

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JAMES BOHSTEDT
Lieutenant Colonel, USMC (Retired), WWII and Korea
1995

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Bohstedt, James H., (1924-). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (177 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (177 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Bohstedt, a Madison, Wis. native, discusses his World War II and Korean War service with the 4th Signal Company, 4th Marine Division, and service with the Reserves. Bohstedt describes basic training at San Diego (California), radar training in Utah, and field signal school at Camp Elliot (California). He relates repairing radios during the campaigns for Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. He touches upon daily life, both while the 4th Marines regrouped in Maui, and in the Pacific islands. Bohstedt also comments on the atomic bomb decision, post-war duty in Sasebo (Japan), and the difference between the Japanese people he encountered and the way they were described by the military. He mentions his return home, use of the GI Bill, and veterans on the UW-Madison campus. After college graduation, Bohstedt joined the Meritorious NCO Program and was called into Korean War service as a First Lieutenant. He talks about his Korean War service inspecting a Korean Marine Corps unit and the Marines' opinion of the Korean War. He remained active in the Army Reserves for many years.

Biographical Sketch

Bohstedt (1924) served in World War II and the Korean War with the 4th Marine Division, 5th Army Corps, and 1st Armored Amphibious Battalion. He remained active in the Army Reserves and achieved the rank of First Lieutenant.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, n.d.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Today's date is January 4, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. James Bohstedt of Green Bay, a veteran of the Marine Corps of World War II and the Korean War.

Mark: Good morning, Mr. Bohstedt. How are you doing?

Bohstedt: Good morning. I'm just fine.

Mark: I suppose the place to start, always, is at the beginning. Perhaps you could tell me a little about where you were born and your upbringing and what you were doing before Pearl Harbor.

Bohstedt: I was born in Wooster, Ohio. My father was a university professor. He was at the Ohio Experimental Station in Wooster, Ohio.

Mark: What did he teach?

Bohstedt: It was not a teaching situation. That was research.

Mark: I see.

Bohstedt: He had been a 1915 graduate of the University of Wisconsin and he took this job for four or five years and then moved back to Wisconsin. So he was in the Animal Husbandry Department at Madison. I was in my freshman year in 1941-42 when World War II started.

Mark: At the UW here?

Bohstedt: Yes.

Mark: Do you recall the actual bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Bohstedt: Oh yes.

Mark: Do you remember your reaction?

Bohstedt: Traditional. We were home listening to the Sunday afternoon concert and it was traumatic.

Mark: As a 17-18-year-old kid, did you think, this is it, I better pack my bags? Or, did you have any--

Bohstedt: Well, I didn't quite pack my bags immediately, but the impact obviously going to be felt by us all.

Mark: How did things change? For example, the campus. Did you notice any sorts of big changes in campus life?

Bohstedt: No. Not immediately. I recall that during President Roosevelt's speech to Congress, I was down in the Rathskeller at the Memorial Union and it was being broadcast. It was traumatic.

Mark: So, you entered the service then in 1942. Do you remember what time of year?

Bohstedt: I signed up in the summer. I enlisted. I was still 18, at the time they were not drafting 18-year-olds. They did soon after. At the time the Marine Corps was not taking draftees and in the summer of 1942 I worked at a pea cannery up in Rosendale and was making my plans to enlist. My parents weren't particularly enthusiastic about that.

Mark: OK. I'm interested in this sort of topic. You picked the Marines. You picked the toughest one of them all. I'm wondering why you chose to join the Marines in the first place.

Bohstedt: Well, funny you should ask because I hardly knew what the Marine Corps was. A very good friend of mine, Bob Fauerbach of the family that owned the Fauerbach Brewery in Madison, although his father was a dentist, he was hot to trot and he signed up in the Marine Corps and I decided I'd go with him. As it turned out he was more anxious to go faster than I was. I waited for the orientation period that I was participating with for the new freshmen in the fall of 1942. So he went charging off to boot camp in San Diego and I went later. So, we didn't really serve together, although I did meet him on Saipan.

Mark: I see. And, your parents weren't wild about this, you said? What was their concern?

Bohstedt: They said wait until you're drafted or whatever and I just felt it was something that was inevitable and I was going to do it. They said that they had to sign a consent form because I was underage. I said "You can make me go to school, but you can't make me study."

Mark: So when did you actually go into the Marine Corps, when were you actually inducted?

Bohstedt: October 2, 1942.

Mark: I'm interested in the process of the actual enlistment so perhaps you could describe your steps from Madison to basic training in San Diego was it?

Bohstedt: Right.

Mark: Perhaps you could just walk me through the steps of how things proceeded. You had to get a physical somewhere and stuff like that.

Bohstedt: Well, I signed up in Madison. That was in a recruiting office in the Post Office there near the State Office Building. There was a whole platoon of us, Avengers of Bataan. We all went out to San Diego together, first went to Milwaukee went through our physical there, then on a train to San Diego. Oh boy, that was traumatic.

Mark: Which was, the train ride or San Diego?

Bohstedt: The train ride was I guess fairly normal, but oh, that arrival in San Diego!

Mark: I assume that this is where the military discipline started.

Bohstedt: Oh yes!

Mark: You seem to recall this fairly vividly perhaps you could describe what it was like to get off the train and have someone start yelling at you.

Bohstedt: We got off the--I've heard since that the Marine Corps staged this more or less, I don't know whether it's true or not, but the recruits would arrive in late afternoon and get hollered at when we got off the train in San Diego and got into trucks and hauled into the processing center and San Diego Recruit Depot and processing went on for a couple of hours and finally we were loaded into barracks and given a bunk and about 4:30 the next morning, the bugles went off and the hollering started and oh, boy! That started boot camp and you heard about Marine Corps boot camp, I'm sure.

Mark: I've heard a little bit about it. I'm sure it was different than the Air Force one I went through. So, it was in San Diego that you got the hair cut and got the uniform and all that sort of thing. How long was your basic training?

Bohstedt: Yep. I think it was 12 weeks.

Mark: That's quite a long time. What sort of training did you get? I'm sure you had to learn military courtesy and how to wear the uniform and some weapons training and that sort of thing.

Bohstedt: Oh yeah, lots of basic things like personal hygiene and a lot of marching, a lot of physical training, a lot of you know--I remember on one occasion we were out on the parade grounds, the grinder as we called it and they decided to have some boxing. Well, I'd never had boxing gloves on in my life, but I was the second tallest man in the platoon and so they lined me up with the tallest and we were going to box a little. We spared around a little and I was trying to hit the guy, but I didn't know what I was doing. Well, he said, he whispered at me and said, "I thought we were just sparring" and I said, "I'm trying to hit you." It turns out he was a golden gloves boxer and just pounded the Hell out of me. That was a bit of a lesson too. I don't know what, but--

Mark: Was this your first time away from Wisconsin?

Bohstedt: Oh, no. We traveled a lot as a family, to the east coast and the west coast. As a matter of fact, in 1939 we'd been to the San Francisco Fair and in 1943 I was back there on Treasure Island, because it was a Navy training unit I was stationed there.

Mark: I see. So you had traveled to some extent. What I'm getting at is that in military basic training you come across people from all different regions of the country. Different class backgrounds etc. etc. etc. I was wondering about your recollections of how all these different people got along in basic training.

Bohstedt: Well, this group that I left Madison with, we stuck together and we were Platoon 925 in San Diego Recruit Depot so we were all Wisconsin people and we had two drill instructors, two corporals, one was from Wisconsin and one was from Iowa so we didn't get into the melting pot at the time.

Mark: Not too many southerners I take it?

Bohstedt: No. I had my fill of Texans a little later but--

Mark: We'll come back to that. After about 12 weeks or so you finished training and what happened after that? When did you depart for the Pacific?

Bohstedt: During that period, I had had one year of college in Madison in Electrical Engineering and although I hadn't gotten into any particular electrical engineering, apparently they thought I had some talent so they had a bunch of us take a test and it was for what they told us was Radar School. Well, none of us knew what radar was, we thought they were talking about the Marine Raiders, then active in the Pacific. Because radar was absolutely brand new at the time and at any rate, it was a sort of a technical exam that I took while I was still in boot camp and I guess I passed because then they assigned me to radar training. So from boot camp in San Diego I was sent to a one-month course right there on the San Diego base which was pre-radar which was just

electrical subjects, mathematics, etc. and from there I went to three months training in Logan, Utah. They had set up a school there again, to teach advanced electrical theory and electronic theory.

Mark: So it was right up your alley then.

Bohstedt: Yeah. Because I had always fiddled with electrical things. That was my intention of a career.

Mark: So, you were basically happy then with where the military had put you.

Bohstedt: Yeah, right.

Mark: After Utah then, is that when you went overseas?

Bohstedt: No. After Utah I was sent to Treasure Island, California. There was a Navy Radar School there. It was a six month course and in the beginning the people that were trained in radar were all commissioned and then later all the Navy types came out first class and the Marines came out, I guess Staff Sgt., then as radar technicians became more common they cut it back, I guess late in the war they were graduating them as Private First Class. At the time most of the class or 3/4 of the class were graduating as Staff Sergeants, four stripes.

Mark: These people in this training program, in the radar program, what sort of guys got into this? What kind of guys were selected for it? Did they have engineering backgrounds?

Bohstedt: Pretty much, yeah. I'd say they were pretty high-class people. They were not even yet the typical melting pot; they were seemingly middle class American boys.

Mark: College guys?

Bohstedt: Some, not too many.

Mark: I see. Such as yourself.

Bohstedt: Yeah.

Mark: I don't mean to keep pushing this, but when did you go overseas?

Bohstedt: OK. Well, I got to delay that a little bit further. When we graduated, I was made a Staff Sergeant, which is pretty damn good rank in the Marine Corps. That's the staff NCO. That's the top three figures and they said, "Well, who wants to go to Chicago?" Well, they didn't ask us who wants to be a teacher,

they said, “Who wants to go to Chicago?” Well, I hadn’t had any leave and by that time I thought well, I’d like to get a chance to go home. Home was Madison and if I was in Chicago, I could do it. It turns out the opportunity to go to Chicago was to learn to be a teacher trainer in the radar program and we were stationed at some high school, north side, and we were doing a lot of our training, Commander Eddy, I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of him, he was pretty famous at the time because he was running a TV station in downtown Chicago, WBKB and he only broadcast a few hours in the evenings and then on the side he ran this teacher training course for Marines and Navy. Well, I got my chance to go home a few weekends and never got a leave but it’s not that far. I even wrote my own leave orders one weekend because we weren’t allowed to leave the area, but I never got caught on that. At any rate, after a while there I said, “Well, I don’t want to be a teacher trainee.” They said, “Well, if you aren’t going to cooperate, we’re going to send you overseas.” That’s what they did.

Mark: So this was in ‘43?

Bohstedt: Very early ‘43. So I was sent out to Camp Elliott.

Mark: Camp Elliott?

Bohstedt: Camp Elliott. It’s Navy-owned now. The Marine Corps turned it over to the Navy later in the war. But it’s just north of San Diego and the plan was, of course, I was considered a communicator by then. Incidentally, I should say that I was trained on all these Navy radar units on how to maintain them, and I never saw another radar the rest of World War II. But, I was sent to Camp Elliott and I waited around for a month and the 4th Marine Division was up in Camp Pendleton getting ready to go overseas. But, the plan at the time said that all communicators going overseas have to go through what is known as Field Signal School, which was being held up in Camp Pendleton. So, by the time I spent a while in Camp Elliott and then went up to Camp Pendleton, the 4th Marine Division had pulled out for Roy De Muir operation in the quadrant so I missed that. I went through this Field Signal School, carrying radars and radios and carrying telephones and setting up wire lines and all of which was useless. So then, when that was over I was assigned to the 4th Division and sent to Hawaii. Stayed a while on Oahu in a casual company and then flown over to Maui. By the time I got to Maui, the 4th Marine Division was ready to pull out for Saipan-Tinian operation and I was only there a couple of days, maybe a week or so.

Mark: On Maui?

Bohstedt: On Maui before we pulled out for Saipan. And I was assigned to communications in a signal repair unit. We had a repair shop for radio and telephone equipment.

Mark: Where was that based?

Bohstedt: That was with the 4th Signal Company, 4th Marine Division.

Mark: For the Saipan operation, where was your unit based? Where did you experience this battle?

Bohstedt: Well, you see, the 4th Marine Division was home-based out of Maui. Some divisions had permanent home bases and some didn't. Ours was Maui. So we combat loaded out of Maui and went to Kwajalen and Boy, it seemed half of the world was there. Then went on to Saipan operation.

Mark: I'm interested in the Saipan operation. I'm interested in your perspective on it. What were your duties during it and how did it all happen?

Bohstedt: Well, we were on an APA, Attack Passenger transport and loaded into LCVPs and we were headed for the beach on D-Day, late D-Day and about the time we were a few hundred yards off the beach, it started up again, shell fire, and so the word was that we wouldn't go to shore that night. So we just circled around all night. The next morning things were a little quieter and we went ashore and set up our repair shop. I landed on the beach with a little box of radio tubes.

Mark: What were your responsibilities then?

Bohstedt: I was to repair an SER300, so-called walkie-talkie and, of course, I hadn't seen one but a few weeks before and I knew nothing about it. I hadn't had an opportunity to even read a manual, but the first thing we did was to try to soak the salt water out of some of the equipment that got doused coming ashore and eventually some repair manuals in chests came ashore and they had a whole bunch of instruction books and I just sat around reading them. By the time the Saipan operation was over, we figured we'd repaired every radio in the Division at least once.

Mark: I was going to ask you about the effectiveness of this equipment that you dealt with. Were there problems with these walkie-talkies?

Bohstedt: There was one thing that was particularly--there was about a point-o capacitor that often failed. There were maybe 25 of them in the unit and a lot of them failed. So, that was the first thing I looked for.

Mark: For what reason? Salt water or poorly built?

Bohstedt: Poorly insulated I guess. We had a little tube checker and we could--there were an awful lot of tubes in that little sucker. It was pretty complicated equipment for those days. So we had this radio and this signal repair operation and we stuck a couple of miles behind the front lines, but following up periodically. I think we were in about four different locations through the length of the operation.

Mark: Were you subject to any sort of hostile fire at all or were you far enough back to avoid that?

Bohstedt: I've often said the most dangerous things that happened to me during the operation were from our own troops.

Mark: What sort of thing was that?

Bohstedt: Well, some guy was cleaning a 45 some distance away and he accidentally cranked off a round that came close and at one point, some Navy planes were strafing the front lines toward our lines and they didn't cut off the guns fast enough and a few rounds came floating over our way.

Mark: A little closer than you would like I take it.

Bohstedt: Yeah. Not that I could say it was immediately life threatening. So, like is typical and I think an awful lot of guys will probably tell you this, you're in as much danger from your own buddies as you are from the enemy.

Mark: Yeah, I've heard that before. So, the Saipan operation lasted four days or so?

Bohstedt: Oh, no. This was a month, 40 days, something in that order.

Mark: And you spent the time repairing the equipment, during the battle?

Bohstedt: Right.

Mark: What did you do when it was finally over?

Bohstedt: Well, we sort of regrouped so to speak and it was no more than two weeks and we went down to Tinian. Tinian was in easy eyesight, south of Saipan and that was a completely separate, distinct operation. It was rather a coup I think, out of the Marine Corps. There was only one, I think, really good beach on the island of Tinian for a landing and the Japs thought we were going to come there and so the Marine Corps staged a demonstration off that beach the morning of the invasion and then snuck ashore on some tiny little semi-

beaches just about wide enough for an LCVP to come ashore and they landed the whole division across that narrow, tiny beach. The Japs didn't expect it and the operation was only about a quarter as valid as Saipan was.

Mark: I see, and on Tinian you did the same thing as on Saipan?

Bohstedt: Same thing, yeah. Oh, incidentally, I got to tie up with Bob Fauerbach again because when the operation on Saipan was over, I knew that he was in the 10th Marines which was the artillery regiment for the 2nd Marine Division and I went looking for him and to make a long story short, I found him on top of a bunker on Aslito Air Field on Saipan and we had a great visit. He's been a life-long friend and I'm still in touch with him frequently.

Mark: Small world sometimes, huh?

Bohstedt: Yes!

Mark: The Saipan operation was in '44 and then on the sheet I had you fill out the next engagement you listed was Iwo Jima and I'm interested in what happened in the meantime. During this island hopping campaign they were attacking the islands and there were these rather long gaps between engagements and I'm wondering what--

Bohstedt: Not too long. When you get--take--certainly not in the signal repair company, but the 4th Marine Division took some pretty violent casualties and so you got to bring in replacements and you gotta do training, etc. After Saipan, after Tinian, then we loaded up and went back to Maui again and went through our retraining, re-supply procedure and then we loaded up again and went on to Kwajalen and then to Saipan which absolutely amazed me. The whole damned island looked like it was covered by buildings, Quonset hut types, they'd made a fantastic base out of it and then went on it to Iwo. At the time, Sgt. Nolan and I were on an AKA which was a cargo ship. We had some brand new radio vans. They were big 6 by trucks with receiver vans on one and transmitter vans on the other and they were brand new things for Marine communication and so we were shepherding those units and they were to be used more or less experimentally because they were brand new. So we were on the AKA and we were separated from the rest of our friends. At that time, by the way, I had been transferred from the 4th Division to the 5th Amphibious Corps, which Corps Headquarters was right with the 4th Division on Maui so it was just across camp on Maui.

Mark: I see. Why did this transfer occur?

Bohstedt: I don't know exactly why it happened. Why does anything happen in the military?

Mark: I see, yeah, I know that story. So, the Iwo Jima Campaign.

Bohstedt: We came to Iwo Jima. We were due to go ashore on D+1, but, the famous sands of Iwo Jima just made a shambles out of the beach and the beach masters were having one hell of a time getting anything across the beach because the shifting sands made traffic impossible. They had to lay the steel mats down, they tried everything they could, so we were delayed to about D+12 or D+13 before we finally got ashore.

Mark: Wow, that's quite a long time.

Bohstedt: Yeah, but it was still only a short way into the overall operation. I'm trying to think--it was about 40 days or so.

Mark: On Iwo Jima, your duties were pretty much the same?

Bohstedt: Pretty much the same.

Mark: Did you still have the same equipment malfunctions or did it get better?

Bohstedt: No. Same equipment, doing the same thing. I was getting pretty good at it. But, then I'd done enough of it that I knew what to look for. I repaired an awful lot of Sierra 300s.

Mark: I see. Now, Iwo Jima is not as tree covered as the other islands would have been. I think its smaller too.

Bohstedt: Much smaller and there was only--I don't know if there was anything you could call a tree on the island. It was a lot of scrub.

Mark: So, I would imagine you were perhaps more close to the battle by this time.

Bohstedt: Yeah. We were within sound of it. But, not involved in it.

Mark: This is a good time to back track a little bit and you mentioned the Texans before so we can start talking about these kinds of subjects. I'm interested in the non-combat experience in the Marines.

Bohstedt: Well, that Texan part goes back to Logan, Utah. We were in the little--it was winter time--we were in this little college town in Logan and there was more of a mixture of people there. For some reason or another there was a whole bunch of Texans there. They seemed a little loud and obnoxious to me. No big incidents.

- Mark: So between the battles then when you were back on Maui or Kwajalen or wherever, what sort of things did you do to occupy what free time you had? Letter writing, poker playing, what sort of things did you do?
- Bohstedt: Well, there was something you'd call liberty I guess on Maui. We could load aboard trucks when we had liberty and go to town and walk around the main street, go to the USO Club and I was not much of a boozier so that didn't occupy much time. I did like my beer occasionally and sometimes we had beer in the camp, letter writing, reading books, it was a very quiet existence.
- Mark: Was it different on a place like Maui, relatively Americanized than when you went into the, like Kwajalen for example?
- Bohstedt: Well, I never went ashore in Kwajalen. These were ship gatherings I guess you'd say.
- Mark: Did you have much contact with some of the native people of the islands you were in? Sounds like you were pretty much busy.
- Bohstedt: Almost none. We saw some, I remember on Saipan and Tinian, we could see a compound, they were all rounded up and guarded, but we didn't see many and infrequently.
- Mark: Where were you when the war ended?
- Bohstedt: I was on Maui. As a matter of fact, we were beginning the procedure of combat loading for the invasion of Japan.
- Mark: What sort of procedures or planning was going on from your perspective?
- Bohstedt: Well, normal combat planning. I say combat loading because you load your cargo ships entirely differently if you're going to an operation than if you're just carrying some gear from here to there. We were in the initial stages. As I recall it, we understood later that the initial invasion of Japan was to be all six Marine divisions abreast on Honshu.
- Mark: Did you talk much about having to invade Japan amongst some of your fellow Marines? Was it the topic of discussion or did you just assume it was going to happen?
- Bohstedt: No, to tell the truth, we didn't. It was just something that you knew was there and one sort of sidelight. You always remember where you were when you heard some significant news. We were just pulling into Kalui Harbor in Maui coming back from Iwo when we heard Roosevelt had died. I always remember the scene then.

Mark: What was it like?

Bohstedt: Oh, God, that idiot Truman is going to be President! Of course, I'm a little bit of a Republican so--

Mark: It is my understanding that some of the troops were very fond of the President.

Bohstedt: I was raised Republican and I been a Republican all my life.

Mark: Do you recall what you were doing when you heard that the atomic bomb had been dropped?

Bohstedt: Not exactly. I was on Maui and we heard the news. I don't know precisely where I was at the moment.

Mark: There has been a lot of controversy about the bomb lately with the Smithsonian doing their thing. I'd be interested in your perspective on that.

Bohstedt: Well, specifically you're talking about the Enola Gay situation and I'm aware of it and it infuriates me because my answer to those people would be "I may be alive because of the atomic bomb. There were going to be an incredible number of Marine casualties if we had to invade the island of Japan and we didn't have to invade the island of Japan and thank God." The Enola Gay incident just really boils my blood.

Mark: There's a lot of that. That's why I was curious as to your reaction. So, the war was then over. How long was it until you got back to the U.S.?

Bohstedt: At that time, they immediately established I think at 85 points to go home. The points were months in service, a point for every month of service plus a point for every month overseas. I didn't have the necessary 85 points so what they did was take a bunch of us out that weren't entitled to go home and loaded us aboard ship and we went on to Japan. We were the first troops into Sasebo Harbor and we occupied the naval base on Sasebo.

Mark: The Japanese had, of course, had surrendered, but as you were pulling up into the harbor there was there any apprehension? Were you afraid someone might take some pot shots at you?

Bohstedt: Yes. I wouldn't say we were psycho or hyper about it, but we were wondering what the reaction was going to be.

Mark: And what was it?

Bohstedt: It was absolutely, there was no reaction. We came ashore and they looked at us and we looked at them and they didn't even look cross-eyed. There was absolutely no apparent antagonism or even reaction.

Mark: So, you spent like five months in Japan?

Bohstedt: Well, not quite. I actually pulled out of Sasebo Harbor on D-Day, December 7, 1945.

Mark: I'm interested in occupation duty. What sort of things does a Communications Technician do during an occupation like that?

Bohstedt: Well, we set up our repair shop in a weather station, a small separate building on the Sasebo Naval Base and for a while, there was a lot of Japanese military equipment in the warehouses and so what they had us doing, aside from maintaining our own equipment, was they'd go into these warehouses and they'd say, "Well, if there is anything in here you fellows want, take it. Otherwise, we'll haul it outside, put it in a pile, run the tanks over it and shoot it with a flame thrower." The term was we were destroying Japan's war potential. So, that's what we did. At one point, a bunch of us got a recon, I guess it was for the weekend, which was an intermediate sized truck and we decided we wanted to go down to Nagasaki and see what it looked like.

Mark: Did you get to do that?

Bohstedt: No we didn't. We got maybe halfway or something like that and there were blocks set up. They didn't want us going down there. So we never got to Nagasaki but we had made the try anyway.

Mark: Did you have much contact with the Japanese people and were there rules against fraternizing with the Japanese?

Bohstedt: Very little. Supposedly, but I don't think they were very--I didn't go into town much. Some of the guys did a little tom-cating, or what's the polite term? Some went into town, but I was still pretty young and innocent so I never spent any particular amount of time—I did a little shopping, there was very little to buy. There was very little contact with the Japanese. They were very docile.

Mark: Did that surprise you?

Bohstedt: The degree of it, yes. Of course, we had been fed this yellow peril line all through the war and they were little flat-eyed bastards and all that sort of thing. Then all of a sudden they didn't look so masterful at all.

Mark: That's interesting actually. So your points came up and you went back to the U.S. then. You arrived December 24th--that's Christmas Eve. You landed in San Diego and you wrote a brief story here about a phone call. Perhaps you could relate that to me.

Bohstedt: Well, I hadn't told my folks that I was due to come home, I didn't want to get up expectations before it happened so it took a couple of three weeks to get from Japan to San Diego and then when we went into Camp Pendleton the day before Christmas. So, the next day, everybody wanted to call home. So, I went to a PX where there were some phone booths on their veranda and got an operator and they registered me and I waited hours and hours. Finally, my turn came up and I called my folks, Fairchild 6759 in Madison. Nobody home.

Mark: They were at a relative's house or something?

Bohstedt: No. They had friends, they were at a party somewhere. But it was sort of crushing you know. They didn't have any particular parades. There was no recognition of these conquering troops coming home. What a blow-out.

Mark: When did you finally get back to Madison?

Bohstedt: They loaded us eventually on a train and oh God that was a terrible trip. Three days to Great Lakes and was released from Great Lakes in the middle of January '46.

Mark: This was a free and clear discharge from the Marine Corps?

Bohstedt: Yes.

Mark: How did you get back to Madison?

Bohstedt: Oh, got on a train. That's what we used to do in those days. Train to Milwaukee and another train to Madison.

Mark: I presume this time you called home to make sure someone was going to be there.

Bohstedt: No, I didn't. I just showed up.

Mark: You just showed up at the door? Do you remember your mother or father's reaction?

Bohstedt: No, I don't, honestly. I think they were glad to see me.

Mark: Undoubtedly. So, here you are, freshly discharged, war veteran Marine,

Bohstedt: Looking forward to having a little time to myself, goofing off a while.

Mark: I was going to ask what were your priorities?

Bohstedt: Well, I wanted to finish college. The GI Bill was available and I had one year of college anyway. I was determined that I was going to go then because I had come to realize that an education was going to be essential. So, school started in about ten days or maybe it was only a week after I got home. I got back just in time for the second semester. I finished in 2.5 years then going both summer schools. So one year before the war, 2.5 with all the summer schools after the war, and finished in June of '48.

Mark: Did you use the GI Bill?

Bohstedt: Oh yeah.

Mark: I'm interested, did you have trouble utilizing it? How did you find out where to go and what to do to be able to use it?

Bohstedt: Oh, it was very thoroughly known. Everybody knew about it and what to do.
[End Tape 1 Side A]

Bohstedt: As a matter of fact, I was married for the last year in school and so then I got a few bucks more a month.

Mark: Did the GI Bill meet your financial requirements for school?

Bohstedt: Well, I lived at home, at least the first year and a half before I was married. Yeah. It wasn't very much. I think it was about \$75 and maybe \$95 after I was married. But we got by.

Mark: I'm interested in life on campus after the war. Were there a lot of veterans such as yourself on campus?

Bohstedt: You bet. They were coming back in a flood. Somehow or another they built all those temporary buildings. They had all the space needs for the classrooms, etc. and they were considering building additional classroom space and they said, oh, the costs are so high now we can't afford to build buildings for the University so they popped up these temporary quarters all over the place.

Mark: The Quonset huts.

Bohstedt: Yea. The Quonset huts and the construction costs did nothing but keep on going up.

Mark: You had been in school before the war and then after the war, I'd be interested to know if you noted any changes in the campus and in the way things were conducted on campus. For example, the relationship between the undergraduate and the professor. Was it different relating to a professor as a 19-year-old kid and then as a war veteran? Did those sorts of things change?

Bohstedt: I don't recall thinking anything startling as a professor's son I was used to the University environment and no, it seemed fairly normal. There was an awful lot of veterans around, but there were some non-veterans, there were some 4F's, so there was a mixture there and a few women in the Engineering School, not very many.

Mark: Were they veterans by some chance?

Bohstedt: Mostly not, that I know of.

Mark: There were several campus student veterans groups. Did you join any sort of--

Bohstedt: No. Never joined any veterans groups.

Mark: I was going to ask that at the end of the interview, but we can talk about it now. The Legion or VFW you've never ever joined?

Bohstedt: Never. I have gone to the Marine Corps Reserve Officer's Association. but only part of the time at that.

Mark: Is this a conscious decision on your part to not join these groups?

Bohstedt: My idea has always been that the--whether fair or not--that those organizations are drinking societies and lobbying groups and I just didn't feel compelled to join that effort.

Mark: You eventually got back in the Marine Corps. I'm interested in what made you decide to rejoin the service.

Bohstedt: Yeah. Well, there was a program I became aware of called the Meritorious NCO Program and if you were, I don't know whether it was just an NCO or staff NCO, but if you were a Marine Corps NCO with a certain good grades and good ratings and subsequently graduated from college, you could apply for a direct commission. So a couple of months before I graduated in '48 I applied. It took until '49 before all of the crank turning finally got taken care of and I got a direct commission.

Mark: And you went back in.

Bohstedt: No. I underwent the interviews and one thing and another in Schenectady, NY where I went to work for GE after the war, right after school. But then I moved with GE to Chicago and I did join up with a reserve unit in Chicago just a few months before the Korean War started.

Mark: So you actually went to Korea then?

Bohstedt: Yes.

Mark: Perhaps you could explain to me when North Korea invaded the South what happened as a result to you? So you were in the reserves and called back and I'm just interested in the process of getting back in the military and getting overseas.

Bohstedt: I was in Chicago and went on vacation in June of '50 and I knew the guy that ran the training post up on the Canadian border and I went on a canoe trip and the Korean War had started just as we went off into the woods. Two weeks later I came back and there is old Brownie standing on the dock and said, "You've been called up!" So, I rushed home to Chicago and packed up my gear and moved my wife to Madison and she was then pregnant and went off to the Marine Corps. Went to Camp Pendleton.

Mark: You had to go through some sort of processing or?

Bohstedt: Yea. I was a brand new 2nd Lieutenant. and I didn't know from nothing. So I spent a few months there in Camp Pendleton signing clothing issue tickets and whatever miscellaneous things they could do to keep us busy. There were very indiscriminate about the call-ups. They just sent out mass mailings of call-up letters and they got--well at one time we had platoons of Lieutenants with Captains as squad leaders and Majors as company commanders. They ran us through swimming training or watching old training films, whatever. But they said "This guy needs some officer training. You can't just be an officer without some background so they sent me to Quantico, VA to the first special basic course that they set up.

Mark: What sort of training did that involve?

Bohstedt: Well, it's just basic tactics, basic courtesy, basic history, basic things you ought to know to be an officer. I guess you'd call it the 90-day wonder type training.

Mark: How soon did you get to Korea? I take it not until 1951 sometime.

Bohstedt: Well, Yeah. You're impatient. They classified me then as a communicator because I'd done that during World War II so when I got done with first special basic course, they said, "Well, you go to Communications Officers School." which was also in Quantico, VA. But there was two or three months in between so I functioned as an assistant instructor in the basic school which is what the West Point and Annapolis graduates and ROTC graduates all had to go through. Then I went to Communication Officers School and graduated in summer of '51 and they said "Well, where do you want to go?" And I said, "Send me to Pearl Harbor." By then I was a 1st Lieutenant and they wanted 2nd Lieutenants at Pearl Harbor so they gave me orders for Korea.

Mark: I thought Korea was just as good.

Bohstedt: Oh, probably. A bunch of us from that Communications Officers School showed up at the Marine Memorial Club in San Francisco and we stayed there and they gradually dribbled us out of there to Japan and then Korea. For some reason or another, I didn't have any political pull, but I was one of the last ones to leave. By the time I then went to Japan and then Korea, while I ran into some friends that I had known in Quantico, they had filled all the signal officers bills [billets] in the 1st Marine Division so they sent me back to Japan and I became Communications Officer for the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion which was stationed in Japan at Camp Ukuska.

Mark: Now where is that?

Bohstedt: Just near Yokohama. Ukuska is the big naval base they always talk about. [UNEXPLAINED BREAK HERE] The majority of my service in Korea was when Col. O'Neil--we had one company functioning in Korea. The other companies were there in Japan, but Col. O'Neil wanted to go over to inspect his one company operating in Korea and I accompanied him on a short trip. They were dug in as artillery support for a KMC unit, Korean Marine Corps, which was holding the South back to the Han River north of Seoul. These armored amphibians were just dug in as artillery pieces.

Mark: What were your impressions of Korea? I've heard a lot of different stories. I'm interested in what you thought.

Bohstedt: Awful damn cold when I was there. Boy I caught the cold of my life. The 1st Division was over on the--near the right-hand side of the line and oh, God it was cold. The operations were reasonably stagnant about that time.

Mark: The cold in Korea. You hear about quite often. Being a good old Wisconsin boy, I wonder if you could perhaps compare. How cold was it really? Compared to today for example.

Bohstedt: The difference is whether you are in a nice warm house or in a breezy tent. Those tents with the wind blowing right through. They were just killers.

Mark: You spent how long up on the line there?

Bohstedt: A couple of weeks.

Mark: I see. Doing what?

Bohstedt: Just inspecting the unit and schmoozing. The Colonel wanted--back in those days officers had to pay income tax. But, there was a \$200 a month income tax deduction for every month you were in Korea so the usual routine for people that wanted to spend a little time in Korea from Japan was to go over late in one month and stay over into the next month and then you got two months worth of income tax deduction. I suppose that's what you'd say we were on.

Mark: I just have a couple of questions about Korea. This is a UN operation. Did you have any contact with other forces?

Bohstedt: No. None. Strictly Marines.

Mark: I'd be interested in your comments on the difference in the Marine Corps between Korea and World War II. Was it different? Like morale, discipline and those kinds of things.

Bohstedt: Well,

Mark: Cause this was our first so-called limited war.

Bohstedt: There was sort of an underlying grumbling, disappointment with the whole conduct of the war because we had our handcuffs on and I don't know if you ever remember the incident but very early in the Korean War while I was still in Camp Pendleton, Truman made some disparaging remarks about the Marine Corps.

Mark: Oh, did he?

Bohstedt: Oh, yeah.

Mark: Do you remember what he said?

Bohstedt: Oh it was a glorified police department and they lived on publicity or something to that effect. And, boy, there was total hatred for--and that was

sort of pervaded the whole operation and we were there because we had to be there and we weren't very happy about it but you know, what are you going to do? I remember there was a lot of grumbling at the very beginning when I was at Camp Pendleton, first called back. I didn't grumble because I remember when I was being interviewed for this commission they said, "Well, if the Marine Corps decided to call you up, would you go?" And I said, "Well, I would hope that there was something very earth shaking that required me to go, but yes, I would." So when something earth shaking came up I had no grumble, but there were a lot of guys that got pulled out of lucrative positions and left their families and they're out there in Pendleton not doing anything in particular at the moment and there were a lot of guys writing their congressmen and I remember there was a General Noble and he called a bunch of us officers together in a theater in Camp Pendleton and the basic theme of his lecture was that impatience is a sign of immaturity. So, yeah, there was grumbling, but there was nothing--we were Marines.

Mark: It is my impression it didn't affect the operational capacity of your unit.

Bohstedt: No. It was just grumbling. We used to say in the Marine Corps that when the troops are complaining, they're happy. When they stop complaining, then watch out.

Mark: I see. Now, the Korean War also took place in the context of the cold war in the containment of communism and those sorts of things. Was the subject of communism and Red China and that kind of thing--was that discussed among you and your cohorts?

Bohstedt: No. We used to watch some of those movies that came out of Hollywood during the war and after and boy, they really trowelled on the sarcasm and the patriotism, you know, the troops don't talk too much about that sort of thing.

Mark: That's my experience too from talking to a lot of guys, but I do ask the question. So you spent a year in Asia again.

Bohstedt: Well, not that long, I came home at the end of '51.

Mark: What I'm getting at is there was a rotation system as I understand but I'm kind of fuzzy on how it's operated.

Bohstedt: When the Marines called up the reservists, it was sort of a understood rule that the term of the call-up was to be about 18 months and so my 18 months were about up when I was in Korea and unfortunately my wife had written to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and said, "I'm pregnant and I need to have my husband at home." She got her father, a doctor, to sign the statement and the Marine Corps wrote to me and said, it's customary for the officer to write

his own letters. Well, I don't know if that accelerated anything or not, but I was then sent home about when I was due. Getting home again, right at Christmastime.

Mark: So you went back to work at GE when you got home?

Bohstedt: Went back to work at GE in Chicago.

Mark: Having been away from the job for almost 18 months did you have trouble getting reestablished in your old job? Problems with colleagues perhaps? Did you get behind in some of the work?

Bohstedt: Well, I was afraid that I'd lost time, but I don't know if that really happened. I wound up getting within the year, an excellent assignment with GE, which shaped my whole career. I can't say that I suffered that much.

Mark: In terms of the rest of your military career, you remained in the Reserves until when?

Bohstedt: Well, I was in Chicago then, and I joined another Reserve unit in Chicago and then I moved to Milwaukee and I transferred to a Reserve unit in Milwaukee and went to summer camp every summer with the unit and eventually I left GE and went to work for Beloit Corporation in Beloit and by this time I had made Lieutenant Colonel. And the Marine Corps is too small to have very many senior jobs in the active Reserves so I joined what they call a volunteer training unit in Rockford which was just a go in once a week and do a couple of hours of studying and training on unpaid status and eventually I left Beloit Corporation and went to work for American Can in New Jersey and I was in a volunteer training unit in New Jersey and eventually CO of the unit and when American Can transferred me to Green Bay in 1982, I just went inactive at that point. Eventually, they wrote me and said, "Well, get active or get out." I had at that point 22 good years to retirement and 20 was what was required so what the heck, I went on the retired list and then eventually when I got to age 60 I went on the retired with pay list and I get a very nice check every month.

Mark: In the Reserves you had to do like two weeks in the summer or something like that?

Bohstedt: Yup.

Mark: What sort of things transpired during these two-week training sessions?

Bohstedt: Well, some of them were at Camp Pendleton; some of them were in the Camp Lejune in the East. We'd fly the whole unit on the leased planes which were mostly relics left over from World War II and we'd undergo unit training. We

were an infantry company and we'd do the grunt type of things. Stomping up and down the hills and communicating back and forth and undergoing basic training type of--

Mark: What sort of people were in the Reserves? A lot of people like yourself, a lot of veterans? Young college guys?

Bohstedt: No, not many college. There were a lot of World War II veterans both commissioned and enlisted and a lot of young fellows that the draft scared into signing up. It was a pretty good mixture.

Mark: You've exhausted the questions that I had, is there anything you'd like to add?

Bohstedt: Well, can't say that we missed very much. It's been interesting; I still have an enormous respect for the Marine Corps. I don't regret much of what I did, but I wouldn't do it over again for anything!

Mark: Thank you for taking the time to talk to me this morning.

Bohstedt: I'm pleased to.

[End of Interview]