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Charles Burney

When they hit Pearl Harbor I had already been in for nine months. I knew pretty well what to expect. We went to Camp Forest, it was Camp V and after the war they named it Camp Forest and now they've got Arnold Engineering wind tunnel up there at Tullahoma. So it's been in the military a long time. We started out with 75th brigade. It was 168th field artillery long tongs from Colorado. A long tong is a gun that shoots straight. There was 181st halacy unit a halacer can shoot over a hill. A 190 field artillery out of Tennessee. We, after Pearl Harbor, we were the busiest bunch of folks you ever saw. We loaded all of our equipment on flat cars and headed for California. We didn't know if the Japs were gonna invade the coast or what it was. But we knew we had to be somewhere where we could fight. The people were scared of the Japanese, the Americans. They took them out of their homes and put them in campus up in Idaho and places like that which was a bad thing to do but the Japanese at Hawaii had helped pin point Pear Harbor. They knew there were certain Japanese that would help their homeland. In World War I they did the Germans that way. They took certain Germans and put them in prison. People over here were good citizens. They were buying tobacco and sending it back home, but during that time everybody suspected them of being espionage. I had been in a Horse Calvary unit and they changed us over to field artillery. We were the 191st field artillery and they gave us two French guns. The United States was not prepared for war. The equipment, no way in the world, we were just coming out of a big depression. But sooner or later we got organized. They used the ladies to work in defense plants, they said to be in the war, those that weren't farming, if you were a farmer they would defer you. If you were four F which is sick or conscientious objective or anything like that they would let you out of it. We loaded all of our stuff up it took us about a month. We put it on flat cars and you wire them down. You got it so tight that it can't move by the time the train shifts a little you would get some slack in there. We were on a train for a week and it was winter time. At night time you had to pull your shades down, they didn't want anybody to see what was going on so they could report it to the enemy. We went through Wyoming, Colorado and Utah, and we zigzagged and wound up down in Southern California and then went back up to Camp Roberts. In California you've got the rainy season and you've got the dry season. We got there in the rainy season. We unloaded all our equipment out in the rain and we got trucks stuck up and this that and the other. We maneuvered up and down the coast for two years. That's the best deal you ever saw in California. They've got great food, they grow all this stuff. The cooks can get anything they want to cook. You travel up and down between Los Angeles and San Francisco. I went to Sequoia National Park with a bunch of fellows on the weekend. They have these big red wood trees and we got us a cabin and the next morning they trapped a bear outside of our cabin. I heard all that noise and I didn't know what it was. They trapped this bear and carried it way out in the boondocks and turned it loose and said he won't be back this year. Some folks when you get a weekend pass they go to the first beer joint or the first gambling place or something like that but I got with a bunch that wanted to see the state. It was great we got to see pretty well what we wanted to. You could hitchhike people in California would pick you up and carry you somewhere. Of course you didn't always get a ride with a blond in a convertible, but I road in a big truck one time. Nobody else come

along. The speed limit in the United States was 35 miles an hour all over the country. This truck driver coming down one of them big hills in California he kicked it out of gear and I looked over to see what he was doing and I know he was doing 90 but he had it under control. Those highways mostly run North and South, Highways number 1 state number 1 was over on the coast were you could see the Pacific Ocean. And 101 was parallel to it and run right down the country. In the middle of the country you had Highway 99. Coming down you had that famous Highway Route 66. When I come home on a vacation we used Route 66 as much as we could. Of course it went to Chicago you had to get off of it around Amarillo or someplace like that.

Interviewer: How often would you get to come home?

Mr. Burney: They let you have a furlough once a year. Well every six months I believe it was. But you had to be a good boy. Depending on if you was a good boy, and how much pull you had and this that and the other. If the powers that be didn't like you they wouldn't give you a furlough. If they liked you they might make them a little closer together. It wasn't supposed to be like that but it was. When we first went in up at Tullahoma, Tennessee I had some officers that were drunks. I had a captain that was an alcoholic and a first lieutenant that was a drunk and another lieutenant that was a playboy. And once we got ride of those and got some good officers in there it made it a lot smoother. Of course those that were drunks they did their job but you didn't appreciate it.

Interviewer: How old were you when you got in the service?

Mr. Burney: I was 21; I had finished two years at Austin Peay. Austin Peay normal school. Then we were in California maneuvering, practicing for about two years and one weekend I got a pass and went to the Rose Bowl. That was the greatest thing in the world. Georgia played UCLA. I didn't know anything about the Rose Bowl parade I just waited until 1:00 and went to the game. I missed all that parade and everything. It was good deal. Something that could never have happen if we weren't at war. We got ready to go overseas they sent us to a place close to San Francisco called Camp Stoneman. I went from southern California to northern California and picked up a case of the flu or something another you know. Then they put us on this boat. We went under the San Francisco Bridge. The water got rough. My plate was moving around sliding down back and forth and I got sea sick and a whole bunch of others got sea sick. I was sick for 21 days. I got to feeling a little bit better and thought I would go get me a bite to eat and I walked by the old diesel engine and it made me sick again. Nobody seems to care, if you sea sick you're just on your own if you die they put you overboard, wrap you up and put you overboard. We sailed out on the Sea Flasher and went to a little place called Good Enough Island. My boat was zigzagged. They thought maybe they could fool a, what it is it that goes under water?

Interviewer: a submarine? *Mr. Burney:* No, it's a navy ship that goes under water, it puts out torpedoes, I'll think of it later. Anyhow they thought maybe they was out there somewhere so they would zigzag every 15 minutes. It takes you a long time to go overseas, we didn't have a convoy, we were just out there traveling by our self. You'd get in a storm at sea, and your boat one time was up on top of those waves all you could see was air and next time it would get down and you could see water on both sides of you. That was awful. A storm at sea you put your lifejacket on and hold on to something. Those sailor boys go ahead and work, they have to. But I was scared. Submarines are what I was trying to

think of. You're scared there is a submarine out there. So you zigzag every 15 minutes and if he shoots at you then you've gone over here and it's gone off somewhere. I think we traveled about 18 knots, I'm not sure what a knot is but it's not quite as fast as a mile. We landed at Good Enough Island, which was more jungle than anything I ever saw after that. Our sister battalion was over there before we got there and they put up our tents for us. We got out there and got in those tents and when you get over seas you get powered eggs, powered potatoes, powered carrots and you have to eat different. One night I went out of my tent and there was a big old snake out there and it scared me to death. A boy from Mississippi wasn't afraid of snakes and he killed him. The next day they come over there and measured him and he was 10 feet and 11 inches and his eyes were spread out about like that you know. They figured out I was scared of him and the next night going to the movie, we had outdoor movies, next night going to the movie they run over its mate and it come up on the jeep like that. They killed him and brought him back. You have to build up your tents to stay out of the flood water it comes a flash flood you know they had two or three steps up to my tent. They curled that snake up right up in front of my tent. I went out there and I woke everybody up at that time it wasn't funny to them. They had lizards that looked like small alligators that would crawl up on your feet. They had birds that made funny noises. There were no Japanese on that island. We went out and we would shoot coconuts off the tree. Those natives could climb those trees just like a monkey. We shot them off and eat them coconuts. We went up in the mountains and got some green bananas, they never get ripe. I don't know how the natives got them ripe. But you get green bananas and they stay on the stalk and they grow up like that and they just stay green. *Interviewer:* They don't get ripe unless they are on the tree. *Mr. Burney:* I don't know how the monkeys eat them or anything like that. We didn't have alligators over there we had crocodiles. A boy from another battalion got bit by a crocodile and before they could get the blood stopped he died. Another boy was getting the peeling off a coconut with a bayonet and he cut an artery and he died. You hear all those rumors you don't get a whole lot of orders but you hear rumors. You listen for your rumors. The quartermaster who supplies people issued us a hammer and you can tie your hammer to a coconut tree here and a coconut tree here and it had a thing up there you can keep the water off you. You had netting and zippers I bet they paid 4 or 5 hundred dollars for those things, they were really fancy. They issued me one and I slept just like a baby in there. I got the a rumor from another outfit, you know what happened at such and such a place, no, they said those fellows had hammocks and the Japanese come in there at midnight with their bayonets and hit everyone of them right in the middle. I turned in my hammock in and slept down on the old dirty ground wet ground. *Interviewer:* But it wasn't true was it? *Mr. Burney:* I don't know, could have been but it was just a rumor but with me it made it true. They sent us 12 copies of the Leaf Chronicle. We were a local unit you know and you always waited to get your copy of the Leaf chronicle when you had time to read it. The army is very very strict until you get over seas when you get over seas and you do your duty and they leave you alone. We would get a little time to read and we would read. They put me on the outpost. I had turned into a tractor driver. They used me at nighttime on the outpost. You got a buddy with you. You don't feel good because the Japs could slip up and surround you.

Interviewer: Did you have encounters with the Japanese? *Mr. Burney:* Oh yeh. *Interviewer:* Like battles? *Mr. Burney:* We were field artillery. They didn't get too close, the infantry had man to man combat with them, we didn't fight like that. We would have if they would have come in on us. But just

a few cases we saw them and where they were dug in and where they were hiding and everything. One time we were at BeAck Island. That was a terrible combat. We were attached to the 41st division and the Japs run the infantry out. The Army doesn't like to say you're run out, they like to call it a retrograde move but the damn Japs run us out that is all there was to it. We went back and got up on a hill. When the zeros come in we saw them. They had the zero and we had the P39, P38 and the P40 all out there fitting against them. The Japs could turn faster than we could and it was the dog-gondest fight you had ever saw. And I was just sitting up there looking at it. You know you could never see one like that in the movie, never, never. The Japanese come in from this direction we saw them coming we couldn't tell whether it was our planes or their planes. And they went around, I thought well they gone somewhere the next time I saw them they was dive bombing us. There was no place to hide. It was a coral island and you couldn't dig a fox hole and there was no place to hide, just take it. They set our powder on fire and we put that out. The first thing you know, the P38 was a good plane but it took it 100 miles to turn around if he missed it on the first run he was gone way out there somewhere and come back.

Interviewer: When you were in that battle did a lot of people die?

Mr. Burney: Wounded, we had some people wounded. A lot of people died later. But we had some people wounded in that. My colonel wrote a book after the war, he had the records and everything see. I've got a copy of his book here. And I've got a copy of the 75th field artillery brigade. Would you believe, would you believe we had a gentleman named General Hospital. General Hospital was our brigade commander for a little awhile. I've got his picture in here somewhere. I know I have. They scattered us out. If you were going to fight in the jungles you couldn't go over there with a big unit. So we divided up and by the time I got there to fight I was in a battalion. I've got his picture somewhere. But now this is the book that our colonel fixed for us. I made a few little notes here. Charlie Underwood, the war was about over and Captain Austin carried his men out on patrol. We weren't' supposed to do patrol. We were field artillery and we were supposed to stay with our guns where we could fire that 155 halotser. But he liked to volunteer for stuff like that. He was a graduate of Texas A & M, big ole red faced boy. He carried some men up on the mountain and got them trapped. Got some of them killed and got some of them shot up. They sent us up there to get them out. We left at night time to go get them out. I filled up my canteen and got me a couple of little chocolate bars to take with me I didn't know where I'd be or what. A bunch of fellows just went like they were and they asked me said you got any water, and I figured they had the same chance to take water that I did and I said no. We got up there and there was a boy named Price that had been shot up and the Japs came back around to finish him up and he played dead. He had some wounds and he was bleeding and he put his finger in those wounds to keep them from bleeding so bad. And he asked me if I had any water and I couldn't tell him a story. You know there the man had been lying there all night long and everything thinking he was going to die. What water he didn't drink he spilt and left me plum without any water. We had Filipino little bearers come up and take the wounded and the dead out. Four men to a litter, we didn't have enough Charlie Underwood. I had a captain from Boston. He said Burney you've got a M1 riffle I'm going to leave you up here to guard this body. He got another fellow to stay with me. There was nothing I could say. You know I didn't want to stay up there. The Japs was watching us they had their eye on us all the time I imagine. I said to myself I'm gonna have to spend the night up here I better get me a drink of

water and something to eat. I found something about like a turnip and I dug that up and eat that. I drank some water out of a mud hole to get prepared for the night. About that time here come some fresh litter bearers, I could have kissed them, I could have kissed them. They took ole Charlie Underwood, he was from Cumberland Furnace. He was a bugler for us for a long time. You know the Army doesn't have buglers' anymore. You know that bugler was something we listened to you knew when to go to bed and when to get up when we laid awake at night it just meant something to you. Anyhow we were on four operations one of them didn't amount to much. Orlandy it didn't amount to much. We got in the mud and that kind of stuff and got used to the jungle. But BeAck was a hard fight. We were with the 41st division and we were supporting them. The 41st division National Guard division out of California. We went with them to, we had two invasions. Then they assigned us to 1st Calvary division. The 1st Calvary was regular army you know and they moved, they moved out. We were in Laity, Phillipian Islands and it come the rainy season and we got back over in the mud and the guns went down and the tracks went down and everything. We said we've got to be able to get out of here if they call on us, we've got to be able to get out of here. We made a cortary road you know you put logs down and logs across them. As soon as we got that cordery road built we couldn't get out on it. You know if we could have got out on it would could have gone to Hero. A lot of those places had been named by the Spaniards. Pilipino belonged to Spain. A lot of those names were Spanish names. About the time we was ready to get out it quit raining and dried up and we worked, you know Uncle Sam had to pay for every one of those logs. We took them out of somebody's coconut orchard coconut grove. We hooked on to our stuff and got out of there. They loaded us up on LSTs which is landing craft tank. You loaded up on them backwards. You've got plenty of time to load up but don't have much time to get off the Japanese shooting at you. D-day or D plus one or something like that. So you want everything just in order. You put a lot of stuff big stuff down in the tank down in the basement of the LST a lot of the smaller stuff up on top. We got a bulldozer the first thing to come off. We tied the blade up at one time they pulled in and the bulldozer wouldn't start and they couldn't get it off. So they backed out in the ocean and pushed it in the ocean. A \$100,000 piece of equipment and come back in and we pulled off.

Interviewer: How big were those? *Mr. Burney*: It was a D6 bulldozer. *Interviewer*: The tank you were loading all that stuff on or was that the ship. *Mr. Burney*: Pretty good size, big enough to take a whole battalion. We put a whole battalion on there we had the headquarters the medics and the service and everything. You come in you got a couple of doors that open up like that and you've got a ramp that goes down. Coming off you could come out in a hurry. But backing in there you back over that ramp and you go and your gun gets down here and you get right here you can't see. All you can see is the top of the LST. It takes some good men to back you in there. They load them three in a row. You either go down the middle or you go to the left or you go to the right. Once you get in there you boom them down. They got big booms chains that will hold them in place. That ship can hit some rough water and bump everything else. We went in to BeAck it was a rough deal. We went into Latie.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Mr. Burney: I've got it right here you want to look it up? It was 43 or 44 somewhere along in there. Over in Newginnie the natives were interesting little people. They weren't Negros but they were black. They chewed beetle nuts and it wore their teeth down just like you would file them down.

Interviewer: That's like their tobacco isn't it?

Mr. Burney: Yeh. The girls just wore they didn't have anything on the top. They would send them out on an island to get them away from the GIs. They build the houses up on bamboo. The houses would be 12 feet up in the air had a latter to get up in there. When the tide came in it could run under it. I saw a little native, I don't know how old he was, but he was in a canoe with an out rig on it. You know what an out rig is? *Interviewer*: I do. *Mr. Burney*: Okay. It had an out rig on it and he was out there paddling and all at once he dived in between the canoe and the out rig he went down and I thought he won't ever come up but he did and he had a little fish about that long he held him up and showed him to me and he just eat him. He just eat him right there. They pulled tricks on you. They didn't know much English but they learned a little bit. I was out their swimming and he started yelling shark shark and I got out and in a hurry he started laughing just dying laughing. One time on Laytee the Japanese sank a cargo ship and it had our rations on it. We had enough stuff to eat breakfast and enough stuff to eat supper but we didn't have enough stuff for dinner. They cooked up some green pea soup and cooked some crackers. That's what we had for a month until they could get us another ship could get in there. We had the best cooks you ever saw. I don't know about other folks. Our cooks had been in CC camp and they had been in school and so forth and they really were good cooks. They wanted you to have something good to eat. We had a boy from down Erin and he made a lot of pies and everybody was crazy about him. We had a boy from up in east Tennessee and he was the main cook. The cooks worked a shift on and a shift off. It was too hard on them getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning every day you know. But they had a leader for each crew and we had good food. If the quarter master would get it to us we had it. The service battery brought us water and gas and food. But our supply sergeant would go over and picked up clothing. You didn't draw a lot of clothing but they would bring you ammunition and stuff like that.

Interviewer: How long did you stay in one place at one time?

Mr. Burney: It was different we had a rest period once in awhile. We'd stay one place maybe a week. By the time you got set up good and knew where you were you had to leave.

Interviewer: Did you move somewhere because of the action because that's where Japanese were?

Mr. Burney: Yes, the Japanese were going back and we had to follow the infantry. We were there to support the infantry. The Japanese moved back. We had some Japanese one time they were in a cave they had been there a long time and had time to dig in. They would roll their gun out and fire at you and go back in that cave before you could return fire. We got what was called an A26 airplane. They got naphthalene; you know what naphthalene is? *Interviewer*: I don't. *Mr. Burney*: Naphthalene burns it burns something terrible. He would fly down like he was going to fly in that hole hit it and that naphthalene would go up just at the last minute, We sat there and watched that naphthalene go in there and burn the Japs out. They didn't have the equipment that we did but they had the ability to stay

in a hole and just give you trouble. I didn't like them at all. They didn't smell good, you would go over where they were and they would eat rice and somehow or another they had a different smell to them. We were in a place one time the whole battalion, A battery, B battery and C battery and each battery had four guns. Each battery would head another way, A Battery one way and B Battery one way, Manila was behind us so we didn't need anything there. We had been there about three days and two Japs came up out of the ground. They had been camouflaged down there. You wound Japanese and a lot of time they would commit suicide. They had been told we was terrible folks I guess cause they didn't want to be captured. They had a hand grenade that was long, we had a little ones you know, they had a long one and they would take it and pull the pin and put it under their arm. I saw some that had committed suicide and they didn't bleed much. I didn't know if it was because of the explosion or because they eat rice or what it was but they didn't bleed too much. One time we were in position and you can't ever tell who's going to be brave and who's not. We had a big ole boy from Arkansas, looked like a wrestler named Henry. His job was a machine gun. We saw when the Japs came by him. We saw in the dust where they come by him and they went on in the back. Met a man back their on a 30 caliber. His civilian job was a dress maker. We had a Jew boy out of St. Louis. Sort of a goody goody fellow, nice mad but sort of sissy. He shot them Japs legs out from under them and they laid their until daylight. But Henry wouldn't shoot at them, somebody asked him said what happened, he said something whispered in my ear you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. So he let them Japs go by. Great big ole rough fellow. The Filipino people were interesting they liked to do KP for us and liked to help us. They called everybody Joe, you know GI Joe. *Interviewer:* I've been to the Filipinas. I was over there about 3 years. *Mr. Burney:* Where were you? *Interviewer:* Manila. *Mr. Burney:* Oh yeh, I was over there about 2 years. Did you climb any of them coconut trees? *Interviewer:* I was scared to, my daddy got burned trying to climbing one, he scraped up his arm. *Mr. Burney:* The people could climb them just like monkeys. They could use their feet just like they use their hands, just like monkeys. We had Japanese to fire on us with 20mm and they set the powder on fire. It was down close to my tractor and the tractor had an air clutch and it had an emergency clutch. There was a boy trying to move it and he didn't understand it. I came down there and told him to let me have it and about the time and I used the emergency clutch and jerked it into gear and pulled it out. And about the time I got it out of there that powered no sooner blew up. If it didn't have a fuse it blew up just like peeling a banana. They all saw me down there. They put me in for a silver star to the first Calvary. I come back a bronze star. They thought I was some kind of hero. I just went down there cause it was my tractor. This boy that was down there trying to move it instead of him getting out of the way he stood down there and it blew his buttocks off just like you cut it off with a broad ax or something. He lived about four days he was a Clarksville boy. When I came home his momma sent me word to come see her. I hated it you know I didn't know what to say to her. We knew sooner or later we were going to have to leave Manila and go into Japan we didn't know who we would be attached to but we had a pretty good idea we would lose a lot of people. The Japanese were there on their homeland and they were fanatics. I had enough points to come home with my bronze star and everything I had enough points to come home. I was in a Camp in Manila getting ready to come home when they dropped that atomic bomb. It tickled me to death, it was a terrible thing but them Japs hitting us at Pearl Harbor was a terrible thing. I had a friend, he dies about two or three weeks ago, he was a captain in the navy and he was in Pearl Harbor when they hit. They sent him to San Francisco. He got a ship and a crew and went back to fight. The first part of that

war the Japanese navy give us a hard time and the Japanese military give us a hard time. We kept building up and building up. General MacArthur would by pass them. They would be at a place waiting for us with all their men and ammunition and everything and we would by pass them at another place. That left them back there the people couldn't supply them. They couldn't get food into them and ammunition so they finally had to give it up. When you bypass a place that put them out of commission. MacArthur was way too old to be in the service. But his daddy had been a general before him out in Arizona and he was just a natural for it. He had General Kroeger to help him and General Kroeger was a great man to work with. The navy and marines took some of those islands over there and we went in the bigger islands. The navy and the marines went in one and just take it. If they lost a bunch of men they just sent more in and they took them in a hurry. The Japanese navy was able to fight at night and our navy was at a disadvantage to fight at night they learned how, they had to learn how. They had some great big battles over there and Admiral Nimitz and Bull Hosby and all them fellows hit the japs heads off and finally we got the advantage over them. I had a chance to come home and I come to San Pedro, California which is outside of Las Angeles and they had German prisoner of war working these KPs and I had never been around any Germans you know they couldn't use the Japanese because someone would stick a knife in them I imagine. We didn't care for them. They put us through too much misery. Once upon a time I was maneuvering in the Mahaiwe Desert. We stayed out there six weeks. They told me to get a radio operator t, never heard of the man. I went out there to follow him and he had tanks and halftracks and everything. I found out real quick you couldn't take a wheel vehicle and keep up with them in that deep sand. I come to a fork in the road and the sign said Las Vegas this way I my buddy said have you ever been to Las Vegas he said no, I said we got plenty of gas, he said well let's go. We was supposed to be following General Paton and we went up to Las Vegas and found us a fire station, prettiest green grass out there you ever saw and they let us clean up and sleep out there. We looked around a little and after about three days we figured it was time for us to get back. They never asked us what we had learned and we never volunteered to tell them. Now what questions you want to ask me?

Interviewer: Well uh. You were talking a little about the Japanese. I know that the feelings toward the Japanese during this time were extremely negative with reason, they were ruthless. Before Pearl Harbor what was your view of the Japanese?

Mr. Burney: Well I didn't know any, I didn't know any. Before Pearl Harbor they were just some people way over on an island I figured I would never go to. I never thought about them much. We were thinking about going on passes and seeing what we could learn about California and all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: What about the Germans?

Mr. Burney: The Germans in their part of the war they had a paper called Stars and Striped. And in our part of the war we had a paper called Down Under I got to read it but I couldn't read Stars and Stripes. We got information we could form pilots coming in and stuff like that but we didn't know what was going on. We got the Leaf Chronicle. They sent up twelve a copy of the Leaf Chronicle and we'd read that and see what we could learn. It looked to us like the Germans were going to push us all out to the ocean. They had the stuff and Hitler pushed them. It looked like they would rule the world. Hitler

made some big mistakes. One of them was jumping on the Russians. The Japanese I mean the Italians were their allies. But the Italians weren't as good a fighters as the German and they go in trouble over in Africa. The Germans had to send Romel over to try to pull them out. That extended them too far. They had to send the gasoline and diesel fuel too far and their airplanes. If they had just stayed like they were trying to get France and those Yugoslavian countries like that. England you see they run England out of Dunkirk. England sent word to send all the barges big ships little ships and everything. They had to leave their equipment and just barely got away with their lives. Went back to Brittan and the Germans were bombing them, they was tearing them up going and coming. If it hadn't been for Churchill I imagine the British would have give up. They was almost whipped. When we got in the war it took us a long time to get all our equipment. We furnished Russia with equipment. What they call lend lease. General Marshall was the head army man and he sent a lot of lend lease stuff to Russia. Then we had to have our own equipment. Stuff like that. The British had the navy until they got it shot up. The Germans had the U-Boat which was a submarine. They shot em up going and coming. We were building ships, Rosie the Riveter. *Interviewer:* My grandmother done worked on that in Kansas City. *Mr. Burney:* They built them but they built them so fast those Liberty ships would get out in a storm and just break half into. We finally learned what to do in the U-boats and we could get stuff to Germany. We sent our men over to England. English people didn't like it. Some of them did and some of them didn't. They said the GI's are over here and over sexed and they didn't like for the GI's to court their girls and you know a young man that's what's on his mind. We got some good airplanes and the British would bomb at night and we would bomb during in the day time. What we was looking for railroad tracks and dams and stuff like that. The Germans were beat long before they give up. Hitler wouldn't let them give up. They had France certain people in France would go underground and destroy stuff. They had France, Spain was neutral, Protégées were neutral Switzerland was neutral. The thing that got the Germans was that Russian winter. They got the tanks over there. You'd park a tank and overnight the track would freeze up, you couldn't jump in it and take off you had to work it back and forth. The Russians got enough equipment they weren't worried about their men, they had a lot of men. If you killed a lot of men they were going to send a lot more out there. WWII was a complicated thing. We had people helping China. We had people helping Greece. We had people fighting in Sicily and Italy. And we made a landing in Germany that Normandy landing and we also made a landing down at the Mediterranean. The Russians sort of insisted we do that to take some of the pressure off them. Once we got up there they was as mean as the devil.

Interviewer: What about Franklin Roosevelt at this time?

Mr. Burney: He was sick, when we got Mr. Truman in, before that he was an invalid but he wasn't sick. He and Churchill made his fine and he was smart enough to watch Stalin. I think Stalin was a meaner man than Hitler. He was a bad dude to kill his own folks.

Interviewer: What was your family's and you r views of FRD.

Mr. Burney: What was my opinion, oh I liked him. *Interviewer:* He changed a lot during the depression.

Mr. Burney: Oh yes he did. I liked him and I liked Truman. Truman come in there at a hard time and took over. Roosevelt come in during the depression and you had the CC camp and the NYA and WPA

and all those things. You could work for WPA even though you were one relief you felt like you were earning your money. He just pulled the country back up.

Interviewer: I guess I could ask you some questions about the great depression.

Mr. Burney: The great depression, people were moving they were on the move looking for something better. There were a lot of hobos. A freight train would pull in and twenty-five or thirty people would jump off it. They come into the community and bum a little something to eat they came to my house and my momma said yes I'll feed you. They'd say I'll work, you feed me and I will work. I would whisper to my momma and say let them cut kinlen. That was my job see and I'd let them hobos cut me a pile of kinlen. My daddy was a postal employee. And he had it a little better than a lot of folks. We didn't, he had to help my daughters out a little bit and my son in laws. Basically he made about as much money as he ever did. He carried the mail with a horse and buggy. He had to have two horses one horse for Monday, Wednesday and Friday and one for Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. They carried mail six days a week. You worked on Saturday just like he did any other day.

Interviewer: How big was your family?

Mr. Burney: I've got two sisters and one brother.

Interviewer: So what did you, since your Dad was a postal man where did you live? Did you live in the country or the city?

Mr. Burney: You had to live where you could keep horses. He rented a house until he bought one. But he had to buy a place big enough where he could keep horses in the city.

Interviewer: Where did you grow up?

Mr. Burney: 68 High Street.

Interviewer: High Street in Clarksville. Where were you born?

Mr. Burney: 68 High Street.

Interviewer: So you went to high school and then you went to college at Austin Peay normal. Right after that did you enlist in the service or were you drafted?

Mr. Burney: No, no they just called my outfit in. I was in the National Guard and they called my outfit in for a year, it lasted a little longer than that. But Mr. Roosevelt could see what was coming and he called a bunch of units in. The National Guard, they took the National Guard and got used to them, switched some officers in and out. They made a pretty good fighting unit.

Interviewer: What kind of job, did you have a job before you went in the service?

Mr. Burney: I was a student. *Interviewer:* Then before that you worked with your family? I played a whole lot. I worked on a farm for three years, three summers. I liked it. I was a mule man and I liked it.

Interviewer: When were you discharged?

Mr. Burney: September 2, October 2, 1945.

Interviewer: What did you do after the war?

Mr. Burney: I went back to college for two years under the GI bill. I'm qualified to be a school teacher, secondary education. *Interviewer*: After the two years of college, what did you, were you married then?
Mr. Burney: Part of the time. We've been married 53 years. *Wife*: It took him three and a half years to get his degree. *Mr. Burney*: We've got three big ole boys and got eight grandbabies. This is Catherine's granddaddy and that's my granddaddy. Her granddaddy was a country magistrate. My granddaddy was school teacher.

Interviewer: What did you go to school for? Did you have a specialization?

Mr. Burney: Social Sciences.

Interviewer: Were you a teacher?

Mr. Burney: No, no I went to work for the guard and worked fulltime they called me a AS&M technician with means Administrative, Supply and Mechanical. So I had to do it all and after that I went to work for public housing urban renewal, public housing.

Interviewer: Did you know your wife when you were in the war?

Mr. Burney: No I knew her brothers and sisters. She's a little younger than I am. She was a majorette in the band and had long hair. I thought she was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen.

Interviewer: Since you didn't correspond with her during the war did you get to correspond with other people?

Mr. Burney: With my mother and my nieces would write to me once in awhile. There was two ladies at my church that had been assigned the duty to write to military folks. And I got a letter from them about once a month.

Interviewer: Did you get to write letters too?

Mr. Burney: Did I send out letters? Yes but they read all my letters. They censored everything I wrote. You had to be careful what you said.

Interviewer: Did your family ever get letters that there were pieces cut out of?

Mr. Burney: Yes, they wasn't cut out they was just a line throw them. If I told any war news or anything like that they cut it out. I had a buddy that transferred from my battery to headquarters. He was a radio operator. And I'd run by and see him about twice a week and we'd turn on the Tokyo Rose. In Europe they had Axis Sally but we had Tokyo Rose. She was an American Japanese that was caught over there and they held her. She had to put these propaganda out. Had the prettiest songs, American songs, you

ever heard. She told us I know you boys are here form TN, come on up we'll be waiting for you. I said how in the world does she know that but they had ways of finding out you know. During WWII when I was out in California all songs related to the war. And we had some of the best songs along in there. Big Band, we had Big Band and it was great. I went to the Hollywood Palladium and Tommy Dorsey was down there. And I went back another time and another big band leader was up there. Back at our camp they sent Harry James out there. Harry James was married to a one of them movie stars, a pen up girl, Betty Gable. We had Joe Lewis come up there one time. You know Joes Lewis? *Interviewer*: I think so, I'm not sure. *Mr. Burney*: He's a boxer. Joe Lewis came up to see us and put on an exhibition. Prettiest girl I ever saw was Linda Darnell. Those others were bigger stars. But Linda Darnell was a natural beauty. They sent her up to West Garrison. I was a in a little place called East Garrison. There was a main highway between West Garrison and East Garrison and all we had to do was get in a truck and run over to West Garrison. West Garrison trained recruits and we were a fighting outfit. Nobody ever told me this but I think they were using us like Coast Guard. We could run up and down the California beach there. The Japanese come in to Santa Barbara one time and shelled an oil well. You never knew where they would be.

Interviewer: I don't want to take any more of your time; I know you've been talking a long time.

Mr. Burney: No, you take as long as you want to.

Inter viewer– Living conditions when you were over in Japan were alright. I mean you had food you didn't have to do without food?

Mr. Burney: I didn't go to Japan.

Interviewer - Not Japan, when you were over in the Pacific Islands the South Pacific.

Mr. Burney: Not really you had powered eggs; it wasn't like your momma feeding you. You had powered eggs, dehydrated carrots and dehydrated potatoes. But we had such good cooks. You exercising sooner or later you got to where you made it fine. I've got no complaint on the food.

Inter viewer– Your living conditions for a little while, you told me for a little while you slept on the ground then you had the hammocks.

Mr. Burney: Living conditions were bad. You got down the dirt; you were expecting the Japs to slip in on ya. I slept on my back and if I heard something I didn't move I could just move my eyes so I could see. It didn't turn out to be anything but you know you never knew.

Interviewer: Were you promoted when you were in the service?

Mr. Burney: Demoted.

Interviewer: Promoted did they change your rank or did you get metals?

Mr. Burney: Oh yeh, I got a bronze star for heroic achievement. That give me five points. My Batter Commanders sent it in for a silver star. But the First Calvary had seen a lot of heroes and I wasn't a

hero. You get bronze star for meritorious service and you can get it for heroic service. Mine was for heroic. If they liked you they can give you one for meritorious. To get it for a hero they got to write you up and prove that you did something anyhow.

Interviewer: What was your rank when you sent into the service?

Mr. Burney: I was a buck sergeant.

Interviewer: Then when you got out?

Mr. Burney: I was a technician grade five.

Interviewer: Well, how about the medical treatment over there?

Mr. Burney: They did the best they could, they did the best they could. They would put a man in each outfit and he would tend to you. They called him the pillory. You know we had a nickname for everything. And he was a pillory. He had a little thing of pills and if you needed to you could go to the headquarters. If they saw something bad wrong with you they could send you to the hospital. We were pretty well set up except for the rainy season. The rainy season you weren't set up for anything.

Interviewer: I know that now you read so much about the war and you know a lot of history about the war. But when you were in the war did you have a sense of the big picture, what it was all about?

Mr. Burney: No, you tried to learn but they just told you what they had to. All I had to know was to be handy to get on my tractor, to pull my gun when they told me to. One time we got in a place and the Japanese drove the infantry out. The infantry come through our perimeter and we had to hurry up and follow and we had MTM trailers pulling. It was my job at that time to pull two MTM trailers. And the bulldozer pulled two MTM trailers and the kitchen truck pulled one ton cargo trailer. Well the kitchen truck was down on the beach. So he couldn't pull his and the bulldozer was broke down so he couldn't pull his. And I hooked up to the trailers when they were ready to go. And the commander came by and said you're going to have to pull Jones's trailers. Well it's hard to back one trailer, double hard to back two trailers and I backed two trailers over there and picked those up and got ready to go. They said you're going to have to take the kitchen trailer too, back up to it. I said I can't you're going to have to bring it to me. They brought it to me and I had to take my crew and all the cooks and five trailers and I had enough power in my tractor to do it but I didn't have enough traction. It was a coral road and the man made it with a bulldozer and made it pretty rough. We pulled out other and I come to a little hill and I turned one of them trailers over, the back trailer. They put ropes on it and straightened it up and held it while I went down the hill. I went down the hollow and up the next hill and I couldn't pull it up. They hooked to it and the tractors on to me and I put it up on the hill. About that time here come the Japanese fighters. Before I could get unloaded good her they was all around us. But we were right on the beach and you could see them out there on the ocean fighting. Next day they got it don't know if it was MacArthur or what but they got orders, it was the 41st division they got orders to go back. And they went back and we had to follow them this time we got them. We realized that they weren't easy we fired one time 23 hours, 23 hours. And what you do you fire and when you cease firing the infantry goes

in and cleans up you fire just over their head. You've got a firing observer and a radio man with the infantry you'll fire one and he'll see where you fire and he will say right so much, left so much of down so much until he gets you on the target. You fire one gun and when you get on target you fire for effect all guns. And we had one gun when we were firing 23 hours he was loading up before he got orders to the firing 23 hours he did know how long. Well they said cease fire and the infantry went through and mopped up the Japs. We sent word that we had one piece, one gun that had a round in it and asked permission to fire and they said cease fire the gun barrel was red hot and it condensed on that shell and the projectile was fused and to get it out we had to carry that gun to the ordnance, well the ordnance that fit right over the fuse and they took it, it was as dangerous as could be, Inter: It could explode. Burney – Oh yes, we took all the powder out there wasn't any powder in there it just had a fuse on it. They took that and they pushed it up against a tree and it pushed that projectile out. Of course they fused it the ordnance did we didn't have to. And it took the riffling those big guns, they've got riffling in them. They are not like old civil war cannons they got riffling in them. You know what riffling is? *Interviewer: I'm not sure. Mr. Burney:* It's something that makes it spin when it comes out. It took the riffling out about that much. They could never use that gun anymore for firing in. They could use it firing. They could never use it any more for firing in cause it wasn't quite as accurate as it would have been with all that riffling in there.

Interviewer: What other stories do you have?

Interviewer: What about your first day in the battle or your first day in actual combat?

Mr. Burney: You're nervous. Scared just like a little bitty boy, a lot of folks wouldn't tell you that. But you're scared every night. One time we were on a rest period. We had four or five days rest before we went into battle. Outdoor field we had a pretty good movie on and some guy went berserk and started swinging his rifle. Everybody had a rifle and ammunition you know, bad stuff. They subdued him, but back in the back we didn't know what it was. They stampeded just like a bunch of cattle. Somebody come down and said it's a man that went berserk. Come on back to the movie. I said I'm this close to home I think I'll just go on back to my tent. You know you get upset like that and I didn't want to go back to a movie. You know we had USO shows. Bob Hope came about once a year and John Wayne come by and Bob Hope had a girl that come with him and a man. The girl was a singer and the man was a comedian. John Wayne was the biggest fellow I ever saw. He couldn't hardly get out of that tent. He had to bend down to get out of that tent. Bob Hope was and they had the loud speakers in the back and you'd hear it here and you'd hear it back here echo. One of the lines where I was sitting I asked this ole boy, you got a knife, yeh I cut that wire, that was a terrible thing to do. But it stopped that, I didn't get the eco anymore. That's mean, that's mean that's what it is. Mr. Burney's wife asked, "how old were you." Mr. Burney replied, "I was about 23." I was old enough to know better.

Interviewer: Sounds like you had some adventures.

Mr. Burney: Yeh, yes I did. You know we've got to watch the Japanese now. Folks don't know it but they didn't like losing that war. Wait until they get to where they can buy us. They are going to buy us and put us out. Russians their not that strong anymore.

Interviewer: Sure do appreciate you sacrificing your life.

Mr. Burney: I've got some buddies you can go see if you want. How many do you have to do?

Interviewer: Ten.

Mr. Burney: You get you a piece of paper and let me give you some names. This one time it was raining, raining something terrible and I had my poncho and had my riffle up under it where it wouldn't get wet and we heard some people coming and we couldn't understand their language and we were just getting ready to fire down on them. Someone said wait their Filipinos. The Filipinos had been run out by the storm and they come through and went on back somewhere. I had a boy with me from North Carolina a boy named Chester. And he lit up a cigarette, and you could see it. I said Chester I wish you'd get under that if you are going to light up that cigarette, and he said, "hell everyone's got one time to die." I said well you got to take care of yourself. I told my sergeant if you've got to double the guard and put someone with me just leave me out there by myself. You know just to light up a cigarette, you when it's dark out there and that cigarette just light up there. But the 11th airborne division did what they were supposed to. They went in at Bitan Cregidor and run the Japanese out. Then they got upon the prettiest dry hill you ever saw and put on them pretty uniforms and shined their boots. They had us out there in the boondocks. The 11th airborne come to Clarksville, they come to Clarksville, Ft. Campbell. They had a bunch of Mexicans, tough little fellows.

Wife: We've gone all over the World with people he was in the service with. Mr. Burney: All over the United States. Interviewer: Where all have you been? Mr. Burney: We've been to Virginia, Iowa, Denver, Colorado Springs, Florida, St. Louis, and South Caroline. Interviewer: That's neat. Mr. Burney: It was if you was able to do it. When you can't climb the stairs. You got Paul Lyle's name?

Mr. Burney: In the Japanese were up the bluff and they couldn't see us but they could see out dust. If you've got two different ones looking where that dust cross then you know where we are. They didn't have to fire just the first round was a hit. We had a boy there a gunny corporal out of Kansas. He was preacher, he wasn't ordained but he was a preacher there in Kansas. And it killed him without making a mark. Just a concussion killed him. We had another boy from Miss it cut his legs off and he died on the way to the hospital. It hit, somehow or another it hit the gunny corporal. We weren't able to fire back at the Japs. Way back up on the hill somewhere was an aircraft, a 90 mm they fired at those Japanese direct fire until we could get reorganized and return fire. The next day we went back up and went over a hill, they moved us out of there we were just like sitting ducks. If you go over the hill you back down here with a Houser you can fire out but if they fire enough to clear that hill they are going to miss you. We heard them fire you know we heard them. Just in case but they were firing with guns. If that gun could get over the hill, if it hit that hill it would explode and not hurt anything, but if they could get it over that hill it was going way on over us. We had a young boy there Red Nelson, he wanted to run he said his time was up he wanted to run. One of his buddies tackled him and threwed him down. You can never tell who's going to brave and who's not. Some of them you can but some you can't.