

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

THE NIMITZ MUSEUM

PRESENTS

AN ORAL HISTORY BY

JOHN BARTLETT

INTERVIEWER - NED SMITH

TAPE NUMBER 1303

TODAY IS FEBRUARY 26, 2004 AND THIS INTERVIEW WITH MR. JOHN BARTLETT IS TAKING PLACE IN ONE OF THE ROOMS PROVIDED BY SUNDAY HOUSE DOWN THE STREET FROM THE MUSEUM.

THIS INTERVIEW IS IN SUPPORT OF THE CENTER FOR PACIFIC WAR STUDIES, ARCHIVES FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR, TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL INFORMATION RELATING TO THIS SITE.

MY NAME IS NED SMITH AND I AM INTERVIEWING JOHN BARTLETT.

JOHN, WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

JOHN

I WAS BORN AT ??????? VILLAGE IN COLTON, KANSAS IN 1923.

NED

WHO WERE YOUR PARENTS?

JOHN

RAY AND MARY BARTLETT.

NED

WHAT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME?

JAOHN

WESTCOTT

NED

DID YOU HAVE ANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

JOHN

I HAD THREE SISTERS, ALL YOUNGER. I AM THE ONLY ONE IN THE MILITARY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FAMILY.

NED

WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

JOHN

I WENT TO SCHOOL IN DENISON, KS. AND THEN MY FOLKS MOVED TO ILLINOIS AND I FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL IN THE LITTLE TOWN CALLED PLEASANT HILL, IL.

NED

WHERE AND WHEN DID YOU ENLIST IN THE MILITARY?

JOHN

I WAS DRAFTED IN 1943, MARCH 3RD. IF YOU REMEMBER THOSE DATES.

NED

DID YOU GO TO BOOT TRAINING OR WHAT SORT OF FIELD WORK?

JOHN

THE INDUCTION CENTER , THEN WE WENT TO ----I FORGET RIGHT NOW-----JUST TO GET OUR SHOTS AND UNIFORM AT CAMP ROBERTS, CALIFORNIA FOR INFANTRY BASIC.

NED

AT THIS POINT, THIS WAS JUST INFANTRY?

JOHN

YEAH.

NED

YOU SAID YOU WERE DRAFTED. YOU DIDN'T GET A CHANCE THEN TO SELECT YOUR'S.

JOHN

I VOLUNTEERED, THEY CALLED IT VOLUNTEERED FOR INDUCTION. I VOLUNTEERED FOR THE AIR CORPS. IN THAT YEAR, BUT I NEVER SEEN THE AIR CORPS.

NED

YOU GOT TO CAMP ROBERTS AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

JOHN

LIKE I SAY, IT WAS INFANTRY BASIC. SOME GUYS COME THROUGH THE AREA SAYING, "ANYBODY WANT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE PARATROOPERS?" SO, I AND A FEW OTHER GUYS DID. THEN WE WENT FROM THERE TO FORT BENNING, GEORGIA FOR PARACHUTE TRAINING THERE. ONE COAST BACK TO THE OTHER. FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE COUNTRY TO THE WEST COAST, BACK TO THE EAST COAST. I THOUGHT AFTER THE INFANTRY, I THOUGHT I WOULD RATHER BE ANYWHERE. I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT ONCE I GOT BACK ON THE GROUND, I WAS BACK IN THE INFANTRY.

THEN, WE WERE WAITING TO GO OVERSEAS SO WE WENT TO CAMP PATRICK IN VIRGINIA TO BE SHIPPED TO EUROPE. AS 503 MADE A COMBAT JUMP AT NEW GUINEA. THEY NEEDED SOME REPLACEMENTS SO WE WENT FROM THE EAST COAST BACK TO THE WEST COAST, BACK TO CALIFORNIA AND GOT ON A SHIP THERE TO BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA. FROM THERE, WE TOOK A TROOP TRAIN UP TO KAREN (SP???) AUSTRALIA. WE WERE THERE ABOUT A MONTH AND HAD SOME LIGHT INFANTRY TRAINING AND THEN WE WERE SENT UP TO PORT MORESBY, NEW GUINEA TO JOIN THE 503 THAT WAS STILL THERE. WE DONE TRAINING UP THERE AND DONE SOME PARACHUTE TRAINING.

THEN WE WENT BACK TO BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA FOR SOME R AND R AND THEN BACK TO NEW GUINEA. FROM THERE TO A DIFFERENT PLACE.

NED

WE WILL PICK THAT UP LATER. AT THIS TIME, YOU ARE NINETEEN.

JOHN

I AM NINETEEN YEARS OLD. I HAD MY 20TH BIRTHDAY IN MAY.

NED

ARE THERE ANY OF THE FELLOWS WHO JOINED WITH YOU THAT STAYED WITH YOU ALL ALONG?

JOHN

OH YES.

NED

ARE ANY OF THEM HERE TODAY?

JOHN

NO. WE ALL WENT IN AT THE SAME TIME. WE VOLUNTEERED IN CALIFORNIA AT THE SAME TIME BUT WE DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER.

NED

DO YOU WANT TO DESCRIBE YOUR FIRST JUMP?

JOHN

I WOULDN'T MIND. WE DO EVERYTHING ON THE GROUND FOR THREE WEEKS. YOU DRILL. YOU GO OUT ON MOCK AIRPLANES ABOUT FOUR FEET OFF THE GROUND, ASSUME YOUR POSITION. WHEN

YOU GET INTO THE AIRPLANE, AND WE PACKED OUR FIRST PARACHUTE TOO. WHEN YOU GET UP IN THE AIR, I THINK WE WERE ALL SO SCARED, WE DON'T KNOW (??????) THEN IT'S TIME TO GET UP AND JUMP. YOU DO IT AUTOMATICALLY. YOU DON'T EVEN REALIZE IT UNTIL YOUR CHUTE OPENS AND YOU BEGIN TO RELAX.

NED

YOU HOOK ON TO A WIRE?

JOHN

A STATIC LINE THEY CALL IT, RUNNING THROUGH THE AIRPLANE. AS YOU JUMP, THE LINES PULLS THE PACK OFF YOUR PARACHUTE. IT KIND OF GOES OVER YOUR HEAD IN THE PROP BLAST ACTULLY OPENS UP THE PARACHUTE.

NED

WHAT IS THE INTERVAL BETWEEN JUMPERS?

JOHN

I WOULD SAY, LESS THAN THREE SECONDS. IF YOU COULD SEE THEM, IT'S JUST ONE AFTER ANOTHER COMING DOWN. WHEN HE GOES OUT, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE GOING TO JUMP RIGHT ON TOP OF HIM. HE'S JUST MOVED AWAY. THEY GET A BUNCH OF MEN OUT IN JUST A FEW SECONDS.

NED

DO YOU HAVE SOME PRACTICE JUMPS ON THE GROUND?

JOHN

FROM A TOWER, YEAH.

NED

HOW MANY OF THOSE DID YOU GET BEFORE YOU JUMP OUT OF AN AIRPLANE?

JOHN

I DON'T KNOW. I GUESS NOT VERY MANY. IT'S FROM 250 FOOT TOWERS. IT GIVES YOU SORT OF A FEEL.

NED

WHEN YOU JUMPED OUT OF THE AIRPLANE, WAS IT QUITE A THRILL? WAS IT ABOUT THE SAME AS JUMPING FROM THE TOWER?

JOHN

LIKE I SAY, YOU GET A LITTLE THRILL INTO IT. IT'S ALL AUTOMATIC. ONCE YOUR PARACHUTE OPENS, YOU KIND OF RELAX, AND FLOAT TO THE GROUND. I THINK WE JUMPED FROM 800 FEET OUR FIRST FOUR JUMPS AND THEN THE NEXT TIME, WE WENT TO 1200 SO WE WOULD HAVE A LITTLE LONGER RIDE.

NED

ON YOUR REGULAR COMBAT JUMPS, WERE YOU AT THE SAME ELEVATION?

JOHN

OH, NO. WE WERE LOWER. I SUPPOSE IN CORREGIDORE, WE WERE A LITTLE OVER 300 FEET. YOU HAD AN OPENING SHOCK AND THEN YOU WERE ON THE GROUND. THEY TRIED IT AT 400 AND THE WIND WAS CARRYING TOO FAR AND THEY DROPPED IT DOWN.

NED

FROM NEW GUINEA, DID YOU DO ANY JUMPS IN THE PHILLIPINES?

JOHN

JUST THE ONE ON CORREGIDORE. OUR OUTFIT DID HAVE COMBAT JUMPS BEFORE WE GOT, WELL, FROM NEW GUINEA, THERE WAS ONE. MY BATTALION DIDN'T JUMP BECAUSE THEY WERE HAVING SO MANY CASUALTIES ON THE AIR STRIP THEY WERE JUMPING ON WAS TOO HARD AND THEY WERE GETTING PEOPLE HURT. WE WENT IN BY BOAT.

NED

WHAT WAS THE NUMBER OF THE UNIT AGAIN?

JOHN

503 REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM.

NED

THE FACT THAT YOU WERE GOING OUT AS A REPLACEMENT, DID THAT GIVE YOU A LITTLE SHUDDER?

JOHN

NO. I WAS REAL PROUD OF THE GUYS I GOT IN WITH. THEY WERE OLDER AND WISER.

NED

(UNABLE TO HEAR QUESTION)

JOHN

I DON'T REALLY KNOW. ABOUT 300. IT MAY HAVE BEEN MORE THAN THAT.

NED

THAT INDICATES THE CASUALTIES WERE PRETTY HIGH.

JOHN

THAT WAS HARDLY ANY CASUALTIES. THEY WERE PREPARED FOR US. WE WERE PREPARED FOR CASUALTIES. THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY ON THAT FIRST ONE. THEY HAD LESS THAN TWENTY PROBABLY. THEN WE WENT UP AND INFILTRATED THROUGH THE WHOLE RIDGE. WE WERE NOT A BIG OUTFIT. WE WERE JUST A COMBAT TEAM.

NED

WHAT TYPE OF AIRCRAFT WERE YOU JUMPING FROM?

JOHN

THE C-47.

NED

THAT WAS A TWIN ENGINE AIRCRAFT?

JOHN

YES.

NED

AND ABOUT HOW MANY WERE THERE IN THE JUMP.

JOHN

I THINK AROUND TWENTY FOUR.

NED

WERE THERE SEVERAL AIRCRAFT? DEPENDING OF COURSE ON WHAT YOUR MISSION WAS.

JOHN

YES. THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH AIRPLANES TO JUMP THE WHOLE OUTFIT. THEY WOULD HAVE TO JUMP AND THEN COME BACK AND PICK UP THE NEXT GROUP TO JUMP AGAIN.

NED

THEN, WHEN YOU GOT ON THE GROUND HOW DID YOU GATHER?

JOHN

YOU TRIED TO GATHER WITH YOUR OWN SQUAD. WE WERE ASSIGNED TO A PLACE TO BE AND THEN YOU JUST WORKED FROM THERE. I'VE ONLY GOT ONE COMBAT JUMP. WE WENT IN BY L C I's, BY BARGE JUST LIKE REGULAR INFANTRY.

NED

THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID, AN AIR OUTFIT AND ENDED UP INFANTRY.

JOHN

WHEN YOU ARE ON THE GROUND, YOU ARE BACK IN THE INFANTRY.

NED

THEN FROM CORREGIDORE, YOU HEADED WHICH WAY?

JOHN

BEFORE CORREGIDORE, WE HAD MINDORO ISLAND. WE MADE ONE IN THERE BY SEA. THEN, AFTER CORREGIDORE, (?????) THERE WERE POSSIBLY GARRISONED BY 800 TO 1,000 JAPANESE. THE ISLAND WAS FULL. WHEN WE JUMPED, THE 3RD BATTALION JUMPED FIRST, THE PLANES CAME BACK DOWN. THE LEADERS OF THE JAPANESE WERE KILLED WITHIN THE HOUR. WHEN WE CAME IN ABOUT (LOST THE PASSAGE) THEN,, WE WORKED WHAT WAS CALLED THE TOPSIDE, RIGHT ON TOP OF THE ISLAND OF CORREGIDORE WHERE THE COMMAND WAS. WHEN THE COMMAND WAS GONE, ALL THESE OTHER UNITS NEVER KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON, THE JAPANESE. THEY HAD TO DO EVERYTHING ON THEIR OWN, INDIVIDUALLY. WE WERE ORGANIZED. THEY NEVER REALLY GOT ORGANIZED. ONLY UNDER INDIVIDUAL UNIT, COMPANYS AND PLATOONS. THAT IS WHAT SAVED US. WE HAD A REAL ADVANTAGE THEN.

ABOUT THE THIRD OR FOURTH DAY, COMBAT (?????) FINALLY THEY HAD PRISONERS AND THEY ESTIMATED IT TO BE ABOUT 6,000 JAPANESE ON THAT LITTLE ISLAND. (MISSED PASSAGE) I WOULDN'T BE TALKING TO YOU TODAY. IT WAS A WONDERFUL MISSION WITHOUT US HAVING SO MANY CASUALTIES. WE HAD ABOUT 200.

NED

DID OLD GENERAL DOUG SHOW UP ANYWHERE ALONG THE LINE HERE?

JOHN

HE SURE DID. HE CAME BACK SOME TIME IN MARCH OR EARLIER THAN THAT. OUR GENERAL PRESENTED HIS ISLAND FORTRESS BACK TO HIM. THERE WAS A BIG CEREMONY.

NED

WHEN THE PICTURE WAS TAKEN WHERE HE WAS COMING ASHORE, THE "I SHALL RETURN BIT".

JOHN

YEAH, HE CAME UP. I GOT TO BE ONE IN THE PARADE TO STAND GUARD , AN HONOR GUARD.

NED

WHAT DID YOUR OFFICERS THINK OF GENERAL (?????)

JOHN

PERSONALLY, IF I HAD TO GO BACK, I WOULD WANT HIM BACK.

NED

YOU WOULD?

JOHN

YES, I WOULD. HE WAS A WONDERFUL MAN ----(UNABLE TO HEAR PASSAGE)

NED

HE WAS A GOOD MILITARY MAN. THERE WERE NO TWO ----- HE WAS A GREAT GENERAL. FROM CORREGIDORE, WHICH WAY DID YOU GO?

JOHN

WE WENT BACK SOUTH TO NEGROS ISLAND. WE WENT IN THERE AS REGULAR INFANTRY.

NED

WHAT TOOK YOU ASHORE?

JOHN

I THINK WE FLEW IN THERE, GOT IN TRUCKS AND THEY TOOK US TO THE FRONT AS FAR AS THE

TRUCKS COULD GO AND THEN WE GOT OUT AND STARTED UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS. THEY TOOK US FROM THE AIRPORT THERE.

NED

DID YOU HAVE ANY BEACH LANDINGS?

JOHN

YES.

NED

FROM A L C T OR WHAT KIND OF UNIT?

JOHN

WE HAD AN L C I , LANDING CRAFT INFANTRY. I DIDN'T LIKE THAT. THEY PUT YOU DOWN INTO THE HOLD. IT WOULD GO UP ON THE BEACH AS FAR AS IT WOULD GO AND THEN YOU GO OUT AND YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE COMING OUT INTO.

NED

HOW MANY INFANTRY PERSONEL COULD THEY CARRY?

JOHN

MAYBE 2,000. I AM NOT SURE. A PRETTY GOOD SIZE GROUP.

NED

THE NEGROS ISLANDS, WHERE WERE THEY?

JOHN

WE WERE JUST ONE AREA. WE JUST STARTED UP INTO THE HILLS AND WORKED OUR WAY JUST A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME. THERE WAS ANOTHER INFANTRY DIVISION ON OUR RIGHT. WE ACTUALLY WERE THERE UNTIL THE WAR ENDED. DIFFERENT AREAS, WE WOULD MOVE AROUND.

NED

WAS THE RESISTANCE PRETTY TOUGH?

JOHN

YES. MY POSITION WAS SECOND SCOUT. ON THE 22ND OF MAY, I WAS 22 YEARS OLD AND WE

WERE GOING OUT IN THE HILLS TO SEE WHERE THE JAPANESE WERE LYING LOW. WE WERE GOING UP THERE UNTIL WE MET THEM. I JUST MADE SERGEANT. I WAS GOING TO FALL BACK IN MY SQUAD AND TAKE IT EASY ON MY BIRTHDAY. THE PLATOON SERGEANT FIRST SQUAD OUT. A GUY GOES OVER AND MUMBLES SOMETHING TO THE PLATOON SERGEANT, "SECOND SCOUT" AND I ALMOST SHOT HIM BUT THEN I THOUGHT, HE WANTED ME BACK THERE BEHIND HIM. I FELT KIND OF HONORED HE THOUGHT ENOUGH OF ME TO PROTECT HIS BEHIND.

NED

THAT WAS GOOD. YOU SAID YOU WERE THERE UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR? DID THE JAPANESE THERE SURRENDER?

JOHN

YES, AFTER THE BOMB, AFTER THE SECOND ONE. I DON'T KNOW, IT WAS TWO DAYS. I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY NEGOTIATED. MY SQUAD NEGOTIATORS MET WITH THE JAPANESE GROUP. A FEW JAPANESE CAME IN.

NED

WERE THE ALL JAPANESE OFFICERS?

JOHN

I KNOW THEY ALL MADE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEM TO COME DOWN THE NEXT DAY. ONE OF THE MAIN BODIES. I THINK THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO COME IN AROUND 10 O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING. MY SQUAD GOT TO MEET THEM. THAT WAS KIND OF AN HONOR. 10 O'CLOCK OR LATER, THEY DIDN'T SHOW UP, DIDN'T SHOW UP. I CLIMBED A COCONUT TREE AND I LOOKED OFF IN THE DISTANCE AND GOD, HERE COME A STRING OF JAPANESE SINGLE FILE AS FAR BACK AS YOU COULD SEE. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT.

NED

THEY DIDN'T WAVE FLAGS?

JOHN

NO. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE THEIR RIFLES UNLOADED AND MUZZLE DOWN. THEY DID NOT. THEY NEVER LOOKED UP. NEVER ANY PROBLEM. WE SENT THEM ON INTO THE HEADQUARTERS AND THAT GROUP WENT THROUGH. WE DIDN'T GET ANY SOUVENIRS. THE NEXT GROUP CAME IN AND THEY HALTED THEM AND ALL OFFICERS (MISSED WORDS) SO SHOOK THE REST OF THEM DOWN AND WE GOT OUR PISTOLS AND SABERS.

NED

DO YOU RECALL WHEN YOU WERE IN THE PHILLIPINES, DID YOU HAVE THE RIGHT CLOTHING OR DID THEY HAVE WOOL CLOTHING FOR YOU.

JOHN

NO. WE HAD THE REGULAR COTTON (UNIFORMS)

NED

AND THE EQUIPMENT? DID YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE EQUIPMENT?

JOHN

NO.

NED

WHAT KIND OF WEAPONERY WERE YOU USING?

JOHN

THE FIRST WEAPON WE HAD WAS B A R RIFLE.

NED

THEY ARE PRETTY HEAVY AREN'T THEY?

JOHN

YES. AND THEN AFTER I MADE SERGEANT, I CARRIED A THOMPSON MACHINE GUN.

NED

DID ALL SERGEANTS CARRY A MACHINE GUN?

JOHN

UNLESS THEY ACTUALLY WANTED TO CARRY.

NED

THAT RIFLE WAS LESS WEIGHT THAN A B A R ?

JOHN

ON YEAH. I WAS SO GLAD TO -----

JOHN

I WAS SO GLAD TO GET OFF THAT ????????

NED

HOW DID THEY SLING TO CARRY THE B A R ?

JOHN

UNABLE TO HEAR PART OF THE COMMENTARY

WHEN WE WENT BACK TO AUSTRALIA FOR R AND R, THEY TOOK OUR MACHINE GUNS. WE HAD 30 CALIBER MACHINE GUNS TO MAKE US MORE MANEUVERABLE AND GAVE US THE B A R . WHEN WE GOT BACK FROM AUSTRALIA THEY ASKED ANYBODY THAT WANTED TO GO TO B A R SCHOOL (LOST SOUND-----A QUESTION ABOUT THE A - BOMB)

JOHN

I CAN TELL YOU MY FEELINGS ABOUT THE A-BOMB. IT SAVED MORE JAPANESE THAN IF WE WENT IN. IN THE INVASION OF JAPAN THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGHER CASUALTIES.

I NEVER GOT TOO CLOSE TO ANYONE. I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID THAT SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN TO THEM.

NED

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY HUMOROUS INCIDENTS?

JOHN

WELL, TO ME IT WAS FUNNY BUT IT WASN'T FUNNY AT THE TIME. WE WERE UP ON THIS HILL ABOUT 4 O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON AND THERE WERE TWO JAPANESE MACHINE GUNS DOWN THE HILL THERE. I SAID, "LET'S GO DOWN THERE AND GET THOSE MACHINE GUNS. I GOT BAND OVER MY SHOULDER AND HE GETS ONE. WE WALKED DOWN THE HILL AND CAME ON FOUR JAPANESE LAYING IN A HOLE. THEY HAD BEEN THERE ALL DAY IN THE HOT SUN AND NEVER STUCK THEIR HEADS UP. THE ONLY THING THAT SAVED THEM WAS THEY MUST HAVE GONE TO SLEEP. WE WALKED UP ON THEM. ONE OF THEM CAME OUT OF THAT HOLE. THERE WAS A SOUVENIR HUNTER, AS SOON AS HE SAW US FIRING, HE CAME RUNNING DOWN THERE AND THAT'S ALL HE WAS AFTER. HE WAS A RAILROAD GUARD ROLLED OVER ON HIS SIDE. I WONDERED WHERE THE TRACKS WERE BUT IF FOUND OUT SENT THE METAL BACK TO JAPAN, THE RAILS. ANYHOW, HE WENT AROUND THE CAR AND HE SEEN THEM. HE THOUGHT THEY WERE DEAD AND HE STARTED TO SEARCH THEM. ONE OF THEM GRABBED A HAND GRENADE AND TRIED TO STICK DOWN HIS JACKET. I HEARD HIM HOLLER. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE WAS DOWN THERE AND HE JUMPED AROUND THIS BOX CAR AND THERE WERE THREE JAPS AND HIM. HE WAS

RUNNING AND IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE OUT OF A COMIC STRIP. I CAN STILL SEE HIM. HE DIDN'T HAVE A WEAPON. HE DIDN'T TAKE ONE.

NED

THIS WAS THE SOUVENIR HUNTER? HE WAS ONE OF YOUR UNIT?

JOHN

YES. HE WAS FROM OUR COMPANY. HE GOT THOSE THREE JAPANESE AND HE WENT BACK UP ON THE HILL THEN. AT THE TIME IT WASN'T FUNNY BUT I CAN STILL SEE HIM RUNNING.

NED

IF YOU HADN'T SHOWN UP, HE WOULD HAVE -----.

JOHN

LIKE I SAY, WE HAD NO IDEA THERE WERE THAT MANY JAPANESE ON THAT ISLAND.

NED

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY SPECIAL MISSION THAT YOU -----

JOHN

NO.

NED

ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY?

JOHN

THERE PROBABLLY WAS A WHOLE LOT BUT I DON'T REMEMBER ANY.

NED

HOW ABOUT THE CHOW?

JOHN

IF YOU COULD DO IT, IT WAS FINE.

NED

WHEN YOU ARE ON YOUR IFANTRY ATTACKS, DID YOU HAVE A FIELD KITCHEN OR DID YOU HAVE TO TAKE-----?

JOHN

USUALLY, WE JUST CARRIED OUR OWN RATIONS. THEY WOULD CARRY THEM UP TO US.

NED

ALL PREPARED.

JOHN

NOT LIKE THEY ARE TODAY, I WOULD GUESS.

NED

WHEN DID YOU GET BACK TO EATING REGULARLY, AFTER PLACES WERE SECURED, WOULD THEY SET UP FIELD KITCHENS?

JAMES

ON THE ISLAND OF (?????) I THINK WE WENT TO ALMOST A MONTH WITHOUT A BATH AND WITHOUT PROPER CHOW. WE HAD DYSENTERY, JUNGLE ROT, TROPICAL ULCERS. AFTER WE WENT BACK IN, WE WENT TO THE HOSPITAL FOR DYSENTERY. AFTER WE GOT PRETTY WELL, I SAID TO THE DOCTOR, "DOCTOR, CAN YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS?" I HAD A GREAT BIG TROPICAL ULCER. I SPENT 80 DAYS IN HOSPITAL. WE WERE GOING TO LEAVE FOR THE PHILLIPINES, AND MY LEGS STILL HAD SORES ON THEM. THEY FINALLY GOT WELL.

NED

WHERE WERE YOU IN THE HOSPITAL?

JOHN

AN ISLAND CALLED ????????. I LEFT HOME A CIVILIAN AND I CAME HOME A CIVILIAN. I NEVER HAD A THREE DAY PASS.

NED

YOU HAD A TERMINAL LEAVE?

JOHN

NO. I GOT PAID FOR A TERMINAL LEAVE AFTER I GOT BACK.

NED

HOW ABOUT YOUR OFFICERS. DO YOU RECALL YOUR C O?

JOHN

OH YES.

NED

PRETTY GOOD?

JOHN

YES. HE WAS MY PLATOON LEADER. VERY EFFICIENT.

NED

WAS HE A LIEUTENANT?

JOHN

YES. FIRST LIEUTENANT. JUST A KID LIKE THE REST OF US.

NED

DID HE GO TO O C S OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

JOHN

YES.

NED

DID YOU HAVE ANY REGULAR ARMY. OLD TIME REGULAR ARMY GUYS?

JOHN

YES. WHEN I GOT UP INTO NEW GUINEA, MY SERGEANT, SQUAD LEADER WAS AN OLD REGULAR ARMY. HE WAS IN THE ORIGINAL TEST PROGRAM FOR THE AIRBORNE. HE HAD 50 PARACHUTE JUMPS. HERE, I HAD 6 OR 7.

NED

HOW MANY DID YOU END UP WITH?

JOHN

THIRTEEN JUMPS. ONLY ONE COMBAT AND THAT WAS CORREGIDORE. THE REST OF THEM WERE JUST TRAINING.

NED

DID THAT MAKE YOU A LITTLE NERVOUS, NUMBER THIRTEEN?

JOHN

THE JUMP DIDN'T. IT WAS WHAT WAS ON THE GROUND.

NED

AFTER THE BOMBS WERE DROPPED, HOW LONG BEFORE YOU GOT SENT BACK STATESIDE? THE TREATY WAS SIGNED SEPTEMBER 2, 1945.

JOHN

I GOT BACK IN DECEMBER.

NED

IN THAT INTERIM, WHERE WERE YOU?

JOHN

WE WERE SENT DOWN TO ----- OUR UNIT WAS BROKEN UP AND ALL THE GUYS THAT DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH POINTS TO COME HOME WERE SENT TO JAPAN. I WAS SIGNED UP WITH THE 11TH AIRBORNE. THE REST OF US, MOST OF US, WERE SENT TO SOME OTHER UNIT TO COME HOME. WE WERE SENT DOWN SOUTH TO MINDINAO ISLAND AND JOINED WHAT WAS CALLED, "THE DIXIE DIVISION". WE CAME HOME TO SAN FRANCISCO.

NED

AND THAT WAS BY TWO SHIPS?

JOHN

YES.

NED

THEY HAD YOU PRETTY WELL PACKED ON THAT SHIP.

JOHN

OH YES. I DON'T REMEMBER THE NAME OF THAT SHIP. I WAS THERE ONLY A FEW DAYS AND TOOK A TROOP TRAIN TO CAMP GRANT, ILLINOIS. I WAS DISCHARGED CHRISTMAS DAY.

NED

DID YOU GO INTO THE RESERVES THEN?

JOHN

NO. I DIDN'T.

NED

DID YOU HAVE A CHOICE?

JOHN

OH YEAH. A FEW YEARS LATER, I WAS IN THE AIR FORCE RESERVES.

NED

WERE THERE ANY CHANGES THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE STATES DURING THE PERIOD YOU WERE OUT? WHEN YOU WERE COMING HOME, WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS?

JOHN

I WAS HAPPY. I DIDN'T CARE. AUTHORITY DIDN'T BOTHER ME ANYMORE. I KNEW I WAS JUST GOING HOME.

NED

ALL THE TIME YOU WERE OUT THERE, YOU DIDN'T HAVE A GIRL FRIEND OR YOU DID HAVE?

JOHN

THIS ISN'T FOR PUBLICATION IS IT?

NED

NO, I MEAN AT HOME?

JOHN

OH. THAT'S DIFFERENT. WELL, I DID WRITE TO ONE.

NED

THE ONE YOU MARRIED?

JOHN

NO.

NED

OK. CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES OUT THERE?

JOHN

NO. I THINK I WAS ONE OF THE BEST ORGANIZED COMBAT UNITS.

NED

ON YOU R AND R IN AUSTALIA, DID THE AUSTRALIANS TREAT YOU GUYS PRETTY WELL?

JOHN

OH YEAH.

NED

THEY LIKED THE GI'S DIDN'T THEY.

JOHN

I WAS JUST THERE AND I HADN'T BEEN THERE VERY LONG AND ALL THE OLDER GUYS GOT FURLOUGHS AND EVERYTHING. US GUYS HAD TO TAKE CARE OF CAMP AND EVERYTHING. I LIKED THE AUSSIES.

NED

IF THERE IS NOTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY JOHN, ON BEHALF OF THE MUSEUM, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR TAKING THIS TIME TO GIVE US THIS ORAL HISTORY. YOU UNDERSTAND NOW, WHAT WILL HAPPEN, IT WILL BE TRANSCRIBED, YOU WILL BE SENT A COPY AND YOU CAN ADD TO IT OR CORRECT IT OR DO WITH IT WHAT YOU WANT TO DO. SEND IT BACK AND THEN WHEN FINALIZED, THEY WILL SEND YOU A COPY OF THE FINAL DRAFT. THE DOCUMENT THEN WILL BE PLACED IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE MUSEUM FOR FUTURE STUDY BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE A REAL INTEREST IN THE DOCUMENT.

THANK YOU.

TRANSCRIBED BY FOREST J. REES

PROOFED BY MARJORIE J. REES

FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS

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