

**Interviewee: Bob Drannen**

**Interviewer: Thomas Saylor**

**Date of interview: 10 August 2002**

**Location: dining room in Bob Drannen's home, Cloquet, MN**

**Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, September 2002**

**Edited by: Thomas Saylor, December 2002**

Bob Drannen was born 23 August 1926 in Duluth, Minnesota, but spent his childhood in Atkinson, Carlton County, Minnesota, where his father ran a small general store. After graduating from Barnum High School in 1944, Bob immediately enlisted in the US Marines Corps; he was sent to Parris Island, South Carolina, for Basic Training, then assigned to the regimental weapons company of the Third Marine Regiment, Third Marine Division.

With this unit, Bob boarded a troopship and headed for the island of Guam, where preparations were under way for the forthcoming invasion of Iwo Jima. When the invasion began in February 1945, the Third Marine Division was held in reserve; several division units were later dispatched to the small island of Chichi Jima, almost three hundred miles north of Iwo Jima, where Japanese forces had a communications base. With several hundred other Marines, Bob remained here until June 1945, when he was returned to Guam to begin preparation for the invasion of Japan (scheduled for fall 1945). Bob was on Guam when the Pacific war ended in August 1945.

While many military personnel were returning to the US and being discharged, Bob remained on Guam until October 1946. For some months Bob served as the personal driver for Admiral Chester Nimitz, then Chief of Naval Operations, but for most of the time there was little to do. Bob finally returned to the US in late 1946 and was discharged in December of that year.

Once again a civilian, Bob used the GI Bill to earn an associate's degree from the University of Minnesota (1949). He subsequently worked in the sales division for Northwest Paper (later Potlatch, then Sappi), retiring in 1984 with thirty-four years of service.

**Interview Key:**

**T = Thomas Saylor**

**B = Bob Drannen**

**[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation**

**(\*\*\*) = words or phrase unclear**

**NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity**

**Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.**

T: Today is August 10, 2002 and this is the interview with Bob Drannen. First, Bob, on the record, thanks very much for taking time to talk with us.

B: You're entirely welcome.

T: I want to ask you, just briefly, when and where you were born?

B: I was born in Duluth, Minnesota, on August 23, 1926.

T: Any brothers or sisters?

B: I had one brother who died two years ago and I have one sister that lives in Duluth.

T: Still lives in Duluth?

B: Yes.

T: What did your folks do?

B: My Dad worked for Western Steel up until 1931. Then he moved to Atkinson and he ran a country store until he retired.

T: Which was when? When did he retire?

B: 1951 I think it was.

T: So as a young boy did you grow up in Duluth or...?

B: No. I was born in Duluth, but I lived in Atkinson with my folks.

T: How far is Atkinson from Duluth?

B: From Duluth? Twenty-eight miles.

T: Did you go to school in Atkinson too?

B: Yes. There was a grade school up through the eighth grade there. Then we went to high school in Barnum.

T: Did you finish high school in Barnum?

B: Yes. In fact, they tore the school down. I went from the sixth grade through the twelfth grade in Barnum. It was ten miles. We rode by bus every day.

T: Bus up and bus back every day.

B: Yes.

T: That makes for a long day. When you were in school, it looks like you were about fifteen years of age when Pearl Harbor was attacked in December of 1941.

B: Yes.

T: Do you remember what you were doing when you first heard that news?

B: It was early Sunday morning and my dad came and woke my brother and I up in the bedroom and told us about this. We all almost cried.

T: How was your dad reacting to this news?

B: It struck him badly. He was in the Air Force in World War I. He was a great American citizen. He loved America, and it hit him bad.

T: Now you were fifteen years of age. What did this news mean to someone like you?

B: It meant that if the war lasted, I knew I was going to have to go. I talked to my dad, and I told my dad I wanted to go in the Marine Corps. When I was seventeen, he did sign for me on it.

T: By the time you went in the Marine Corps, which was mid-1944, was your brother already in the Navy?

B: Yes. He was already in for over a year. He enlisted in the Navy.

T: So you were following in your brother's footsteps.

B: Right on.

**(1, A, 55)**

T: You were in school for a couple of years while the war was on. Do you recall if the war impacted your school at all?

B: Very definitely. When the war started, we had a lot of men high school teachers. I'd say six months after it started, they were all gone. All women high school teachers. That's one thing that we all noticed. The teachers were going. You know, the young ones that were in draft age, or wanted to enlist. The older ones stayed there. But I'd say two-thirds of them were gone. They left.

T: What about any activities at school that were patriotic or war related?

B: We had flags in every room now. All of our teams, I played on the basketball and football teams, had flags in the locker room, and we'd always salute them. Our dads told us to do that, so we did.

T: Did you feel yourself to be, as a young man, a patriotic person?

B: Yes. I was brought up that way through my dad.

T: You finished high school in 1944?

B: 1944.

T: How soon was it before you enlisted in the Marine Corps?

B: It was about a month afterward. We enlisted and then I broke my wrist, and I had to wait for another couple months before I could go back through again. It delayed my entry.

T: From what we talked [about] earlier, it was, I think, August of 1944, or September, that you actually went off to Basic Training?

B: Yes. In September of 44.

T: Where did you go for Basic Training?

B: Paris Island, South Carolina.

T: By the way, what made you join the Marine Corps and not the Army or the Navy?

B: A friend of mine in school, we talked about it for years. So we just decided we wanted to do it.

T: So it wasn't a real scientific decision?

B: No, no. We just wanted to.

T: Paris Island, South Carolina, is pretty far away from Minnesota.

B: Yes.

T: Was that a new part of the country for you?

B: Yes, it was. I had never been there before.

T: What can you tell us about South Carolina?

B: Paris Island? I had never seen the ocean before, and Paris Island is out in the ocean. They had to take us out there to get there. On a boat. Now they have a bridge going there, which they didn't have before. We could go in the water and do this and that when we were free. I enjoyed it. It was good to me. I never minded boot camp. A lot of people hated it, but I didn't mind it at all.

T: What about the climate down there?

B: It rained. It was the rainy season. No snow or anything but where we'd get snow here it rained down there. Never got real cold, no.

**(1, A, 112)**

T: Was this your first time being away from home for a long period of time?

B: Yes.

T: How was this? Was it an adjustment for you?

B: Oh, very definitely. Our family has been real close. My mother and dad and my brother and sister and I got along just perfect. That was the hardest adjustment I had to make, not being with them.

T: How did you adjust? Because suddenly, from being at home, you're now thousands of miles away in a very different situation.

B: I had never been much of a letter writer. I adjusted by writing letters to them. It's just something that you had to do. It's something that you had to tell yourself. They're not here, and I have to adjust myself accordingly.

T: Did some folks have an easier time or a harder time than you with this adjustment?

B: Oh, very definitely. We had some people who they kicked out because they couldn't adjust. For example, if we were going to march on a ten-mile march or something they'd go hide. They wouldn't get up in the morning and stuff. They threw them in the brig and then discharged them. We had one person that was from Texas, he couldn't adjust and they let him go.

T: At this point in time, late 1944, was everyone in the Marine Corps still a volunteer?

B: Yes. Everybody volunteered.

**(1, A, 139)**

T: What was the easiest thing for you about Basic Training?

B: The easiest thing? *(three second pause)* I was in sports all my life, and I didn't mind running or climbing or doing rolling and doing this and that. That came very easy to me. The physical part was nothing.

T: What was the hard thing about Basic Training?

B: Being away from my family I think was the hardest thing. Other than that I never had a problem with it.

T: How would you describe what you were training to do when you were at Paris Island?

B: They trained us mostly to be a rifleman, up in the front lines. That's what we were in. But I never was; I was in an anti-tank outfit.

T: You did your Basic Training, and then did anti-tank training?

B: Yes. I did the anti-tank training on Guam.

T: When you were in Basic Training was it pretty clear, was it made clear, or maybe you just knew, that you were going to the Pacific?

B: Oh yes, we knew we would. Yes, they told us that. It was very clear.

T: Was it also clear that you were probably going to be in on an island invasion?

B: Yes, they told us. In fact, before we dropped the bomb on Japan [in August 1945], I was back on Guam. We had some half-tracks and jeeps and stuff and we had them

all relined because they told us we were going to be one of the first people to land on Japan.

T: So even after Iwo Jima was over the preparations were being made for Japan, and you knew you were part of that?

B: Oh, definitely. Yes.

T: Being that you were going to the Pacific from Basic Training, was there much discussion about the Japanese, who they were, what kind of people they were?

B: Yes, there was a lot. Most of the discussion wasn't good. A good example of this is when I got through training, just before we were going overseas. We got shipped to San Diego. Our head sergeant told me, he said, "Don't smile too much when you're over there." I've got this gold in my front tooth, see? *(smiles to show front teeth)* I got my teeth kicked out in high school. It was there he said, "That's the first thing the Japanese are going to look for, and take and knock your teeth out." There was a warning about it. Very definitely, yes.

T: What else did you learn about the Japanese in Basic Training?

B: Not to trust them. We were told this constantly. Don't trust them, because they will do anything to get you. They never cared for human life--where the Americans did. I think that was the most important thing. You just don't trust them.

T: And this was drilled into you?

B: Oh, very definitely.

**(1, A, 189)**

T: So by the time you went to San Diego to ship out, you guys kind of knew what to expect and what kind of people you were going up against?

B: Oh, very definitely.

T: Is there a positive memory, or a positive anecdote, you can relate to us from Basic Training? Kind of a favorite memory?

B: Boy *(four second pause)* I don't really know. I can't say that I had anything that was outstanding, or anything was good. I enjoyed it all.

T: You liked Basic Training.

B: I enjoyed it, yes. I did.

T: Did you come into contact with southerners at all when you joined the Marine Corps?

B: Yes, we did. In fact, they would tell us we had an accent, and we'd tell them they had an accent. The people from Texas all the way down would tell us from New York, well even New York had an accent that was different. But this thing, we would tell each other that you talk different than we do. You notice this right away.

T: You hadn't heard this before being up here?

B: No.

T: How did people from different parts of the country get along?

B: We all got along real well. We were taught that we had to protect one another.

T: An esprit de corps kind of thing?

B: Exactly.

T: Would you say when you left Basic Training that you felt confident or comfortable about yourself and the unit you were with?

B: Very definitely I did.

T: Being in the Marine Corps, I'll ask you. Did you feel yourself to be better than those Army or Navy guys?

B: Yes, I did (*laughs*). Not better. I'll take that back. We had better training is what I should say. We were trained a step above the rest of them to do different things, where you were going on these islands and stuff.

T: Was your training longer than the Navy or Army?

B: Yes. It was. We did different things to protect yourself and one another.

T: As an individual and as a group?

B: Yes. Both ways. Right.

T: Were you part of a squad by now? You were anti-tank or you were in a rifle squad?

B: Actually it was Weapons Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division. It was a regimental weapons company.

**(1, A, 224)**

T: You worked closely then with a small group or a squad of other men, right?

B: Right. Yes.

T: How were the general dynamics, the group dynamics, then of this small squad?

B: Very close to each other. Everybody would help everybody else. We all had to know their job. They had to know our job. We were real close.

T: You went to San Diego by train?

B: Yes. It took us six days to get across the country on the train.

T: Do you remember that train ride at all?

B: Oh, very definitely. We stopped three times and went to a restaurant where we'd get out and eat. We enjoyed that. We'd get off the train and stop and eat, and then we went through Texas. I can remember it was much warmer than we had here in Minnesota. We slept. There were four bunks, one right above the other. Each person had about two feet to sleep in, so you just crawled in there and slept.

T: If you raised your head up...

B: You'd hit it (*laughs*). It was cramped. It was very cramped.

T: How do you kill time on a train like that?

B: Looking out the window. That's what most of us did most of the time.

T: What kind of thoughts were going through your head now that you were really moving from Basic Training to something real?

B: Most of us talked about where we were going to go on the train. As soon as we hit San Diego, we knew we were going to go to Guam. They told us we were going to go to Guam, but we didn't know what islands we were going to go to from there. That was where we knew we were going to go.

T: That would be for training, or as a staging area?

B: Right on. Yes, that's where you prepared your unit to get ready to go on another ship and go someplace.

T: When did you hit San Diego? Do you remember when that was?

B: It was still in 1944. I don't remember the date. Late in the year. Then the troop ship to Guam. We went on a troop ship. There were twelve thousand of us on this ship! *(laughs)* Twelve thousand on this ship.

T: Even with a very big ship, that's still pretty cramped.

B: Oh, boy, was it ever. And our ship, we zigzagged. We were all by ourselves. No convoy. We were all by ourselves, and we zigzagged through. We stopped in Pearl Harbor for a day and a half, and then we went from there to Guam and they let us off on Guam. Two days later the ship I was on, the Japanese torpedoed and sunk it. They were going to go back to Pearl Harbor, and it got sunk. Two days after we got off of it.

T: There's good fortune already. On Guam, what were you doing?

B: We were getting ready, we thought, to go to Japan. We had 37mm and 105mm cannons. Then we had eight half-tracks that were almost like tanks. That's what our group did. Learn how on everything that was there. Everybody had to know how to fire everything. We were heavy weapons.

T: That's what a regimental weapons company does?

B: Right on. Yes.

T: So you became proficient in a number of different weapon systems?

B: Yes. I know how to drive the half-tracks, and how to fire the guns and stuff.

T: When did it become clear to you that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division was headed to Iwo Jima?

B: I don't remember when, but they told us that we were going to be the floating reserve. If they needed us we were going to go in. So we went there and then we pulled ashore and let some people off, and we went back and then we went up to [the island of] Chichi Jima.

T: So you knew before D-Day at Iwo Jima that you were not going to be part of the assault.

B: Yes. We were the floating reserve. They told us that.

T: When it was known to you that you were going to be attacking Iwo Jima, what were guys saying about this when it became clear this is what was going to happen?

B: Keep your head down and don't look up anyplace, because they're going to shoot you. Iwo Jima was hilly, and you had to lay there, and they would shoot you if you ever raised up. They did get many people. Keep yourself hidden was the main subject.

T: What was going through your mind then as it got closer and closer on the way to Iwo Jima? What were you thinking about?

**(1, A, 295)**

B: Am I going to get shot? Am I going to get killed? Am I going to make it, or am I not going to make it? I think that was on everybody's mind. Thinking about yourself.

T: Was there a concern with your unit and being really up to it, up to the task as well?

B: Oh, yes. Very definitely it was. Our thought was that we were a real good unit. We had real good officers to train us and stuff, so everything was real good.

T: So you felt a sense of responsibility to your unit as well?

B: Definitely.

T: Did that sense of responsibility, not wanting to fail, did that drive a lot of guys?

B: Our outfit, we never had a problem like that. Everybody was for everybody else. We did not have a problem, no. That wasn't a problem with us.

T: Was that an important part of what motivated people?

B: Oh, very definitely. That brought people together, so you knew you could the person next to you and they knew they could trust you in any way. That was very important to all of us.

T: Just being able to count on other people?

B: Exactly.

T: The attack on Iwo Jima was in February of 1945. The day of the attack, where exactly were you and your unit? On ships?

B: No. We were still on Guam.

T: So when the attack on Iwo Jima started you were still on Guam?

B: Yes. Then we went up there afterward. We were the floating reserve if they needed us. But we didn't have to go in. The only time we went in was when we let some people off. Other than that we backed off again. I was never part of the war on Iwo Jima. I was very lucky. The 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines were there. There were thousands of casualties.

T: From floating reserve, though, your unit did land on Chichi Jima.

**(1, A, 321)**

B: Right, we went to Chichi Jima. It's north. I think it's six hundred miles north of Iwo Jima. Way north.

T: What kind of place was that?

B: It was a small island and it was all mountains. All rock going right down in the ocean. It was the main Japanese communication center for the whole Pacific.

T: Was it difficult to land on this island then?

B: We had our rifles loaded. They told us to watch it. There were quite a few Japanese on there, but they laid down. The first day they laid down when we came. So we got off and two days later they had some generators where they had light to light up your tent and stuff. The Japanese came out and cut all the lights, all the cords.

T: They were on the island but they didn't engage you when you actually landed.

B: No, no. They were on the island. We took a bunch of them back with us to Guam. We sent most of them home. We took the commanding officers of these different regiments and took them back to Guam, where they were thrown in prison.

T: Prisoners. That's not something we hear a lot about in the Pacific. Here you're talking about taking a number of Japanese prisoners. How do you explain that?

B: America wanted to find out how and why they did so many of the things they did. Through these people is how they found out so many of the things.

T: These Japanese were surrendering though?

B: Oh, yes. They were surrendering.

T: And that's different than the past in the Pacific.

B: Oh, yes, yes. They were surrendering.

T: Was there still armed resistance on the Chichi Jima as well?

B: There was, but we only heard them fire once and they claim they didn't fire at us. But they had cannons. In fact, in these mountains they had caves with elevators in them, rope elevators that they'd pull. They had doors where they could open and fire on anybody they wanted to. But they never fired on us.

T: This is so ironic, the difference between what was happening at Iwo Jima and what was happening here.

B: Well, I think they knew that they were through. I honestly believe that. On Iwo Jima they would get killed rather than be taken prisoner. But here they were different. They were changed. They were different.

T: So there was this ironic difference between what was going on at Iwo Jima and what was happening at Chichi Jima.

B: Very definitely there was.

T: You faced virtually little if any armed resistance.

B: Yes. They didn't like us. They cut the wires and they took an axe and went over and cut some tires on some jeeps and stuff like that. Destructive work rather than hurting people. This was at night.

T: The first night or the first couple nights you were there, did you dig in? Could you even dig in on this rocky island, or was there a perimeter that you had to guard?

B: We slept on the ship and went to shore. It took us two days. We put up our tents. Then we'd go back to the ship at night, and then the third night we did that but then we had guards. Half the people were guarding and half the people would sleep. Then you'd change off.

T: Were you part of the guard at night?

B: Yes.

T: What was that like? You were in a front line situation.

B: To me it was scary because you didn't know the area. You never knew if somebody was going to come up behind you and cut your throat or do this. It never happened but you didn't know that.

T: Is there a certain amount of tension that comes with wondering what's going to happen?

B: Oh, very definitely there is. Yes. It makes a person think, and you never relax. You hear a noise and you look around.

T: Were there any incidents at night that you can recall where there was an infiltrator or even what somebody thought was an infiltrator?

B: Not at us. There was an old building there that they didn't bomb.

**End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 319.**

T: Back to this perimeter story.

B: The officers stayed in this building and they would go over there at night quite a few times and break windows. I remember one time, our officers got a hold of some of the Japanese officers and found out who it was. I don't know if they gave them food or beer or what they did if they'd squeal on their own men. Then we have these guys locked up in brigs.

T: How long was it before Chichi Jima was declared secure?

B: I'd say a month. Probably three weeks and it was declared secure.

T: Did the Marines take a lot of casualties here?

B: No. Just a few. Very, very few.

T: How long did you and your particular unit then stay on this particular island?

B: We were there almost six months.

T: Once the island was declared secure, what were you doing there?

B: The main job was to blow up the caves where they had these guns. They had eight brand new Japanese Zeroes. Fighter planes. There was an airstrip, too. I was too dumb to realize at the time. They told us that they would get these planes back to San Diego for us. So we had to ship them back to the United States. I could have had a brand new Japanese Zero for nothing. But nobody took them, so we blew them up. That's what we did. They had buildings that we had bombed, and some of

them weren't hurt. They were about two-foot thick concrete all the way around. That's where they had all their communications in there. We blew up all this stuff.

**(1, B, 419)**

T: Taking over an island like this brings up the subject of souvenirs. Was there a big demand for, and taking of, Japanese war souvenirs?

B: We had absolutely tons of them. I got that sword there that I have on the wall in the living room. It came from Iwo Jima but I got it on Chichi Jima. I had Japanese rifles. I had two more of those swords. I had Japanese hand grenades. I had some bayonets. We had anything we wanted. I sent a lot of it home and I took a lot of it back to Guam with me when we went back there.

T: I'm curious that there was a lot of stuff and people were interested in having this stuff.

B: Yes. We could have had anything we wanted. That stuff I took back to Guam with us I kept there, and when our outfit was going to come back home, I was with a guy by the name of David Brinkley. It wasn't the David Brinkley of the TV news show. It was a different David Brinkley. We asked our commanding officer if we could fly back to the States. He said, "If you can get it, you show me." So we went up to the naval air station up there and we talked to a couple of guys and they said, "What do you have in souvenirs?" We told them what we had and we got a jeep and brought up all this stuff, so they said, "Yes, we'll give you a ride back to the States if you'll give us that." I think it was ten days later we got on there, and they lied to us; the plane only went as far as Pearl Harbor. Then they dumped us. That's all the farther it went. Our boys, the other guys in our unit, were on a ship that was ready to come home. I think I told you that I drove for Admiral Nimitz on Guam. Well, we didn't know what to do when we were back in Pearl Harbor. We had to get back to San Diego.

T: I want to tie up the souvenir thing. What do you think is the attraction for many guys of having these kinds of war souvenirs?

B: I think the majority of it is just to say you were over there. I think that was the main reason. I gave all mine away. I didn't need them.

T: To acquire this stuff. Was it simply laying around, or did you have to take it from people?

B: No. We made the Japanese take all their gear and put it in piles, which they did. We don't know if they did all of it, but there was a lot of it there. And then they told us, "You can go in there and take whatever you want." Our officers told us that. That's how we got our stuff. It was there for the taking.

**(1, B, 478)**

T: When you got back to Guam, was there a demand? Did people want this stuff and were they going to pay for it to get some of this stuff?

B: Yes, you could have got rid of it with anybody. In fact, a lot of people did sell it to other people.

T: There was a trade in this.

B: Oh, yes.

T: Now at this point you were up close. You actually saw Japanese here on Chichi Jima. Right?

B: We were as close as you and I are.

T: What was your impression now of the Japanese? You had learned about them before.

B: I still don't care for the Japanese. In my mind I don't care for them. But I don't hate them. They're citizens of the world and you have to respect it. I'll put it that way. That's how I feel about them.

T: How about the interaction between Marines and Japanese on Chichi Jima? How did you observe that? What was that like?

B: I think the majority of them were afraid of a Marine. I honestly do. They figured it was either kill or be killed. And they figured we felt the same way. They backed off from us on there. They did. I don't know why. We all had the same feeling.

T: So there was a level of fear on their part?

B: Yes, right.

T: How many were captured? Do you have any idea?

B: We sent most of them home on three Japanese ships. Back to Japan. Then I think we took twenty-five or twenty-seven officers back to Guam with us. That's all we took. After V-J Day they were sent back to Japan.

**(1, B, 515)**

T: What did you do with these Japanese while you were there on Chichi Jima? They were just there?

B: They were just there. We were there and they were there. We did have boundaries where they could not come in our area at all. There were a few at first that would walk in there but they were told not to and kicked around a little bit. There was a fenced off area and they were told, "You can't come in there," and they respected it.

T: What kind of problems were there?

B: Over there? The biggest problem, until we shipped them all back, was you never knew if you could trust them. When you went to bed at night you never knew if somebody was going to come in and hit you over the head. We were told to fear them and not trust them.

T: And was that reinforced at Chichi Jima as well?

B: Oh, yes. Very much so.

T: While you were at Chichi Jima, which was a number of months, the plans for the invasion of Japan were developing. Did you know or did you expect that your unit was going to be part of this?

B: We knew we were. When we got back to Guam from there, in June, we had everything, all our half-tracks and everything, they had double metal welded over the tracks. We were told that we were going to be one of the initial invaders of Japan when the invasion came.

T: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division was going to be part of the first wave in the invasion of Japan.

B: Being that we were the floating reserve on Iwo Jima, we were going to be the first.

T: So the war for you was going to take a very different turn, it looked like. How were you processing the fact that you were going to be part of the first wave of the invasion of Japan?

B: You try not to think of it, but you were hoping and praying they would bomb everything terribly before you went in there so you could at least get to shore. That was the main thing, to actually land.

**(1, B, 553)**

T: Were there training exercises going on to prepare you for this invasion?

B: Very definitely, yes. They would take us out two blocks out in the ocean on Guam and have us jump overboard out of an LST [landing ship, tank] and swim to shore. With packs on and stuff. We did that half a dozen times or so. You had to eat little C rations and K rations, because that's all there would be for a while. How to shoot. How to carry your ammunition. That was the main thing.

T: Did you expect you were going to be more of a rifleman in Japan? Or using heavy weapons?

B: Heavy weapons, but we all had the rifles. I had a rifle and a .45 caliber pistol.

T: You've now been at Basic Training, had a little stop at San Diego, you've been on Guam, Chichi Jima, and back to Guam. Were there times during this period that you had liberty, or time off?

B: There was no liberty. There was no place to go. We did have time off. A lot of times we would have a Saturday and a Sunday off. You could do as you wanted to do. We'd go and knock down a coconut tree and eat coconuts, or go swimming in the ocean or something. That's all.

T: Did your spare time activities differ on Chichi Jima and Guam?

B: Oh, very definitely. Guam you could go all over the place, and there were different airfields. There were people. I had some friends I went to high school with who were there. One of them was in another Marine outfit and two of them were in the Air Force, and I saw all three of them over there on Guam. When you were off you could go to these different stations. On Chichi Jima it was just a little island, and you were just right there.

T: What did guys do on Chichi Jima when they had spare time? Was there alcohol available?

B: There was beer. After three months there was beer.

T: You got your beer ration late, and all at once?

B: Right. What most of us did... the Japanese had some docks--wooden docks that went out maybe twenty, thirty feet into the ocean. We'd go there and sit. There were crocodiles that we could see there. There were all kinds of octopus. And we'd go sit and just watch those. We'd spear and catch little fish and throw them to the crocodiles. You'd spend hours just killing time doing that.

T: That's a different universe from where you grew up.

B: Everything was so different. They were just unreal.

T: What else did guys do when they have free time?

B: When we got back to Guam, not on Chichi Jima, they had baseball. Each outfit, they wanted you to have a baseball team where they'd play each other. Just to keep your mind occupied. And then basketball courts. Keep your mind going.

T: Was the training on Guam as you're getting ready for the invasion, was it more intense or more relaxed?

B: I think it was quite intense. Everybody had a feeling of, "Boy, I don't know."

T: You knew what was coming.

B: Right. Exactly.

**(1, B, 612)**

T: The invasion of Japan never happened. When V-J Day came you were on Guam. I'll ask you about that in a moment. One thing I wanted to ask you about is on social matters. Things like minorities and other ethnic groups. Did you come into contact with blacks while you were in the Marine Corps?

B: No, there weren't any. There weren't any at all.

T: When you were on Guam were there blacks in other areas?

B: There were some blacks that were cooks on the ships. We saw very, very few of them. There were no fights or anything. We didn't have any to not get along with, but we didn't have any problems.

T: Were there other minority groups in your unit, Hispanics or Native Americans, things like this?

B: No, there weren't.

T: Pretty homogenous group.

B: Exactly. Yes. We were from all over. The only difference on some of us, they said we spoke different English and we told the southerners and Easterners. That was the only difference we ever had.

T: And southerners and people from the north got along pretty much okay.

B: Very well, yes.

T: Did you come into official contact with women during your time in the military?

B: No. There were some women in the service when we came back from Guam. We had a USO outfit that was a block away from us and there were some women working in that, but there weren't too many women in the service overseas when I was there.

T: Right, and you were never in the hospital in the service, were you?

B: No.

T: Never saw nurses or Red Cross people?

B: No.

T: You didn't come back to the States until 1946, so you really had the experience being over there.

B: Yes. I enjoyed it.

T: Let me ask about a person that maybe you can think of that made a positive impact on you. Somebody maybe that you looked up to. A buddy or somebody in your unit.

B: We had a first lieutenant that was so good to us. In fact, he told us that he liked us better than he like his other officers. He would come with us whenever we were doing something rather than go with them. He treated us just like kings.

T: How did officers and enlisted men generally relate to each other?

B: When you were right in combat, there was no difference. They didn't wear any bars or anything. But, now like after the war, they had their area and we had our area. They had their mess hall, we had our mess hall. It was different. They had theirs, we had ours.

T: During free time was there much camaraderie between the two, officers and enlisted men?

B: No. This one we had would rather come with us. But most of them stuck together. The officers in free time, they could have booze. Enlisted could not. They would get together and have their party. When the war ended with Japan, all of our officers had tables out in front of our tents with all their booze on it. They said, "Come on. You guys can drink all you want." That was a special occasion.

**(1, B, 658)**

T: Whatever happened to this lieutenant?

B: I have no idea. I don't know. He was from Maryland, someplace out there. I don't have any idea what happened to him.

T: But a good guy for you while you were in there.

B: Yes.

T: You alluded to combat situations a moment ago. Did you have combat situations on Chichi Jima?

B: No, I never did. We never did. We never had a problem.

T: This is something we mentioned before we were taping. It seems that fortune or good luck or something comes into play sometimes.

B: Oh, very definitely.

T: And for you, I mean, we read accounts of the Marine Corps at Iwo Jima in the Pacific and preparing for the worst, and your particular path through this was a very different one.

B: I hit it real lucky.

T: Is there such a thing as fortune or fate?

B: Oh, very definitely there is. Yes. You have to be lucky, number one, and number two, you have to be careful in what you're doing. Think first before you act on a lot of things.

T: How do you explain the good fortune part? I mean, your unit was floating reserve at Iwo Jima and scheduled to go first at Japan.

B: We lucked out (*laughs*). We wouldn't have been here today if everything went the way it was headed.

T: I remember reading about the casualties they were expecting on the invasion of Japan.

B: It was terrible.

T: Bob, you were away for a long time. How did you stay in touch with family and loved ones?

B: I wrote a letter once a week to my family. My mother and my sister would write me once or twice a week. It was funny the first few letters that we got. You couldn't say too many things. You couldn't mention an officer's name. You couldn't say, "I was on Guam," or anything. They'd cut it out. My mother said the first few letters she got were all cut out. There was nothing to read.*(laughs)*.

T: They were carefully reading what you guys were writing.

B: You could not seal a letter. It had to go to your officer, and he would check everything.

T: You learn with time what you can say?

B: Very definitely.

T: That would make all your letters pretty banal wouldn't it?

B: It was nothing. I saw a palm tree, and I got some of this, and I ate a coconut. Other than that you didn't say anything because they'd cut it out.

T: Were there ways of coding things to sort of let your folks or your family members know where you were, what you were doing?

B: I didn't have it, but a friend of mine from Duluth, had something that code that he would say with all the islands and they knew where he was. I wasn't smart enough to do that. If he had a letter, he'd probably say something and put a question mark here or something and that meant this. That's how he did it.

T: Did they censor your incoming mail too?

B: No. Just outgoing.

T: You wrote about once a week you said. And you got mail how often?

B: A lot of times you wouldn't get them for three weeks, but then you'd get a half a dozen letters.

T: When you got a whole bunch of letters, were you the kind of guy who read them all at once or did you kind of save them and read them one at a time slowly?

B: I'd glance at them and put them down. And then later on I'd take and read them all thoroughly again. More than once.

T: How important is mail to soldiers away from home?

B: It's half your life. It's so important. You never forget your family and friends. To me it was so important.

T: So you noticed when there wasn't a letter.

B: Very definitely.

T: Other guys, were there guys for whom mail seemed to mean a lot or a little less than yourself?

B: We had one guy that, he was from out in the southeast, North or South Carolina or someplace there. I bet he didn't get over two, three letters. A lot of times our mothers or dads would send a picture of something. We'd show him. I don't know why, if his family and he if they didn't get along. He very, very seldom got anything. It hurt him. I noticed that.

T: Did guys share letters around? You mentioned showing pictures. Was it sharing and being part of a group or were letters kind of private things?

B: We started out with six people in our tent and then we went down to four. We'd show our letters to the people in your tent.

T: The people you were close with.

B: Yes, sure.

T: Did you have a lot of turnover in your unit? Getting replacements?

B: No. Very, very little. We weren't taking very many casualties.

**(1, B, 726)**

T: So you got to know guys pretty well.

B: Yes, we were together for two years, most of us.

T: What kind of people appealed to you in your unit?

B: The people who liked sports and just people you could talk to. Just to gab with.

T: And when you sit down to gab, what kind of stuff do you like to talk about? If there's a conversation, what kind of conversation are you likely to jump into?

B: Sports or talking about your family or what you did the day before, what you saw. Everyday stuff.

T: Were there guys who kind of kept to themselves, too?

B: Very definitely. In the tent down from us we had three guys, they were all three from Texas, not from the same town or anything, but they were in the same tent. They stuck by themselves. They talked to us, we talked to them, but they were always by themselves. They weren't with the rest of the group. Everybody noticed that. Now why, I don't know.

T: Were there what you might call even cliques in your unit?

B: No. We didn't have any. In fact, anybody tried to get too close to an officer or something and everybody would tell them, "We don't do that here. You stay away." Everybody stuck together. We never had any problem like that.

T: Did you stick together in more of a large group or were there small groups of people that began to form?

B: As a large group. We stuck together. We were all real close in our outfit.

T: That's fortunate. There are other stories about guys who weren't so fortunate. Did you encounter any of the native population on Guam or Chichi Jima?

B: Yes. We could hardly understand them. Some of them had learned to talk English. This is on Guam. They would slur every other word so you really had to listen. They were nice. If they had to go someplace we'd give them rides here and there. They were good to us.

T: Was the interaction between US military and these people generally positive or was there friction?

B: On Guam we were close to them. They were good.

T: How about on Chichi Jima? Were there natives there? Inhabitants?

B: Two. And they absolutely hated the Japanese. We took them back to Guam with us. I forget their name now. There were two brothers.

T: That's all there were, two?

B: The Japanese had killed all the rest of them.

T: There were only two left?

B: Two brothers that were there. They went back to Guam with us.

T: Now these Japanese, you said that some of the Japanese, officers I guess, were sent back to Guam from Chichi Jima?

B: Yes.

T: What happened to them?

B: They put some of them in jail.

**End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.**

T: Some of these Japanese were jailed?

B: They put them in brig, yes. I say there were twenty-seven that were brought back. Twenty-seven officers. Five, six, seven of them they kept in the brig. The rest of them they sent back to Japan.

T: Bob, did you make lasting contacts during your time in the military? Guys you kept in contact with after your service days?

B: Yes. I still get in contact with the guy in Duluth.

T: You stayed in a number of guys in your unit since the war? Have other guys in your unit also stayed in contact or are there some who have chosen not to?

B: There are some who have chosen not to. It's amazing how many people have died, out of the four hundred of us that stayed up on Chichi Jima.

T: Was that your entire company or just part of it?

B: Six hundred of us went up there, but four hundred of us stayed up there. And of the four hundred that stayed up there, there's only 127 of us living. In this letter that I got from a friend in my unit, he got it in there that there's that many that have dropped dead. Of course, we went in when we were seventeen. We had one guy that was thirty-seven years old at that time. We called him grandpa (*laughs*).

T: He must have seemed like it to you guys.

B: Right.

T: There are unit reunions as well?

B: I haven't been to one, but they have had two different reunions out East.

T: They're not an annual or a regular thing?

B: No.

T: Is that something that you're interested in, going to reunions?

B: Not really any more. When I worked I traveled so much, I hated it (*laughs*). That's the way I feel now.

T: You get a newsletter every couple months, and that's enough?

B: That's enough.

T: Speaking of news, when you were on Guam or Chichi Jima, how did you get news there?

B: They would pick up from the ships that went by. The ships would have something. A couple of the officers had phonographs. They'd play music if you wanted music. There was no radio or anything where you could pick up music or anything. On Guam you could, but not on Chichi Jima.

T: How about on Guam, were there newspapers floating around?

B: Yes. There was a paper that came out. I think the Seabees printed it. It came out a couple times a month, I think.

T: Kind of a little broadside?

B: Yes.

T: Did you get *Stars and Stripes* there too?

B: No.

T: Did you feel like you kept up on news? Did you feel like you knew what was going on in the rest of the world or in the rest of the war when you were over there?

B: Yes. When the war was going on, if there was a big invasion or a big air strike or something they'd tell you. Other than that, the smaller things, they'd let it go. You wouldn't hear about it.

T: Was scuttlebutt, were there rumors and stuff going around?

B: Constantly. Most of them were wrong. Somebody would just dream up something. Most of them were wrong.

T: I want to get to your Guam time, because you were on Guam for a long time. I think you told me it was around June of 1945 that you were back on Guam?

B: Yes.

T: And you didn't leave Guam until October 1946. That's a long time. Actually before you got back to Guam, President Roosevelt died, in April 1945. How did you and those around you...?

B: Terrible. We felt terrible. It made all of us cry.

T: Was there a sense of concern or worry now that the president was dead?

B: No. There wasn't that. It was just losing the man. Then I think most of us didn't know, but thought that we could win the war. It was just losing the president was the bad thing. That was bad.

T: Was there any kind of a ceremony at Chichi Jima where you were?

B: Yes. There was a minister that flew in from Guam. He was a naval chaplain. We all went in the mess hall and he gave a sermon about the president.

**(2, A, 101)**

T: They flew a chaplain in all the way from Guam.

B: Yes. Roosevelt was our commanding officer. He died.

T: Were there regular church services on Chichi Jima?

B: No, because we didn't have a minister there. But on Guam every Sunday there were all kinds of services.

T: Were you a church-goer then?

B: Not steady. I went I'd say two-thirds of the time. I would miss about a third of the times.

T: Was it Lutheran you were attending? Protestant or Catholic?

B: It was Protestant. They had Catholic and Protestant. Just the two. I went to the Protestant.

T: Was there anything memorable about the messages that you remember hearing on Sunday morning?

B: The main thing was never give up, because you're going to get home. Be optimistic about it. Never give up, because you are going to end up at home again. The message was more individual. I think their main object was to get your mind away from that, and bring it on yourself rather than the large war effort.

T: That's very interesting. You were on Guam then in June so it must have been on Chichi Jima then when the war in Europe ended.

B: Yes.

T: Do you remember hearing that news too?

B: Boy, do we ever! We thought, "Now we're going to end this other one too!" That's what everybody thought. Gave a boost to everybody. Anybody who didn't have a high morale, that brought it way up.

T: Now was this because you thought they were going to sending units over to help us?

B: Yes. We'd get help or they probably knew that they would be bombed or something from other ways than us. From this side or that side. It helped.

T: Once you got back to Guam, it's a different world. How did your life change when you got back there?

B: I told you mine changed a hundred percent, because I got picked to drive for Admiral Nimitz.

T: Was this right when you got back?

B: Shortly afterward. After V-J Day.

T: How does one get picked to be the driver for Admiral Nimitz?

B: His driver went home, and you had to have a license to drive a jeep or a great big truck, and I had both of them.

T: From being in the company you were in.

B: Yes. And so our commanding officer said, "Come with me. I want to take you someplace." So we went up to Admiral Nimitz's house and there were I think six or eight of us. He interviewed each one of us.

T: You got an interview with Admiral Nimitz?

B: Yes. And I got picked. I stayed in my outfit, but every morning I'd drive up to his place in a jeep and he would tell me if he was going to go someplace, where he was going to go. I'd get his big car out of the garage. He had five stars on a red plate. I'd pull that out. He was real good to me. There was a submarine that came in, that got hit by a Japanese submarine. They didn't get hurt bad, but they fixed it. I took him down there. He says, "Come on with me." So I went down and I went down in the submarine. We just went down periscope depth. I was with him on that.

T: What was that like?

B: Scary (*laughs*). Because they told us we were just going to go down. No, really it wasn't bad.

T: It must have been quite an experience.

B: Oh, very definitely. Yes.

T: What kind of car did the admiral have? What were you driving?

B: A 1940 DeSoto station wagon. It was a nice car. Most of the time I wouldn't take him in that. He'd say, "I'll ride in the jeep with you."

T: Did he have an aide with him, or just the two of you?

B: Just the two of us mostly, but if he had an aide or if we went to pick up somebody. We went to pick up another high-ranking naval officer. He wasn't an admiral or anything, but we went down and picked him up. We'd take the car then. When I went up to pick up Bob Hope, I took the car. That was in '46.

T: So the war was already over. What do you remember about that particular time?

B: Admiral Nimitz didn't come with me. He said, "Take the car and go up to the airport on the other end of Guam and pick him up." So I went up there and I told the security guard, well, he saw me with the car, and I said, "I'm going to pick up Bob Hope." There was Bob Hope and two women that came. I told him I was going to pick him up, so I shook hands with him and I brought him back to Admiral Nimitz' house.

T: So you had a ride in the car with Bob Hope, too.

B: Yes. We talked about, "How you doing? Where you been? How's everything?" It was just a real good talk.

T: What kind of impression did you draw about Bob Hope from that little conversation?

B: He to me is one of the finest men that ever lived. He was down to earth with us. He was down to earth with the Admiral. He could talk to anybody and make you feel the same level as he was.

T: He didn't come off being better than you or anything?

B: Very definitely not. No.

T: He came there for a show obviously.

B: Oh, yes. In fact I saw it twice. I think he was there for four or five days. In our outfit he had one, and I think he went to four different places around the island and did this show. It was funny. It was good. He would joke.

T: By the time he came in '46, were the number of troops on Guam already decreasing?

**(2, A, 211)**

B: They were starting to decrease then, yes. But there were still lots of people there, you bet.

T: What was Admiral Nimitz's position by this time with the war being over?

B: He was in charge of the Pacific fleet. He was the big boy.

T: What can you say about him? You interacted with him on a regular basis, it sounds like.

B: He was real nice to me but, like I say, a PFC [private, first class] and a five star admiral...

T: That's a little bit of a difference, isn't it?

B: He was real nice to me. When we got off the submarine, coming back to his house he said, "How did you like being underwater?" He'd talk like that. He was real nice. We really never had any big conversations, though.

T: If you're driving for him now, was there one particular experience you can remember that stands out in your mind, or one time when something special happened?

B: I know one time I was taking him up to the airport. He was going to fly back to Pearl Harbor. We hit a rainstorm and when it rained over there... I pulled over to the side of the road for a while. It was bad. I remember he was saying, "I think you did the right thing." I remember that.

T: So the weather on Guam, was it pretty severe?

B: No. But every once in a while when it rained, it would just absolutely pour.

T: If you were pulling the car off the side of the road that says something.

B: You betcha.

T: Was it generally sunny?

B: It was warm there all the time.

T: Did you like the climate?

B: Yes, it did. Let me tell you the story of getting back to the United States. When we traded off all our weapons to these Navy guys, for the ride to San Diego, and as far as we got was Pearl Harbor. We were there for three days and finally I told this Dave, I said, "Dave," I said, "I'm going to go up and see Admiral Nimitz." He had moved back there. His office was there. So I went over there.

T: This is late 1946 now when you're going back.

B: Yes. I went over there and there were MPs at the door. I said, "I want to see Admiral Nimitz." "Well, you can't go up there." "Well, yes, I can," I said. Anyway, they called somebody, and somebody called somebody. I gave them my name and he said, "Let him come up." So then I went upstairs, up to his room. We shook hands and he says, "What can I do for you?" And I told him. I said, "Well, we goofed. We traded some stuff that we got at Chichi Jima and we were supposed to get a plane ride back to the United States, but this is as far as the plane went." He said, "When do you have to go back?" I said, "We want to beat our other guys back there, and they'll be back there in six, seven days." And he says, "Be here tomorrow morning at five o'clock." So we were there. He didn't go, but he had his pilot and his copilot and his St. Bernard dog, the three of them. They flew Brinkley and I back in his four-engine plane, back to the US.

T: Get out. Just the two of you?

B: The two of us and the dog (*laughs*). He was good enough to do that. I told him the truth and he flew us back. I'll never forget that.

**(2, A, 261)**

T: So you got a lift back in the admiral's plane and obviously you beat the other guys back?

B: We beat them back. We told them we'd be there waiting for them and we were. We were only there for just a few days. Then we got back on a train and went to Illinois. The whole unit.

T: You were on Guam when the war against Japan ended, when V-J Day came. How did those in your unit and those on Guam react to that news?

B: It was the happiest day of our life. We knew that a lot of us would never be living if we had to land on Japan. When that happened everyone was so happy. Officers and enlisted men were all buddy-buddy and everything. That was the greatest day.

T: Did that give a real sense of relief to you personally?

B: Very definitely. Yes. What made me feel so good, I knew that I was going to be able to come home. I never knew before. If we had to land on Japan, you never knew if you were going to be shot up or if you were going to make it or not. But I knew then that I could come home. That was just like black and white.

T: You mentioned wondering if you were going to make it back. What was worse for you, the fear of being killed, or the fear of being perhaps maimed?

B: Maimed. That was worse than being killed, yes. I just can't see that. It's scary. That was my fear; it actually was. I don't think I was alone in that.

T: What kind of celebrations were there on Guam? Organized celebrations or otherwise.

B: Our outfit, all the officers brought all their booze out and on this table. We had the whole day off. Do whatever you want to do. There was no high-ranking officer that was any better than a buck private. They'd shake hands and do this and do that. Everybody got joy up in their head.

T: The world was equal for a day?

B: Exactly. Everybody was.

**(2, A, 295)**

T: Was there a larger island-wide or base-wide ceremony too?

B: Oh, yes. All over the island. There were several airports on Guam, and a lot of the fighters were circling around in the sky. Everybody was happy.

T: Any accidents or mishaps?

B: Not that I know of, no.

T: One thing I wanted to ask you, one reason the war ended was because of the use of atomic weapons against Japan. At the time, did you feel our government was correct to use atomic bombs?

B: Yes, I did. I certainly did. The reason for that is the Japanese who were at war would do anything to kill an American. They hated America. They hated you because you were an American. Not because we killed so many innocent people, but because we ended the war by doing this is the reason I'm glad about it.

T: Obviously it affected you very personally.

B: Yes.

T: How have your feelings changed on this subject since 1945?

B: I hope we never use one again. But if it comes to saving our country by using it or not using it and go downhill, I hope we use it. But I'm not in favor of it. I'm against anything like that.

T: Would you say that you still think we did the right thing in 1945?

B: I think we did, yes. I'm not against it.

T: You spent a lot of time on Guam, and I guess it wasn't always as Admiral Nimitz's driver. What else did you and your unit do until the end of 1946?

B: I was driving a gas truck for a while. I'd go down to a Naval air base where these ships would come in with gasoline and fill it up. A lot of it was diesel fuel that I would haul. I would fill the ovens at three different mess halls where they cooked. That only took me a half a day. Then I had the other half a day off.

T: The pace of life really got easier, didn't it?

B: It changed a hundred percent.

T: Did you feel frustrated by the fact that you were just killing time?

B: No. I enjoyed what I was doing. I'd go out and look at the ships on the ocean and do this and that and the other thing. But I was glad when I got to come home, too. I was very glad.

T: Were you ready to come home before October?

B: Yes, I think I was. I'd been over there long enough. I was ready to come back.

T: It's a long time to be over there when the whole purpose for your being there was gone. Is there anything that you can recall from the time you were on Guam, any anecdote or memory that you want to put in the story at this point? Something that may have happened that was memorable to you.

B: I'll tell you something that was memorable to me. I was standing guard duty one night. Once a month different outfits had to stand guard. We had it once a month.

T: We were still standing guard even after the war was over?

B: Yes. We were standing guard and all of a sudden I heard something running. It was dark. I was looking, and pretty soon it was a monkey that ran in between my legs, a wild monkey. It hit both my legs and I didn't know what it was at first. After it hit me, I had a flashlight and I shined it and saw that it was a monkey that hit me. But it scared the dickens out of me.

One other thing I'll never forget. We were training. This was before we went up to Chichi Jima. We were training in the jungles there. I came across, I don't know what kind it was, a snake that was about six inches around and about ten feet long. I'm scared to death of snakes anyway. Boy I sure went the other way in a hurry! A great big thing! Some of the other guys had seen it too. That scared me.

T: Was there other wildlife on the island?

B: On Guam? Oh, yes. There were deer there. There were wild monkeys. There were some oxen. I don't know if they were brought there and let loose, but there were oxen that you'd see every once in a while running around.

T: You worked as a truck driver for a while and had a lot of free time for yourself. Were you able to travel off the island at all?

B: No. The only time we got off when we went up to Chichi Jima we went. I saw Saipan and some other island right next to it. I never touched foot on them. We just saw them.

T: So you spent most of your time on Guam. The end of 1946, October 1946, you were back in the States. After going to Chicago with the troop train did you come back from there to Minnesota?

B: Yes. On a bus. We took a bus from Chicago to Duluth, and from Duluth to Atkinson.

T: So you finally got back there. Did your folks meet you when you got back here or did you go to the house and see them first?

B: I told my folks I was back in the States, but I never told them when exactly I was coming. I didn't know when I was going to be there, so I never told them. I got back on a Saturday, and my dad was running the store in Atkinson. My mother was upstairs, we lived upstairs of the store. Dad was real busy. I came walking in. He stopped, and we hugged each other. He hollered to my mother. He said, "Mabel, get down here!" So she came down and there I was (*laughs*).

T: How was it to see your family?

B: It was just perfect.

T: Was your brother already home?

B: He was home, but he was already going to school down at the University of Minnesota [in Minneapolis].

T: So he was back to the States, out of the service and back to civilian life. He beat you back to civilian life.

B: Yes.

T: Did you feel that you were kind of, in a sense, late getting back to civilian life?

B: No, I didn't really. I was satisfied with anything.

T: You're an easy-going guy, aren't you?

B: I was satisfied. (*both laugh*)

T: Once you were discharged, what was your initial reaction to being out of the military?

B: It was a complete change in life. I didn't know what I wanted to do.

**End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 382.**

T: You got out and you were just twenty years old and you said you really weren't sure what you wanted to do.

B: I really wasn't sure, but my brother was going down to the U [University of Minnesota, Twin Cities], so I went down.

T: Did you get GI Bill benefits?

B: We got GI Bill benefits. We stayed at a dorm on campus. They paid for everything. They paid for our dorm, they paid for all our books, they paid everything. So it didn't cost us anything.

T: How important was the GI Bill for you as far as going to school?

B: The GI Bill made it for me. My Dad couldn't afford to put both of us down there. My brother got the same thing I did. The GI Bill made it for both of us. It was terrific.

T: You stayed at the U and you got an Associate's degree, right?

B: A two-year degree, yes.

T: How soon was it for you between getting out of the service and going to college?

B: I got out in December, and I waited until the next spring. Then I went from there.

T: You went pretty quickly to school.

B: Yes.

T: You didn't have months to kill with finding a job or something.

B: No, no.

T: Would you say that you had a pretty easy readjustment to being a civilian?

B: Oh, yes. It wasn't bad at all for me.

T: Was there anything that you found difficult to being suddenly out of uniform and into civilian clothes?

B: No. Life has always been perfect for me, so I didn't have any problem.

T: Sounds like you have often just rolled with the punches.

B: You have to *(laughs)*.

T: Do you feel that the military was a good experience, a bad experience, or a neutral experience?

B: I think it was the best experience in the world for me. In fact, I truthfully believe that every young man should spend a year or two in there as soon as he gets out of school. I spent seventeen years on the draft board in Cloquet. I've got three different presidents. I've got plaques there.

T: That was '50s and '60s?

B: Yes. I enjoyed it. Like I say, it's not for everybody, but I think it makes a man out of a boy when you go in like that.

T: Let me ask you to be specific. What is it about the service, doing military service, that does that?

B: It makes a young person learn to take care of themselves. You don't depend on anybody else or anything. At that time I've got to depend on myself to get this done. I think that's very important for anybody.

T: A sense of maturity.

B: Exactly. Right.

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T: This is your chance to be a philosopher. When you were in the service during the war you were eighteen, nineteen years old. What did the war mean for you personally at that time?

B: My dad taught my brother and I to be true Americans and stick up for this country. I was proud that I had the chance to do it.

T: Did you feel when you were in the service during the war that in an abstract sense, that's what you were doing there?

B: Yes I did. Most of the time.

T: How about the rest of the time?

B: It was... I don't know what I'm going to do, or why I'm doing this. But most of the time I did feel that way.

T: So you felt that you knew why you were there.

B: Exactly. Right.

T: How do you reflect on your own war experience and military experience now as an older man?

B: I was one of the luckiest people in the world. I never got hurt. I've seen people get shot. I've seen people get hurt. But I never did. I'm proud of the experience I had. I'm glad I did it. That's how I feel about it.

T: Do you think in any way that the fact that you in a sense "dodged the bullet" several times, does that impact the way [you] feel about your entire military experience?

B: Very definitely, yes, it did. If you were right over there and got shot and stuff, you'd hate yourself and you'd hate everything. But that never happened to me. I agree with you there.

T: In what ways do you think that the war changed your life?

B: It taught me how to take care of myself number one, but the big thing it taught me [was] to like and respect people. I think that is one of the biggest things that there is. I worked with people all my life. I enjoy people. I think that taught me how to do it to the best of my ability.

T: Am I hearing you say that it helped you to grow up faster?

B: Oh, very definitely.

T: So at age twenty, you were a person with two years experience in the service and having been in the war for a year. Is there a favorite story, anecdote, that you can think of that you want to put in here?

B: A little poem or something you mean?

T: Any kind of incident that happened to you.

B: I'll tell you something about the Marine Corps.

You can have your Army khaki.  
You can have your Navy blue.  
There's still another fighter  
I will introduce to you.  
His uniform is different,

The best you've ever seen.  
The Huns call him the devil-dog,  
But his real name is Marine.  
He is trained on Paris Island  
The land that God forgot.  
Where the sand is fourteen inches deep  
And the sun is scorching hot.  
Now he has peeled a million onions  
And twice as many spuds.  
He spends his leisure time  
Washing out his duds.  
So listen girls, take this advice  
I'm passing on to you.  
Go get yourself a nice Marine  
There's nothing he can't do.  
And when he goes to heaven  
To St. Peter he will tell  
Another Marine reporting, Sir  
I've done my stretch in hell.  
And if St. Peter turns him down  
Right back to hell he'll go.  
He'll kick the Devil off the throne  
And run the whole damn show.

T: Thanks very much for that. Let me thank you very much for your time today.

**END OF INTERVIEW**