

Interviewer: Okay we are operating it is the 15<sup>th</sup> of December the year 2000 and I'm speaking with Mr. George Swift who is a long time veteran. The last time we spoke I believe you told me you joined the Tennessee National Guard at the age of 15.

Swift: That is correct.

Interviewer: Now how did you manage to sneak into the National Guard at the age of 15?

Swift: It wasn't too many people who wasn't looking for people and they turned their head and I sneaked in.

Interviewer: How old did you tell them you were?

Swift: I was 18 I think.

Interviewer: Told them that you were 18 but you were actually 15?

Swift: I don't recall exact but it was okay they weren't that strict not like the regular military. But I went in and I spent about 5 years enlisted and at the end that's when they veteranized us that's a bad word veteranized but.

Interviewer: That's a sensitive word.

Swift: Yeah but it was actually they called us active duty. And I went up to Tullahoma they had the new camp they built up there at Tullahoma and that's where we went. And this was the 109<sup>th</sup> Calvary Tennessee National Guard. And we had horses everybody rode horse and it was right down here I don't know they have some kind of doing as you go down around the river there.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Swift: The stables was closer to the river than it is now but enjoyed that.

Interviewer: So your original training was in horse Calvary? So you leaned equestrian techniques and was your training here in Clarksville or did the National Guard send you away?

Swift: Well once a year once a year we went down to Fort Oberthrope Georgia and spent two weeks down there. But we did training here every Sunday.

Interviewer: Every Sunday. They train one weekend a month now and two weeks in the summer. I'm assuming it was probably similar.

Swift: Yeah something like that well it's been how many years ago seventy some odd years ago.

Interviewer: I believe you went in 1935 so that's 65 years. That's been a while.

Swift: Yeah it's been a while.

Interviewer: Now I meant when you first went in when you first enlisted in the National Guard did they send you to a basic training?

Swift: No

Interviewer: No?

Swift: No we had it all right there in the stable.

Interviewer: Really? Interesting

Swift: Had no basic training but when we was riding it was altogether different it wouldn't have helped us too much. We took basic training there but it was good we become soldiers there. And those horses they were just real good horses.

Interviewer: Really

Swift: Yeah if they wouldn't have been some of us wouldn't have got to ride around all of them you know because they could get out from under you.

Interviewer: Now horses require daily care.

Swift: Oh yeah

Interviewer: At a National Guard unit how were they say if you only met once a month or so how were they who took care of the horses?

Swift: Oh no we had two or three people that was regular all the time.

Interviewer: Fulltime?

Swift: Yeah fulltime yeah

Interviewer: And they maintained the stables took care of the animals.

Swift: Absolutely kept them well of course then when we came in that was part of our job to make sure they cured and rubbed down and things like that.

Interviewer: Now once you were training did you have your own horse assigned to you?

Swift: No no yeah you had your own horse I thought you meant my horse.

Interviewer: No no with the unit.

Swift: Yeah we had our own horse and I remember that mine was bleach faced. And one time we had a training outfit on a hill and I don't know if they ever located that hill again back here and it was somewhere around down in this area down here. And Clarksville was invited out I mean invited to come

and watch it. But we put on some action where pulling off your horse you can pull off the horse on the side we would ride together and then somebody would sneak in the belt and drag you off the horse. I'll never forget when the one Corporal took me in the belt and I went straight over the head of my horse and slide down by my shoulder. And the horse went over top of me and burned a big hole in the back of my head. That hoof had come over you know he did a good number on me. I was sore it didn't hurt me you know it hurt my feelings more than anything else. I know when the troop commander came through the only thing he ever said to me he said are you hurt? I said no well walked off he never said sorry or good job. You know I was a young guy I wanted somebody to tell me I was doing a good job but he didn't. Anyway I've still got the scar back here where he hit.

Interviewer: Now were you trained in I would imagine in saber fighting and also shooting from horseback?

Swift: Yeah we didn't actually shoot a lot from horseback but we bang bang bang you know.

Interviewer: You were trained for it?

Swift: Trained for it yeah. When we went to camp two weeks down there we trained hard. They the horses knew more about it than we did most of the time.

Interviewer: Really they were better trained than a lot of the men?

Swift: Yeah yeah you know when you are on a horse and he's trained and trained right you can move one leg forward and that horse is going to turn the opposite you know back that leg and forward right there. He had been trained around so long you just had to move one foot forward and he would react you could get the horse to go where you want to.

Interviewer: Now when you were federalized that would have been around 1940 I imagine.

Swift: 1941

Interviewer: You were federalized in 41.

Swift: Federalized in 41.

Interviewer: You were activated as a unit your Calvary troop was activated all of you?

Swift: Yeah well they that's when we lost our horses.

Interviewer: That's what I was going to ask.

Swift: They took our horses and where they went I don't know probably up in the North West somewhere. But it was we were a fielder I mean we were in a field artillery.

Interviewer: So they converted you from a Calvary unit to an artillery unit?

Swift: That's right yeah.

Interviewer: How did that transition take place?

Swift: How

Interviewer: Where did they send you?

Swift: Right up here to Tullahoma.

Interviewer: To Tullahoma Tennessee.

Swift: That's where we went up there and stayed I don't recall dates to well but we went up to Camp Roberts from there the whole unit did. And from there we stayed on well actually we stayed there for about the best I can remember close to six months or a year.

Interviewer: This was your training period to become an artillery unit?

Swift: That's right.

Interviewer: What type of artillery were you trained on?

Swift: Well at that time we had I'd been in posts but we were trained into that time to have 155 howitzers 155 millimeter howitzers and that's about all they ever had the unit. I left the unit to get schooling. And I went to Fort Seal Oklahoma the schooling. And the schooling was the officer's candidate schooling. And I was there for 30 days and pinned a bar on me when we finished I became a Second Lieutenant I was a First Sergeant when I went out there. I had to come up from a recruit in the calvary. So then we took our lieutenants that we had, just got their bars and they shipped us right overseas. We went to Hawaii first and we was over there several months protecting Hawaii.

Interviewer: Pearl Harbor?

Swift: Yeah but then we kind of split up the lieutenants did. They sent some here some there and some another place. But they found that I wound up in what is the name of it Guadalcanal I went to Guadalcanal. It was rough it was rough all the way but it was a unit from the marines that came in ahead of us and they took a pretty good brunt of the situation there. However we still had some Japanese around.

Interviewer: And at this time what was your, you were in an artillery battery?

Swift: Yes I was in a battery.

Interviewer: And you were still a lieutenant?

Swift: Yes I was still well I was a Second Lieutenant.

Interviewer: Second Lieutenant and what was your job in the battery?

Swift: Okay I was the motor officer. And I had well I think there was about 20 people under my patrol because I was the motor officer. And they had something to do with the motors the mechanics whether

it be the drivers or what have you. So we and there's another thing I always can remember this and laugh every time I tell it I laugh. We had some older officers because at that time they had been in the National Guard for a long time you know and they come on up. And this one particular Colonel and I will not use names.

Interviewer: That's fine.

Swift: But we had the battery out on there on the road in Hawaii and was going somewhere I don't know where maybe to the ocean we went to the ocean to protect our land practicing. Well we always had to wear our helmets and when he said he was driving along in a jeep you know he went by this one truck and this one kid didn't have his helmet on and they was working at that real hard making sure everybody had their helmets on. He drove on up beside of the truck and said soldier soldier get that helmet on, only he used some bad words, poor kid said I don't have a helmet. He said I don't care get that helmet on. You talk about the roar up and down the place. Everybody laughed about that of course he didn't hear him he didn't know what he said. And they never went into combat with us he left us. Anyway where we took off we took off to Guadalcanal from there.

Interviewer: So you went from Hawaii to Guadalcanal by Navy ship of course.

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: What type of ship do you recall the voyage from Hawaii to Guadalcanal?

Swift: It was a freighter and a lot of people were sleeping way down in the hull. Some of us got beds on top.

Interviewer: Pretty rough conditions going over?

Swift: No not too much it was rougher when we went from Oakland over to Hawaii.

Interviewer: Really

Swift: It was rough yeah.

Interviewer: Rough seas or just bad

Swift: Rough seas everybody in that ship got sick except five of us. Five of us hang on to the outside.

Interviewer: Were you one of the fortunate ones that didn't get sick?

Swift: Yes I was and there is always someplace you know that you think back and you think about the bad things that happen but you think about some good things that happened and you think about things that back then was funny to you why you have to laugh every time.

Interviewer: Sure

Swift: It was all over the deck everybody that was on there they was deathly sick really. You ever seen a man that was ocean sea sick that's when you see a man that's green he was so sick. And I'd be walking

along on the deck just going I mean you walk back and forth you had to step over these people because they were laying all over and I'm not exaggerating a bit. I started to step over this young fellow and he raised up on his elbow and said I wish they'd take a damn bomb and blow this up. That's all he just fell back down.

Interviewer: He was sick enough he didn't want to live.

Swift: No he didn't want to live anymore. And I had a good friend that was on there that graduated from OCS when I did and he was deathly sick. We had a big storm between out there and that island and when we got off of that ship they loaded us on buses I mean trucks to take us where ever we were going. And they took him off in an ambulance and I never heard from him again.

Interviewer: Took him off the ship in an ambulance.

Swift: Yeah they took him off the ship in an ambulance. I mean to the hospital wherever it was. But I never did hear any more from him and he was a good friend of mine. So that was just when we were going over there. I mentioned something about the time we had that we were there in Hawaii and our duties were to keep out post and things watch in the water and everything.

Interviewer: So in Hawaii you were like coast defense artillery?

Swift: Well they had I don't know exactly what you would call it but that's what our job was really. That 155 howitzer and that howitzer is the one that shoots projectile put straight and then down.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Swift: And you go over hills with those and get right in behind them. You probably know that anyway. And we stayed there for I don't recall just exactly how much time we spent there but I know we spent at least six months there on Guadalcanal.

Interviewer: Talk about your landing talk about going into Guadalcanal. What was that like when you first arrived?

Swift: Very very it didn't bother anybody we didn't have any casualties from our

Interviewer: So you had a peaceful landing?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: But the marines had already pretty well controlled the island?

Swift: Yeah we had it fairly easy but it was hot and man I'm telling you there was mosquitos and everything there because it was swampy land. I'll tell you one of the things now do you want me to tell you some of the things that makes me laugh too?

Interviewer: Yes sir absolutely.

Swift: We wasn't getting very much to eat.

Interviewer: That was going to be my next question about the rations because I know the marines had been on short rations for a long time. They had a very bad logistical problem on Guadalcanal.

Swift: They did but one time we hadn't had much meat in a long time but our patrol came back and told me there was cattle up in the hills up there. And so I took the mess steward and myself I don't know who else there were three or four of us. Anyway we just killed us a good cow up there and brought him back and boy that was good. We had steaks and everything else out of it. So that's my last one on that I'm not going to tell

Interviewer: That's fine that's fine. So when you arrived on Guadalcanal they still hadn't straightened out the whole supply system they were still short rations. Was there a shortage of food or just fresh meat and vegetables?

Swift: Fresh meat

Interviewer: Shortage of fresh meat you had plenty of the k-rations?

Swift: Yeah oh yeah we never did but that man that was our mess steward at the time he did a good job but they didn't bring it to him.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: But we killed that calf up there cow took it right down there and cut it up into meat portions.

Interviewer: Now your living conditions on Guadalcanal.

Swift: Well our living conditions wasn't as bad as other places I was going.

Interviewer: You didn't know that yet though.

Swift: No I didn't know that yet. The one thing again you had to dig a hole and get in it because you slept in it.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: And the Japanese sent out patrols like we sent out patrols. This one the first night I was there we had our bed rolls you know and we'd put them down in that hole that we dug. And all at once along during the night something said whop. You know like something had fell out of the tree and it was something that fell out of the tree. They had these, and what they were I don't know some kind of big lizard. Anyway that thing screamed just like a lady. And we didn't know whether the Japanese were coming in if we were about to get blindsided you know. I said I wasn't going to tell anymore.

Interviewer: No that's fine that's fine interject anything that you care to.

Swift: After a while we went from there to oh what was that place that they had such as hard time. There was another outfit I can never recall what the name of it was. But anyway they were having a hard time getting all the Japanese out of that area they were in. And we weren't doing anything we really got a good rest there

Interviewer: So you didn't have much of a mission there at Guadalcanal?

Swift: Our mission was when we were backing in other words we went in if they needed us. But they couldn't handle us because we didn't have much land. We got word then that we was going to go another place. And we got loaded up and got back out there on the ship. The Coral Sea I'm sure you know is where they had that big ship

Interviewer: Big Navy battle yes sir.

Swift: But we had to I don't know what days but we moved about half way up Brittan I think that's where it was. But it was another island and so we was going to go over there to that. And on the way up we got orders the ship did, got orders to pull in to a certain area in there because it was these submarines. There were submarines in the area. And we pulled back got back in this cove like got back in there where they couldn't get to us. But just before we left over there Guadalcanal why we had some beer shipped in, I don't know whether you know that or not but we did. And these people that were on that ship over there they weren't military they were what do you call them?

Interviewer: Merchant marines?

Swift: Yeah merchant marines.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Swift: Merchant marines anyway they wanted some of that beer and we wouldn't let them have it no way no way they could have it. But finally we went out and fished and did everything while we was waiting to get moved out of that cove. New Brittan that was the name of it.

Interviewer: New Brittan

Swift: Yeah we went up there. So we got out of there without any problem and went on into Brittan. And we stayed there I guess it's pretty hard to remember that many years back.

Interviewer: Sure, you had a peaceful landing on New Brittan also?

Swift: Yes we did.

Interviewer: Now how about getting I'm curious about getting the artillery pieces on and off the ship. You went on to Guadalcanal you had to unload 155s no small gun.

Swift: No

Interviewer: It must have involved a tremendous amount of work on the battery just to get your, now how many guns did you have?

Swift: Six

Interviewer: Six guns of course six duce and halves to haul the guns.



Swift: No you used something bigger than a duce and a half.

Interviewer: What did you haul them with?

Swift: A diamond T.

Interviewer: Okay and then your ammo carriers and of course crates.

Swift: They took four battalions they took I'm thinking two or three, three I think it was LSTs landing ship

Interviewer: Right

Swift: And I was the when we was getting ready to load up again and move up to New Brittan I was the what they call the Quarter Master Officer.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: It was my job to see that all those ships were loaded properly you had to have you cut these little dolls out and placed them where you that's what you were doing. You weren't placing dolls you were placing trucks and guns and everything else.

Interviewer: You said it took three LSTs to move the battalion ashore?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: And were they built the same as they are now three gun batteries serve per person headquarters?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay

Swift: Yeah that's what they had. Anyway I was that was the first time that I really got hurt. It hurt me pretty bad I didn't get any wounds just hurt my back. We had enlisted personnel down there practicing loading putting them on backing them off getting them on. Until we got them on there like we thought would be good. And you had to have all of the weights in the proper place depending on how much it weighted and everything. But we dismissed except there was about four or five officers and there were helping making sure everybody was working if nothing else. But when we finished up this one ship it was so far forward we had well just looking at this house we had about that much space in the back to go in. So we couldn't have it like that we had to face it where it was evened out.

Interviewer: Right to balance the load.

Swift: Balance well yeah. So I called the officers over and I said we're going to have to move this we could have done it. When we finished with it the first time we went in there we raised it to put the gun down, and raised it but you could slide it then almost over

Interviewer: Almost stack the guns.

Swift: Yeah stack that's right that's exactly right you must have been there.

Interviewer: I spend a couple of years around the army.

Stacking and stacking the guns but as I say we couldn't leave it because there was too much weight back in there. So all of us got around this big trailer and on each side of it I was at the end. And when I said heave you know I expected everybody to heave and pick that heavy thing up. But as they did as they came up with it some I stuck my foot under it like that then I could get my foot under it and hold it t least I thought I could hold it. But it didn't hold like that so I yelled loud said hold it. They came around and helped me hold it up until I got my foot out from under it. The doctor put me in the hospital field hospital and they had a wooden table and they put a sheet on the wooden table and put me on my back because it hurt the lower part of my back and would not let me turn over or move or anything else unless one of their people helped. And I stayed there a week and he told me then don't you wish you had stayed back in the United States. And I said no no not me I'm going where my men go you know I was a go getter. And he said I can send you back if you want to go you've got something or another I said no. Well I'll just say this one time I remember wishing that I had said yes. But I didn't I said no well anyway

Interviewer: So that was New Brittan?

Swift: That was New Brittan.

Interviewer: And did you folks see any action in New Brittan? You said you had a peaceful landing.

Swift: No no never did see any action over there. We went from there to the Philippines. And that's when there was action in the Philippines. We landed at Lock In and I don't know how many troops but I know we had five or six ships in there maybe even more. And they loaded us on and started out from Aberdeen spent two nights in there. They were gathering the boats together and getting them in the line they wanted them to be in and all the plans that they made. But we had we were strafed by the Japanese a couple of times we had a pretty rough time. They dropped a shell dropped a bomb didn't do too much damage but they got to us.

Interviewer: Is this during the landing?

Swift: Huh

Interviewer: Was this when you were trying to land?

Swift: No this was before while we were moving.

Interviewer: Oh while you were moving. You weren't even there yet okay.

Swift: That's when the Japanese sent in a few airplanes to let us know they were still around. I had a lieutenant by that time I was Captain by that time I think and this lieutenant he was working with some of the enlisted men there they had some 50 caliber machine guns on the boat you know around the deck. So they were coming in pretty heavy there and he jumped in and he picked up one and put that 50 caliber in there. He got a medal for that. The airplane came down like to strafe and he followed him and when he got him in there he shot him down. And he went back up and that's when he tried to dive on

us and he went back just about as far as from here to that tree right over the edge and he didn't know shot him down. If he hadn't we'd have had a big mess right there because he would have knocked the whole ship out probably.

Interviewer: So one lieutenant with a 50 caliber machine gun saved the vessel probably saved your life.

Swift: Yeah oh yeah from that we went to Clark Hill there in the Philippines. We was doing our normal job then that we had been doing pushing artillery up into the mountains.

Interviewer: Now were you a battery commander at this point?

Swift: Yeah battery commander yeah I think this is the time I can't remember. General McArthur he always said I shall return

Interviewer: Yes sir

Swift: And while we were up there in the mountains and were actually firing right into caves. There were a lot of caves they dug them in there. So we would lower down and shoot directly into the caves close them up. But anyway Douglas McArthur General Douglas McArthur wanted to come up when he landed he landed down in the field. We were already out of Clark Field then we were in the mountains up there and were still firing at the Japanese. And he walked in the walked right out in the we had to put guards along the road you know with field classes. And it was cleared all the way coming up there he walked right out in front of the infantry just as pretty as you please with these big ole glasses. Looked around I thought he was stupid you know you put a man that's a five star general they've bound to have some use for him somewhere.

Interviewer: Got to have use somewhere.

Swift: Don't throw it away but he did it though. I never will forget the time that we were short on ammunition and this time yeah short on ammunition. And we had I spoke a minute ago about some old timers that had been in the National Guard for a long time. Well our artillery commander I don't remember his name but he was old and his head shook like I never saw.

Interviewer: Some type of a palsy maybe?

Swift: Palsy yeah yeah that's what he had. And so we went up there at the end had take the battalion commander he told me to take two of my guns up ahead of the infantry

Interviewer: That's odd

Swift: Well we put out feelers I mean we put out eyes up there on the mountain. But we started firing on the target and we could see and see movement because they were coming up on our right back here the infantry was the 7<sup>th</sup> no it wasn't the 7<sup>th</sup> I don't know what it was. They were coming up on our right across the valley on the other side and so the Japanese were backing off. So we went to work on them every time we'd see movement in the bushes and things like that we made sure it was our target. He got there and he said well we didn't have any we had ammunition but we couldn't use it because something was coming up in the near future that we were going to have to have that ammunition so we were saving it. But I had just fired on this one particular bunch of bushes we had saw and it wasn't there

again. We fired on it and any other targets that we could see. But he came up there later after General McArthur was there he came up there and said, he always shoot his head, he says what is that over there? I said there's some Japanese over there we're firing on them and he said can you hit them? And I said yes sir we can hit them and he said put a round over there so I put a round over there and blasted it away. And he said why aren't you shooting on them that's what he said why don't you go in and shoot them and I said well we're short of ammunition and we're only allowed so many rounds. And he looked at it and shook his head and he said Captain he said do you know who put out that order? And I said no sir I don't. He said well I tell you what I was the man that put that order out and he said from now on you shoot as much of it as you want to shoot. So we had a pretty good ball there.

Interviewer: You had mentioned the last time we spoke that you commanded black troops.

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: Was your battery at this point?

Swift: That was after the war.

Interviewer: Oh that was after the war okay. We'll get there maybe not today but we'll get there. Now talk some more about your movement through the Philippines. What happened next after McArthur's visit?

Swift: Well we were sitting my battery was sitting right on the flat it must have been straight up almost. We had dug in my foxhole was in the back and all at once and I had forgot people with machine guns were all the way around. And right on the head of the edge of that big bluff they were sitting on top of was a good place to have it, it turned out not to be. We kept hearing something hearing something some had broke loose they had come down and were sneaking around down in that valley and climbed that bluff and threw hand grenades. You know that come up and threw hand grenades. Well of course we had some casualties and they got inside the perimeter. I saw somebody had let one through and tried to shoot at him they'd take a smaller bomb and throw it down through the tube and it would hit the back of that tube back there and it would blow up and you'd lost your gun. And that's what they were trying to do. So finally I saw this guy come out they had throwed the gun into a dug out just about that size so they could get down into. And he I was in my foxhole and had a 45 we carried 45s.

Interviewer: Yeah 45 pistols sure Colt 45s.

Swift: And I reached and got that and I had a car beam it wasn't a car beam it was a Thompson Sub Machine gun.

Interviewer: A Thompson 45?

Swift: Yeah that's right 45. And he I saw this guy come out of just a little bit of clouds and a little bit of you could just see somebody coming out of that place. Well I had connections all the way around the perimeter and nobody was moving and so I started to shoot him and this Thompson I had just jammed on me. Well then I had my pistol 45 revolver and I picked that up. When I picked it up I started to shoot and it wouldn't shoot. I had jerked it up like that and that artillery rolled out. But that guy sitting right on the other side of me that was there he dialed in and pow. But that distracted me that gun and the next morning he said he couldn't have gotten any closer if he had been out on the range he couldn't have

done it. So I thank him for my life you know. The guy that had this the Japanese that had this also had a piece of paper with paths on it up in the mountains right to where I was. They would come in and get the man and blow him up.

Interviewer: Right take out the brains and take out the unit.

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: What's your opinion of the Thompson Sub Machine gun? Probably not real good after that experience.

Swift: It was heavy heavier than a car beam I thought you know you had to get all the bullets out there you could. I'm sure it was a good weapon but it would have been better the car beam.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: The only difference in the carbeam wasn't as large as the 45 was it could knock them down if you ever hit them. But the car beam was a light

Interviewer: Now the car beam was a 30 caliber right rather than a 45 caliber.

Swift: That's right

Interviewer: So it didn't have the knock down power it was much lighter to carry. What were your enlisted men armed with generally were they armed with a 30 caliber?

Swift: No it was a 16

Interviewer: They were armed with the M1s?

Swift: Yeah M1s.

Interviewer: Those were pretty heavy too?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: With the wooden stock. And they weren't awkward for the guys trying to now I'm talking you gun crews your guys on your artillery pieces. They had the big M1s

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: To tote around

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: So that didn't make their job any easier.

Swift: Well actually it didn't bother them too much because when you went into position and dug a hide place your gun could go down because you could reach part of the way up so you were pretty well hid if you had a good bull dozer to help you dig.

Interviewer: Now did you have engineer support to help you dig the holes a bulldozer.

Swift: We had a bulldozer assigned to the battery?

Interviewer: Yeah

Swift: Very good

Interviewer: Not the battery but

Swift: The battalion?

Interviewer: Yeah the battalion

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: How about aircraft did you have an artillery spotter or two aircraft.

Swift: We had two planes. Now that was the battalion

Interviewer: Right at battalion level.

Swift: We had two L4s.

Interviewer: Two L4 Stensons

Swift: We didn't get those until later I think because it was a later model. I know that I was out and we had got swooping over the ocean out there.

Interviewer: So you got to go up with one of the spotter aircraft?

Swift: Yeah oh yeah and I don't remember at that particular time but I know that we was looking for what we was doing up there is we were looking for a duck. Not a you know a duck.

Interviewer: Yes sir not a duck with wings the amphibious transport.

Swift: Somebody was out there fishing out of it

Interviewer: Really soldiers out fishing.

Swift: Yeah they were so I was in the front seat and of course he was in the back seat. And there again I don't know why we were situated like that but we were but I was he was telling me what to do and I was doing it with the rutters and all stuff like this. And he told me how to come in and land we went around and came back in and came in and landed. This little field out there you know had a place to land

man I just got cold sweats. I started looking down that runway and I just put my hands up and I said take it in because I couldn't. That's the first time I think I ever backed out of anything but I backed out then.

Interviewer: Was that your first time in an aircraft?

Swift: Yeah not the first time in an aircraft but the first time I tried to put it down.

Interviewer: I don' believe I'd want to try that.

Swift: No

Interviewer: How affective was the areal artillery spot using the aircraft to locate targets?

Swift: Very

Interviewer: And their ability to relay the information back and for you to

Swift: Very good as long as you keep communication.

Interviewer: And how was your radio communications generally reliable?

Swift: Generally I had radio that was about all I had but we didn't have too much trouble. We did have some problems.

Interviewer: Now did a battery have artillery spotters did you have forward observers?

Swift: Yeah forward observers that's what we had yeah.

Interviewer: Okay and they went out with what like a walkie-talkie?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: To cal in back to you calling targets calling to fire.

Swift: To fire yeah. When we got ready to go to Korea

Interviewer: We'll take one war at a time I think Korea's going to be another interview.

Swift: Yeah but I'll tell you know in WWII when we came down and I was talking about that we pulled out and they sent us back across to what was that island

Interviewer: Manila?

Swift: No it was I can't remember what it was but anyway we went back there

Interviewer: Yes sir

Swift: And pulled my battery back out and I don't think service battery I'm not sure what they did. And we was there two weeks just two weeks to redo it and clean it and all that stuff.

Interviewer: Rearm and refit

Swift: Yeah and I was having a lot of people coming in the Philippines were coming in but there was two I walked up to this big garbage dumpster we had to dig in the winter two little girls Philippine girls O walked up to that garbage can and there were those two little girls down in that garbage can. Digging for bread and stuff that really made you want to go back and fight hard when you see all of that. So I set some can goods up there and they wanted to take my cloths and wash them and iron them and stuff. And we knew we thought we had two weeks and we did have two weeks there.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: So I decided I wanted to go up and get me a monkey. So I pulled out and I had a pair of pants summer pants so I took that along and I came back with a monkey.

Interviewer: You caught a monkey?

Swift: Yeah I trained him.

Interviewer: So what did you do with the money?

Swift: Well I kept him tied down there I was in a tent a command tent there. And it had the pole you know in the middle of it pretty nice little tent. And I kept him tied to that tent I had a table I used for my administration stuff and one day I was also checking all of the letters that went out you know you had to what do you call it

Interviewer: Censor

Swift: Yeah censor all of that mail and I was the one that censored it to. So I'd sit there and censor mail then I'd play with the monkey. So after a few months I didn't realize I had given that monkey enough string enough line that he could reach that desk. And I walked in there and this monkey was sitting there just tarring these letters all to pieces.

Interviewer: These were letters that your men had written home?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: Now here's a question I've never talked to anyone who actually censored mail before. You read each out going letter that your men were sending back to the states.

Swift: Yeah well you had more than one there was too much detail.

Interviewer: Right well what if you found something in a letter that they shouldn't write? Did you scratch it out or send the letter back or



Swift: You would call the man up come here you know you can't say this you have to re-write it. I never had a problem because we would beat on them not to send.

Interviewer: Sure for operational security if the letters fell into the wrong hands then valuable information could be lost or put into the wrong hands more importantly.

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: Now after your two weeks did you keep the monkey when you moved on?

Swift: No I left I had found out you could get 45 days rest and recuperation so I went back home. I had been there 28 months I believe in combat. And in fact I had more points you could get out by points I had more points than anyone else around me. So I got home right here in Clarksville and my wife and I we were sitting in the living room up here in an apartment and just before you went into Madison where they're putting a new road through there.

Interviewer: Where they're building the new bridge.

Swift: Yeah a bridge and I'm sitting there and I was trying to get a button on because they had already called wanting me to come to the court house. Down there because they were going to have a parade you know and they just said get to the parade real quick and they wanted me to march in that and I did. But I was sitting there trying to get this uniform I had lost a button or something and she said did you hear that you know they were announcing it over the radio. I said yeah I heard that then she kept on you know but that's in the paper too.

Interviewer: Now is that VJ-Day or VE-Day?

Swift: VE-Day

Interviewer: VE-Day?

Swift: Yeah that's Europe it would be VJ-Day

Interviewer: VJ-Day

Swift: Yeah when they dropped the bomb.

Interviewer: Right so you were already home?

Swift: Yeah well no yeah I was at home at that time but I was supposed to go back.

Interviewer: So you came home for 45 days leave in the summer of 45 and you were preparing to go back.

Swift: Yeah and go back into Japan.

Interviewer: Go back for the invasion in Japan.

Swift: Yeah and when he handed me my order he said I don't care what you do in the 45 days but at the end of 45 days if you have to swim back you better start.

Interviewer: So you were supposed to go back to the same battalion?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: Had you relinquished command of your battery or had one of your lieutenants taken over?

Swift: One of the officers took it.

Interviewer: So he took it temporarily.

Swift: The executive officer is the one that steps up you know.

Interviewer: Okay so your XO took temporary command and you expected to go back.

Swift: I didn't go back.

Interviewer: You didn't go back so

Swift: I knew that I had enough points to get out or at least I thought I did. But when I went back down to Fort McPherson when I got ready to go back I didn't turn in until the 45 days was up

Interviewer: Sure very few soldiers go back early from leave.

Swift: But when we I told this young fellow who was getting me ready thought he thought he was getting me ready to go back over there. And I said where are you going to assign me to? Well sir you're going back overseas. I said no I'm afraid you're wrong there and we yakked about it a little while and finally he said come back in the morning he said you'll have to come back in the morning. Again that was a time that they were extending them. The General over there had already told him back at Fort McPherson that everybody was to go back.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: I went back the next morning and I said I'll just get out. I'll just take my discharge right now.

Tape ended and another tape was started

Swift: I'm not going back over there. But I did I didn't go back over there then I went back over there for Korea.

Interviewer: So did you get out of the service between the wars?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: So you got out

Swift: I got out for 70 days.

Interviewer: You got out for 70 days?

Swift: When I went back in see my commission was only a reserve commission.

Interviewer: Right because you had been activated out of the guard.

Swift: That's right it was reserve commission but I kept my reserve and I kept my grades. But when they said I told them that they put me out. And I went to work at B.F. Goodrich trucking company. Which was the railroad company there.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: I was working there when I activated the National Guard.

Interviewer: So you went back to B.F. Goodrich once the war was over?

Swift: I went back to B.F. Goodrich and I bought an old house right down town on this road that goes on down through there. But I didn't want to go and my wife not this lady here but the one that passed on but we decided she had her sisters and all in Michigan that's what I was trying to say Michigan. And we decided to sell the house and move to Michigan and unfortunately well fortunately really I went to up there under pretense of going to get a job up there.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: And so when I got there I never stopped until I started recruiting. See I was a Master Sergeant in the Reserves I was a Master Sergeant. And then I was promoted from there I didn't have anything I was a Captain that's what I was I was a Captain.

Interviewer: Right so when you got up to Michigan you walked into a recruiting office and volunteered to go back on active duty?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: Now did you go back as an officer or as an NCO?

Swift: No I had already put in for that go to back in to active duty.

Interviewer: Okay

Swift: But they weren't taking any back in at that time.

Interviewer: Alright

Swift: So

Interviewer: No they were mustering hundreds of thousands out.

Swift: Yeah and so they took me and said they'd have to send me down to Chicago to get in and then they'd ship me wherever they needed me.

Interviewer: Right

Swift: And that was the Air Force I went Air Force.

Interviewer: Okay

Swift: And they sent me down to Louisiana down there and I was the chief of statistics in Louisiana at the air base. Then that's where they called me back to active duty from and so I called to Fort Hood Texas and that's where I had the black battalion not battalion black Company.

Interviewer: Black company now what

Swift: Engineers

Interviewer: Company of engineers.

Swift: Uh huh

Interviewer: And what was your rank at this time?

Swift: I was a Captain.

Interviewer: You were a Captain again okay. So you were a company commander of an engineer company. This would have been 46?

Swift: Yeah when I was called back in I was called back in as a Captain right.

Interviewer: Called back in as Captain in 46. So the wasn't integrated yet you had separate

Swift: No it wasn't

Interviewer: The blacks had their own units and the whites had their own units.

Swift: That's correct.

Interviewer: But you had all white officers?

Swift: All white officers and it wasn't in the air force I'm sorry I misstated that. But I was in the engineers over there as Captain and then I went to I think I'm about to lose it. But I know I wound up oh now I know I got lost there for a minute but then when I went to the into the air force

Interviewer: Let me tell you what Mr. Swift this tapes almost over that's why I keep checking I've got a checker here. What do you say we stop for today but pick this up another day because your getting tired I think?

Swift: Yeah

Interviewer: And train of thoughts getting a little lost. Why don't we stop for today and we'll make arrangements to pick up again.

Swift: Alright

Interviewer: Because I want to get one I really want to talk to you about what it was like to command black troops. I'm very interested in that.

Swift: Okay

Interviewer: I'm very interested in your prospective and then I want to talk about Korea and that's a whole nother tape.

Swift: Yeah

Tape ended