

Interviewer: Alright Mr. Hunter I'd like to say first of all thank you for the opportunity to conduct this interview on behalf of myself and Dr. Zieren. I covered some of the guidelines with you before the interview so can I your name, place of birth and date of birth?

Hunter: The military record shows my name as Harley Lynn Hunter. I'm known by Lynn but that's my military name. I was born in a north city community called Live Oak Florida it's in Suwanee County on April 11, 1926.

Interviewer: Okay (tape skips)

Hunter: Had one older brother seven years older than I am he served as a Chaplin Army Chaplin during World War II. I have a sister that's five years older than I am and a mother and father so a family of five.

Interviewer: Family of five, what were your parent's names and their occupations?

Hunter: Okay my father's name was Arch Hunter and he in the depression years the early years ran a grocery store and later years was chief of police in this community and sheriff of the county and he was sheriff when I was in the Marine Core in World War II.

Interviewer: Your mom was a homemaker during this time?

Hunter: My mom was definitely a homemaker she was a strong supporter for the children. Heavy responsibility in the church she taught Sunday school for ever in a Baptist church. And my sister went to college as a music major at Stetson University and dropped out because of finances just before World War II. And she married a man that was working in the shipyards making ships for World War II in Jacksonville Florida.

Interviewer: you've mentioned that your mother was strong with her religious faith was the religious faith in your family strong all the way through? Was your mother the strongest of the

Hunter: It was strong all the way through but she was the strength of it. She was so strong that we would never think of missing going to church every Sunday never think of it. And then my brother was a Baptist minister and committed went to be a minister when he was 17 and this was a very strong thing within the family brought a lot of pride to the family. And then he finished his education during the war seminary and joined the army as a Chaplin.

Interviewer: What was the education level of your parents did they have college complete college?

Hunter: No the first person in my family as far as I know that went to college was my brother and then later my sister. And I dropped out of high school to go to World War II so I didn't finish high school until after World War II.

Interviewer: You were too old you wouldn't be too old to remember the great depression you were about four years old during that time.

Hunter: I remember it.

Interviewer: Do you have any memories of the depression?

Hunter: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Of the depression?

Hunter: Yes sir.

Interviewer: What memories do you have of that time?

Hunter: I remember we lived close to a railroad track and the homeless people in those days were called hobos and the men primarily would leave home and try to find a job wherever they could find jobs and send some money to their family. And the result of that there were hobos traveling the railroad a lot and they would walk up to houses and ask if they could work in the yard or cut wood or do something for a meal. And my mother regularly fed the homeless people or hobos. And so we would see that and our family lived in town and dad lost his job the store closed down. So we suffered as a family a little bit we had an automobile but it couldn't be used it had to be jacked up we couldn't buy gas for it for several years it was not used. So we lived more comfortable than some people but still we were deprived of a lot. We did not have a lot of good food we adequately because of mother's ability to feed the family on a little bit but I'm reasonably sure that I can say with accuracy that the family's income wasn't even \$7 a week.

Interviewer: And you just made a reference to the fact that your father and mother would feed some of these men that came through. Some of the other interviews that I've conducted that was a strong point of the people that lived in this time period would contribute to the others less fortunate no matter what their circumstances and you just said your family did. Did this give you any type of values of giving and care for other people?

Hunter: Yes I think very definitely in other words my entire life and every member of my entire families entire life has always felt like we had a responsibility to those less fortunate than we were.

Interviewer: You said you dropped out of high school

Hunter: Yes

Interviewer: To go into World War II. While you were in high school did you have a job that you did after school?

Hunter: Always

Interviewer: What types of jobs did you have while you were in school?

Hunter: My father required the two boys work all the time. So from the time I was nine years old until today I have always worked. I don't ever remember not drawing a pay in all those years. Now the pay was a lot of time modest my first job started when I was nine years old and I had a bicycle and after school and during the summertime I would go by the drug store and I would spend the balance of the day and the weekend delivering prescriptions and drugs to people. And my pay for that furnishing the

bicycle and delivering and working around the drug store sweeping and things like that my pay was \$1.95 a week. And there was no 40 hour week if I worked after school and Saturday and Sunday if my work included 12 hours or 14 hours I drew \$1.95 in the summertime if I averaged 10 hours a day it was still \$1.95. You got paid by the week and not by the hour.

Interviewer: Was the money that earned did it go directly to contribute to the family or was that the money that you would use for other things for yourself?

Hunter: My brother and I always and my brother when I was too young to work myself my brother always whatever money he earned himself he shined shoes he worked in drug stores and he worked loading trucks and things like that when he was a teenager. And we always came home and gave all the money to my mother and then she gave us back part of it. So that was the procedure used until I was grown.

Interviewer: Okay when 1939 occurred Germany invades Poland and Europe is put into this war situation. Did you at the time have any idea of what was going on or what was about to happen?

Hunter: Well I'm really glad that you asked that question because we did know some things that were going on. Now that the history has been opened up and 50 year confidentiality records no longer are kept we're learning a lot more of the things that we knew a little about.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Hunter: There's two events that were occurring that we heard about that proved to be very important things in World War II. And one was the rape of Nan King by the in 1937 by the Japanese going into China and occupying Nan King. The other one was the sea to Leningrad where the Germans surrounded Leningrad and set up a camp this would be a military camp surrounding the city. Leningrad today is called St. Petersburg and so they surrounded this city for 880 days. And in the early phases of this we were hearing how the civilians were suffering and the rape of Nan King we were hearing rumors. We didn't really believe it how the atrocities were being occurred against the women and the civilians in China. The result of that I think had a major influence on the men of America that volunteered to be drafted or volunteered for military service.

Interviewer: What year did you volunteer for the Marine Core?

Hunter: Okay I tried to get in service when I was 16 and they turned me down tried to get in the Navy. But when I was 17 I went to the Marine Core with my parent's approval they approved it and I signed up in mid-1943. And I actually reported to duty in December of 43.

Interviewer: Do you recall where you were on December 7, 1941?

Hunter: Yes I do

Interviewer: Where were you at and how did you hear the news?

Hunter: I was in high school on a football team and moving up I was I don't remember what position I was playing but I was playing football in school. And the coach and a bunch of us boys was out on the field throwing the ball around and someone came up and said Pearl Harbor had been attacked. The

coach was probably 32 or 3 years old married man and he all of a sudden was very disturbed about it and left and we all went home. We heard it on the radio and everybody was trying to figure out where Pearl Harbor they didn't say in Hawaii Pearl Harbor they just said Pearl Harbor. Almost no one knew where Pearl Harbor we were looking in the Philippine records trying to find it.

Interviewer: That was my next question to you of the interviews that I've done I think the average is probably three people out of the nine interviews that I've conducted three people knew where Pearl Harbor was at the time. One of them that knew was actually a gentleman I knew was actually in college at this time and he said the reason he knew was because he had had a geography class on world geography and that's where he knew Pearl Harbor was located in Hawaii and the distance between the two.

Hunter: No I didn't know anything about where it was.

Interviewer: The next day President Roosevelt gave a speech about the events that took place on that Sunday. Did you have access to a radio to listen to this speech?

Hunter: In that period of time your radio your AM radio wouldn't pick up but we went to we would go to a neighbor's house if our radio didn't pick it up we did hear that.

Interviewer: What did you what were your feelings when you heard this speech and heard the things that the president said? What were your feelings at this time?

Hunter: My feelings were my concern for my parents my sister primarily the women.

Interviewer: So this is what drove you to volunteer for the marine core?

Hunter: I was very athletic I was strong for my age and I was coordinated and I felt like that I was a type of person that could make a contribution to a combat unit and so therefore I just was restless and felt like I needed to do my part.

Interviewer: What led you to the marine core over the other services?

Hunter: I don't really remember what that was except I wanted to be in a fighting unit I wanted to be in an infantry unit. And the need at that particular time in the Pacific was great probably that was it more than anything else I don't really remember. I think if I had been standing by a navy recruiter I would have signed up there.

Interviewer: Once you joined where did you actually join the marine core at in your hometown of Florida?

Hunter: I joined up in Florida our recruiting office was in Jacksonville and I went over to Jacksonville two of us and we were recruited there. Then when I reported to duty it was in a very small town in central Florida known as Orlando very small at the time 1943. I don't know the population but it was a very small place. I reported there and then I was sworn in there and caught a train and went to Parris Island South Carolina for boot camp.

Interviewer: Home of the sand flees?

Hunter: Yeah

Interviewer: I'm from around that area I know all about those. So you leave from Florida and traveled to South Carolina is this the furthest distance you had traveled away from home?

Hunter: Oh by far. I never had been I never had seen a mountain I never had seen snow. I don't think I had ever been 200 miles from home but I had been over a hundred a little bit. So it was a new experience by far.

Interviewer: In Orlando did you receive a battery of tests and physical exams in order to find out the job you were best qualified for?

Hunter: I did receive a physical matter of fact I believe I received a physical in Jacksonville. When I reported to Orlando it was just paper work and put on a train and sent to North Carolina. So I don't think I was examined physically in Orlando I was physically examined in Jacksonville by a navy doctor.

Interviewer: Alright what was your initial impression as the train pulls into Parris Island and you get off the bus and here's the marine core GIs what was your initial reaction to this?

Hunter: Well I arrived at night and the little town called _____ was maybe 15 to 20 miles from Parris Island itself. And so a truck came in to pick up recruits several times a day from the railroad station and so when I arrived there the sergeant told me to go in there and clean the head which in the army would be called latrine. And I said to myself what's he doing giving me orders I've still got on my civilian clothes. But I had enough experience in my life I felt like I should obey. So I did I go in and clean up a head and later that night a truck came more trains came in and there was about 60 or 100 of us got on a truck and went into Parris Island.

Interviewer: Your basic training marine core I know the length of basic training now in the marine core is 16 weeks what was it during this time considering there is a war on? Did they shorten your basic training?

Hunter: Yes they did. I think the basic training just before the war was about 14 weeks but mine was 11 weeks and it was highly intensified.

Interviewer: Did you get any advanced individual training AIT school?

Hunter: Whenever Roosevelt activated the National Guard in my hometown Florida formed a state guard which was similar to the National Guard but it was controlled under the governor instead of the federal. And it was we used the armory used the same facility trained the same way as the National Guard. I had been fortunate that I had some experience in the National Guard how to clean a rifle military law a little bit and close order drill a little bit of use of a rifle. So I was already a little ahead there on the average recruit plus I was a person that was pretty well disciplined so they didn't have any trouble with me not obeying orders.

Interviewer: So you leave Parris Island you have finished with all your training with basic and the AIT training where was the next duty assignment that you got?

Hunter: A train pulled in well trucks carried the group of marines about 3,000 had just finished boot camp or 2,000 maybe. And they loaded us up on trucks and carried us to the depot. We got on a train and went to Camp LeJeune North Carolina near Jacksonville North Carolina and reported for combat training there.

Interviewer: And while you were at Camp LeJeune is that where did you participate in large scale maneuvers or was this still training phase for you?

Hunter: Okay the routine at that time was a group of new marines with a few sprinkling of experienced marines would form a battalion. And the battalion would train as a battalion that would be four companies of about 1,000 or a little over 1,000 men. And they would train together for another nine weeks or so and this would be combat training you would learn to be an expert in what they thought they might assign you to. So I had considerable additional training on the M1 rifle and then had a great deal of training on a 60 millimeter mortar. And so when I go overseas I'm qualified to be assigned to a rifle platoon and a mortar platoon. And I had training on machine guns BARs flame throwers but that was minor training hand grenades, mortar, and rifle was the main thing I was trained on.

Interviewer: Those were the main things. So you spent nine weeks at Camp LeJeune.

Hunter: Approximately nine weeks.

Interviewer: Approximately nine weeks and that's doing your battalion level training with companies and other units like that. After you left Camp LeJeune where were you sent to?

Hunter: Okay let me back up just a moment on Camp LeJeune because there's an important thing I think I better explain to you.

Interviewer: Okay

Hunter: It's winter time there and it's not far from the coast very damp and very cold and I think that the marine core took that weather circumstances to train you as a group that you were going to tolerate anything. And so therefore we spent out of a seven day week we probably spent five and half to six days away from any kind of shelter at all living in a pup tent or foxhole on the ground and it was just terrible condition. But we found out we could survive it we would do alright we continued training so that training was a lot of outdoor training that prepared us mentally and physically that we would obey orders above all. And that we could withstand a lot of pain and a lot of discomfort. Now from there during this period of time between these two trainings the only leave I ever had I received nine days off and I caught a train to go back to Jacksonville to go back and visit my family. I spent a total of seven days home during that training period and that would be the only leave I'd ever have while I was in the service. Now from there Camp LeJeune they loaded our battalion and couple other battalions on trains and sent us to Norfolk Virginia at night. We left Camp LeJeune North Carolina go to Norfolk Virginia and there we board a ship the train goes right up to where the ship is. We get right off the train on to the ship and we know we know we were trained for combat we have no idea where we're going. And we board this ship and the next night or the next day the ship pulls from Norfolk. Now you've got to remember they tell the troops nothing you don't know where you're going or anything about it. But we knew which way the sun would rise and the sun would set we also could see lights from cities way off from a distance. So we would estimate well I bet that's Savannah Georgia I bet that's Jacksonville Florida we would see the lights in the sky. Now if you was right up on the coast they had the lights cut off

because of war years. But back inland there would be lights and you could see the reflection up on the sky. And so we guessed we were going south and we ended up going through the Panama Canal. At the Panama Canal I saw the first mountain I had ever seen.

Interviewer: I want to back up for just a minute.

Hunter: Alright

Interviewer: While you were at Camp LeJeune you've already elaborated on the training conditions that you went through. At your let's take it from this way looking back on what you've experienced that we'll get into later and the conditions that you trained in do you think the training you received was adequate or was it completely different for your survival when you were gone?

Hunter: No I thought it was totally adequate and totally proper. It was the conditions overseas were extremely bad quite often but never did interfere with the efficiency of the unit they tolerated.

Interviewer: In overall you feel the unit as a whole was a good unit very well trained and very well prepared?

Hunter: Yes I do.

Interviewer: Okay you go through the Panama Canal had they told you at any time yet where you were going before the Panama Canal?

Hunter: Not at all.

Interviewer: Is it safe to assume once you started through the Panama Canal most people realized where you guys were going to?

Hunter: Oh yes. There is a couple of interesting thing I might comment about the ship going down. We could not take a bath except for the salt water there was a salt water bath. And I'm not sure we had any soap at all so taking a bath on the ship was not very pleasant but the food was good and we were able to rest a lot. Now the German submarines were in the area in this period of time 1944 and so every morning navy slow flying airplanes I think they were called PBYs would circle around us looking for subs and on a regular basis blimps would go with us too. So we had navy blimps and navy patrol boats circling us because the ship was by itself it did not have any escorts but it was going pretty fast and it changed directions every seven minutes. A submarine could zero in on a ship it takes about ten minutes or nine minutes to do it so all of my experience in the war the troop ships changed directions every seven minutes.

Interviewer: Huh on what on the ship you said you guys had a lot of time to rest what were some daily activities that you would do on the ship?

Hunter: There was not enough room to have an activity the biggest thing were down in the hole where we stayed you must remember there was no air conditioning in this time. And so down in the hole the further south you got the hotter it was and the air was kind of you looked for air. So what would happen if you could find a comfortable place up on ship you usually would get a friend with you and you would stay together and you would occupy a spot and you would occupy that spot for two or three weeks. You

would one of you would be there all of the time so somebody else wouldn't get your spot. And so if it rained you got in the rain one of you would go get show then come back and save that spot the other one would go get and you would save it 24 hours a day. I remember there was an air vent we occupied on one of our ships and the air vent was about the cap that kept the rain from going in was flat it would be like a saucer turned upside down. And that was about five feet a circle in diameter and we occupied that thing for days and days and days because it was clean smooth to lay down and nobody was walking on you. So that but there wasn't any time to exercise you would have the hatches where the cargo would be lowered in the ship it would be like a carpet. And they would call over the intercom your companies platoon and you would report up there probably daily or at least every other day for rifle inspection and for inspection just to be sure that you were clean and that your weapons were clean. But other than that and going to chow there wasn't anything to do.

Interviewer: Wasn't nothing to do. When you left Norfolk you continued through the Panama Canal did you stop in California or did the ship continue on?

Hunter: No the ship we didn't see land again until we say Hawaii Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: And you pulled in Pearl what was your reaction when you pulled into Pearl Harbor?

Hunter: Well we had heard so much about Pearl Harbor because actually you see the war by this time the war had been going on well over a year. And so we had heard about it and you could see the damage that was done but the most impressive thing was the hundreds and hundreds of war ships that were there. I didn't even know there was that many ships in the world. And they were preparing for an invasion of various islands in the Pacific and their coordination efficiency just amazed me.

Interviewer: How long do you remember how long of a trip it was for you to leave Norfolk and land in Pearl Harbor?

Hunter: I really don't but I would estimate that it was probably over two weeks. I do remember a ship leaving after the war leaving Japan heading straight to California in a straight line as fast as it could go and it took 30 days. So I would say probably 17 days would be my guess something like that from Panama. It would be over a month from Norfolk.

Interviewer: Yeah

Hunter: To the Canal.

Interviewer: What when you got to Pearl Harbor did everyone unload the boats at this time and set up in a barracks or what was the normal procedure when you pulled into Pearl Harbor?

Hunter: Okay that's a real good question because it might be well at this point to tell you how a marine travels if he is in the infantry. We had a sea bag just like the navy it's like a long pillow case made of canvas. And everything that you're gonna own is either going to be in the sea bag or on your back. So you learn you have a bucket to wash your clothes in that's in the sea bag you have a blanket that's in the sea bag you have stationary that's in the sea bag. So extra clothes are in the sea bag the things on your pack are very limited things so what you do is you board ship your sea bag goes in the hull of the ship and you won't see it again for a long time. So you are going to live off of what is in your pack your pack is divided into two sections and the bottom section can drop off. As a matter of fact this is the actual pack

that I was issued in boot camp and when I was discharged I had this pack. And so my name was on it and my battalion was on the back of it. And this is the pack now there was a similar size of this that hung below it what would hang below it you could put in a change of underwear you could put in a change of socks you could put in stationary and things like that. The top you would have only absolute necessities only one pair of socks a few things like that.

Interviewer: The packing list that you described sounds extremely similar to what 11 bravos in the army carry and that's my job as an infantry in that army. And ours is the same way you put your duffle bag somewhere it goes on a truck and it disappears and you don't see it until the last day.

Hunter: You see when once you settle down in a camp many months later then your sea bag will catch up with you so you just don't see that for a long time.

Interviewer: Exactly so you get to your sea bags in the hole you've got your pack with you your rifle stays with you of course and you pull into Pearl Harbor. You guys unload the ship was there barracks for you to live in or

Hunter: Okay we never were involved in unloading the ship. We would walk off the ship with we were a combat unit we were trained for combat they didn't use us for that in this stage of the war later they did. But in this stage of the war you were preparing if you got off the ship you were going to go start training immediately you got yourself in physical condition and you were not going to take time to unload the ship somebody else was going to do that.

Interviewer: I didn't mean that you physically unload but you disembarked from the ship

Hunter: That's right we got on a truck and we went into Pearl Harbor and that ship disappears we don't see that ship anymore. And we're there about 12 days not long then we are at a camp it is a temporary camp that we can be housed in it is between Honolulu and Pearl Harbor. We stay there we get a pass a few times and the pass is from three o'clock in the afternoon until six in the evening. You leave at three and you have to be back at six. And so a couple of times we get to go to Honolulu maybe three times get to go to the beach go swimming one time awful beach for a Florida boy. And then we get back on a ship another ship and we leave we have no idea where it's going to and the next day we're at another island and its Maui. And Maui is not really populated at that time it was really a farming area and so there was a marine camp in the mountains on Maui and we occupied that camp for a few weeks until we board ship again to go to combat. When we arrived at this camp this is the first time in my life I had been up on a mountain. The first time in my life I had ever looked down and saw the cloud we were above the clouds for several days and I had never seen that. And when we got there this camp had been vacated and you've got to remember there was about 3,000 of us and this camp had been vacated for weeks or months and we all had combat knives typical combat knives. And they told us to get out and mow the grass and so 3,000 guys get out there and we cut the grass that's about 10 inches high so we cut the grass what time we wasn't in combat training. So they solve the problem and keep you busy all the time.

Interviewer: You started talking about Hawaii and being above the clouds I was stationed in Hawaii my first duty assignment and I know the mountains that you're talking about to climb up and down I've been on a few of those. So you guys were on Maui for a few weeks before your training they round you back up they call you in and you get your gear and you get back on another ship.

Hunter: Right

Interviewer: Where did you leave had you still been told where you're going?

Hunter: Oh no

Interviewer: No one told you anything?

Hunter: In the entire war no one ever tells us anything.

Interviewer: You never

Hunter: No you don't know where you're gonna be this afternoon. In other words there's logic that if you're captured you don't know anything if your ship sinks you can't tell the enemy anything. You don't since you don't know you can't tell so they never tell they never tell us anything you never know. Now we get on the ship on Maui and now we know we're a replacement battalion now you start thinking well why do they need a replacement battalion and that's because people are going to be killed or wounded. And they know this way ahead of time and the battles that have already occurred at this particular time in history is the primarily the Guadalcanal the Solomon Islands, Tarawa and the Marshal Island battle is going on right now it's just ahead of us a few weeks. So whenever we arrive in the Marshal Islands the ship arrives in the Marshal Islands we anchor there waiting to be called in. We are on our way to Saipan and our replacement battalion had been assigned to the 4th marine division which was one of the three divisions fighting on that island. And so the divisions fighting was the 4th marine division the 2nd marine division and the 22nd armor division. And so we are approaching Saipan the battle is underway and they had a large number of casualties and so we are told at this point that we are going to be assigned to the 4th marine division. As we get ready to go evidently the high command changed the plan and assigned us to the 2nd marine division. And so my group we really are split up at this point the group that I was assigned to was just three of us. Three of us three mortar men were assigned to report to 6th battalion 6th regiment 3rd battalion K Company mortar platoon. So we are assigned to go to that platoon to replace casualties that they've had. Now the battle of Saipan is finishing there's still a lot of enemies on it but I missed the battle itself I was not in that I was in the total battle of Tinian and then I fought against the Japanese on Saipan but it was a cleanup. It was trying to capture the Japanese that were hiding still in the island but they weren't a major force there may have been 1,000 of them there may have been 1,500. And but they were not battalion strength they did not have artillery they had machine guns rifles things like that and so that was my involvement on Saipan was a patrol involvement. On Tinian I was there for the whole thing.

Interviewer: And all of your stops that you made I wanted to back up just a minute the stops you made about the 12 days you stopped in Pearl Harbor and then the few weeks you had on Maui. When you're training you made reference you're a combat unit when you step off the boat your either going to combat or your training for combat. Did you still continue with the large scale training the battalion and company levels or by this time did they have smaller groups say a platoon training or some squad training or the mortars you were talking about. Did you guys have individual training time set aside so you could perfect your skills on the mortar?

Hunter: Okay our training that I was involved in you felt that you was part of the division which was 21,000 men. You knew definitely you was part an important part and then your regiment broke down to a forth of those a regiment. Then a battalion and a battalion is a little over 1,000 yeah a little over 1,000 and four companies in a battalion. So what really happens is as far as you as an individual

Your part of a company of 248 men. So they are your family you eat with them you sleep with them you're not gonna be away from them any for months. Whatever they do whatever they feel you're gonna feel together. Now the machine gun platoon the rifle platoon they all train individually most of the time so you go out on a patrol 248 men go on a patrol normally. They might break it down to a platoon patrol but the company would usually go on a patrol and you'd be gone on patrol for a week. So our routine there on a patrol type of thing was that we would go on a patrol for a week we would train for a week then we would be common labor for a week. We would unload ships we would help build airfields we would just be common labor and that rotated around your training activity but we primarily worked with the company.

Interviewer: Company level was about the lowest you would go?

Hunter: Yeah

Interviewer: So you've gone to the Marshals you're doing patrols on Saipan and you said in Tinian you were there from start to finish.

Hunter: Yeah for the whole thing.

Interviewer: What was your initial reaction when you first I'm assuming Saipan would have been the first time you were actually in a combat bullets flying in both directions situation. What was your reaction the first time you can recall being shot at?

Hunter: Well the as a teenager I had a problem I could get an upset stomach pretty easy. And I was very sensitive about animals being killed seeing chickens being ringed a chicken's neck was kind of hard for me to handle it happened every day for me at home or all the time. So this type of thing was hard for me to handle. I felt like in combat I would have trouble eating around death and I worried about that all of my training how am I going to be able to handle this because I won't be able to eat around a lot of death. I found out that was not a problem at all. It was horrified to see because things were so bad that I never expected like you would be moving forward and there would be people are dying. You've got to remember here's an island that has say 20,000 Japanese and when the orders when the war is over the battle's over there's not going to be 1,000 of them surrender. So that means that 19,000 of them is going to die in the next few days. Beside your own death so there is so much death that goes on you find out pretty quick that you can handle that. And it's worse than you would think like you see death in tropics bring on maggots, maggots don't pick they eat flesh they don't care whether it's animal or people. So this kind of wakes you up to reality and of course the smell and the flies' people haven't the flies are unbelievable you can't hardly eat for flies.

Interviewer: You were you ever wounded

Hunter: No

Interviewer: In your experiences in combat?

Hunter: No

Interviewer: Did anyone immediately around you were they ever wounded?

Hunter: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What the marine core doesn't have their own set of medics they use the navy core men. What was

Hunter: Our platoon our mortar platoon of 21 people had a medic assigned to it. Our company of 248 men had about 10 medics for the company. So wherever we went we had a medic all of the time so therefore he looked after us.

Interviewer: Did you personally feel any men obviously the men that received the attention was your medic that was assigned to your platoon do you think he was very efficient in what he did and a very capable person?

Hunter: Extremely as a matter of fact there is a lot of kidding back and forth about navy people and marines. That's been going on forever but you start talking about a medic in front of a bunch of marines and they will take up for him every time. As a matter of fact they don't even appreciate you doing it because they know the truth. The truth is they suffered just like we did and they were extremely they had to be the best. I can't believe any medics was any better than they were. Now right at this point I might tell a story

Interviewer: Go ahead please.

Hunter: About the medic that was kind you are trained when you get in combat to take orders and obey without hesitation. But circumstances develop that you don't predict but you are trained to take orders. So if you are on the line in a mortar platoon or mortar squad somebody is going to be in charge. So in the event normally there is a lieutenant in charge but we don't take orders from a lieutenant we take them from the sergeant. So the sergeant tells us what to do well we had this medic and the medic is just there. He carries a pistol he has to protect himself but most of his gear is first aid and knives and surgery type things. Now if a bunch of guys are wounded or a guy is wounded he takes command of the scene. So if he tells you to do something that pertains to his expertise you obey him just like you would a lieutenant. So that's because he knows what he's doing and you're not going to say now why are you doing that you're going to do what he says without hesitation.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: So the third day I was in combat an artillery shell landed in the midst of these 21 people that I'd only been with a few days. And of these 21 people three of them was critically injured that's a pretty high percent. And these were people that I had been associated with just for a few days. Now it happened during the day time there was a marine tank going back to get fuel there was no stretchers there were no jeeps there were no ways to get the wounded back and you could not give up your valuable mortar men that was protecting your rifle platoon to take them back. So we tied the wounded on a tank that was going back and the core man gave us orders of what to do. And one of the guys had his leg almost totally blown off the amount of skin that was holding the leg together would not have been any larger than my hand. And in the explosion his foot was lying beside of his face and the core man told me to cut it off and I took my knife and cut his leg off.

Interviewer: This that you just made reference to was this in where was this at?

Hunter: This occurred on Saipan.

Interviewer: On Saipan.

Hunter: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay I'd like to go with.

Hunter: I need to correct Tinian it was on Tinian.

Interviewer: Tinian okay I'd like to go with you know starting your first landing at Tinian and from the time that started if you could just a brief description of what you're what your job duties were and the things that you encountered. Such as you land obviously mortars set up behind rifle platoon was to cover their movement.

Hunter: Okay I think I can better explain that like this.

Interviewer: Okay

Hunter: Now let's back up for a minute the battle was going on the Japanese still totally controlled Tinian and the battle was going on in Saipan. Our ship anchored off of Saipan to send in to replace the casualties on Saipan. They ended up shipping us ashore on Tinian as the battle started. So therefore the first few days the battle was on Tinian. Now to kind of give you a clue of how an island battle goes let me show you this. This shows an invasion this is an example of a typical Pacific battle.

Interviewer: Okay

Hunter: An invasion force goes onto an island and this particular one is Saipan and Tinian is two miles off shore. So now an invasion force goes through and they go straight across the island it takes maybe several days. When they get across the island one group of the military will go south and the other go north until the island is taken. The troops will go all the way across the island as they move along during the day there will be infantry men on the beach over here and over here and all the way in between regardless of how much the mountain is. So this how a typical invasion occurs I thought if I showed you that you'd understand it. Now when you get moving on land this is what a company would look like. This is the enemy this is the enemy territory up here this is daytime this is the way a platoon a company would move out during the daytime in marines philosophy World War II. The riflemen are very front and the enemy is up here we are going to move forward and take as much of that land today as we can from them. And these men are the ones that I say go from beach to beach.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: Because five miles is five miles in. Behind these men are machine gunners the machine gunners are maybe ten feet behind them. If the riflemen as they are walking along in a position ready to fire and they are firing on the enemy if the machine gunner is needed he moves up and then he joins them and whenever he has done what he needs to do he drops back and they keep going. So the riflemen call him up as they need him the mortar platoon is back here we're several hundred feet behind the front lines. One of the reasons that I feel fortunate is that I saw so much yet I wasn't in the danger they were in. And yet I was able to see this going on. And so we would move along with our mortar the 21 men if we

we're full strength which many times we were not. Then if the riflemen and machine gunner got in a problem and they couldn't solve it and they needed a mortar to drop a shell on the enemy then the company commander or the lieutenant would tell us to do and we would immediately fire, we could start firing within a minute. The shells that we fired were three pound shells and they would go up over an object like if you was at Austin Peay on Madison at Austin Peay and the front line was there and the enemy was over by the stadium or behind the armory and officers wanted us to drop shells on the enemy we could fire shells over Austin Peay and hit the enemy on the other side that's what we did. We'd knock out machine gun and artillery pieces and many times just drop a large number of shells to kill the enemy that may be in the field. So this kind of shows you what the activity was.

Interviewer: I just have a quick question. You said earlier I want to clarify it you were on a 60 millimeter mortar right and you had on a 60 millimeter mortar I know for the army we had four men to run the tube. Is that what you had four men?

Hunter: Yes we had six.

Interviewer: You had a six man team?

Hunter: Now see in an island situation you're not gonna be able to call up supplies all the time.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: So every night before we would dig our foxholes every night and we would have ammunition brought up to us and then water and food for the next day. And then we'd have a good supply now during the day if you got in a real tight job you would get some more ammunition but a lot of times it wasn't easy to do.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: So we carried all that we could possible carry. See now the shell weighted three pounds and if a man carried ten of them, which he needed to carry more than ten, that's thirty pounds plus his own rifle his own water and food. So it would be easier for a man to have from seventy to one hundred pounds of weight as he moved. So we had six men to do that.

Interviewer: Because know I don't know if they did it here situation are definitely different here from when I was in the military. Each rifleman the 60 millimeters in our company they carried their ammo our company XO had the truck with ammo but each man would carry at least two rounds a piece.

Hunter: Now I've studied history on that and that's strictly up to the commanding officer if he wants more ammunition. So that's a solution you've got to solve it the best you can. Now see what we would do the mortar men we would have the shells that we could carry. And we would be selective and not fire except if we had good targets not you would not waste your shells. And at night you usually had all the shells you needed because they would bring them up to protect the troops at night. You want me to show you a night set up?

Interviewer: If you've got one please.

Hunter: I've got one. Now this is the way a night set up would be. Now the mortar platoon is going to be several hundred feet behind the riflemen and the machine gunners. The riflemen and the machine gunners now are going to be in a line. The machine gunners are going to spend the night up front with the riflemen and they are going to be in foxholes. Back behind them several hundred feet and we have to find an opening because we can't fire shells through trees so we would have an opening like this and the tree mortars, the 21 platoon had three mortars. The three mortars would be set up like this and each mortar would have a number one number gunner and their foxhole would be big enough and deep enough that the mortar would sit in there and on each side of it would be the two men.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: Now they would dig their foxhole where ever the sergeant told them to. He would say here, here, and here and you'd dig your foxhole. Now these other men are the ammunition carriers the medics and the lieutenant is everybody else. Now they're going to get these are the guys while this crew is digging their foxholes these other men are going to be bringing up the ammo for the night bringing up the food and they're going to be digging their foxholes. And the lieutenant has to dig his foxhole and the core medic has to dig his foxhole. So all of the foxholes are going to serve tonight is to keep the enemy from coming in on the gunners. So we're gonna every night we're going to be set up something like this depending if the sergeant would point out where you're going to put you're foxhole. And when he pointed a place if it was rocky or bad that's your tough luck that's where you're gonna be. Now rain would come and some nights your foxhole would fill up with water.

Interviewer: In your swimming pool.

Hunter: And you could not another thing about the foxhole in the war I was in the rule at night was anything out of a foxhole you shoot it. You don't say halt whose there in this environment. You see somebody moving and you shoot it and hot they weren't American. But you didn't give away your conversation. Now there was a few you would have to use good judgment on that. There was young guys sometimes walked in their sleep and sometimes they would be frightened and you would have to use good judgment. But as a general rule if they was above the ground you shot them.

Interviewer: Now this you you've just explained how you set up day and night mortar platoons in the movements and this was how you did it in Saipan and Tinian. What just for the tape and for this interview what were the dates? Do you remember the dates of when you landed and began doing this on Tinian?

Hunter: No I really can't think of that date but I think I can come pretty close.

Interviewer: Okay

Hunter: I would say this was probably about May or June of 44. And these two islands Tinian was taken in like 12, 15 days or less. And Saipan was taken in about 16 days so both of islands were taken out. Quam is part of this group Quam is about 100 miles from these two islands. And the two airplanes that dropped the atomic bomb took off from Tinian that was where they left from. So for a long time for many months the closest islands to Japan were these two islands Saipan and Tinian. And at the end of the war the largest air force the largest air field in the world was in Tinian.

Interviewer: When you were on these two islands obviously during the attacks and during the movements you were eating c-rations whenever you had a chance to. Do you recall the next time when you were allowed or could get hot chow brought to you?

Hunter: I think that's a real good question. When you get off the ship they had a tradition and they really do give you a good feeding. We had steak the last meal when we got off the ship and the navy people did a fantastic to us. And all through the war if you could get out to a ship they treated the marines like kings. So occasionally we would get out on a ship whenever we weren't in combat and that was a nice experience. Now you would leave the ship and now you were going to be on rations. And the kind of rations is going to vary. I don't ever remember me having to miss a day and not get food. I did I got food it was either c-rations or k-rations. And one was in a can and then one was in a box and so you had three of those one for each meal. Now when you was in combat you didn't say let's everybody take a break and eat, you would eat when you could. You might eat you'd get up in the morning you might not get to eat maybe until noon. You just would eat when you could you might eat one meal and two hours later eat another one because there was a lull and you had a few minutes. But the mortar platoon would be waiting on the rifle platoon to move out so if they was doing that and we were waiting they might be busy as all get out and we're laying on the ground hoping a sniper don't find us.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: So now that was the food. Now we would go a long time many many weeks before we would take a bath or before we would have any clean cloths and before we would eat hot food. Many many a long I can't put a date on it but many weeks.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: And the worst thing of this is filth the worst thing there is. Flies around eating not clean hands you couldn't wash your hands if you handled the wounded or if you had dysentery you wasn't going to be able to wash your hands. So the result of that with flies around everybody has dysentery. And so if you miss up your clothes and sometimes that would happen you weren't going to get clean clothes and they wasn't going to be washed. Your best hope for it was maybe in the next few days your unit would be down close to the beach and you could rinse them off or secondly we would get two or three nights of heavy rain and you could wash them off a little bit.

Interviewer: What obviously you don't have enough down time in a situation like this to play cards or anything like that. But when you did have down time did you write a lot of letters back home?

Hunter: Well in this situation when you're living out of a bag like this you don't even have stationary. So you would probably not write home for maybe weeks maybe two months three months. You wouldn't write home until you got back until you was in a cleaner condition. Now there were some people that was that did get away with that but the chances of you being able to mail it was pretty slim. But eventually would if you could write it now it might be two weeks before you could mail it but you could but you would have a hard time keeping it dry. If you're in that environment you can't keep things dry.

Interviewer: What when you did get a chance to get back to an area to get your letter and to mail letters off was that one of the highpoints for you to receive mail?

Hunter: Yes I think I better set up because I think there might be a little misconception of what this is. You're on an island that you've totally destroyed. Everything on the island has been destroyed there's no water system there's no sewage system there's no buildings there's no farm houses and no shed everything is destroyed on the island. And now you have sixty thousand infantry people on the island and they're bringing in air force people as fast as they can the navy is building submarine base there PBY bases. And all hospital facilities all of this is going on at one time and it goes from 60,000 people on the island to 200,000. Now you're unit now is setting up camp since we're the infantry we're the buffer between where the Japanese are in the hills the air fields and the hospitals are down below us. So we occupy on this particular island as a matter of fact I think if I showed you that it might help us understand better. Here is the island again of Saipan. Now the air fields are down here this is where the B29 base is. There's a fighter field over here, the battles over now and we're occupying. Now the Japanese are hiding out up in here and so our camp is set up about here. So the marines are going on patrols up this away and we're defending keeping the enemy from down here. And so now we are living in pup tents we don't have any kinds of tents don't have any kind of chow hall. We are getting now most of the time we're not even in a foxhole at night. We are above the foxhole now we're in a tent. If you go on patrol you'll get in a foxhole. So now they start bringing in tents truckloads of tents. These tents that we ended up staying in were 16 foot tents and eight men to a tent. And so in a few weeks you've got tents now you can start writing letters you see you're out of the environment. And also the before you got your tent up they put a tent with chow to be cooked in. Now you're starting to get chow and now you're starting to get back in good health again and you're concentrating on discipline training again. So there's no rest but at least you're not in the danger you've been in.

Interviewer: Okay you've came in the marine core mid 1943 this is mid 44 end of 44 during this time had you been promoted?

Hunter: I'd at the end of war I was a corporal so I got in as private I was private first class before I went overseas. Then I got to be a corporal that was the highest rank I ever got I was a platoon sergeant in charge of a platoon when we were in Japan the war was over I was in charge of 21 men but I never got the rank. So I was discharged the highest pay I would ever draw was combat pay plus my corporals pay which was \$66 a month.

Interviewer: In your all of your experiences starting from 1943 up until you were discharged do you feel the NCOs and the officers appointed above you in your mind were all of them the best of what was offered or did you have some that left a little bit to be desired?

Hunter: Oh I think most definitely we had some that we did not admire we had some that were better than others. The marine core I believe I'm right when I say this they have a philosophy with their officers and it goes right on down to the private to. And that is if you don't carry your share of the load you're gonna get the dirty jobs. And so therefore the officers that we had in our platoon in our company were admired tremendously by us. We would get an officer we would see an officer sometime that we feel like he's not all that good but still we knew that we were better off to obey them. And they sergeants I just can't believe anybody would have been any better ones. Now they were mean as all get out but the point is if you paid attention to them you come out better.

Interviewer: I've just got a couple more questions and that should take care of our interview for today. You said earlier that the 4th marine division the 2nd marines division and the 27th army division were there so you had some contact with the army and you mentioned the air force and you've already talked about some of your thoughts on the navy. What was your thoughts on the personnel that were in the

army and some of the ones that were there form the air core? What were your thoughts on some of these people? Was their discipline and their abilities did you think they were the same as yours or was it the marine core?

Hunter: Okay I have studied some history on these islands and on events since then and I think it magnifies what I thought was the case at the time would be. And that was that you are 248 men in a company and you do not even know what the next company does. You definitely don't know what the next battalion does. So I don't believe I ever witnessed the army in a battle situation I never witnessed that. I would be where they'd been in battle I would see things after the battle but I was never in a position to compare. I wasn't even in a position to compare my company next to me. Because what it is you are totally involved in your immediate environment because to survive that's where your team is and that's where you have to concentrate. So I'm amazed at how little I knew about history about major events that was happening. There wasn't any newspapers there wasn't no reliable radio we were not allowed to carry cameras. So really I don't have an opinion. I do have an opinion more on the navy than I do on the army primarily it was because I traveled on navy ships.

Interviewer: Right

Hunter: I spent quite a few months at sea on navy ships. And I was extremely impressed with their efficiency their gunners and I had some very fortunate events occur off of Okinawa. I was if you are on combat ship and there's a war attack like was off of Okinawa the Komokozzie Japanese pilot suicide pilots are coming in all the troops go to the hole that they are in. You can't stay up on topside in a combat situation so if you had 3,000 combat troops on a ship 3,000 are going to go in the hole. Except they will put some guards up by the stairways to keep anybody from coming up. If they want to come up and look they can't do it. So you'll have guards and you'll have a few observers the navy will want to have a few people watch out for a fire or watch out for a certain area. So they'll bring up maybe a hundred men maybe two hundred men and they'll get assignments on the topside. And so I was fortunate I mean extremely fortunate to get one of those duty assignments during the early part of Okinawa. And I witnessed the Komokozzie pilots coming in and very few marines got to see that. And I witnessed them coming in I witnessed the anti-aircraft gun the ship attacking the shore the ships defending the troop ships in the battle. I got to witness that which is very unique and that battle started on April 1st and 1495 on April 1st the battle started. Roosevelt died on April the 11th and so that was a very I got to see the navy in operation and I was really impressed with them.

Interviewer: You've talked about the Komokozzie pilots and you guys seeing them obviously you fought Japanese infantry. What is your impression on the training level and the determination level of the Japanese soldiers that you encountered? Do you have a mutual respect for their abilities in combat?

Hunter: In addition to the exposure that I had during the war time and in addition to being curious I was a young guy I was discharged three weeks before my 20th birthday. And so I was amazed when I got out about what had happened in the months ahead how did the Japanese why did they fight the way they did. And why did the young Americans did what they did? If you're going to look at history when we say that each day in World War II 22,000 people died somebody had to do a lot of killing. One of the reasons that I think this type of interview is important is that so many people have died that never told the story. And now I feel like there's of us that are left there's only about 15 percent of World War II veterans still living. And I feel like now it's best to try to get it on record of what happened. Now to answer your question about the Japanese soldier we could not understand why they would not surrender. That was just not in their they would charge you and no chance that they could win and they would keep coming.

You could have 50 men firing on 5 Japanese coming at you and they would come at you as though they could beat the daylight out of you. And there wasn't no chance that they'd get there but they wouldn't slow up they didn't care. I learned later that it was because of their religious belief as a guard as an MP when we occupied Nagasaki Japan I had a Japanese policeman assigned to me. And we spend days and days at the gate days and days together. And so I was able to with a little book communicate quite a bit with this policeman. And I explained to him one time the Americans we came from France from Africa from China from Japan, Eskom's, Englishmen that's what Americans are. I said where did the Japanese come from? He said the sun and I said how and he said the emperor of his family is from the sun and we're all off springs of the emperor. Now to him if an American believes in Christ or if an American had is religious conviction as strong as they can be as strong as the American can be his is even stronger because he is living in the presents of a God. And so the term of the Japanese charge is Bamzaie, Bamzaie, Bamzaie you could hear them say it. They would charge Americans and there would be handers of them charging and they will say Bamzaie, Bamzaie, Bamzaie that is interpreted as I understand as meaning blood for the emperor. I promise to defend my homeland and the emperor with my blood or my enemy's blood. So I'm going to battle and somebody's bloods fixing to be shed it may be mine. And so you're fighting an enemy that doesn't mind a bit in the world dying.

Interviewer: I think you've answered as what I've tried to save as one of my last questions. And you've answered it pretty much throughout the interview. And my last question to you would be as since of the bigger picture that was going on at this time. And I think that you've elaborated very well on the fact that you guys had a certain level of knowledge they kept from you in the event of a capture or things of that nature. But after your battles on Saipan and Tinian and after you've experienced in Okinawa what you experienced did you have an idea of the big picture that was going on?

Hunter: No

Interviewer: None?

Hunter: Well we would hear that Churchill made a speech we would hear that Roosevelt died. We would hear things but we seldom got a paper. But now when we were in camp and as I study history and look back it I realize that this period in time I was in service the actual number of days that I was in combat was not many. I pictured in my mind that I was weeks and weeks and weeks in combat and I wasn't. When I really put the pencil to it I wasn't so therefore the big picture I think that the average man on the line knew little about. Now I think I'm well informed not and I feel like that the people that fought World War II made a major contribution to the world because there was some people in charge of some of our governments at that time that thought nothing of killing millions of people for just no reason at all. And they had to be stopped. And my look on the young generation today I am 77 and when I look at people that I'll say are between 45 say President Bush's age down to high school kids their knowledge is so much above our their history lessons are so much above ours. If they don't let history be given to them in a false manner if they know true history I think that they are going to be much smarter than we were. And this is an example of the situation with Al Qaeda we cannot allow people like that to gain control like we Hitler.

Interviewer: You've brought some items out here for this interview some were the maps that you have shown us how you've showed us your rock. There are a few other items that you have laid over here. If you could you know show us what they are and explain to us how you got those.

Hunter: Okay I'll show you two items or three items. This is the cottage belt that I wore and I was 31 in the waist 31 inches in the waist when I was discharged I never changed this, this is actually the size I had in the war. Now on this would go two cases that would hold ammunition for your rifle. I carried a carbine rifle in the war. And then you'd have a first aid kit a knife a combat knife and then you'd have two containers of water that would be all the water you would get in a day. But that was enough you'd get by with that. And then so then this pack would be hooked on the bottom of this and on the pack each man carried a shovel to dig his foxhole with and third man carried a pick. So when we had a platoon together you had four or five picks and every night we would dig a foxhole and that's how we did it. Now here is a knife that my dad sent me right after I went in the marine core. And when he sent it to me it was shiny and they don't allow you to take anything you can't wear a watch or anything shiny in combat. So there was a guy from Pittsburg who worked around the mills and he said I can show you how to darken it so he got some old oil burnt oil and got a fire going and dipped it back and forth in there until it darkened it. And I was able to carry it it's a little lighter now. I think that it's interesting to know now when I show this to kids they say did you kill anybody with it? And the answers no but I do think it would be interesting for you to know how I used this knife. I told you about dysentery I told you about the problems we'd have and you can't afford to ever leave your rifle anywhere you've got to have it with you all the time I meant 24 hours a day. And so if you're digging a foxhole or whatever you're doing eating you've got your rifle with you. Well if you've got to go to the bushes you've got a diarrhea attack you're not going to have your rifle with you. You can lay it down but it's you're going to be here and it's going to be there and you're going to be squatted doing your business. So this was the only weapon I had if the Japanese came up on me so every time I squatted in the bushes to do my business I would have that rifle hoping I would get through before I was disturbed. I got away with that pretty good but kids love to hear that. But that was really the only function I had this now I was trained to kill with that. I know how to fight with that weapon and the other weapons too but I never did have to use it. During the war this is what the marine combat jacket was. Every marine had this didn't matter how hot it was he had a t-shirt and this. And this kept his pack from rubbing his shoulder and that sort of thing. And so your cottage belt would go on the outside of this and this would be your combat clothes. I wore out several of these at the end of the war they issued me a new one. That one never saw combat but I did bring it home. And this is a Japanese saber this is a noncommissioned officer and if you came up on a Japanese platoon there would be at least two of these in a Japanese platoon of 60 men. The officer would have one and his would have a rope engraved and jewelry in it and the sergeant and if you had several sergeants most all of the sergeants would have one. And this was a saber and this has a lot of history to it and it was carried even the Komokozzie pilots and pilots carried this in the plane with them. And it was to help carry on the tradition of the Samaria. And so this is I came up on many valuable souvenirs during the war many valuable knives many valuable pieces of jewelry but I couldn't take them didn't have room for them couldn't take them. After the war we got to Japan they gave all of us in my platoon one of these. So this as far as I know it may have seen combat it may not I don't know. But I've seen many of them that did. When they go to war the officers holds up this and the sergeants and they point and that's the way the men follow into battle. And if they use it it's used in combat it's not just ceremonial it's physical use.

Interviewer: Well Mr. Hunter I've gotten a lot of good information from you and I appreciate you sharing your experiences with you and the items that you have here. And again I just want to say thank you on behalf of myself and Dr. Zieren.

Hunter: Thank you

Interviewer: Thank you sir.

Hunter: Thank you.