

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Thomas N. Earp, Jr.
New Freedom, Pennsylvania
October 1, 2010
Machinist's Mate 3rd Class
53rd Seabees

Mr. Misenheimer:

My name is Richard Misenheimer and today is October 1st, 2010. I am interviewing Mr. Thomas N. Earp, Jr. by telephone. His phone number is 717-235-5288. His address is 787 Lakeside Drive, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Tom, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and thank you for your service to our country during World War II. Now, the first thing I'd like to do is read this agreement with the museum. When I do these in person, I let the man read it and sign it, and I'm also going to mail you a copy of it so you'll have it for your records. Let me read this to you.

"Agreement Read."

Mr. Earp:

Sounds okay to me.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay, good. Now, the next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road we try to get back in contact with a veteran he's moved or something. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact in case we needed to locate you?

Mr. Earp:

Let's see, I've got a daughter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is her name?

Mr. Earp:

Her name is Sandra Tingling. Her address is #6 Albright, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

Her phone number is 717-227-9384.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, what is your birth date?

Mr. Earp:

My birth date is November 15th, 1923.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Earp:

I was born in Govans, Maryland, which is in Baltimore, Maryland.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Earp:

I had one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was she involved in war work at all?

Mr. Earp:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did she do?

Mr. Earp:

She was a WAC.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. Is she still living?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

I'd like to interview her. Do you happen to have her address or phone number or anything?

Mr. Earp:

Nope. My wife does, but I don't have it.

Mr. Misenheimer:

When your wife gets back, we'll see about that then. That's fine. Now, she was in World War II, right?

Mr. Earp:

Yes.

Mr. Misenheimer:

I'd love to interview... I've not interviewed too many WACs, I'd like to interview her.

Mr. Earp:

Okay.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay, now you grew up during the Depression; how did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Earp:

Well, I guess it... I was only seven or eight years old when it started, my mother and father were separating right about that time, so we had a little bit of a tougher time because my mother was

doing both the mother's and father's jobs. We jumped from house to house all over the damn city because sometimes we had to duck the rent (laughing). We got along okay otherwise; we always ate. We always got what we had to have; we didn't go on welfare, though. It was a time that I remember real well what we did and everything, but I didn't really realize it was hardships.

Mr. Misenheimer:

I've heard so many people say they were poor but so was everyone else.

Mr. Earp:

Everybody was the same so I didn't know the difference.

Mr. Misenheimer:

That's right. Now, on December 7, '41 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor; do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Earp:

Yep.

Mr. Misenheimer:

And where were you?

Mr. Earp:

Group of boys decided to drive up to Cumberland because one of them had just joined the Air Corps. On the way back from there we heard it on the radio that we'd been attacked at Pearl Harbor. He said, "Man it didn't give much time did it?" I said, "No, it didn't." That's the first we heard of it, on the way back from Cumberland, Maryland.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What was the reaction when you all heard it?

Mr. Earp:

Well, we just didn't know what to think. We knew we were going to be the ones that had to go in it. We were all about the same age, all about nineteen, eighteen/nineteen, years old.

Mr. Misenheimer:

You had turned eighteen in November.

Mr. Earp:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Right. When did you finish high school?

Mr. Earp:

I went to the first year of high school, my grandfather had given me an old car that he had and I put it together, and I couldn't bring myself to go in the school doors. I skipped school so much they told me to resign, so I did the first year.

Mr. Misenheimer:

So what year was that?

Mr. Earp:

That was 1939 or something like... '39 or '40. 1939 or '40.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What did you do then?

Mr. Earp:

I went to work as a truck driver. I drove a dump truck.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Local driver around locally then, right? Then, when did you go into the service?

Mr. Earp:

I went in the service in 1943 in March.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Which branch did you go in to?

Mr. Earp:

I went down there to join the Navy and they said, “the Navy right now is full, you’re going to have to take – if you want to go in the Navy you’re going to have to go in the Seabees.” I said I’d never heard of a Seabee. He said it’s a – I’d wear the same uniform and everything, I just don’t – I don’t get ship duty, you’re on land ninety-percent of the time. He said they’re the same as the Army Engineers, practically the same thing. That didn’t sound too bad, so I said, “Well, I’ll try that, okay.” He said, “Either that or you’ve got to go over into the Marines or the Army or the Coast Guard.” I didn’t want any part of any of them, so I took what he had. That’s how I got into the Seabees.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Oh, you were in the Seabees, okay. Where did you go for your training for that?

Mr. Earp:

Williamsburg, Virginia.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. Tell me about the training. What all did you do?

Mr. Earp:

We did the same things you see in the movies: we learned how to do close order drill, learned how to take apart the rifles and put them back together, marched all over Williamsburg, and had to attend classes for this, that, and the other.

Mr. Misenheimer:

So, actually you took infantry training, so to speak.

Mr. Earp:

More or less, yeah. More of that than anything. When they sent me, right after I got out of boot camp, they took me and fifty other guys and sent us to California and put us in Camp Pendleton in the Marine base and transferred us into the Marine Corps. I understood, we wondered why we were going in there, and they told us that we were going in there because the Marine Corps had trouble recruiting guys to go in to the Marine Corps Engineers that were similar to the Army Engineers, they said. They needed younger men, we were fifty of the youngest in our group, most of them were old – they were like, at that time, they were like thirty/forty years old and had worked on Hoover Dam and all those places. They were picking guys that had truck driving experience and any kind of experience in a trade. That's how come they picked the fifty of us. We were all in our teens yet, nineteen/twenty years old. We went in there, and we didn't have any say about it, but we didn't care one way or the other. They took us and they made us take our Navy uniforms and everything and put them in a sea bag, and then write my mother's address on it, her home address on it, they took it and sent it home to our mothers. And, gave us new Marine uniforms and everything in the Marine Corps, including their boot camp. Their boot camp wasn't a whole lot different than the one we had in the Seabees.

Mr. Misenheimer:

About how long was that boot camp there?

Mr. Earp:

It was about six weeks.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty rough on you?

Mr. Earp:

The drill instructors were extremely rough on us because they knew we had come from the Navy. (laughing)

Mr. Misenheimer:

What were some rough things they did to you?

Mr. Earp:

They just took us on a lot of 20 mile marches, and most of the other ones didn't have to go that far. Of course, you put the gas mask on and all that stuff, and you're marching. It's hot as hell out there, and you sweat like crazy under that gas mask and marching at the same time, you know.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Then, when you finished that boot camp what did you do?

Mr. Earp:

When we finished that, we got shipped over to Camp Elliot to go overseas. They put us in the 1st Marine Amphibious Corps, that's what our address was then. They shipped us overseas to – the first place we went was New Caledonia to Camp Goettge, which it was a Marine camp down there. Goettge was a famous Marine killed on Guadalcanal, so we were put in the 1st Raider Regiment.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Oh. Did you get any kind of training for the Raiders, then?

Mr. Earp:

They did all kind of training down there for us, to us. Then they sent us to Guadalcanal. We went up to Guadalcanal but the fighting was over, but the bombing wasn't over yet. They were still getting bombed. We were... the actual combat was over.

Mr. Misenheimer:

About when did you arrive in Guadalcanal?

Mr. Earp:

Arrived in there around January of 1944.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. What all did you do on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Earp:

We trained, and trained, and trained for the invasion of the Marianas Islands. At that time we didn't know where it was so we didn't know where we were going to there. We didn't know where in the hell we were going.

Mr. Misenheimer:

How close were you to Henderson Field when you were there on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Earp:

Henderson Field? I don't know how far it was.

Mr. Misenheimer:

But you weren't real close, then.

Mr. Earp:

I know we drove past it when we went to where we were from the ship. I don't know how far...

I guess it might have been a couple miles.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What did you live in there on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Earp:

Lived in a tent. I never lived in anything but a tent after that.

Mr. Misenheimer:

How was the food there?

Mr. Earp:

Food was good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you still considered to be in the Engineers?

Mr. Earp:

No, we weren't. We didn't do anything any different than anybody else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in the 1st Marine Raiders still?

Mr. Earp:

That's where they transferred us in to the 4th Marines, the old China regiment.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went in to the 4th Marines there.

Mr. Earp:

I was in the 4th Marine Regiment there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay.

Mr. Earp:

Then, when they got us ready to go to – when we got ready to get on ships and go to the Marianas Islands, we were put into the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade.

Mr. Misenhimer:

1st Marine Provisional Brigade, okay.

Mr. Earp:

The 1st Marine Provisional Brigade, and that took in the 4th Marines and the Raider regiments, the 22nd Marines – it was a lot of Marine outfits in it. The 22nd Marines had to go to Guam to get their colors back; they lost them on December the 8th, 1941 at Guam. The 4th Marines had to go to China theirs back.

Then when we, we didn't know where we were going, first we went to Saipan. We went to Saipan and sat there and watched the invasion of Siapan. We were in the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade on the ship, and we watched the invasion from our ships and we were more or less there for reserves. Somebody caught the... they caught a disease there on a ship called the *Climber*, it was an attack ship. I can't remember what the guy got.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it malaria?

Mr. Earp:

No, it wasn't malaria.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Dengue Fever?

Mr. Earp:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Scrub Typhus?

Mr. Earp:

It was a fungus, a bad itch. But, they got this fever and it was very catching so they took everybody in that damn thing out there – all the people that were in those ships out there waiting – they took us over to the Marshall Islands and put us off on a little tiny unused island. We all camped out there while they fumigated the ships. After the ships were all fumigated and they thought they were safe, they put us all back on them and took us to the invasion of Guam.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, now the invasion of Guam, I think, was –

Mr. Earp:

July the 21st.

Mr. Misenheimer:

July 21st, right.

Mr. Earp:

1944.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did you go in on the first wave?

Mr. Earp:

No, we went in on the... I don't know how many waves, but we didn't go in on the first. The Higgins boats went in and let the guys off there on the beach, they would come back with the wounded guys. When we went on the deck to get on the boats, on the Higgins boats, we had to stand there and wait for a Higgins boat, and they were operating on these guys on the hatch cover on the ships. There were so many of them, they were just operating on them right out there in the open. They had a pile of hands and feet and parts of guys that they had cut off, they had a pile there about five feet high. You had to stand there and look at that big pile of stuff before we left. That got to you, you know. Then, anyway, we got that and we went down the ropes and got in the boat. He takes off for the beach and the tide had gone down and they couldn't get across the reef. And the reef was... well, it was a long way, I'm just guessing, but I was thinking that was the length of a football field from the beach. So, they dropped, the guy said, "I can't get," he tried several times to get across the damn reef and it wouldn't go so he said, "I'm going to have to drop the thing and let you go from here." So, he dropped the front end and we jumped in the water, and Christ it was right up to our noses. We were walking in the water and the Japanese were up on that damn mountain behind there, Mount – I can't remember the name of it – but they were shooting down in to the water. They told us they were shooting anti-aircraft

stuff down there, but I don't know what.... I don't have any idea what it was, but we were struggling along to keep from drowning, and were just keeping our heads above the water and then the further in we went we got more out of the water. Then, a Marine tank, one of those tanks that can go in the water, they're open, I don't know what they call them, but it's an open vehicle with tracks so they can run in the water. It was only a few guys on it so they pulled us in there because we were struggling. They dropped us off on the beach.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Was that what they call an LVT or Amtrac?

Mr. Earp:

I don't know what the name of that thing was, but it was open, it didn't have no infrastructure or anything, and ran in the water and the land. They just pulled us up in there.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did it have a ramp in the back?

Mr. Earp:

No, but it was hollow, you know, when they pulled us up you could have got fifty guys in there, it was big. I don't know what it was. They could cross the reefs.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Right, they could the reefs, okay. So, then you got to shore, what happened then?

Mr. Earp:

We got ashore and then we were lost, we didn't know where in the hell our outfit... we were on the wrong beach. We were supposed to be on Red something-or-another, and we weren't. We had to start walking on the beach with... a whole bunch of us started walking the beaches, crouching down, and trying to find where our people were. We finally found them after what seemed like forever, to find them. They put us to work right away with a four-man 75mm

cannon. They were bombarding the hell out of the Japanese, but they were about up a hundred yards from the beach, so they were having a hell of a time keeping up with the ammo. So, they put us to going to the beach and bringing the ammo up to them. We spent the next five days, I guess, maybe even longer just going back and forth, back and forth, and then we'd have to start hauling. Then it got so it was no room for them to operate so we had to stay there and throw shells out of the way so they could put the stuff down. We heard later that the Japanese thought we had automatic artillery; they were just, I don't know how they kept from burning up, they were just *pow, pow, pow, pow*, it just went on and on and on, you know. That's where we stayed, probably saved my life because I didn't have to do nothing but go down to the beach and get the stuff and go up there and keep the area clean once in a while, you know.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What company were you in?

Mr. Earp:

I don't have any idea.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Just in the 4th Marines.

Mr. Earp:

They just more or less said, "you, you, and you," you know.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay, okay. Then how long did you haul ammo to there?

Mr. Earp:

I guess for about a week, maybe a little longer, but I know it was at least a week.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Earp:

Then they were starting now to find where we belonged or people were finding us. We finally got back to the company that we were with. They had a place where they had all the tents already up, and now the shooting stopped in that area, you know. Except for these damn 75s, then they moved a bunch of, I think they call them 155mm cannons in there, and they were shooting way up the island on them suckers, but we didn't have do anything, carry anything, for them. By that time they were taking it right up the beach, right from the beach up there in a vehicle, you know. Anyway, then they put us in tents, so we knew that the shooting had stopped on the ground. We had to stay in foxholes for the first couple of weeks, and then after that we were able to stay aboveground as the fighting went way up the island. Then we started, they were trying to get across these damn rivers and streams in places with the vehicles and they put me with about a half-dozen other guys with axes and small hammers knocking the tops and bottoms out of oil drums. Then they would just lay them end to end and across the stream, and they would haul stuff and dump on it, so they could get a road across there without being up to their neck in water every time, you know.

We did that for a while and then finally they started – opened up a pit where they could dig what they called silica, it was white stone. It was white stone, but they could dig it – soft enough to dig. I hauled that for the rest of the time until we got a lot of roads around so they could travel on them, you know, instead of being in mud up to their ears. From then on, that's what we did: we'd build roads, and we built that great big northwest field up there on the north end of the island for the B-29s. When the first one of them came in there, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was so big. Then, we'd go down to the end of the runway everyday and wait for them to take off so we could keep working. Now, we were really into strictly construction work. They had put

us back with the Seabees, and the Seabees were building that damn airport up there. That's about the size of it, I guess.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Now, when you were going in to the beach, were the Japanese shelling you all?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah. They were up on the hill. That beach was... right in front of that beach, it started going uphill. It was called Mount Arafat. It was high, real high, hill. It ain't what we would call a mount but they called it Mount Arafat. They were firing from up there down into the beach and everywhere, you know. Our 75s that we were feeding were shooting the hell out of them up on that hill and everywhere they were. At night time – the first night we were there, them damn Japanese charged us, probably trying to throw us off the beach. They had a night attack, they were all souped up on sake and every other damn thing. They have these ships that they call in there and the ship would send up a shell that would light up everything like daytime. Then, here they are. The sons of bitches were coming up out of the woodwork. Marines were shooting them down with everything they could do, you know. The shooting hadn't stopped them.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What weapon did you have?

Mr. Earp:

What I had was a carbine, .30 caliber carbine.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. Was that pretty effective?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah. It was a damn good little rifle.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. So, they had a banzai charge on you there, then.

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, right on the beach, right at the beach. They were screaming and like crazy and they were getting shot down as fast as they could shoot them.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Were any people around you hit?

Mr. Earp:

Not one. Not one of them around me was hit.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What other combat were you involved in there?

Mr. Earp:

We were involved in that on the beach, and of course they were trying to find these... the Japanese had cannons up on the other end and they were shooting trying to find these guys. That's nerve-wracking as hell. We'd have to dive in the damn foxhole that half the time was half-full of water, and wait until – you could hear them, you know, they were looking for us by like a grid. They would shoot one, two, three, four; and each one of them was maybe twenty yards ahead of the other one or something. It sounded like a giant walking towards you. It would just be *boom, boom, boom, boom*; then they would move over a little bit *boom, boom*, they did that night and day. Ours were doing the same thing to them, you know. That same Sergeant was hollering, they had us sitting – our foxhole was right in front of them, so I could hear that Sergeant he'd say, we could hear him screaming to the guys. He would give them coordinates and scream out, rapid fire for x number of minutes and Christ, then he'd say "Fire" and oh my hell, *boom, boom, boom, boom*. And then by the time the last one shot, the first one was ready again. They would do that for a long, long time shooting at the Japs.

Mr. Misenheimer:

The Japanese were shooting at you and you were shooting at them.

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, they had their cannons shooting back at us trying to find our artillery. They never did. They never did land anything right on them. They were everywhere, but when you're there waiting, Christ, you can hear them coming. That's nerve-wracking; that's why I always have hated damn thunderstorms.

Mr. Misenheimer:

How about mortar fire, were you under much mortar fire?

Mr. Earp:

Well, I never was able to tell much difference between mortar fire and the other. I could tell their machine guns, though, they were really fast, rapid machine guns. I could tell when they were shooting them. Ours were slow but louder, you know.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay, what else happened?

Mr. Earp:

Not much of anything other than that.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Then you went to work building roads and things.

Mr. Earp:

Then we went to work building roads, and we built the harbors, and we did everything. We built Admiral Nimitz's headquarters on Guam. We put all that stuff, Nimitz's stuff, on there; Quonset huts, I think we made it like stateside almost with all the stuff we put in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand his headquarters were pretty nice there, is that right?

Mr. Earp:

They were not bad, yeah, for a combat area. Well, they made it as comfortable as possible, anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, how long were you on Guam?

Mr. Earp:

I was on Guam from then 'til the bomb went off and they started sending us home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't go to Okinawa with the 6th Division then.

Mr. Earp:

No, I didn't have to go to Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in the 6th Division, right?

Mr. Earp:

They were making the 6th Division when I left, and they were putting our people in it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I know the 4th Marines was in the 6th Division later on Okinawa.

Mr. Earp:

They made the 6th Division over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah.

Mr. Earp:

Almost every one of the outfits I was in was in there.

Mr. Misenheimer:

They put different ones together to make the 6th Division.

Mr. Earp:

All the Raider regiments went in there, and the 4th Marines, and probably the 22nd Marines. We were right with the 22nd Marines; they had to go out – they had to take Orote Peninsula, which was just – not very far from where we landed. They had to take that back to get their colors back. That's where they lost them in '41. The 22nd Marines went there and we were with the 4th Marines, and the 4th Marines went straight in. They went up over that big mountain and everything, whatever they called it. It wasn't a mountain it was a big hill.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Yeah. I know the 29th Marines were in the 6th Division also.

Mr. Earp:

I never had anything to do with them. My father wrote me a letter - the 77th Army Division had landed up the island somewhere up at Agana, I guess. We landed at Agat. Our front was Agat. The other one was Agana which was the capital of Guam. The 77th went there and a couple other Marine divisions went there. My father had written me a letter that a girl that worked where he had lived in New York had her husband killed on Guam, and of course he was buried there. He wanted me to find it, if there was anyway I could find his grave and take a picture of it and send it to him. I had to first convince my commanding officer to let somebody from the – whoever had the camera – that they would just do that. He said, "You find it and we'll take a picture of it." So, I went up to the Graves Registration thing and I gave the guy the name and sure enough he pointed it out to me. So, I went back and told my commanding officer about it.

He called down and got our guy to take his camera up there and take a picture of it for me. So, he did and I sent the picture.

When I came home, it was the damndest coincidence of the war that I could ever remember. I was in a bar down in Baltimore and I was sitting there, and there was this Army guy sitting right next to me. I said, "Were you ever overseas?" He said, "Yeah, I was on Guam." I said, "You were on Guam?" He said, "Yeah," he said, "I was in the 77th Division." I said, "Well, I'll be damned," I said, "I was on Guam, and I remember..." and I told him about this about this Army guy who I never knew or anything, but I told him about how I took the picture of his grave and sent it to his wife. When I told him the guy's name, he said, "Oh my God," he said, "you're not ever going to believe what I've got to tell you." I said, "What is it?" He said, "He was in my foxhole when he was killed on Guam." I said, "You've got to be kidding me." He said, "No. Absolutely the truth." I could not believe it, but that's what he told me.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Small world some time.

Mr. Earp:

You're not kidding. I didn't know anyway in the world it could be that small, you know.

Mr. Misenheimer:

That's right. A lot of coincidences like that. Right.

Mr. Earp:

Otherwise, I had a more or less uneventful service time.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Well, when you're in that banzai charge that's not too uneventful.

Mr. Earp:

Well, not that short period of time, no. I would have dreaded going up and down those streets in Europe having to fight them house to house, building to building. We didn't have that, but now on Guadalcanal I could see where they would have had one hell of a time. You couldn't see five feet in front of you because the jungle was so damn thick. Down at Guadalcanal one time, we had a Japanese who had snuck into our chow line. He was starving to death; I guess he figured he'd just as soon die as not get something to eat because he sneaked into our chow line one time. They caught him; I don't know whatever happened to him, but they caught him in the chow line and they took him to the Officer of the Day and I don't know what they did with him. But, he was right in our chow line waiting to get something to eat. (laughing)

Mr. Misenheimer:

Yeah. I've heard of that happening, yeah. Did he have an American uniform on?

Mr. Earp:

I don't remember.

Mr. Misenheimer:

I know in some cases they would take American uniforms off of dead Americans and get in.

Mr. Earp:

I don't remember whether he did that or not, but they caught him. He must have not have been dressed too well, they grabbed him, I guess.

Mr. Misenheimer:

You mentioned B-29s, did you see quite few B-29s on Guam?

Mr. Earp:

Oh yeah. We were working on that field, we'd go in the morning they'd take off for Japan and they would come down that runway, and that runway was about a mile long, it was a really long runway. We'd hear it, gunning their motors up there, and he came charging down that runway,

and right at the end of the runway if you didn't get up off there you went right in the ocean. It stopped at the ocean. He would come down there and we're thinking, "Good God, he ain't going to pick it up." It would finally get down there, the damn thing would look like it was groaning to get up off that runway. Many of them guys came down within, hell, twenty-feet of the end of that runway. They were loaded with bombs and gas and everything and when they picked up that B-29, actually, you could almost see it screaming.

Mr. Misenheimer:

How many airfields did they have on Guam?

Mr. Earp:

They had that one and they had one on Orote Peninsula, a small fighter strip.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Just one for B-29s then.

Mr. Earp:

Just that one big one for B-29s, yes.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did you ever get to Saipan or Tinian?

Mr. Earp:

Never did. We watched the Battle of Saipan from the ship. Other than that, we didn't go to shore on either one of them.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Anything else happen there on Guam?

Mr. Earp:

We cut off the bottom half of the island. They didn't go down there when we were there. They cut it off and the Japanese that were down there... that's where, you know, after the war there was a straggler or two would come up and give up. A year after the war, would come up...

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think 1974 was the last one.

Mr. Earp:

When we cut off the lower end of that island, they just left them there. They didn't... they weren't going to lose any more men going down there after them when we didn't need it, you know. They just isolated them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any typhoons when you were out there?

Mr. Earp:

Had one when we were on New Caledonia, there was a typhoon. It blew our tents down, everybody's tents got knocked down. We had to lay in – there was a sewer ditch and we laid in it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On Guam could you get much food or how was the food there?

Mr. Earp:

Food was good, we had... of course the first couple of weeks weren't that good. We had to eat K rations and all that kind of stuff, but we had damn good cooks in that 53rd Seabees.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in the 53rd Seabees there?

Mr. Earp:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that part of the Marines or was that just the Navy Seabees?

Mr. Earp:

No, it was the Navy Seabees.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you still wear your Marine uniform there?

Mr. Earp:

Well, I wore what I had. You know, by then my... on Guadalcanal I picked up my Marine uniform but damn legs fell off it, it had rotted laying in there in, you know, in that damp. By the time we went to Guam, we were wearing whatever we got our hands on. Most of the time we cut the legs off and the sleeves off the shirts.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay. When did you leave Guam to come back?

Mr. Earp:

Left Guam on November the 2nd, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You stayed there a long time after the war was over then.

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, we were there for a good while, from July to November.

Mr. Misenhimer:

During that time you were just building things, is that what you were doing or what were you doing then?

Mr. Earp:

That time we built the airfield, we built Nimitz's headquarters, we built all the roads, we built blacktop roads all over the place.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Even after the war got over were you still building things?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, that's when we did all that.

Mr. Misenheimer:

I see, okay. Now, on April 12th of '45 President Roosevelt died; did you hear about that?

Mr. Earp:

Oh yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What was the reaction?

Mr. Earp:

Well, I don't... you know, I never was able to vote for him, I didn't know anything about him much.

Mr. Misenheimer:

He was the only president most people had known.

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, he was the president all my life up to then.

Mr. Misenheimer:

On May the 8th Germany surrendered, did you hear about?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, we were glad that happened.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did you have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Earp:

I don't remember any.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Then when they dropped the atomic bomb did you hear about that?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, I was driving a truck hauling silica out of a pit, the guy came in there and said, "They dropped a bomb on a city in Japan that blew the whole damn city completely down!" We said, "You're out of your mind." We didn't even believe it at all. Then when we got back to our camp they were talking about it there, and turned out it was the truth. We just couldn't comprehend it. I couldn't imagine anything that could blow a whole city down, you know.

Then a couple of days later, or a week later something like that, they did it again. That's when they gave it up. Then we celebrated.

Mr. Misenheimer:

August 15th you had a celebration then?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, we had a celebration then. Our commanding officer, we had near beer to drink. You know, whenever we got anything to drink it was near beer. The CO said you can drink every damn bit if you want, so we did.

Mr. Misenheimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Earp:

We had good morale.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Earp:

Some good, some bad. If we wanted a fifth of whiskey we had to pay thirty-five bucks for a bottle of P.M. which was the cheapest whiskey made. I went out with a fifth of P.M. one time out on the road with another guy drunk as a skunk and they put us up in a Marine brig up at Agana. They found out that they... they wanted to find out who the officers were that were doing this. Our officer told us, he said, "You tell them guys anything, you're going to go back to that brig for a year." (laughing) They asked anybody about it, we didn't say nothing. I didn't want to spend another minute, that was one of the toughest things I ever put up with.

Mr. Misenheimer:

How long were you in there?

Mr. Earp:

I was in there for a week. We weren't sentenced or anything, nobody knew where we went.

They had us down as AWOL. They didn't know what the hell happened to us.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Now you mentioned some officers weren't too good, what was the problem with them??

Mr. Earp:

Well, we didn't have bad officers, really. Occasionally you had a run in with one of them that was an ass, but otherwise most of them were pretty damn good.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Earp:

No.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Earp:

I had some but I didn't even take them home.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay, what did you have?

Mr. Earp:

I had a flag, I had a rifle, and I had a sword but I sold them over there.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Earp:

Saw them in California, Hollywood.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Any big names?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah. Randolph Scott, Ida Lupino, other than that, then overseas they had Joe E. Brown came one time. I don't remember whether it was on Guadalcanal or Guam but he came one time.

They say, but we weren't in that division, but they said that Joe E. Brown had lost a son or something in the war, and that he really went right up... he wanted to have his show right smack up there where the action was.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Earp:

None.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you were there in that combat, what did you think of the medics?

Mr. Earp:

They were the greatest.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they work hard there?

Mr. Earp:

They worked their ass off. I think they are the unsung heroes of the war. They were the greatest.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Earp:

I heard music and somebody but I don't know whether it was Tokyo Rose or not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay.

Mr. Earp:

The only time I heard it was during the action on the beach when we were there with them guns.

A guy with a tank came up and he had a radio in there, and that's where we... We were sitting there listening to his radio with him and they called him and told him that there was a Japanese tank coming down the main road and for him to get up there. He had written on his tank "I Do'd It." (laughing) I'll never forget that guy. So, he shut everything off and he said, "I'll be back."

So, he took off and he was gone for a while, then comes back, this damn old tank rumbled up there and he opened hatch and got out and said, "I do'd it." (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Earp:

Our most frightening time was night. Every night was frightening to me. When you heard them giant steps coming looking for you, and it scared the hell out of me because I just lay there in the damn foxhole and shook. When them big shells would go *boom, boom, boom, boom, boom*. I figured, "Goddammit, this next one's coming right in this hole."

Mr. Misenheimer:

What would you consider your worst day?

Mr. Earp:

Worst day? The worst day was the day we went ashore on Guam. You know what was the strange thing about it? As scary as that day was, I wasn't a bit afraid. Something took away the fear. I was just not afraid. I could not imagine what the hell it was, but I was scared I'd crap in my pants or something, but I was just not afraid. I often wonder about these guys in Gettysburg, how in the hell could they have walked across that big field over there, all them God-durn guns going off right in their face and just keep right on walking. I thought of that, I've thought of that ever since, and now I know why they could do it because something takes that fear away from you. It did for me anyway.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Yeah, good. When were you discharged then?

Mr. Earp:

I was discharged on March the 2nd, 1946.

Mr. Misenheimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Earp:

No.

Mr. Misenheimer:

When you came back from overseas until March, what did you do during that time?

Mr. Earp:

Went out and got drunk, and messed around doing only old damned thing I felt like doing.

Mr. Misenheimer:

I mean when you were still in the service.

Mr. Earp:

Oh, when I was still in the service. That was a bad time for me 'cause I had the points to get out, and we got home in November of '45. From November 'til March, we had the month of December, January, and February, three months, I had the points to get out and I had a commanding officer in Washington, D.C. They put me on a tugboat on the Anacostia River, and this guy didn't want to let me go because I was the only guy he had around there who could start the engine and stop it in that damn tugboat. I would take my request for separation, you had to request to be separated, I would take it in to him and he would take that damn thing and tear it half and drop it right in the waste bin right in front of me. He did that from December, January, and February. Finally, I told my mother, "You're going to have to try to get me out of here somehow or another because this son of a bitch is never going to turn me loose." So, she went down to Senator Radcliffe or somebody in Maryland, and told him what the problem was: that I had the points, and I'd had them for months and months, and I couldn't get past this commanding officer. He wrote down there, and they had... next time I took this thing in, I handed it to the officer and he said, "You must know somebody." I said, "Why?" He said, "Now I've got to let you go." He handed me the papers, and said, "Get on the train and go on up to Cambridge, Maryland and get discharged." That's what happened.

Mr. Misenheimer:

You were in the Washington D.C. area, huh?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah, they sent me down there, they have a Navy Gun factory or something down there, and they ran up and down the bay with that tugboat from there. That's what they had me on.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Now, when you were discharged, were you discharged from the Marines or the Navy or Seabees or what?

Mr. Earp:

Now, I'm back in the Navy, so I was discharged from the Navy.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Navy, okay. So you went Navy, Seabees, Marines, back to the Navy, huh?

Mr. Earp:

(laughing) Yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Earp:

Reunions? I've had a lot of them, yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Of what group?

Mr. Earp:

The Seabees.

Mr. Misenheimer:

The Seabees.

Mr. Earp:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

That 53rd Seabees?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Do you see a lot of people you know there?

Mr. Earp:

No, I don't think I've ever seen anybody that I knew. (laughing) 'Cause I wasn't with them, you know.

Mr. Misenheimer:

But you go to those reunions though, huh?

Mr. Earp:

I go to the reunions but I don't know anybody there that I knew back in the service.

Mr. Misenheimer:

When was the last one you went to?

Mr. Earp:

A couple of years ago. I can't remember when it was. It's been about two-three years since I've been to one. They have it every year, but they're getting lesser and lesser and lesser so they finally couldn't find anybody to do all the work it takes to do that. So they just had to quit.

Mr. Misenheimer:

So, when you were in Branson you were not at a reunion then.

Mr. Earp:

No. We've been to a reunion in Branson years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Earp:

I got to Machinist's Mate 3rd Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay. You never did cross the equator did you?

Mr. Earp:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You crossed the equator? Oh yeah, going to Guadalcanal down to New Caledonia. When you crossed the equator did they have any kind of a ceremony or anything?

Mr. Earp:

Did they have a ceremony? That was the wildest thing I've ever been to. There's just never been anything like that before. Holy mackerel.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened? What did they do?

Mr. Earp:

Oh man, they shave you, they make you go up to King Neptune and he's sitting there and he's got this great big dong (laughing) and you've got to go there and kiss that. Then everybody that's been through there rolls up a knot in the end of a towel and stands in line and when you go through that if you were last one coming through you got beat by everybody in the whole damn ship. If you were lucky enough to be up in the front, you only got beat by a very damn few. I mean to tell you, that was some kind of tough thing. Then they cut your hair then they paint it yellow. They take the American flag down and run the pirate flag up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Earp:

That's about the size of it I guess.

Two Jap ships were beached right there on the beach at Guadalcanal. We went in up one of them one day, slammed into one of them one day and went looking around, there was a damn octopus in there. We got out of there and never went back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How big was he?

Mr. Earp:

He looked like he was – the body part of him was about as big as I was anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh my gosh, he was big then.

Mr. Earp:

He was big; he was a big octopus.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yeah. There was those two ships that the Japanese beached around there.

Mr. Earp:

Well, where they beached them ships were almost right where our camp was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I see, okay, all right.

Mr. Earp:

My father was in World War I and then he joined the Army in World War II, and he was on a ship the whole time. Then my sister joined the WACs. Of course I was in the Navy and the Marines. My mother got so lonesome so she joined the Red Cross and the Civil Defense Corps.

Mr. Misenheimer:

What did your father do in World War II?

Mr. Earp:

World War II he was on a ship. On a troop ship. He was at all those islands down there and they were hauling troops. He hauled troops to Europe. It was called the USAT *George W. Goethals* that he was on.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Was he in the Navy or in the Merchant Marine?

Mr. Earp:

No, he was in the Army. He said, "The Army has more ships than the Navy."

Mr. Misenheimer:

Now, he isn't still living is he?

Mr. Earp:

No, he died.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay. That's interesting, yeah. Your whole family was involved in World War II, then.

Mr. Earp:

Everyone of us, yeah.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Yeah, right.

Tom, thanks again for your time today and for your service to our country.

Mr. Earp:

Okay, Richard. Thank you for calling.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Okay, we'll talk to you later then.

Mr. Earp:

Bye.

Mr. Misenheimer:

Bye now.

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