everything. I said, what are you doing? I don't have time for that. He said, you need some weight on you. I didn't even recognize you. I had dropped so much weight. But anyway, we got back to the ship. He was the only one I ever saw from the family. So we went on to Iwo. Of course, Iwo was a different story altogether.

WC: Is that where you were wounded?

TJS: You know, as part of my story in Saipan, I'll go back to it. On one of the excursions, I came back. It's an important story to me anyway. We were tied in. The company was tied in. I spent the night someplace else and the day. I came back. They were all lined up in their foxholes, and I noticed the machine gun crew I used to be with. I started walking up and down, and without knowing it, there was a ridge to the left. I knew the ridge was there, but it ended, and a tank came around the corner. Evidently, he thought I was an officer going from foxhole to foxhole. I got in front of the foxhole, standing on the parapet. I looked in and started talking to the fellas, and the tank dropped a shell right in the middle of the foxhole. Of course, it killed the four men in there, and I got wounded again. I got wounded with a piece of shrapnel. I was never evacuated. They treated me. They fixed it up. Everybody was yelling. I vaguely remember the concussion, I didn't have my helmet strap on. It blew my helmet straight up. I reached up unconsciously and grabbed it. My buddies told me later, it was sad, but it was also funny when they saw all the smoke and two hands reached up and grabbed a helmet and pulled it down. But they were yelling, and so I ran to the ridge with them, and then we took off for the tank. We got there just in time to throw some hand grenades at it. Didn't do any good, it took off.

Following that story, we were going through Saipan, and we're about two thirds of the way through. I was in front of the group. All of a sudden, I looked out and there were four green uniforms laying on the ground. True story. And some machine gun fire was coming off the right flank from some bushes and trees. We stopped our line. I said, give me cover, but it was coming from there. [points in a direction] The guys knew it too, and they started sending bullets and whatnot over there. I ran out there, and there was a Marine with bars on his shoulder. I picked him up. He was wounded in the arm and leg. Two other Marines grabbed the other guys, took them back. I think one was dead, if I remember, and the other three were wounded. Never thought much about it. Later on in the operation, somebody came up to me and said, do you know who you picked up? I said, no. [They said], Colonel Carson. I said, what do you mean Colonel Carson? I didn't recognize him. It's a story in one of our books. He was a strange fellow. He had his ways. During his career, he spent a lot of time in China. They had their groups over there, and he learned a lot of Chinese over there and stuff. When he formed the Raiders, he designed it after their command units over there. He never gave liberty to the people there. Edison's Raiders got liberty and everything. There were two different types of things. But I thought it was interesting. Here was Carson, he didn't stay with the division headquarters. He was the executive officer. But he took his group out. His radioman got shot, and he went out to rescue him. He was out scouting on his own. It seems strange, but that was his nature. That was one of the highlights of my career, I guess.

I'll regress another time. We were on Tinian. This is written up. We advanced, and we came to a ridge at the end of the trees, cliffs, and whatnot. We stopped that night and I dug my foxhole that day. It was big enough for two or three people, a lot of room to stretch out and sleep. Slept there that morning. Mortar shells were dropping out there. Woke up, cleaned up, and a Jeep pulled up behind me. I turned around and I'll be damned, [it was] General [Clifton B.] Case, Commandant of the 4th Marine Division, the 10th Commandant of the Marine Corps, walked up and said, how are you doing, Marine? I said, pretty good, General. He said, can I join you? I said, sure, join me. In the meantime, we were sitting there talking. I said, you know, General, that Jeep bothers me. He said, why? I said, They are going to drop mortar shells out of it. He said, good thinking, Marine. He turned around and said, get that damn machine out of here. So they drove the Jeep away. He said, I'm going to tell you a story. I came up here because we're going to witness the dropping of a napalm bomb. He said it was the first napalm bomb that was dropped. They developed the napalm bombs. He said, we're going to witness the first dropping of a napalm bomb. Now, in a story in Saipan, there is a little story that they used a napalm bomb over there. I don't know if it's true or not, but that was his version.

So we sat there on the parapet. He gave me a lesson on the Napalm bomb, how it was made, how it was put together, and how when it dropped, it spread this stuff and it was going to burn. Well, we sat there and about ten minutes later, these Corsairs came. I swear they weren't seventy five, one hundred feet above us. They went across and then dropped it there. In his autobiography, I read it one time, he sat there because he was scared as hell because he thought the airplanes were going to run into us. That was another story that happened on Tinian.

But back to Iwo. I just don't know how to describe Iwo. Everyone has their own thoughts on it. Our outfit was in the reserve. Of course, we remember Iwo because of the flag raising at [Mount] Suribachi. I'll start there. When you hit Saipan, we had the 4th Marine Division. They had the 3rd and the 5th. But one division cut straight across Suribachi, and people don't realize that it only took ninety minutes. In ninety minutes they were on the other side.

WC: Through the jungle?

TJS: Right. You had Saipan shaped like a pork chop with a narrow part which they went across in ninety minutes and cut it off. Of course, the mountain was here on the left. They had, oh, I don't know, fifty, sixty caves in there. It was hollow and tunnels and whatnot. They did a nice job. At that time, we were in the reserves. We were called up immediately because when you hit the beach, it was a living hell. That's the only thing I can say. It was a different battle. In the other battles we were in, they were there to meet you. They didn't meet us. They let us in on the beach. Because at the northern end of the island, I'll start there. When you landed, you landed in ash, volcano ash, and you sank up to your calves. When you ran forward, you had a hole that was ten or fifteen feet where your feet were. There was a terrace. We couldn't get over the terrace. But at the other end of the island, they had mortars, bazookas, and rockets. And they had, I don't know what you want to call it. But they had what we called the ash can. It was about half the size of a regular American car. It screeched when it took off. You saw it in the air coming. When it landed, anything in twenty or thirty yards was dead. It just blew you apart. That was what you ran into there. We had to dig in. You saw these things coming. You ran away from it if you could. We lost one thousand men in my division that day right there. So we dug in that night. Then we had a terrace to get over. We got over the terrace. There was an airfield there, as I remember. We turned to the right to go to the north end of the island. I don't know how to explain this, but there were four hundred pillboxes on that island. There were one hundred of them right there. What do you do? Well, you can't go back. You had to go forward. What you were looking at, I always describe it as like it's raining out. That was what you had to go through. You knew you were going to get killed.

It's the phrase, either kill or be killed. That was exactly the way it was. I saw this in the paper the other day. Somebody was selling real estate. I said, my God, it reminds me of Iwo Jima. There are twenty four homes here. [shows an image] Visualize one hundred of those like old pillboxes. Just think of Iwo with four hundred like that. How do you get through that? That was the problem. There was only one way to get through it because they were all intertwined. If you went to the flank, [gestures left] you were covered from that side. If you went to that flank, [gestures right] you were going to hit that side. It was a wall of shells, bullets. You had to take one out. You took one out and you lost twenty, thirty guys. [gets emotional] So, if you took one out, you got a little break there. That went on for five or six days. As I said, there were four hundred of those by count. You figure, I'll give you an example. Let's take one hundred twenty of them, and put them on a football field. That was exactly what my group faced. You had to get through them. Of course, I don't mind saying this, we landed with two hundred twenty nine men. We walked off with twenty seven men.

My buddy, I'll tell you a story about him. He was in Company G. They landed with two hundred forty seven. They walked off with nineteen. That was what you went with. Of course, if your buddy got shot, you tried to take care of him. There are stories. His company commander, I'll tell you about that one. They charged the pillbox and he got hit. He did what he could. He got the Congressional Medal of Honor. Here you got the guys that died, the guys that conquered it. I'm not criticizing the captain. He was right. But they got nothing but death. Those things always bothered me anyway. We finally got through them.

Here you had the ash, the mountain, and now my specific job, I became a runner. You couldn't scout there, there was nothing to scout, so technically you could be a scout. Well, the first instance we hit when we got in there, we turned toward the other end of the mountain. You had sand and a beach. I have a picture here. [shows a photo] This is what the other end of the mountain looked like. You got mountains, crevices, rock, and under that, down below, there were two levels of concrete and a village for twenty two thousand men. When I got a peek at one, there was a hospital that had four hundred beds in it. They had a kitchen, they had barracks. My buddies I meet with from Iwo, sometimes say, when did you first see your Jap enemy? Sal, my best friend, never saw one in the nine days he was there before they took him out wounded because they were hitting you with heavy artillery and all that stuff.

WC: Were there a lot of spider holes and that too?

TJS: Yeah. We got through there. On the other side of the island, the highest point was the picture I just showed you. They measured it at three hundred eighty two feet. And there were caves and crevices. and When you got in, you went one hundred yards in and they dropped down. There were three stories. The engineers were fantastic. Kitchen facilities, sleeping facilities, and they were all intertwined all over the island itself. It was just a whole city. But I remember when we finally got off the airfield and got to a place called the AM [unclear] 59.14 Theater. They had Turkey Ridge, and the big battles were going there. We were part of that. At Hill 382, E Company, I guess it was, tried to take that hill four days in a row. When you got up there, you made it, but you had to withdraw because all the [Japanese] troops came out from underneath at night and drove you off the hill. They [E Company] tried five times, as I understand, and they lost just about everybody. Anyway, our outfit just got through fighting in the AM [unclear] 59.47 Theater. Our company commander's name was Walter Ridland [unclear]. 59.50 He replaced my old commander. Garrison became the battalion commander. We got to a place the first time he called me up. Well, first we both jumped in a crater together. Our company was spread out. We lost maybe half of our company by then. He said, TJ, take a message back to Garrison. Tell him where we are. In the meantime, check the left flank. So, I ran off. When running there, what did you do? You just prayed and ran and dodged. I got to the left. He said, check my left flank, and I did. There was nothing there, so I went down to the battalion. Again, it was late in the afternoon. I gave the report to [unclear] 100.38 and started back. [Paul Anthony] Divico, this mailman I talked to you about was there. We chewed the fat. [unclear] 100.47 came over and said, what are you doing? [I said] I'm getting ready to go back. [He said] Where the hell are you going to go? It's dark out. So he kept me there that night. I slept there with my friend, Divico, in a foxhole. The next morning, I went back up and joined my company.

WC: Let me stop you there. I have to change. We're back. You were saying that the general kept you there overnight.

TJS: Yeah. He kept me there. The next morning, I became a runner between the general and my company commander. Before he sent me, I was going back. I remember he sent me off to the right flank to check on Company G who took one hell of a battle. Before we went in, our commanding general mentioned the fact there was a quarry along there. It would probably be the toughest place because they had to go in and climb the quarry. They took one devil of a beating. As I said, two hundred forty seven men, and they came out with nineteen. Anyway, I had to go back up, deliver the message. I was shifting from what was on my left flank, what was on my right flank, and delivering those messages. Fortunately, I didn't get picked off. I did have a few...matter of fact, Divico pointed out

to me one time. He said, You got a bullet hole in your leg over here. You got one over your sleeve. Evidently, you were so grossed with survival, probably worried that____

WC: It just caught the material and not you.

TJS: It just caught the material. I saved that jacket. Anyway, we got things fairly well under control after ten days or so. We spent twenty six days on the island of Iwo. I did. The Lord was good. I didn't get wounded at all. Most of my company went in with two hundred twenty seven and came out with twenty seven, I guess.

WC: Let me ask you something. You've probably seen the movie, the old John Wayne movie, The Sands of Iwo Jima. How accurate was that?

TJS: I would say that it was about ninety percent accurate.

WC: I know they used a lot of original film footage in that too.

TJS: I thought it was a good movie. It was pretty accurate. Trying to think what else to tell you about the Iwo. I can tell you about [Hill] 382 which was the toughest battle going on. You had other divisions on the other side. They were taking the left side. We took the right side. They had their problems. I really don't know what they were because you lived your own battle. After five attempts, Company E was just wiped out. I don't think there were seven or eight men left. Ridland [?], our company commander, was given the task to take that hill which we took that night. What was taking place, and it happened to us, we got up to the top and fought our way up. I showed you the picture of what it looked like, crevices and everything, and rounded off. He called me in and said, go back and tell Garrison we're staying here. Come hell or high water. We're not retreating. So I delivered the message, went back up. And sure enough, that night they came out of their hole. And of course, it's hard to describe that. It was like a movie, I suppose. People can't believe it. They think you're lying. [gets emotional] They came out of the ground, bullets flying. [We] ran out of ammunition, used your rifle as a club, used your knives. Just hand-to-hand. You stood back to back with your buddy. Of course, sometimes you believed it was your buddy who was killed. That was the way it went all night long. When it was over with, that was the key that broke the bank for the whole island. Of course, we joined with the other Marine division.

A mopping-up procedure took place after that. I was running here and there. I became attached to the battalion as a runner. Trying to get a group of six men over here to join a group over here, or find the officers. Of course, we lost a hell of a lot of officers. The story after that, when we left the United States, these buddies I was with, Simmons and [unclear] 1.05.17 he was wounded on Saipan. He wasn't there. Baker, who was with us,

was killed on Iwo Jima. When I got back from one of my running assignments, the gang came over and told me that Baker was killed. The other fellow that was with us was named Massey [?]. I tried to find him after the war. When we were going to Iwo Jima, the word was we were going to spend about seven to ten days there, and then we were going on to Okinawa. Of course, we didn't go. We didn't make it there. He didn't leave with us from the States, this fellow Massey. When I was on Iwo, I was out running someplace. I came back and one of my buddies told me, there's a fellow by the name of Massey looking for you. He was on the way to the next operation. I missed him by ten minutes. It would have been nice to have seen him. It was just like I said, mopping up and getting in those caves and sealing caves. They pulled us off. It was twenty six days. It went on another ten, fifteen days mopping up. They sent us back to Maui.

Some of my friends like Sal, you'd get a good interview out of him if we could get them together. He remembers being hit. They couldn't get him out. He told this story. They had a tank come up. The tank went over the top of him. Of course, they had a trapdoor under the tank. They opened the trapdoor, pulled him in, and took him back to the beach. He said he laid there, and all he could see for a whole mile on each side of him, ponchos, dead Marines, live Marines. They couldn't get him off. Because as I found out, the landing craft came in, they were shooting there, and there were ships all over the harbor dismantled. It took a long time.

WC: What's his name?

TJS: Sal Famolaro [?]. He remembers it vividly, and he tells you how scared he was. He was. We all were scared. We went back to Maui. We were getting ready to invade Japan. I remember the training. I don't know how the other Marines felt, but our group felt bad about this. Maybe it was just ego. We were doing a job, but we never got the rank. Let me put it that way. For example, you were a squad leader. A platoon is made up of three squads and four groups of twelve men. If you were a group leader, you were a corporal. If you were a squad leader, you were a sergeant. You were doing those jobs and your buddies were being killed. All of a sudden, you needed replacements and they were replacing them with, what do you call them, guard duty Marines. They shipped them over and they got the rank, so they took over. You had to train them to do the job, but they had the rank.

WC: Oh.

TJS: Lots of times, some of the guys griped about it. Some of the fellows talked to our company commander about it a couple of times. I'm a squad leader, I don't get my sergeant stripes. He said point blank, we're under the Navy. We don't have the rate. They

don't have the money to give us a rate, so we can't do anything. You were an acting sergeant, you were an acting corporal, whatever you were. That was true. That was what happened in a lot of the divisions. Because the rates and the money weren't there for us. But Old Sal, he was flown back to San Diego. He's very proud of the fact that he survived, like they all were.

While we were training, we got called together one day. God bless him, it was Clifton Case, our general. He made a speech. He was a great guy. Matter of fact, I don't have it, but I have a copy of the speech he gave. Now, I don't know where I got all this stuff from, but I love getting it. I got his original speech before we went into Iwo. And at the top of it, he hand wrote "do not let this out. It'll be delivered verbally." His whole speech about how we were going to hit Iwo Jima and whatnot. I got a copy of that, and I meant to bring it. He got us together and said, you boys that were on Iwo Jima will never see battle again. [gets emotional] We couldn't figure it out. I guess he had enough pull because after that, they came in. Those of us that were still alive were pulled out and sent to Pearl Harbor. Some went up to a place called Aiea Heights where the airfield was. I was assigned to Pearl City. When you went into Pearl Harbor, Ford Island in the middle. You checked in there. Pearl City was where all the aircraft carriers pulled in. When they pulled in and docked, they had all the supplies, food, everything else. The detachment there was in charge of that. I relieved the sergeant of the guard there. Everybody there was sent to our division to replace us. We did guard duty there on the other side of the war. They had docks there, and ten or fifteen buildings. Big warehouses. They were manned by WAVES doing the work in those days. We had a guard. My detachment had a guard at the WAVES barracks to keep the Marines and Navy out of them. That was a side issue there. It was interesting doing that work for a while. I remember sitting down to breakfast. I was posted to the guard. I had a truck and drove, delivering to all the gates and everything else. I sat down to my first breakfast and I looked at it. A young Marine walked over and said, what's up? I'm orderly and I've got to take your food order. We didn't do that where I came from. So I said, let's see what you got. He had a menu. I said, I'll take one of everything. He laughed. I said, what are you laughing at? He said, every one of you fifteen guys that came over from Maui said the same damn thing. So I sat there, and this was true. A week later, I was driving around and stopped at the warehouse and a WAVE was there. I said I needed a new set of clothes. She said, Marine clothes are over in the Navy armory. So I drove over and picked a new sea bag full of clothes. About a week and a half later, I said to her, I need some more clothes. Same girl. I got a new set of clothes. When the war ended, I weighed two hundred twenty eight pounds. In the time I was there, I went from one hundred twenty to two hundred twenty eight [pounds]. Just a

big roly-poly. Then the war ended. I remember doing guard duty. Whistles blew off; and they dropped the bomb.

WC: What was that like when you heard that the war was over?

TJS: Everybody was screaming and shouting and everything else and happy that it was over. Two days later, we got a call that we were going back to Maui. So, he pulled all the Iwo Jima boys, 4th Division, back. [We] wondered what was going on. [General] Case had a lot of pull. He commandeered or he got the carrier Attu, A-T-T-U, and went back to the United States. We were the first Marines out of the Pacific. They sent us back to San Diego.

WC: What was that like when you hit the United States?

TJS: Oh, it was something else. We hit San Diego. Saw the United States and celebrated. As a matter of fact, after I joined, my cousin joined, another cousin joined, and then my brother joined. Two of them were girls, two were boys. One was a WAVE and one was a Marine. One was a Marine in San Diego. I got to see her on the way home. [gets emotional] There was emotion like there is now. But, it was something else. I took the train. Then they had a train to Tennessee. They had a special train for us to go straight across the United States. The general did a good job. I was discharged from Bainbridge, Maryland. We were out of there so fast. They did a checkup. I still got my discharge paper here. They checked my back, my leg, and whatever.

WC: You were discharged on 25 October 1945.

TJS: Yeah, that's right.

WC: You went back home to Schenectady.

TJS: Right. Then I went to work again at Alco [American Locomotive Company].

WC: Did you go to work right away or did you take some time?

TJS: No, I laid around for a little while.

WC: Did you join that 52-20 Club?

TJS: Yeah, I was going to say, I joined the 52-20 Club. My girlfriend from high school waited for me. We got married. I went back to work at the American Locomotive Company and was there for a while. Then I was going to go to the University of Notre Dame and they didn't take married students. They had St. Mary's for women on one side. About two years later, I guess they start taking married students. We got all the big football heroes, Johnny Lujack and people like that. But I wrote a letter to [unclear]

1.14.44 College and the University of Miami. They wrote back [and said] unconditionally accepted. I went down and made the football team and got hurt one time where I got hit in the back and hurt like hell. And decided, is this worth it? I'm a married man. I said, oh, hell with it. So I spent all my time taking college credits. When we were on the football team, they wouldn't let you take over thirteen credits because you were killing your time. Well, I decided to take credits. God bless my wife, she helped me. I took twenty, twenty five credits. Got the handbook out. They had night classes. I took night classes. I had Saturday classes. In college, you had Monday and Wednesday classes, Tuesday and Thursday classes. I hate to say it, I ended up taking a ballet class one time to get the credits. In twenty two months, I got my 4 year college degree. They weren't going to let me graduate because I didn't have residence.

WC: Now, let me ask you this. With that GI Bill, do you think you would have gone on to college had it not been for that?

TJS: Well, I would have tried, but of course my family didn't have the money to send me. I don't think I would have gone. I think the GIs got a good deal there. I had a scholarship to college, but at that time, I don't think they would have picked it up for me. Then I would have had to work and save, or my wife would have had to put me through school. But, no, I don't know. I guess seventy percent of us would have not gone through college without that. That was a good benefit they had. That was a good experience. After getting my Bachelor of Education degree, I got a job. It was an interesting experience as far as that goes, not with the war. I worked hard at it. I coached track and basketball, out in the sun a lot. Then I got promoted to dean of boys, assistant principal, and I became a director of schools in the south end of the county. That was about twenty miles from my house, the other end of Miami, Florida, all the way down toward the Keys. There were fifty eight schools there that I administered to.

WC: How much time did you spend in Florida?

TJS: Well, I went down in 1945 and retired forty two years later. So, I spent forty two years in the school system.

WC: Down in Florida?

TJS: Yeah, Miami, Florida.

WC: What brought you back.

TJS: When I went to Florida, there were only one hundred fifty some thousand people there. It grew and grew and grew. Of course, the Cuban invasion came in at that time. That was another story. We owned some property up in the Sacandaga Camp. We came

up in the summertime. As I got older in the system, instead of six weeks off, a month off, I ended up getting two weeks off. So we finally sold the place. But an interesting story, I was up on the lake fishing with my assistant principal one day. In the water, you heard people talk. A state trooper pulled in. We were two hundred feet in the water. I heard him talking. I said, geez, Bruce, we better get in because he's asking about me. So I went in. My wife Connie said, the trooper said he has a message from Mrs. Smith. She looked at me strangely. Bruce, my assistant principal, was laughing. I said, what's the message? He said to get home right now, they're going to integrate the school system. It was not integrated at that time. Bruce was laughing. My wife said, what are you laughing at? He said the superintendent's secretary's name was Mrs. Smith. My wife thought I had something going maybe on the side. Anyway, I had to get back that day. We had a meeting. I was principal of the school. I had a junior high school, 7th, 8th, 9th grade. The federal judge, incidentally, was a fraternity brother of mine. He asked me many times about integration. The superintendent said, how are we going to do this? It's Friday and we have to open school on Monday. We have to have it done by federal court order. And of course we argued, why did it take so long? But so we came up with the idea, why don't we take three schools, make one a 7th grade, one an 8th grade, one a 9th grade, that way we could transfer them all. But how do you schedule them? The secretary there was named Sharkey. I just got the job two years ago and I asked her. It turned out her family was raised in Schenectady. They had a family here by the name of Sharkey, Ray Sharkey, Don Sharkey. They were quite the athletes. One of the brothers was a pro basketball player. They all went to Nott Terras High School. Anyway, I said, Connie, I need help. Let's call these people. I got about half a dozen teachers in, went to a blackboard and showed them how to schedule the kids. Prior to that, I had a school called Robert E. Lee Junior High School. It was on the fringe of Miami. It was segregated. 20th Street to 36th Street was all black people, Negroes. They were alright. One section was a lot of Puerto Ricans and Cubans. Another section was the whites. It was a crossroads. They all went to that school. They never made publicity about it. Well, they had a lot of problems there. Of course, my assignments, having been a Marine, sent me to all these places. We had order pretty quickly.

I want to inject this here if you're taping it. In those days, we had trouble in schools, but it didn't last very long. The state law in Florida at that time said, the principals in charge of students shall use corporal punishment or whatever needs to control the students. Well, regardless of what went on there, we had very few problems in Florida because the principals used the board. And of course, today one parent complains, it's inhumane. Another part of the system was if you were truant. We had two homes for juveniles in one end of the county and a juvenile judge. So, if a kid did something wrong, you took

him to the juvenile court and he sentenced them to those schools. Barbed wired fences. They got them up at six am, made them clean up, marched them to class, marched them back to class, fed them, and marched them to the cafeteria. They got three months to six months. Well, it's a different world today. But that was part of the thing.

WC: Did you join any veterans organizations?

TJS: I belonged to them all, but as an honorary member. Like New York, I belonged to the American Legion, but at large. Same with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Marine League and whatnot. I just didn't have time to attend the meetings. Belonged to KFC [Knights of Columbus].

WC: What about reunions?

TJS: They had a 4th Marine reunion over many years. I attended half a dozen of them and saw some of my buddies. So few of them have our group anymore. I noticed in the veterans magazines, they do have reunions. But a fellow in the South, he was a bugler in our company. He survived the war. He used to handle them and do the planning. But he eventually gave up on it. So, the last one I remember was about five years ago. While we were in Florida, in the eighties, my wife and I decided, well, we're here. We retired. We enjoyed Florida. We really did. Where we lived was nice and warm, comfortable. Decided, at our age, the family plot is up here in Schenectady. We have a grave marker there. Why don't we just go up there and finish our years here? We decided to come up here and decided to settle in Glenville. My brother lives there. He was in Patton's Army. We had relatives. She had two aunts here, so we managed to have some family. It's been pleasant. I miss Florida, to be honest with you. I love the hot weather, not the cold weather. I'm trying to see if there's anything else I can tell you about what took place to us.

WC: Did you have any other photos there?

TJS: These are the twenty seven guys that were the original bunch of the 4th Marine Division. That's the same thing. [looks through his papers]

WC: Yeah, I'll take, if you don't mind, I'll just take all of that.

TJS: This I'm proud of. I wrote my memoirs and I got emotional about it, but my dad always wanted to know what happened when I got home from the service. [gets emotional] He said, let's see it. That was what he wanted to see. We didn't talk about it. I never talked to him. I wrote my memoirs and I sent a copy to my commanding general, General Garrison. He sent this back and he basically said he was sorry about being tardy in answering me and he remembered me very well. He remembered Kotick [?] and talked

about some of our common friends. Then he wrote and said he would like to have me send this to the Marine Corps Historical Center. I sent the memoirs. I got a letter from them thanking me. They eventually transferred them to the Marine Corps down to Quantico. There's one sentence here. I really appreciate. [reads a letter] "There weren't many Marines who had as much frontline duty as you did. I'm certainly proud of Company F and the entire 2nd Battalion. It was a gung-ho outfit." It was gung-ho. That meant more to me than the others, I guess. I did have more frontline duties because I never lost any time. That was pretty nice to me. [looks through his papers] It's just my discharge papers saying I was shot in the right thigh, left arm and back in 1944. It was just stuff I had on my desk and I grabbed it on the way out.

One thing I know, I tell my story now and some people ask about it. An article here. [reads newspaper article] "On January 27th, Navy leadership, undoubtedly in response to political pressure, directed the Pacific to put together a commando-type unit. The 2nd Separate Battalion officially came to life on February 4th." So, that's when Carlson Raiders started.

I have here in my papers. In my papers, like I have the jacket...this one says caution on it. [reads] "Assigned to 2nd Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion." I outlined that. It tells you the times I was wounded and whatnot.

WC: If we can make copies of all that, we'd love to do that.

TJS: You can do that. I only have one copy of my memoirs left. Everybody's asking me to get it published. I just haven't had the desire to do it. I'll do it. But if I duplicate it, I'll send a copy. I'll get you a copy. [rifles through his papers] This is stuff I don't know if you want to take pictures of.

WC: Well, thank you so much for your interview.

TJS: Well, I appreciate that. It's good to get it out. I get emotional about it.

WC: Oh, that's fine. Thank you, sir.

TJS: Thank you very much, Wayne. I appreciate it.