

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
James "Jim" Erwin
Marine Corps, World War II and
American Occupation Forces in North China

2006

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Erwin, James, (b. 1927). Oral History Interview, 2006.

User copy, 3 sound cassettes (ca. 136 min); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 3 sound cassettes (ca. 136 min); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

James “Jim” Erwin, a Madison, Wisconsin resident, discusses his service as a Marine during World War II and with the American Occupation Forces in North China. He served in the C Company, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. Erwin mentions he was born in Detroit, Michigan and that his father was a chief yeomen first class in the Navy during World War I. Erwin recalls hearing about Pearl Harbor on the radio while listening to a football game. He mentions Americans were uninformed about the strength of the Japanese fleet and expected the war to be over quickly. The day after Pearl Harbor, his oldest brother, Edward “Bud” Erwin, went to enlist in the Navy but chose the Marine Corps instead because the recruitment line was shorter. His second brother, Jack, also enlisted in the Marines and flew anti-submarine patrol planes in Cuba and the Solomon Islands. Erwin describes his mother’s negative reaction when he wanted to enlist; she said she’d “already given two sons.” Erwin eventually convinced his mother that if he didn’t voluntarily enlist in the Marine Corps, he would be drafted into the Army. Upon enlisting, Erwin tells a story of faking his way through a colorblindness test during his physical. Failing to see the numbers on the charts, he listened to the responses of the recruits in line ahead of him and repeated their answers. He passed and was admitted to the Marine Corps; however, his colorblindness became an issue when he reenlisted in 1949. Erwin describes in detail his basic training at Parris Island and Elliot’s Beach (South Carolina). He touches on regional differences and his first taste of grits. He recalls taking salt tablets to prevent heat exhaustion during training. Erwin discusses at length his training on the firing range, requirements for sharpshooters, and their pay-grades. He illustrates the physical transformation he underwent by telling how Jack didn’t recognize him at the train station when both brothers returned home on leave. Erwin remembers working in the mess hall the day the war ended. He says there was “no reaction” from the Marines upon hearing the news except to say “Yeah? Who won?” After World War II, he became a Reservist and served at Camp Le Jeune (North Carolina) as a company runner and at Great Lakes Naval Station (Illinois) as a guard for court-martialed sailors (mostly deserters) at the Naval Disciplinary Barracks. Erwin frequently discusses tensions and teasing among the Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. He portrays sailors as complaining more than Marines. Erwin makes fun of an Air Force pilot for bragging about his Air Medals to Jack, who had flown more air strikes with the Marines. In 1946, Erwin was assigned to North China. He describes his journey across the U.S. by train and across the Pacific by ship. At the port in Shanghai, Erwin says that sailors turned fire hoses on the crowds of Chinese people who were trying to sell things to the American troops. He also mentions seeing Indian Sikhs in the British-controlled section of Shanghai. Erwin’s battalion was

stationed in Taegu (Daegu) and Tientsin (Tianjin), China. Erwin states that upon arrival, the Marines were briefed on the civil war in China between the Nationalists and the Communists. Their mission in North China was to guard the Peking-Mukden Railroad from the Communists and gangs of bandits. Erwin explains that American troops were neutral and under strict rules of engagement; they were not to return fire except to protect themselves. He describes local Salt Police asking the Marines to help defend a salt warehouse against bandits, but they were unable to assist due to the rules of engagement. Erwin goes on to say that the Communists' 8th Route Army, known as the Ba Loo, controlled "the night and the countryside." Erwin describes how he became radio operator and "shot gun rider" in the Jeep, working closely with officers. He discusses hardships of camp life such as washing from helmets because there was no running water. He relates an incident when a Chinese steamboat, that was mining salt, sunk in the Pei River, drowning 200 Chinese people. Erwin says bodies washed up by their base for weeks, and the Marines would push them downstream. He also reports that several Marines died of Japanese B-type encephalitis. Erwin describes positive incidents as well, including having his first filet mignon in Maxim's of Paris Restaurant in Tientsin and rebuilding a firing range in Chingwantao (Qinhuangdao) in a beautiful, wooded area. While in Chingwantao, Erwin describes interactions with British sailors. Erwin recounts that his detail was marooned at the firing range when the Communists took out the railroad tracks. The men played cards and swam at Cadaho Beach. When they returned to base, a bitter officer tried to charge them with furlough time for their "vacation." Erwin describes various skirmishes and power plays between the Marines and the Communists; one time, Marines and the Ba Loo traded insults in Chinese. Erwin mentions several occasions when the Marines fired warning shots or tested machine guns as a show of power. In one instance, a farmer's donkey was killed by a stray bullet, so the Marines pooled their loose change to compensate him. Erwin describes another incident when the Marines gave a lame horse to the Chinese villagers who cooked it and had a feast with fireworks. Erwin describes a Ba Loo raid in Hsin Ho in October, 1946 in which the Chinese used home-made grenades. Erwin goes into great detail about his involvement in the Hsin Ho Incident on April 4-5, 1947. The Marines were supposed to guard an ammunition supply point outside Hsin Ho when the Communist Ba Loo attacked, exploding the ammunition sheds. Erwin tells of being inside an M7 track vehicle and falling out of it head-first when his foot got tangled in the radio antennae. Erwin cut his hands on the gravel, and his company teased him, saying "we don't give Purple Hearts to clumsy Marines." He describes the fighting in detail and encountering U.S. casualties in Hsin Ho as well as a teenaged Ba Loo who'd been killed. Erwin claims that the Hsin Ho Incident was barely covered in American newspapers because Henry Ford died the same week. After North China, Erwin was assigned to Guam, and then he was sent back to Great Lakes (Illinois) where he was discharged. He reenlisted in 1949; however, due to his colorblindness, he was initially assigned to non-active duty. Erwin relates that in 1950 he worked at the Chicago (Illinois) office during the mobilization of troops for the Korean War. In Chicago, he met his future wife, Mary O'Brien, a Marine Corps Women's Reservist (WR), who was serving as a telephone operator. She had served as a mail clerk at Parris Island during World War II. Erwin tells the story of marrying O'Brien in 1950, shortly after the Korean War began. They tried to keep their wedding a secret because they had no furlough due to the mobilization effort. However, when Erwin's commanding officer found out, he finagled a 72-hour leave for

their honeymoon. Throughout the interview, Erwin reveals many instances of Marines bucking authority: refusing to get inoculations; not sleeping with mosquito nets in China; sneaking off troop trains to drink beer; and stealing parkas, boots, loose change, and chairs from the Navy. He ironically portrays himself as being promoted twice because he was seen as lacking ambition. He became a corporal when Lieutenant John Bergen, deciding Erwin had “no sense of responsibility,” signed him up to take the noncommissioned officers exam. Erwin left the Marines as a staff sergeant. Erwin touches upon his career after the military working on chemical pre-treatments prior to paint operations. During the Vietnam War, he pre-treated various weapons and vehicles for the Army including: shells, Jeeps, trucks, and recoilless rifle cases. Erwin expresses relief that none of his five children went into the military or were old enough to be sent to Vietnam. Finally, Erwin tells many stories of surprising coincidences, such as: getting a new bunkmate who’d shared a bunk with his brother Bud for three years in Europe; his brother Jack replacing their cousin in the Solomon Islands during World War II; and, years later in Chicago, meeting the staff officer from Tientsin who Erwin had radioed for help during the Hsin Ho attack.

Biographical Sketch:

James “Jim” Erwin (b.1927) was born in Detroit, Michigan. He served in the C Company, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division during World War II and in North China. He assisted in the troop mobilization effort during the Korean War and, during the Vietnam War, he worked in the private sector pre-treating artillery for painting. He currently lives in Madison, Wisconsin and was a volunteer for six years at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcript edited by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2008

Abstract by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2008

Interview Transcript

John: This is John Driscoll, and today is February 13, 2006. And this is an oral history interview with Jim Erwin. Jim is a veteran of World War II and the years thereafter. He is also a volunteer with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Archives and we are meeting today in the conference room at the Museum, and, Jim, thanks a lot for agreeing to the interview and why don't we start at the very beginning, Jim? When and where were you born?

Jim: Okay. I was born on the 6th of September, 1927, in Detroit, Michigan. I was the third of four boys. I had two older brothers and one younger brother. My oldest brother was three years older than I was. My other brother was two. And then I got a younger brother four years younger than I was. My father was a veteran of the First World War. He was a chief yeoman in the Navy and, interestingly, he was enlisted in the Navy as a yeoman first class. He had intended to become a lawyer and so when he was in high school, he took typing and shorthand. So, when he went down to enlist in the Navy, I guess, in 1917, they saw his typing and shorthand ability and enlisted him immediately as a first class yeoman. And six months later he was made a chief yeoman, temporary rank, and then six months later he was confirmed as permanent rank as a chief yeoman. He served at Great Lakes for a while and then he went to Detroit, Michigan, to the naval detachment at what is now the Ford Motor Company Rouge Plant, and at that time they were installing Marine engines in wooden patrol craft, what they called sub-chasers. And that is where he met my mother. He later served at the Naval Gun Factory at Newport, Rhode Island, and then the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When the war ended, he came back to Detroit, married my mother, and remained in Detroit. He finished law school, became a lawyer. Actually he supported us as a court reporter. He died when I was eight years old. That was 1935. He had a military funeral. The sailors and the Army were pall bearers, the Marines were out as the firing party at the grave. They played Taps. December 7, 1941, I remember it very vividly. We had gone to church. My mother had made dinner and we turned on the radio for the football games, and that is when I heard the news of Pearl Harbor. And I thought at first the Japanese were crazy. I thought it would be a short war. But we had not been informed about the size of the Japanese fleet that really was larger and stronger than the American fleet. And also the Japanese controlled most of the islands in the North Central Pacific, the Marshalls, the Marianas, the Carolines, and so forth. They were former German island colonies which were given to the Japanese after the First World War. The day after Pearl Harbor, my oldest brother, Bud, Edward was his name but we called him Bud, he went down to join the Navy but there was a big lineup at the Navy recruiter and none at the Marine Corps. So he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was sent to Quantico, Virginia, for Boot Camp. When he finished Boot Camp, he was given a seventy-two hour pass.

Came home for the weekend. Returned to Quantico and then was put on board a transport and then sent with the Marine detachment to the naval base at Londonderry, Northern Ireland. And he remained in Northern Ireland for three years. When my brother Jack turned seventeen, he enlisted in the Marine Corps, went to Boot Camp at San Diego, and when his whole boot platoon was finished he was sent to the naval air station at Miramar, and put in a Marine aviation detachment. He took radio school at Miramar and then was transferred to Jacksonville, Florida for gunnery school. After completing gunnery school, he went on what they called operational training. Flew in Navy PBY patrol planes and on anti-submarine patrol. They would fly around for ten or twelve hours, land in the harbor, tied up at a buoy, and then they would take them ashore on liberty in Havana. And they would get back on the plane the next morning. It had been re-fueled. Fly around again and land back in Jacksonville, Florida.

John: Tough duty.

Jim: Yea. Well, he brought home a box of Cuban cigars. Gave it to my uncle. I think he also brought home a bottle of rum that he bought in Havana. But then he was transferred out to the West Coast, joined Marine dive bombing squadrons in the northern Solomons. Interesting enough, I got a cousin who was in that squadron, and my brother was a replacement for him when he came back, so he went home.

John: Oh, yea?

Jim: Cousin Ed Glenner was there. Then the squadron later was moved up to Leyte, in the Philippine Islands, where they provided close air support to the First Cavalry, of the Army, which was making their dash through the mountains up to Manila. And the Marines there had a Marine officer on the ground in a radio Jeep, with the Army, and he called in the air strikes right up where they could drop five hundred pound bombs just a little beyond the bombing range of the American troops. I turned seventeen, told my mother I wanted to join the Marines and she said, no, she had already given two sons. That was enough. So I went to work for General Motors Corporation. I was a messenger in the teletype section. And I was going to work on the bus one morning and I read in the paper that the Marines were looking for recruits. So I stayed on the bus, went down to take the physical at the Federal Building. I should have flunked the physical because it turned out I was color blind.

John: Okay.

Jim: We were in line and there was a Navy corpsman sitting at a desk, and the people would go up to the desk and then they would call out some numbers. When I got up to the desk, the corpsman pointed down to a series of charts that had colored

dots all over them. And he said, "Read the numbers." I didn't see any numbers. I thought this was some kind of a psychology test. When he said "Read the numbers," I called out the same numbers that everybody else did and he said, "Okay. Passed." So we got up in line to the next station, I asked the guy ahead of me about the numbers and when I told him I couldn't see any, he told me I was color blind. So, of course, when we were down at Parris Island, we took another physical down there and I did the same thing. Just called off the same numbers and passed the test there. So, I took the paperwork over to my mother's office downtown and said if I don't get in the Marines, I'm going to end up drafted into the Army. I didn't want that, so she signed for me. And a girl in the office notarized it for me. I took it back to the recruiting station. They said, "Can you leave today?" I said I would like to stay overnight and say goodbye to some people. And they said, "Okay, you leave tomorrow. Be back here at 0800 to be sworn in." So I was sworn in and then off on the train to Parris Island, South Carolina. And I remember pulling into Jacksonville, or Atlanta, Georgia, in the middle of the night. And it was hot, muggy. Went over across to an all-night diner with the other ones to get something to eat. We had meal chits. And ordered bacon and eggs. And when the waitress brought the bacon and eggs plate, there was a little pile of some yellow green stuff on it. And I said, "What's that?" And she said, "Them are grits. Welcome to the South!" So, when we got to Yemassee, South Carolina, where some Marines came on the train, greeted us, yelling at us to move, move, move! Lined us up and then loaded us on cattle cars. These were a semi-truck hauling a big stake trailer and hauled us over to the island of Parris Island. And then as we were going through the base, the Marine recruits that were on the sidewalks were yelling out, "You'll be sorry!"

John: I remember that.

Jim: So then we had the usual routine. They took us in, shaved our heads, gave us a shower. We had another physical, quick physical. Issued us clothing. All they issued us was dungarees, skivvies, socks, two pairs of field shoes, and shaving equipment. Two tooth brushes, one to brush our teeth with, one to use to clean our rifles. Then they moved us over to our billeting area, which were Quonset huts. And of course, we were living in shock and confusion stage, with everybody yelling at us. And of course, right next to us was a platoon that we figured was about ready to graduate, because they had hair. And also their dungarees were sun-bleached. They were executing the manual of arms. They got forty or fifty of them, and every time they made a movement in the manual of arms, you only heard the one sound. They were perfect. And we were, "God, we'll never be able to do that." So we went into drilling, learning close-order drill. Learning the manual of arms. Interspersed with lectures on the M1 rifle and other military subjects. About three or four days later, I and some other Marines were pulled out and sent to the dental clinic. And as we came back from the dental clinic, we were

looking at a platoon, and they looked good. They were doing a good drill. We thought these guys must have been around here for a while. And as we got closer, we found out it was our platoon. Surprise, you know. So, as they say, it was dry, it was hot. We had to take salt tablets. People would pass out from heat prostration but we got no sympathy. The DIs would throw some water from a canteen on them, feed them enough salt tablets, and put them back in the ranks, and they would go on. So, after about two weeks of this, we had an inspection inside the Quonset huts with our 782 gear on the bunk. Lieutenant came in and he would inspect the rifles, and then he would ask questions. Actually, what he was doing was checking how well the drill instructors had trained us, rather than worry that much about us.

John: Yea.

Jim: So, after he left, it was okay to pack up. We were moving out to the rifle range. And the rifle range was nice. A lot easier duty out there. We were in tents. Didn't have much to clean up. Just use a broom and sweep the sand into the cracks between the rough wooden flooring and rake the sand in front of the tent. We got up in the morning and we had physical drill under arms, then went to the chow hall. Had breakfast and then out to the rifle range which we would hit just about the time the sun was coming up. The first stage of it was the snapping-in drill, checking you were in proper position for firing the M1 rifle. Then they put us on the thousand inch range firing semiautomatic .22s. They weren't that interested whether we hit the bulls eye. They were looking for close grouping on the shots. Which meant you had the proper position, you were squeezing them off and doing it right. Then we moved on to the M1 rifle range. We pulled the targets in the butts in the morning, fired in the afternoon, or fired in the afternoon and pulled butts in the morning. But the qualification called for firing eight rounds slow-fire at two hundred yards. Then you moved up to the three hundred yard line. Had to fire sixteen rounds rapid-fire standing and sitting, and sixteen rounds rapid fire standing to kneeling. Then up to the four hundred yard line and fire sixteen rounds rapid-fire standing to prone position. And then up to the five hundred yard line where you got to fire eight rounds slow-fire at five hundred yards. And at the five hundred yard line the thirty-six inch bulls eye was about the size of the front sight blade, about two sixteenths of an inch was about all you could see. Well, I qualified. I think the qualification was two hundred and seventy, or something like that, for marksman, and then two hundred and ninety, or ninety-five, for sharpshooter. Three hundred and five was expert rifleman. And if you fired sharpshooter, you got two dollars and fifty cents extra a month, and expert riflemen got five dollars extra a month. And our standard pay at this time was fifty dollars a month.

John: Okay.

Jim: Then following that, we went to the Browning automatic rifle range and we fired two magazines of Browning automatic with the Browning automatic rifle. There they were making sure we just pulled the trigger with a release that would squeeze off three rounds rather than hold it back and letting off more rounds than that. Then we fired a couple rifle grenades from our rifles. And then went over to another area and threw two hand grenades. And following that, we were finished at the range. And our drill instructor gleefully told us he had volunteered us for mess duty. So we moved from the tents into the barracks where the coaches were. And were issued mess whites. And we were working the mess hall. And, again, getting up about three-thirty in the morning to get everything ready. And then serving the morning chow to the people so they could get out to the rifle range. Then we'd get off maybe about ten-thirty or so, and have a half an hour. Went back to the barracks. We had to bring our rifle over to the drill instructor. He checked to make sure our rifle was clean, and asked us something. And sometime in August, this was, a guy came in the barracks one morning about ten thirty, eleven o'clock, we were sacked out. And he was real excited and yelling, "The war is over! The war is over!" There was no reaction from us. He said, "I'm not kidding. The war is over!" And one of our guys said, "Yea? Who won?"

John: Okay.

Jim: We all laughed. At this point, all we were focusing on was getting out of Parris Island. So, following this, we packed up and went back to our Quonset huts at Main Side. When we got there we were told to pack up field packs with shelter halves and ponchos. We were going out to Elliot's Beach for some extended order drill. So we marched out to Elliot's Beach and lived in the shelter halves for two days. And they brought the food out. We ate in mess kits. We practiced squad tactics, and running and crawling, and things of that nature. And after the third day, they said, "Okay, pack up your packs and everything. We're going back to Main Side. So as we were marching back to Main Side, one of the guys yelled out to the platoon guide, "Pick up the pace!" So we started going faster. And then they yelled, "Pick up the pace!" And so we kept going to the point where we broke into a run. And, of course, everybody was happy because now we were pushing the drill instructor. He had to keep up with us. Instead of him pushing us, we were pushing him. But as those things were, as we pulled into our area, down at Main Side, where our Quonset huts were, there was a brand new platoon sitting there, standing there, and they were going through the shock and confusion stage. And here we came running up and we were all covered with sweat. Our dungarees were sweat-stained. But we were grinning big smiles on our face. And then the drill instructor called us to attention. And then he went into his act and started yelling at us. "What's so funny? Why all those smiles? Wipe those smiles off your face. What do you think this is? Some kind of summer camp?" You know. And,

of course, these people next to us were even more confused now. Because they could see the way we looked and what we had been through, but we were enjoying it. So, well, I guess we got cleaned up and then that night had close order drill, rifle inspection. Next morning, we were told to fall out in front of the Quonset huts rather than in the formations, and then the three drill instructors were there. And they said, "Congratulations. Welcome aboard. You are now United States Marines." And they passed out the emblems and that was our graduation.

John: Right. Yea.

Jim: So then we were taken down to the quartermaster and given our full uniforms. Our greens, and khakis, and so forth. They gave us a ten day furlough, and we went home. And at the time I was home, my brother, who had been in the Philippines, came home from overseas, too. And as I met him in the railroad station, I said, "Hi." And he passed me by. And I had to say "Hey! It's me!" And he didn't know me, he thought I was just another Marine.

John: Yea. Remarkable transformation.

Jim: And the two of us were out one day, over by the old high school. We ran into a buddy of his who had been in his class in high school. His younger brother was in my class. He had been with the Air Force. Eighth Air Force, in England. And he had big gunner wings on his khaki shirt, along with all kinds of ribbons. So my brother asked him, "What are all those ribbons?" And he explained, he said, "Well, for every five missions you get an Air Medal. And when you complete thirty missions, they give you a Distinguished Flying Cross. So I have six Air Medals, and a Distinguished Flying Cross." So he looked at my brother's little combat air crew wings, and "What are those?" And my brother said, "Well, I was a radio gunner in a dive bomber squadron." He said, "Well, how many missions did you fly?" My brother said, "Well, we didn't call them missions. We called them air strikes. But I flew seventy-six." And he said, "Wow! You must have a lot of medals." And my brother said, "No." He said, "We did get a Navy letter of commendation for the Philippines." And that was the difference. So, after furlough there, they brought us back to Parris Island. We didn't do anything, just hung around there for a couple of days. And then they put us on a train and sent us up to Camp Le Jeune. We got off at Camp Le Jeune and marched up into the barracks we were in. They were dropping people off at each barracks. I ended up at the third barracks with the Third Replacement Company, Replacement Battalion. Gunnery Sergeant was there. He told us to line up according to height. And he looked at me. I was the smallest man. And he said, "Okay, Feather Merchant, report to the company office. You are the new company runner." So that was my job at Le Jeune. I carried paper work down to the sergeant major, and

then the sergeant major gave me paper work to carry back up to our first sergeant. And one of the interesting things about it, people were coming and going. People who were eligible for discharge were being transferred up to some base or station nearest to their home. And other people were being transferred out to other places. We'll skip the joke. And the interesting thing is I came up one day and there was a new guy in the bunk on top of me. And so I crapped out on my bunk. And then somebody came in and said, "Erwin, they want you downstairs." So I went down. I came back up and flaked out on the bunk again. And the guy stuck his head over the side and said, "Your name Erwin?" And I said, "Yea." And he said, "You got a brother in the Marines?" And I said, "I have two." And he said, "You got a brother Ed who was in Northern Ireland?" And I said, "Yes, I do." Then he said, "Why is it you Erwins always get the bottom bunk. I slept over your brother for three years in Northern Ireland."

John: That's a remarkable story.

Jim: And he asked me where my brother was. And I said he was with the Fourth Marine Division, Twenty-fifth Regiment, on Maui. And I said, "What have you been doing since you came back from Ireland?" And he said, well, he was on a forty millimeter gun turret on a cruiser, I guess it was. So we kind of hung out together for a while. And then they sent him up to the Boston Navy Yard for discharge. But then starting in January, the Marine Corps came up with a deal where you could enlist for two years. I was a Reservist. And so I shipped over and re-enlisted in the Regular Marine Corps for two years, and was given a thirty-day furlough. It was a delay-in-route furlough. And then I was to report to the Marine Barracks at Great Lakes, Illinois. So, following the furlough, I reported in to Great Lakes. Our CO, Colonel Norman Evans True, who ran a very tight ship, and he said, "You will, at all times, be a model to these undisciplined sailors who sometimes forget that they are members of the military establishment. And any infractions of discipline will be severely punished." And I was sent over to Camp Dewey, Center Brig Unit. There were three brigs and a Naval Disciplinary Barracks at Great Lakes. One was the in-coming brig, which was on Main Side, where the shore patrol would bring the sailors in, and then they would be transferring them over to our brig, and following their court-martials, they might either go to the Naval Disciplinary Barracks, or over to Brig Five, deserters who were going to naval prisons but they were holding them there until they were transferred to a naval prison at Portsmouth. And our duty was, one day you stood four hours on, eight hour watches, in the cell blocks, including the bread and water punishment cells. And then the next day you chased prisoners over to Main Side. And a lot of the days I would chase prisoners over for their captain's mast, which was their initial hearing, for the head of the base captain. And he would be there with a yeoman and they would take the name of the Marine who stood as the orderly at the hearings. And they would read off the charges. And they would ask

if they had anything to say. And they generally said no. And he would say, "Summary court-martial." Or "General court-martial." And then we would take them back to the brig while they were awaiting trial. And in some cases we would take them to another office in the building, where they had to meet with their lawyer who was going to represent them at the court-martial proceeding. And that was duty at Great Lakes. As I say, it wasn't fun because you got a twelve-to-four watch, why, you got woke up about eleven, eleven-thirty, to get dressed, went to inspection, and then went over to the brig, stood watch until four o'clock in the morning. Then came back, laid down on your sack, six o'clock the field music blew reveille, and you showered and got your M1 rifle and went outside for inspection. And then you had close order drill. I remember on one occasion, a sailor stuck his head out the window and said, "Will you damned Marines knock it off? We're trying to sleep!"

John: I was there ten years later. That place got colder than hell in the winter. That was really cold.

Jim: Yea. Oh, the other thing, too, every Friday we would fall out with our rifles. They would put us on a bus and take us over to Main Side, to the parade field. And the Navy band would be out there. And we would have inspection by the base captain and pass in review while the band played. And then back on the bus and back over to Camp Dewey. And the only other incident I remember was the railroad strike. The railroad was going to go on strike and we were ordered to fall out with riot gear and live ammunition. We had our gas masks and tear gas canisters and the tear gas guns that fired tear gas shells. And the captain stood out in front of us and said, "Just because you have been issued ammunition, you will not shoot anybody. Repeat. Do not shoot anybody. If anybody attempts to interfere with the operation of the railroad, you will turn them over to the U. S. marshals who you will be working with. So we were bussed down to Chicago and sat in a side street there in the buses for a while. And then an officer came on and said the railroad employees had called off the strike. So we got back to Great Lakes. Another time I remember something, I was assigned just before noon chow to take a prisoner over to the naval hospital area for a consultation with a doctor. So it was one of those low slung buildings. One story with a porch in front. And I marched him through the sick bay up to the nurses station. And told them what his name was. He had an appointment. So then the doctor came out and they went into another room. And I stood outside the room at parade rest. And then when he finished, I went back to the nurses station. Put him on the bulkhead. Asked the nurse if I could use the phone. I called in for the brig dispatcher and said I had one prisoner, one chaser, building so and so, naval hospital. Need a pick up. He said, "You're out of luck. All the drivers are at chow. You'll have to wait till they get back from chow."

John: Let me turn this over.

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

Jim: So I told the prisoner, "Congratulations. We just missed noon chow." So I didn't want to stand there by the nurses station so I marched him out of the sick bay and had him sit on the bottom step of the porch, and I sat up on the top step of the porch. There for a few minutes and a Navy nurse came out with a food tray with a cup of coffee on it. She said, "Here, I heard that you missed your chow. Here's chow for you." And I said, "Well, thank you, ma'am, but I can't do that. But you can give it to the prisoner." And she said, "Well, at least you can have the coffee." And so she took the coffee cup up and gave it to me. And she offered me a cigarette and lit it for me. And I drank the coffee and smoked the cigarette, and had a cigarette. So then when he finished, why, she picked up the tray and I told the sailor "Thank the officer for your chow." And he said, "Thank you, ma'am." And I saluted her. And that was it. The only other thing that was interesting was, let's see, I had a cousin who was married to an ensign on the base, and she worked in Building 1. And so I had liberty one time and I figured I'd call her where she worked, and she said "Okay. I get off at 4:30 and Bill, my husband, will be picking me up. He has a car. They had an apartment in Waukegan. So I went over to Main Side and I was standing out on the sidewalk with the other sailors and officers who were waiting for their wives or girlfriends who worked there. And the captain's vehicle came around to the front. The chief petty officer driver got out and opened up the back door and was standing next to the back door for the captain. Captain came walking out with his aide, started walking down the sidewalk. And stopped, turned around, and came back to where I was standing. I snapped to attention and saluted. He said, "Well, Erwin, are you going out on liberty?" And I said, "Yes, sir." "Oh," he said, "and are you going to be on deck tomorrow?" I said, "No, sir. I'll be chasing." He said, "Well, enjoy your liberty." And I said, "Thank you, sir." And saluted. And he turned around and left. And the ensign and these other officers were staring at me. And my cousin's husband said, "You know the captain?" And I said, "No, I don't know the captain. I just stood as his orderly. He evidently knew my name."

John: That's great. That's a great story.

Jim: So then, it wasn't too long after that we fell out one time and they called off a list. And they said, "Pack your sea bags. You are going out to Camp Pendleton." So they put us on the North Shore train and took us down to Chicago. Then got on a train in Chicago. It was a nice deal, though, because rather than the trip to Parris Island where we were in day coach, we had Pullman berths. So I remember going through Kansas City, then down to El Paso, Texas. And of course, we were told we couldn't get off the train. So we immediately got off the train and went out to the depot. But Army MPs chased us back. We climbed over the wall and went

down the street, and went into a bar down there. And I don't know what the law was in Texas, but they served us. And then back on the train. And we went through the New Mexico desert up to California, and came into Los Angeles station. And then got on a train there and went down to Oceanside. Got picked up by six-by-six trucks at Oceanside and hauled through Camp Pendleton. And I was amazed at how large the base was. We seemed to be traveling for a long distance. Then they finally dropped us off at a bunch of barracks up in the hills. And they gave us stencils to stencil our sea bags with our movement, which was Ivan 83. One guy joked that it was maybe we were going to Vladivostok. So then they called some of us out and we were assigned to MP duty at the slop chute. I guess we should say for the benefit of those that don't know, the beer hall for enlisted Marines is called the slop chute. Although now I guess they call it the enlisted men's club. They are more proper than we were. So we stood around and watched the other Marines drink beer, and the next day they took us out and gave us our embarkation numbers, then took us over to the swimming pool. We had to take off our boondockers - field shoes - and got up on the high board, jumped off, and swam to the shore. To the side of the pool. Put our shoes back on again. Then we went over to a wall where they had cargo nets draped over, climbed up, and then down the wall on the cargo net. And that went pretty well. And then we went to sick bay and got some more shots, inoculations.

John: Yea.

Jim: Then at the end of the day, we had some time off. And now we could go to the slop chute and drink beer. So what we did, we got to the end of the slop chute where there was a little window. We could open up the screen window. And we were sneaking beer out and stashing it in the boondocks. So after the slop chute closed, why, we went out and recovered our beer and went into the boondocks and sat around drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. And fell asleep. When we woke up, the sun was shining, so we ran like hell back to the barracks. Well, everybody was already falling out. And our sea bags were stacked in the middle. And there was the first sergeant there who promptly took our names. So then we were put on busses and went down to San Diego, and boarded the troop transport. It was a full-sized transport, the U. S. S. *J. C. Breckinridge*. Went out to sea. We had to make a stop over at Midway Island because they was going to drop off a sailor who had appendicitis and fly him back to Pearl Harbor for surgery at Pearl Harbor. And I don't know many days we were at sea but then we ended up the Wangpo River. Went into Shanghai. And we anchored for a while in midstream. The Chinese came out in junks. They were going to sell us all kinds of stuff, but the sailors got out fire hoses, and turned the fire hoses on them, drove them away. And we tied up at the dock. It must have been around the British section of the thing, called the Bund, in Shanghai. Because the guards there were Indian Sikhs wearing these brown turbans. We were in Shanghai for a couple of days, and then back out to

sea again. Went up to the port of Tsingtao in the north. And Tsingtao had been the former fleet headquarters of the German Pacific Fleet, up to the First World War and the German colony, but when the First World War broke out, the fleet sailed and tried to make its way back to Germany. Finally the British caught up with it off the Falkland Islands and they lost the naval battle there. But the U. S. S. *Repose* was in the harbor there and also the headquarters for the 7th Fleet at the time. The Navy liked it because it was one of the best anchorages, I guess, in China, or as far as the fleet anchorage. And I guess we were there a couple of days and then we went up to Taeku [Daegu], and anchored off Taeku [Daegu] bay. The gulf there is very shallow water and the water that goes to Tientsin [Tianjin], anchors into the gulf. Even the landing craft had to wait for high tide before they could get over the bar and into shore. So it was afternoon when we loaded onto LSMs and went into Taeku [Daegu]. And Taeku [Daegu] was the Navy Port Control Group, GROPAC 13. And also Able Company, First Battalion, 5th Marines, was billeted there. So, we retrieved our sea bags and the lieutenant was standing out there with a roster and flashlight, calling off the assignments. And all of the Marines I had been with at Great Lakes were assigned to the 7th Marine Regiment at Chingwantao [Qinhuangdao]. They were going by train to Chingwantao [Qinhuangdao] in the morning and I was standing there all by myself with my sea bag. So I was finally called and ordered to the First Battalion, 5th Marines. So when it was over, I went up to the lieutenant and asked him if it was a mistake. And he asked me what my name and rank was. And he showed me the roster but they had me listed as a private 521, basic marine. And I told him I was a Pfc., and I was a 522, guard patrolman, which was the MOS we were supposed to be given at Great Lakes.

John: Okay.

Jim: And he said, "Take it up with your first sergeant when you get where you are going." So the next morning, back on six-by-six trucks, and they dropped some people off down in Taeku [Daegu], it was Headquarters and Baker Company. And then there was about a half a dozen of us left. Took us further up the road to another compound. Got out there and were greeted by the first sergeant who informed us that we were now members of Charlie Company, First Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. And he asked if somebody could type and a guy held up his hand. So he called him out and told him he was the new clerk. "And anybody have any questions?" And I stuck my hand up and he said, "What's your problem?" And I told him the roster was wrong, I am not a private 521, I'm a Pfc. 522. So he said, "Come into the office, we'll call the sergeant major and have him check your record book." And when we got in the office, he asked me what I'd been doing. How long I was in the Marine Corps. I told him a year. He said, "What have you been doing for a year?" I said I was a runner at Camp Le Jeune, and then a chaser at Great Lakes. So he said, "Good, you're a runner again." He said, "Do you know

how a change sheet is made out?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, you can show this guy how to do it."

John: On the job training.

Jim: Yea. And then I, we were taken into a warehouse and we met our company commander who was a twenty-year old second lieutenant, John Bergen. And he explained that there was a civil war going on. We were neutral and were under rules of engagement. And the rules of engagement were, one, you will not fire unless you are fired upon, two, you will not return fire, only to protect your own life and the lives of other marines, or to protect American property. And he said, in addition to the Nationalists and the Communists, there is also a bandit gang running around, too. So, but the main mission of the Marines in North China at this time was to guard the 136 miles of the Peking-Mukden Railroad. The coal supply for most of China came out of the Tangchan-Lindsee area. And in order to keep the coal supply going, why, Marines were stationed at bridge outposts all along this railroad line, in addition to other detachments at certain stations, like at Tangchan-Lindsee was another Marine detachment, too. We supplied guards for coal trains. Sometimes large guards to go out to Taeku [Daegu] when they were offloading supplies off the ships, and then our third mission was, for the company, was, we were required to send a quick reaction and relief force out to the ammunition supply at Hsin Ho, if they had any trouble out there, and the OD there called for it. They had Marines from all of the companies on temporary attached duty out there. Initially it was the assault platoon in headquarters company with Marines from Able, Baker, and Charlie on two weeks detached duty there. So with people running in and out, there really wasn't a hell of a lot of people back in the compound we were in. In addition to my duties as the runner, I was also the shot gun rider in the company Jeep. If the Jeep went out of the Taeku [Daegu] area, like it had to go down to Taku to Able Company, or out to Hsin Ho, to the compound out there, you had to have two armed Marines in every vehicle. Because the Nationalists pretty well the cities but the countryside belonged to the Ba Loo. Now the Ba Loo was the 8th Route Army. In Chinese, Ba means eight, and Loo means route or way. So another job, then, I was on the telephone to the sergeant major, I was standing by on the field phone. I stood by during lunch periods, chow, and he wanted the names of some Marines who were going out on a detail. And I was on the field phone and spelling them out phonetically. And Lieutenant Bergen came in and he said, "You know the phonetic alphabet?" And I said, "Yes, sir." You know, that was the one they used then. He said, "Good, because now you are the SCR 300 radio operator. Get the radio, call in to the Comm Section, make a radio check with them and get your call signs." So they were Maypole, and we were Maypole Charlie. And that was kind of the duty. Another interesting thing, the compound itself, we had no running water. Water was brought in by a water trailer and everybody had five

gallon expeditionary cans, and we either washed out of helmets or buckets, or something like that. There was a river ran right alongside us and every morning you would see steamer, a river steamer, going down stream loaded with Chinese, and they were going to the salt works down at the river entrance to the bay. Evidently, they recovered the sea salt down there. That is what the Chinese used for the food, to preserve their food. I remember I was shaving one morning and I heard the sentry on the river bank call for the corporal of the guard and looked, and the steamer was there and it was stopped in mid-stream and it was sinking.

John: Oh, Jesus.

Jim: And I learned later in an almanac that something like two hundred some Chinese died when the steamer sunk. But that was China.

John: What river was that?

Jim: The Pei.

John: Oh, that's right, you mentioned that.

Jim: Yea. We would get bodies, sometimes. They would wash up and the corporal of the guard had a boat there. And he would go down there and he would push them back out into the current, and would joke, "We are passing them on to Battalion," because Battalion was down at the corner of the river, and we figured they would drift up there. So. One of the details I got while I was there was, I mentioned earlier, one of our outposts at Fongtu, which was about thirty-six miles up the river, up the railroad tracks towards Tangshan, got shelled by mortars on night. Lieutenant Flagg had seen the Chinese were tearing up the railroad ties and tracks which they removed to block the trains for a while. So we had the machine gun fire a burst over their heads. And then a Chinese Salt Policeman came down with a note from the commander of the Salt Police warehouse, which was up the tracks a little ways, and the note said that if the bandits attacked them tonight, will you come to our aid? Which we couldn't do. But then that night mortar fire came in and Sergeant Ralph Begazzi in the machine gun platoon got hit by mortar shrapnel. Well, the corpsman patched him up. And got on the radio with Doctor Rogers, the battalion surgeon, and then I think they put him on a train and shipped him down at sick bay. I don't know whether he had to go to the field hospital at Tientsin or not. But he came back on duty. Then I got on a detail which was a beautiful detail and we went up to Chingwantao [Qinhuangdao] to rebuild the old North China Marines rifle range. This is where the U. S. Marines used to fire the range. And we were in tents, and nice wooded area, nice sandy beach on the China Sea there. We built and fired the range. So British sailors from the H. M. S. *London* came down. The *London* was in port at Chingwantao [Qinhuangdao] and

we fed them beer and cigarettes, and talked with them, and they were kind of unhappy when they found out we made a lot more money in our pay than they did. We saw they had plenty of beer and cigarettes, though. And incidentally, later on, in, oh, I guess, in '48, no, it was '47, that next year they had come back and when they were coming into wherever they were down in South China, they were fired on by Chinese shore batteries and took casualties. But when we finished firing the range up there, then we got stuck up there because the Chinese had taken the tracks out. The Communists had taken the tracks out.

John: Oh, wow.

Jim: So we were marooned. So all we had to do was sit around and swim and play cards. So, finally, the tracks opened up and we got our trains back down to Changtoo again. And I remember all of a sudden I can smell the fertilizers, and stuff, and thought, "Ah, home." So we got home. Then one of our Marines, Malcolm Hayberd, out on Outpost 2, at again at Hangkoo, got shot by a sniper. So Lieutenant Bergen decided he wanted to have a little show of strength to them. So we organized a patrol to go up the thirty-six miles to the outpost. So we got up like at two or three o'clock in the morning, had breakfast, SOS.

John: Yep. Famous stuff.

Jim: Drew our field rations, packs, two canteens of water, which we always carried, and left about four o'clock in the morning. Made good time going up. I was the runner between the point, which was Platoon Sergeant Kohl had, and the advanced party, which was also the main party. So we had an extra bandoleer of ammunition and two sixty mortar rounds. Because we took a mortar and the light machine gun with us. And I remember our corpsman, Joseph Bellow, was up there with Platoon Sergeant Kohl, and he was complaining about when he joined the Navy, he didn't join the Navy to have to do these things like Marines.

John: Right.

Jim: So, I just said, "Hey, Doc. If you hate the Marines so much, why is it that when you guys go out on liberty, you are always wearing Marine uniforms? And not Navy uniforms?" And he gave me a dirty look. Well, when we got up to Peitang. And we watered at Peitang. And we were delayed there for a while because some of the guys had blisters. The corpsman had to treat their blisters, and so forth. And then we moved on up again, and we got about maybe five miles north of there, and some guy had heat prostration. Fell out. And I watched the corpsman recover his heat prostration. He opened up his dungarees and took off his t-shirt and poured some water on his chest. And the water just sucked up like a blotter. It was just absorbed immediately. So Lieutenant Bergen explained. "See, this is what

happens when you don't take your salt tablets. So, now, if we had been on an urgent mission, we would have been in trouble because I would have had to leave the corpsman and some people with him, and the rest of us would have had to go on. We may not have had enough people to do it." And there was a big Pfc., Frank Corso, decided the lieutenant wanted him carrying the radio rather than me for the long haul, because I was a feather merchant. So he calls in to Peking to let them know we were held up. And then Peking passed it on to Battalion, and as he said, the colonel down at Battalion was concerned that we wouldn't get up to Hangkoo before dark, so he said, "Stop a train and get on the train and take the train the rest of the way." So we did. We flagged down a train and put a Marine up in the cab to make sure he stopped. And then they offloaded us at Hangkoo, and then we dug in on the opposite side of the river on the rail bridge. And I remember by the time I got my fox hold dug, it was dark. And I couldn't see to read the ration cans. They brought over ten-in-one rations for us. So I started using my C's and K's that I had in my pack. And then that night I got, I guess it was the two-to-four watch, or something in the machine gun pit. And I remember sitting on the edge of the machine gun pit thinking, boy, here I am somewhere up in Northern China. And I hope it's quiet and we don't have any problems tonight. So then Corso came and relieved me at four o'clock and so I went back and crawled in my shelter half. We didn't put them up. I just wrapped it around me and went to sleep. Then it started raining and I heard Platoon Sergeant Kohl get up, and told Corso to secure the gun. They weren't near. The sun would be out and so they looked down at me, and they told Corso here is plenty of room. So they lifted up my shelter half and tucked the thirty caliber air-cooled in with me, and I slept with the machine gun. So then the next day, I guess, we were there for a while and then we got on a train and went back down to Tangku. Oh, I meant to tell you, did I mention we were up on the rifle range at Cadaho Beach, near Chingwantao [Qinhuangdao] I said it was like a vacation. And of course we got held up there because the tracks were out, but then when we did get back into Tangku and into the company compound, the first sergeant was mad because he said, "You guys were up there vacationing and I am short-handed, and people couldn't leave the outpost, and couldn't do this because we didn't have enough people."

John: Did you ever know a happy first sergeant?

Jim: So, he says, "You know, you guys are going to get all the crappy details. Matter of fact, I am going to talk to the sergeant major and see if we can have you charged with furlough time for the time you were up at Cadaho Beach. But after that, they didn't go up there any more. They were firing the range at Peking rather than get stuck up there. So then we got back, and the Lieutenant Bergen got me and the Jeep driver, and said, "Get some khakis" He had to go up to Tientsin, pick up the battalion payroll. And I was riding shotgun on the Jeep. Boy, those rough roads in the Jeep going up there. I spent more time bounding up into the air than I did

sitting down. We got up to Tientsin and we stayed in the hotel in the Italian quarters. He stayed in the former German area which was transient officers quarters. But then he picked us up in the Jeep and took us over to the French concession area and he bought us filet mignon at Maxim's of Paris Restaurant.

John: Oh. Man. In China?

Jim: Yea. In Tientsin. And he said, "Order the filet mignon." Well, I didn't know what filet mignon was. He said, "It's a steak, you know. You'll like it." So I had a steak dinner there at Maxim's of Paris Restaurant. I understand it is still there but they moved it up to Peking [Beijing] now, because that is where all the tourists are at now. They go up to Peking [Beijing]. So then we get into August and on the 5th of August at two o'clock in the morning, well, the way we ran the relief operation was that every evening at evening chow, the first sergeant, or gunnery sergeant, would say, "Okay, everybody that's got a detail tomorrow morning, fall out. Everybody that is on compound guard duty, fall out. Sick, lame, lazy, or no duty, fall out. There would be half a dozen of us left standing there. He would say, "Okay, you are the relief force tonight. If you hear the field music sound the call to arms, grab your socks, run to the main gate, the corporal of the guard will put small arms ammunition on a six-by truck that was parked there, off-duty A(mmunition) S(supply) Team. So that is what happened. I got up grabbed my socks, got my M1 rifle, and run to the truck. And he passed out ammunition and got up there, and I was dropped off with another Marine on Post No. 2. I've got a little thing here, a sketch of the ammunition supply. So I took up position down behind the road on the AST. And somebody started firing, so I told myself, that figure out there could be somebody so I opened up almost immediately. And then they called for everybody to cease fire. So we sat there, spent the rest of the night there. And the next morning went back down to Tankgu. And Lieutenant Bergen said that just after we left, he got a call from the colonel and the colonel told him to take out a sixty mortar and fire some illuminating rounds.

John: Jim, I am going to switch tapes.

[End of Side B of Tape 1.]

Jim: When we got dropped off at Post 2, as I say, we fired a couple of rounds, and the order was given to cease fire. And then when dawn came, we went back into Tanku. And I got chewed out by Mr. Bergen because I was supposed to be on the SCR 300 radio and wasn't supposed to respond to the call out there. So then we had four Marines at Tientsin died of sleeping sickness, Japanese B-type encephalitis.

John: Oh, wow. That's terrible.

Jim: So they came down with some shots for it. It was two series of shots, and they were painful. You didn't feel them, at first. It was like a regular shot and then a few minutes, it felt like somebody hit you in the muscle. So a lot of guys were skipping the second shot. And the corpsman was running around trying to find them. But the order also came down from Division that everybody had to sleep under mosquito nets. It was hot and miserable and I didn't want to sleep under a mosquito net, and didn't. The first sergeant and the gunnery sergeant started making bed checks and, if they caught me without the mosquito netting, so I got run up. And Lieutenant Bergen looked at me and he said, "Erwin, you know what your trouble is? You have no sense of responsibility." He said, "You're one of these Marines who is very happy as a Pfc., wants to stay a Pfc.. You're not interested in promotion because you don't want any responsibility. Well, I just changed that. They are having the promotion test Battalion tomorrow. You will go down to Battalion Headquarters. You will take the test. You will pass the test. And you will be promoted and take on the responsibilities of a non-commissioned officer." So, now I made corporal. So about another week later, there was another raid at the ASP. And we went out again in the middle of the night, except I didn't go. I had to stand by with the radio. But they decided after these two raids then that they were changing the guard structure. They pulled in the people from the Assault Platoon and the other companies and we moved out of our compound and went out to Hsin Ho, and moved into the compound at Hsin Ho, and we took over, we were relieved of all other duties and took over the security of the ammunition supply point. And this compound we moved into at Hsin Ho was the former Standard Oil Company compound back in the '20s and '30s.

John: Oh, okay.

Jim: And the oil tanks were still there but they were all rusty and shell-holed and everything. And as I said, I later read, there was a gun-boat stationed there. The U. S. S. *Tulsa*, worked out of Hsin Ho. And also in 1927 when the Marine Brigade went over there with Smedly Butler, that there was a Marine air detachment used to fly out of there and run patrols and reconnaissance. In fact, in General Vandergrift's memoirs, he wrote about going down to Hsin Ho and flying out as an observer on one of the aircraft. I remember he said it was a euphonious name, Hsin Ho. So, as I say, the ammunition supply point was beyond the village. We had to pass through the village of Hsin Ho to get out there, and, of course, everybody went out with loaded weapons. But, again, rules of engagement. And shortly after we arrived there, one night just after taps, this heavy firing broke out in the field opposite our wall and the Ba Loo were shooting up a rail station that was a little ways down and across from we were at. The railroad line ran right alongside our compound. And so we kind of went to general quarters and formed up a hasty defense thing. The compound was really too big to cover but I guess that was their

way of welcoming us to the neighborhood. So after that, the gunnery sergeant, James Patrick Whelan, a nice gunny. He was a little guy. He was a feather merchant, too. But he figured he would do two things. He had his old machine guns. The barrels were worn out. And so this was a good excuse for him to try to get new barrels out of battalion. So he said, "We'll also let the Ba Loo know what we are doing." So he took the machine guns out that evening after dark. And there was an old French Foreign Legion fort there which only walls were left. And he loaded them up with tracers and fired the tracers into the wall. And, of course, they were ricocheting up in the air, and everything like that. And he said, "With all of that, maybe he could get new barrels for his machine guns." So that was the duty. There were eight magazine groups there, and actually they were nothing but wooden framework with tarpaulins covered over them.

John: Oh, okay. I didn't know what you meant by magazines.

Jim: And there were eight of them there with spaces between the different groups. But a sentry on each group, magazine group. But, of course, he had been, he was probably covering a half a mile patrol. So it would be relatively easy. There was only one wire across the outside, and the Chinese could actually crawl up and crawl through the wire, grab some ammunition, pull it out through the wire, and then leave it in the field. And in the field opposite the next day these Chinese would be out with donkey carts, cutting whatever they were growing in this field out there. And so at one time, there was a Chinese came in close to the wire. This was under 7th Service Regiment. They were supposed to be responsible for the Ammunition Supply Point. And the interesting part in a later raid. Well, I won't skip to the later raid. The OD went over to the Marine who at that thing. I forget what his name was. I got it in here. Told us to fire some rounds over his head to drive him off because he was in too close. And he wasn't a very good marksman. He shot and killed the donkey.

John: The donkey?

Jim: Donkey. The donkey cart. So Lieutenant Mitchell went around and collected all the spare change everybody had in their pockets. Went out to the farmer and gave him this big handful of coins. The farmer was very happy. He felt that he was more than compensated for the loss of his donkey. But the other part, too. Well, we'll get to it. So that was it. And again, this must have been in September, we got a call on a Sunday afternoon that a group of Marines and sailors had come down from Tientsin. They were corpsmen. They were duck hunting along the river. There were thousands and thousands of ducks along the river. That was one of the main food supplies for the Chinese. The ducks and pigs. And they had been taken prisoner by an unknown group of armed Chinese. So Lieutenant Bergen was told to take a patrol out and try to make contact with them to determine what

could be done to get them released. And we had the Jeep and a weapons carrier. And so it was probably about a half a dozen of us. And we went out in the countryside and drove around. Couldn't find anybody or make any contact with them. But as the lieutenant said, we didn't go out to try to rescue them. Just to make contact to see what we could do to get them released. But we came back. It was getting dark. And as we came along the road just past the village of Hsin Ho to turn into our compound, again, all kinds of fire broke out. The Ba Loo were in the field opposite us shooting up the railroad station. So, as I say, we started loading weapons. Immediately Lieutenant Bergen and the first sergeant said to clear those weapons because as long as we weren't taking any fire, we weren't returning any fire. "Make sure your weapons are on safe and hold fire." So we laid behind the road there for a while and there was break in the firing. And then one of the Marines yelled across, "Ba Loo, ne wamba." That is the worst thing you can call a Chinese. Wamba is turtle. And ne wamba is you turtle. And also there is the Chinese version of the finger. Instead of saying, you turtle, you would look at the guy and just hold your hands up wiggle your thumbs like a turtle crawling. They would get mad when you did that. And then one of the Communists yelled back some insult in Chinese about mingwa American Marines. I believe its translation roughly was they have incest with their mothers. And then we heard this angry Chinese yelling at them and they shut up. So I guess it was their CO telling them they were supposed to be there to shoot up this city and not exchange insults with us. But they were good. They pulled out and you never heard them or saw them leave. And we moved into the compound and Lieutenant Flagg was still there. And he was on the phone to Battalion Headquarters telling them about the firing. But he said, "So far, all I hear is enemy weapons. I don't hear any M1s or any American weapons so it doesn't look like we are engaged." So we got back in. And he told Bergen, "Boy, I was sweating it out."

John: Oh, hell, yea.

Jim: Okay. So then, October, we got replacements. We got a new commanding officer. A full captain came in.

John: October?

Jim: Of '46. And a bunch of new second lieutenants and so forth came in. Lieutenant Bergen took over the machine gun platoon and then he got promoted to first lieutenant. And he told me the colonel commended him for the way he handled the company. And he said, well, the credit belongs to the staff NCOs. They are the ones who were doing it, you know. So then Captain Owens decided he was going to set up a horse patrol. Because he thought what was happening was they would sneak in, get ammunition, take it out in the field, and then force the villagers to pick it up and put it in the donkey cart. So we had horses in our compound which

had belonged to the Japanese officers who had previously had the compound. So you could go out every morning. We would put out three - four man patrol on horseback, and then they would make a sweep along particularly this line, the 1 - 2 - 3 line in the field to make sure there were no ammunition cases laying there. So I went out on one of those patrols. I found out why cowboys wear chaps, because the inside of my legs was rubbed raw. And it was a winter patrol. It was colder than hell. And there was a little stream down at this edge of the thing. And we got down to the stream. The sergeant was ahead, and the horse wouldn't cross the stream. It was frozen. So we got off the horse, and pulled the reins over the horse and tried to pull them. And the ice broke and he was standing up to his knees in cold water. Some said the horses were smarter than we were. We had to go back to the thing. I came back, we were coming back from one of these patrols and just before we got into the village, we were looking ahead of the village. And there was normal activity in the village. And somebody fired a round at me. I heard it impact behind me. And, of course, we swung our weapons around and looked around, and didn't see anything. Then when we looked to the village, the mama-sans were grabbing the kids, and everybody went inside. When we got to the village, it was deserted. You didn't see anybody. So that was kind of a barometer of the attitude of the people there. We had one of the horses went lame. And we took it out and gave it to the villagers. For meat. And they had a big celebration. They shot off firecrackers and everything. And then that night some of the Chinese came over to our gate with charcoal braziers and cooked steak and duck egg for us. Of course, the steak was the horse.

John: I was going to ask.

Jim: We gave them a quarter or a half a dollar for it. October 5th, another raid. This was earlier in the evening and people from Battalion went out. They sent out an 81 mortar section. They were firing illuminating rounds. And I just went out with Captain Owens in the back seat of the Jeep carrying the radio. They just had me standing by at the guard house there, monitoring radio traffic in case they wanted to bring more people out. The interesting part of it was they were firing these illuminating rounds, and they were blowing back towards the ammo dump. And the OD and I were standing there. And we were kind of hoping one of them would go into one of those ammo sheds and set it off, and then we'd have a little bit of excitement. But they were all burned out before they got that far. But the next morning we went out and made a sweep through the area and found a bunch of dud hand grenades and so forth. I think one Marine was wounded in that raid, but he wasn't from our company. He was someone from Headquarters Company. So, and then one of the ODs out there, Captain Owens decided to set up fixed machine gun positions in various areas, particularly in one here. Which wasn't a very good idea because now we are getting into the Fall and it's getting colder. The guys would sneak in sleeping bags and stuff, and sleep on watch. One time I

ran my radio communications watch about two o'clock in the morning, I get this phone call from the ammo dump. And it was the corporal of the guard, and he said that I was supposed to go to the lieutenant's quarters and get some dry clothes for him, and also go to Sergeant Skalovos's quarters and get dry clothes for him, and wake up the Jeep driver and the corpsman. And bring them out the ASD. So I said, "What's going on." And he said, "Just do what you are told." So the corpsman wasn't very happy about getting woken up. And so then when we got out there, I went into the guard house, and the corporal of the guard said get out. So I went to the sentry at the gate there, and I said what's going on? And he laughed and he said, "Well, the OD decided he was going to sneak up on one of the machine gun positions along this bottom stretch here. And he got Sergeant Skalavos, the sergeant of the guard to go with him. But they weren't sleeping. And the machine gunner was a bloody-haired Boston Irishman. I forget what his name was offhand. So what he did, he just swung the .30 caliber around, challenged in Chinese, as he was supposed to do, and let a burst go over their head. They dove off the road. And it had rained. And they went into the ice water there, and they were soaking wet. I heard the next morning when the OD got back in the compound, Captain Owens told him it was his own damned fault. We aren't out there to play games, you know. If you want to get yourself killed, go ahead, but don't bring the sergeant in on it too. But on that October 5th raid, there were two prisoners taken. Normally they hauled their dead and wounded out with them. This one Chinese was wounded. And his buddy stayed with him. So then they captured them the next morning. They took care of the one that was wounded but then they interrogated the other one. I saw the intelligence report. He readily told them what village he was from, what his company identification was, who his battalion commander was, and even who the regimental commander was. And what village he was from. And he said that, actually, there was supposed to be two companies staged this raid but the second company had failed to make the rendezvous. But their commander decided to go on ahead without them. And so, again, we found all kinds of these potato-masher grenades that were duds. The Chinese villages had their own little blacksmith shops where they could make these. They were just cast iron and then they had a wooden handle on them, that screwed into it, and was hollow in the middle. And then they put in the detonator and tied it with a string. And then they could just pull the string and throw the grenade. And it always seemed after one of these raids we would find some of these dud grenades. And so forth. Then, Captain Owens got relieved after the October raid. He went back. I think he was a reserve officer and he was going to get a permanent commission, and we got a new company commander, Captain Joslyn. Who was a very good man. He was more related to the troops than Captain Owens was. And as I found out as his radioman and talking to him, he had gone to William and Mary College.

John: Oh, yea?

Jim: And he was there when the war broke out and he was going to go to medical school. He was going to become a doctor. His mother was a widow and, of course, he asked me about my family. He found out that my father had died. He wanted to know how often I wrote my mother. And I told him not too often. And he said, "You will write to her every month." And he had a good sense of humor, too. And so, other than that, I guess things were pretty quiet through the winter. Well, we were down at the bottom of the food chain. We were still living off, everything was in a can and it was powdered potatoes, powdered milk, and all of that. And the only thing good about it was they baked fresh bread every day, so you got bread and canned jam and stuff like that. But then at Christmas and Thanksgiving they sent turkeys down from Tientsin. And we had turkey dinner. We did have a change of command ceremony. And, as I say, we were at the bottom of the supply chain. So our gunnery sergeant, Whelan, took the weapons carrier in and he went down to GROPAC 13, to the Navy facility, snuck in with the people and stole a bunch of Navy gear. We had these Navy pile jackets, you know, and lined pile trousers, and even got a bunch of black Navy work shoes and things like that. So we had this change of command ceremony when this general came down from Tientsin and a guy was standing there. He didn't have any gloves on. And he said, "Where are your gloves?" And he said, "Quartermaster doesn't have any." He said, "Put your hands in your pocket." And he looked down and a couple of them were wearing these Navy black work shoes. And he said, "Where did you get the shoes?" He said, "The gunnery sergeant stole them from the Navy." So our S-4 officer was relieved and we got a new S-4 officer, and we started getting parkas and all of this cold weather gear and equipment. And, which brought us into April, I guess, of '47. And, oh, incidentally, going back, about these ones that had been kidnaped on the patrol. They had been released without harm. We found out later the reason they took them was they were Ba Loo, and they had captured some Browning automatic rifles. And they didn't know how to make them work. And you know the trick with a Browning automatic rifle is it fires from an open bolt.

John: Yea.

Jim: And, of course, they would load it, close the bolt, and it wouldn't fire. So they wanted these Marines to show them how to fire the BAR. They didn't indicate whether they taught them or not. I think they probably did. What the hell? So April 4th, 5th, 1947, Captain Joslyn was down to Battalion. He was the prosecutor in a court-martial. And our executive officer, Lieutenant Magnum, was in charge of the company. And on Good Friday afternoon, I cleaned my rifle and then, for some reason, we had to take something out to the ammunition dump. Message or something to the OD out there. Lieutenant Midlar. So I went out in the Jeep with the Jeep driver and as we were going through Hsin Ho, it was empty. There was

not any normal activity. And I thought, oops! Something is up. You know, the Ba Loo must be in the area. So, when I came back, I reported it to Lieutenant Magnum. But he didn't seem to be that interested in it. So, that night, about one o'clock in the morning, I got the telephone call on the field phone from our Lieutenant Midlar, the OD, and he said, "We got firing up on Post Number 3, and I don't what is going on. Sergeant Kohl is going over. He is commander of the guard, and I am getting the sixty mortar team." We kept the sixty mortar people out there. Now we had switched jobs, instead of having the fixed stationary, he got two Jeeps out of Battalion. And each Jeep had a .30 caliber machine gunner with a gunner and an assistant gunner, and also a BAR man in it. So, if there was firing, then the two Jeeps could respond and bring heavy fire power immediately to the area. He said, One of the patrol Jeeps was at the guard house. I am going to send it out with the mortar team. And I am also going to send a fire team out with it. And we are going to have them fire some illuminating rounds, and see what is going on." So I went over and I woke up the captain, and told him what was happening. And he said, "Okay. Get on the 300 radio and call the people up. Tell them to go to Condition Red, which meant 'ASP under attack.' And also tell them we are coming out." So I went back and woke up the field music. And he sounded the call to arms. And I got on the radio, and called in to the ASP and went down to the guard house with the radio, and grabbed some ammunition for my M1. Incidentally, I was the only one authorized to carry a .45 caliber pistol, but I didn't, because somebody would probably steal it, anyway. But I did have a .45 which I had bought. So at this time we had been given an M7 track. They sent it down from Regimental Weapons Company. Why I don't know. They thought maybe it would impress the Chinese.

John: Half-track?

Jim: No, this was a full-track and mounted a 105 millimeter howitzer on it. And they initially sent a half-track down with a 75 but they had all kinds of trouble with it mechanically, so they replaced it with this full-track. And that came up to the gate first.

John: All right. Okay.

Jim: Now, normally, I rode in the back seat of the Jeep, the company commander in the front seat. We would have practice raids out at the thing just for exercises. Going back and forth, I'd be in the back seat of the Jeep on the radio. He'd be in the front seat. He was a very tall, slender guy with a protruding chin. In fact his nickname was Fearless Fosdick. Of course, he didn't know it, but that is what it was. So the M7 track got up to the gate first, so the captain got in it, and I followed him into the track. We pulled up to Hsin Ho and he stops. And I can see him thinking the same thing. If we were going to get ambushed, that would be the ideal place

because, you know, they can just throw grenades at you from the narrow street. But we got out of Hsin Ho and I turned, looking ahead towards the ammo dump as we were heading for the ammo dump, and all of a sudden, there is a tremendous explosion at the back end of the track. I thought the motor blew up. And I was looking at the back of it and then I heard this banging on the side of the track. So I turned to see what the banging was. Now I could see tracers coming across the field that were hitting the side where I was standing and ricocheting up in the air.

John: Oh, man.

Jim: And, of course, fortunately, the sides of this thing were thick enough where they weren't penetrating it.

[End of Side A of Tape 2.]

John: Okay. Go ahead.

Jim: Well, then there was more small arms fire. Okay, we had just been ambushed. And then they started throwing grenades. And they gave the order to bail out. So I decided I wasn't going to crawl over the side of it, I was going to roll over on my side to make a smaller target. Which didn't work because I got my right foot caught in the track's radio antenna that was tied down in the back, and I got hung up. So Joe Perkins, who was the driver, unhooked my foot and I came down head first out of the track. Put my hands out to break my fall. Then I looked around. There was nobody up ahead of the track and I didn't want anybody to come around and fire down the sides into our flank. So I moved up to the front and took up a position there. But then I heard them calling down the line that the captain wanted me, so I crawled down the line to where he was. And he said, "Where's the radio?" And I said, "I left it in the track." He said, "Can you get it?" And I said, "Yea." And I went up and got the radio out of the track. And he said, "Okay, call Battalion. Tell them we've been ambushed. We've taken casualties. The M7 is out of action. What I am going to do is leave a security party with the wounded and the corpsman, and the rest of us are going to move up to the ASP." So I got on the radio but Battalion wasn't up on the 300, but the guard shack was, the people at the ASP. So I gave the message to them, and they had a hand-crank deal anyway that they could call that in. And I know I stressed that we would be coming on foot. So they wouldn't be shooting at us. So then, as we started to move out, they started to blow up ammo sheds. There was a tremendous explosion and you could see the fire.

John: Chinese were blowing them up?

Jim: Yea, they were blowing up the ammo sheds. In fact, it must have been artillery

because it looked like artillery projectiles flying out into the field there. In fact, in the fire blazing from the sheds, we could see some of them running around. So we got up to the ammo dump and Lieutenant Bergen was talking to Medlock and Sergeant Kohl, and Sergeant Kohl said, what happened is they came up alongside, just past Posts Number 2, they were taken under fire by the Chinese who were all over the place. And he said they had to pull back. He said if they hadn't pulled back, he said, "If we hadn't pulled back, we probably would have all been casualties and, sorry, sir, but I left some wounded and probably some dead there, too." And he said, "I want to recommend right now at this time that the mortarman, Al Perkey, be put up for a medal because he was wounded and, even though he was wounded, he still kept trying to set up and fire his mortar. And then he took another wound and I think that was fatal." So Joslyn told him, "Okay, here is what you do. Take what people you have left and set up a perimeter around here, and I am going to go into the ammo dump. I'll take Sergeant Lumen, who was with us, and Pfc.. Fuller, and we'll go in and see if we can find our missing people." And the corpsman came over at that time and he wanted parkas to cover the wounded that they had brought back. Some of them from Kohl's party. And, oh, yea, Newman, Sergeant Newman was there and when we were standing there, he said, "I've got something in my back that is driving me crazy. And I can't reach it." So I felt around his back and he had a piece of probably grenade fragments sticking out of his back. Yea. So, I pulled it out and I gave it to him, and I said, "Here, you got a Purple Heart." He threw it away and said, "Screw it, I've already got two of them. I'm holding out for a Navy Cross." He had been wounded on Saipan and on Iwo Jima.

John: Oh, man.

Jim: But later, after a reunion, he decided he wanted the third one and I made out a statement for him. And they awarded him his third Purple Heart down at Quantico. He was retired and living in Quantico.

John: That's great.

Jim: So, then, the three of us went into the, or four of us, went into the ammo dump. We had to work around back of Post 2. I did find one of our dead but we could not recognize him in the dark. I don't know, it was one of the new replacements that came in, I guess. Around in October or November. So we were working along the back there, why, they were still blowing up ammo sheds. And the interesting part was, you would see this column of flame shoot up in the air. As soon as that happened, you would hit the deck and it wasn't until it hit its peak that you would get the bang and the explosion and the ground shake. And then so, as we got up to the 3, or 2, we saw one of them, a fire break out on one of them. We ran over and they evidently had just set the tarpaulin on fire. So, I think Newman had his

carbine bayonet and we were able to cut the tarpaulin off and we stamped it out. And then we saw the second patrol Jeep. And we went up to the second patrol Jeep and they were all wounded in it. And Jacob Gerib was the sentry on Post Number 3 at the far end. And he said what happened was, he had gone into one of the ammo sheds to sneak a cigarette. You're not supposed to be smoking in the thing. And, of course, he was more concerned about somebody at the guard house seeing him light the match and the cigarette, so that is why he was hiding his cigarette. And he said while he was in the shed, he heard some noise at the wire, and he went out and looked, and these Chinese were cutting the wire. And he said he saw they were armed. So he said, well, screw this noise. So he challenged in Chinese and then immediately began squeezing off rounds from his M1 rifle. And he said, as soon as he fired, a Chinese bugle blew and they just rose up from the field all over the place.

John: Oh, no.

Jim: And he thought, oh, my God, what have I done? You know. They took him under fire so he started crawling back, slightly wounded, so he fell back into this area back in here. And dropped down on the ground. The second patrol Jeep was over on the back leg of the ammo dump and they had heard the firing so they immediately swung around and came over through the, let me get oriented, they were up here. They were over here. So they swung around and started to come over here and this is where Gerib had been. And Gerib said, he was in here watching. When they came around the corner here, and got up to this point, the Chinese were already there. And they took them under heavy fire and were throwing grenades at them, and everything. He thought they were all killed, but the Jeep driver survived. He played dead, but the other three Marines were killed. So after they started pulling out, that's when he went over and he found the one that was still alive. So they went down to try to get the Jeep going and they got a little way and it kept dying. They thought maybe the Chinese had drained the gasoline out of her. Or something. Then they found Pfc.. Stankowicz who had been on Post Number 2, and he was very badly wounded. In fact, he was in such pain that he wanted them to shoot him. But they didn't do it. So, I called in on the radio and got a corpsman to come out with an ambulance Jeep. Told him I had three William Item Ables. [WIA - wounded in action]. And the Navy corpsman came out. He had to drive his Jeep along the road here. These sheds were burning. He was probably scared, too. But we loaded them in the ambulance Jeep and he took off and ran them back down to the guard house. And I got the message on the radio that there was a strike of F4U's [Marine Corps dive bombers] that would be coming down from Tseintsien at first light. In fact, they said the pilots were already in the cockpit and had run up the engines and so forth. And they would be down for air cover. And Captain Joslyn told me, "Well, tell them that no air strikes without my clearance, because I didn't want them shooting Marines." So

then we stayed with the bodies of the three, and then daylight came. And when daylight came, the other Marines, they came around the back leg there. In a convoy, they were chasing the Ba Loo. So got the gate opened up there, and they took off. I think they went in the wrong direction because I told Captain Joslyn normally they would come from the north, around the Pengtang area, which was where the last raid was from. From October 5. But, these guys went south. So, who am I to tell them where to go? But, anyway, so then, oh, finally, we made a sweep through this area back here. We found another dead Chinese. And he was just a kid, but so were our kids, guys, they were just seventeen, eighteen year olds.

John: Sure.

Jim: So then the chaplain came out with his Jeep and he apologized for the fact that they had no vehicles. So we loaded two of the dead on top of the hood of the Jeep, put the other one in the back seat. And we walked out. As we were walking down to the guard house, and turned them over to the corpsman there at the guard house. And we had other people come in at that point, from Able Company, I guess. Yea, because Gunny Whelan came up. He had transferred to Able Company and said he was glad to see me, because he had heard I got killed. And I said, "No, I'm okay. But you lost two people from your machine gun platoon, Salvenine and Joe Pervasnick were killed." So, he said, "Okay." But anyway, as I say, everything had quieted down. And I had cut my hand when I bailed out, on my palms. Of course, they were all filled with dirt, now, too. So I went over to the Quonset hut where the corpsmen were, and as soon as I came into the Quonset hut, the chief pharmacist's mate there said, "Hey, Erwin, I heard you were in such a big hurry to get out of the track, you jumped out head first." And I said, "No, I got my stupid foot hung up on the radio antenna, and that is why I came down head first." And he said, "Well, we don't give Purple Hearts out to clumsy Marines." And so they cleaned my hands out and bandaged my hands, and I went down with someone and we looked at the track. And I could see where the bullets had hit the side, and dented it, and pulled it out, but they didn't go through it. Or anything like that. So, but then we were in stand-down, so we went back to the compound and then I got on the phone with the sergeant major and he gave me the casualty list. Who they had and where they went. Some of them were put in the small OY Cessna aircraft that they used as forward observers for artillery, and so forth, and flew them up to the field hospital there. And then they were stabilized there. And the most seriously wounded, like Whitmore and Whitus, and some of them, were then flown down to the Tsingtao in an R4D [twin-engine transport aircraft] and put in the U. S. S. *Repose*. And they treated them further there, and then they were flown back to the States. They would stop over in Guam, and then in the naval hospital in Pearl, and then back to the United States. But after that, it wasn't too long after that the word came that we were pulling out.

John: I never heard a word on this.

Jim: I looked it up in the newspapers when I got home. In the records section. Well, Henry Ford died that day. So that was the big news in the newspapers that Henry Ford died. All him. So the final count, as I say, it was five dead and fifteen wounded. But there were other people who had minor wounds that were just treated by the corpsman that were never done.

John: How did your hands come out?

Jim: They were okay. Yea. Just cut, a little scabbing after that. Other than that.

John: What cut you, do you know?

Jim: Probably just the gravel on the road. I came down and I was breaking my fall, and end up with cuts from the gravel. I think it was cuts from the gravel. I don't know. I don't think it was grenades, or anything. But, so, then they pulled us out. No warning. And we went down to Taeku [Daegu] and joined up with Able Company. At Taeku [Daegu]. Then Captain Joslyn called me in the office and told me that I had to go down to Battalion and take the test for sergeant. And I said, "Sir, I do not consider myself qualified to be a sergeant." And he said, "Bullshit. You have been under fire."

John: They are so understanding.

Jim: And he said, "I need you in a rifle platoon." So I went down to Battalion and took the test, and had to take it twice, because when we were taking the first test, we were in this Quonset hut, and I could see the guys from Comm Section, and I knew them. A guy would have a pencil in his hand like he was thinking, and he would be tapping off Morse, "What is the answer to 5?" And then he would start tapping this way. And I knew what they were doing. But, evidently, when they checked the scores, the scores for Comm Section came out so high that they knew something was wrong, so they made us go back and do it again. And so I ended up, I got promoted to sergeant. Then we got put on an LSM and brought up to Taeku [Daegu] bar, and loaded on the attack transport, the U. S. S. *Lynville*. And something I forgot to mention in this. All along, we had an interpreter in our company who was a war horse. His name was Ben Kominski, and the story behind him was, his father was Polish and his mother was French, and they were living in French Indo-China, where they had a plantation there. Father and older brother went back to Poland in early 1939 and got caught in the war, and both of them were killed. And then of course, when the Japanese took over Indo-China, when France surrendered, they moved in and occupied Indo-China, and since they were considered Polish citizens, they were interned by the Japanese, and ended up in

the Santo Thomas prison camp in the Philippine Islands. And somehow, when the Philippines were liberated, and the prison camp was liberated, Kominski ended up with the Marine Air Wing. And when the air wing went to China, MAG-24, to Tseinstein, they brought him with them. And how he ended up in our company, I don't know. But they would use him as an interpreter when they had to talk to the Chinese. And so when we got on board ship we had Kominski with us and then Captain Joslyn said, "Let's keep him out of sight so when we get to Guam, I want to have deniability. So it was a good ride to Guam on the *Lynville*. It was a little rough seas the first day out going through the Sea of Japan. I went down to the mess deck. I guess a lot of people must have been seasick because there wasn't that many people on the mess deck that morning. Then when I came up the ladder and got on the weather deck, a bunch of guys were standing up against the forward bulkhead, where we were billeted, and the bow dipped down, the water came over, and they got splattered. That is what they were standing there watching. And the other nice thing about the trip was the dolphins found us. Dolphins would come up. They would dive underneath the bow and come up on the other side. One followed, one right after the other. So we pulled into Agana and we were unloading at Agana, and I guess they had Guamanian natives working the booms during the day. And they would probably quit at four o'clock. They were in a big hurry to get out, so then the Marines started taking over, they were unloading cargo. We were cargo load and unload company. So we had people down in the hold, working the hold. So I don't know, maybe one o'clock in the morning, Captain Joslyn came in to the forward troop hold in the bow, and woke me up, and said, "Get your poncho. Wake up three other Marines. And get ponchos, and follow me." So I woke them up. "Captain Joslyn wants us. Get your poncho." So he took us down into the ward room and had us cover these nice Navy ward room chairs with our ponchos, carry them down into the troop hold, and put them in the company Jeep, which was in the troop hold. And then the boom came down and lifted up the company Jeep and hauled them off. So, when we finished, they put us on six-bys and they brought us up to Camp Wytek, which was on a kind of a cleared off area on one of the mountains up there. And went into there, some Quonset huts. One of them was the company office and then the Quonset where he had his desk, which was nothing but a table with the four ward room chairs.

John: Ward room chairs.

Jim: Little later, the colonel came in and saw this, and he told Captain Joslyn he had been catching all kinds of flak from the Navy about everything we had been stealing off the ship. And he said, "The least you could do was to share them." And so we told the Jeep driver to put two of them in the colonel's Jeep." So, then, okay, we lost all the officers. The only one we had was Captain Joslyn. We got a new officer in as executive officer. Lieutenant Magnum was in the Jeep and he got

shot up pretty bad. Incidentally, I saw pictures at the reunion of the wards there at the field hospitals. Navy nurses had 1st Marine Division patches sewed on their Navy uniforms.

John: Oh, yea?

Jim: Yea. I thought that was interesting. They were proud. We were proud of them, too. 1st Marine Division. So, by this time, and Platoon Sergeant Kohl extended his overseas tour and he got a thirty-day furlough. Gunny did the same thing and he went on thirty-day furlough. So we only had two staff sergeants left in the company. Platoon Sergeant Gosman fired our First Sergeant Rose, who wasn't very good to begin with. He evidently performed very poorly at the ASP and Shultz told me later he kicked him out. So Shultz became the first sergeant, and Platoon Sergeant Myer was the acting company gunnery sergeant. I was the acting platoon leader for the first rifle platoon. Sergeant Bernard had the second rifle platoon. Barry had the third rifle platoon. Chick Coleman had the machine gun platoon. And we had a new Sergeant Woodruff took over mortars. So all the platoons were being led by buck sergeants, and only two staffs in the company, and that was it. Okay. They had a little kind of a theater deal which was a natural bowl, and they were going to use that for the theater. And they named it Perky Bowl, the Pfc..mortarman that was killed, who incidentally got a posthumous Silver Star. And Captain Joslyn put in for and got a Bronze Star for Pete Stankowicz because he said he was so badly shot up that he wanted to give him something. So, and he got a medical out of it. He wasn't fit for any further duty. Same with Harrington. Harrington was lucky. He took one, they shot him once in the shoulder and then when they came over, they were stripping them, and taking off his watch, taking off his class ring from his high school. He was afraid for a minute the guy wouldn't be able to get it off and he'd use a bayonet to cut it off. But he did get it off. But then they shot him again. And I guess he was going to shoot him in the head and that is when he shot him through the neck. But he didn't hit anything seriously. But he got a physical disability discharge because his shoulder wound was so bad. So on Guam, we got put of working parties, and my job was to blow holes in the coral. The Navy was building some dependent quarters out there. They were Quonset huts and they'd put a little porch on it, and then they would put a little thing in the back, the usual thing, and they had a shower and stuff in them. But they needed a water line. The engineers had gone through and dug with pick and jack-hammer, or drilled, holes along this line. They had them marked. And then what we would do, they had like a bull-dozer with the doo-hickey on it. And a sheet of armor plate. And so Coleman and I would alternate, we'd put a stick of forty percent gelatin dynamite in the hole, use the wooden stick, punch the side, put in an electrical detonator, and tie it off. Bring it back to the hell-box. Then drop the plate over the hole and "Fire in the hole!" Boom! And the plate kept the coral down. Then they would come in with jack-

hammers and shovel out the water line. So we did that for a couple of days. We got bored. We thought, maybe it would hurry up the procedure if we could put in two sticks. So we put in two sticks and boom! It threw the thing up in the air and the coral came out and you could hear it raining down on the Quonset hut roofs. Then the engineering officer came over and, fortunately, it turned out, he was a lieutenant that I had served with at Camp Le Jeune. He was a nice North Carolinian by the name of Thunderburk (?), and he looked at me, and "I might have known, Erwin. You know. Can't be trusted." And so forth. And he said, "Yea, I was talking to your CO at the officers club and I heard about your diving out of a vehicle head first." He said, "But I'm taking the hell-box away from you and I'll have an engineer set off the charges from now on, since you people can't be trusted." So I think that was about it at Guam. We had showers there, which was nice. We never had before. We had no showers or anything at the site. We were washing out of helmets or buckets. One thing I do recall there was when we first got there, they had a little theater. Put the screen up in the jungle. And they played Disney's *Fantasia*. Ever seen that? And, of course, I understand it didn't go over that big in the United States. We're just sitting out in the jungle. Of course, it's perfectly dark, with all this technicolor things, like that. Oh.

John: Yea.

Jim: So when they finished it, "Play it again! Play it again!" So they rewound it and they played it twice. So that was the highlight of the movies that we saw was when we saw *Fantasia*.

John: That's great.

Jim: So, then I guess it came to the point that Platoon Sergeant Schultz, our first sergeant, called me in the office and said, "Pack your seabag, you got to go up and have your shots checked. Your time is coming up. You're going home on the transport. You and Berra are going out." So I went and got my shots at sick bay along with Berra. And Captain Joslyn called me in the office and said, "I just made out your NCO fitness report." I didn't know they had NCO fitness reports. At that time. But, I guess sergeants on up. And he said, "I gave you an excellent rating in all categories. What are you going to do when you get out?" And I said I was going to go to college. He said, "Well, when you go to college, you should go to one that has Naval ROTC and put in for the Marine Corps. You are still young enough. You could get a commission in the Marine Corps. You would make a good officer." So then I got on the transport and we went home. I worked in the laundry because I was broke, other than \$25 I got for selling my .45. Because the sailors left money in their dungarees and we'd go through their pockets so we made up a little beer money kitty out of that. The only other interesting thing, when we first went down on liberty in Pearl Harbor and walked into a bar on

Hotel Street, there was a Navy chief sitting in the bar drinking beer. And I got up and said, "Hi, Chief." He said, "You stationed around here?" I said, "No, I'm on a transport going home." "What's the transport's name?" I told him. "That's my ship. Going in down at San Francisco." "Listen," he said, "can you do me a favor? Hold some money for me. I'm staying overnight." Liberty ended at midnight. And he said, "I don't want this girl I'm with, I'll probably get drunk and I'm liable to get rolled." So he gave me like \$40 or \$50. So I went back to the ship. Next morning after morning chow, I went down to the chief quarters and I asked for him. He had told me his name. And they were kind of evasive. "I think he's up on deck." "No, he might be there." So I figured he was still out. Sure enough, a little later, when I was up on deck, I saw him kind of sneaking aboard. He came around the side of a warehouse. So I went down to the chief quarters again. And I said, "Here, Chief, here's your money." He looked at me. I said, "You were in the bar down on Hotel Street and gave it to me." "Oh, shit! I completely forgot about that. I thought the girl rolled me, and I smacked her around." The other chiefs bust out laughing.

John: That's great.

Jim: So then we rolled into Treasure Island, San Francisco. Took us over to the base there. And immediately they had an officer shake down our seabags. He found the shoulder holster for the .45 and wanted to know why I had it. I said, "I was a radioman and turned the .45 in." He looked like he didn't believe me, but what the hell?

[End of Side B of Tape 2.]

Jim: So we arrived at the Naval Station, Treasure Island.

John: That's where I got my walking papers.

Jim: Then as soon as we got in, they told us to put our greens on. And had me and five other Marines report to the corporal of the guard over at Marine Barracks. They had me on prisoner chaser duty.

John: Oh, boy.

Jim: So we went over there and drew side arms. And they said, fall out with the guard detachment. And these guys were in undress blues, white pistol holsters and white gloves, and all that. So the lieutenant came up and immediately saw us, and of course, we had just took our greens out of our seabag, and we were still wearing boon dockers. We had no dress shoes. "Where the hell did you come from?" I said, "We just got off a boat from Guam." He said, "Well, keep out of sight, will

you?” So we picked up these Navy prisoners from five chiefs. So I guess the chiefs got the detail because they went and drank coffee. So we had them doing some, they were cleaning up some yard work, or something like that. Then we turned them back over at chow time. That was all we had them. So, the guy said, do we turn in our side arms? “No, keep our side arms and go to the mess hall first,” because they had very long, long lines at Treasure Island. But this way, when we were under arms, we’d go right up to the head of the mess line. Which is what we used to do at Great Lakes.

John: Yep.

Jim: So we went to the head of the mess line, had noon chow, and then turned them in. And then they called me into the office there, and they said, “Okay, Sarge, here is the story. You are scheduled to be discharged in January. This is now October. You got thirty-seven days accumulated leave. So, by the time we get through your accumulated leave and then possible Christmas furlough, there’s not a hell of a lot for you to do, so we can give you an early out.” I said I would take the early out, particularly after looking at the guys running around in their dress blues and barracks duty, and that. I didn’t want any more part of that. I’d been out in the field too long. So they said, “Okay, you were enlisted at Camp Le Jeune. We can either send you back to Camp Le Jeune or send you to Great Lakes. I said, “Send me to Great Lakes.” Because it turned out my brother was getting married. So we got the train and went to Great Lakes. They sent me down to the rail station with a Jeep driver. He dropped me off and took off because it was four o’clock. When I gave the guy the travel orders, he looked at them and said, “This doesn’t work out. They’ve got you listed for tourist accommodations. And the only train that will get you up to Great Lakes at Chicago in time is the Super Chief. And that is all first class and Pullman. Okay, here is what he was going to do. “Every place that they got that third class, scratch it out. I am going to write in first class, and you initial it.” So he gave me Pullman tickets and I was going out on the Super Chief. So we got back to Treasure Island, I had my seabag packed. They threw us on a bus that took us over to Oakland and we got to the rail station there at Oakland. Conductor came running up, saying, “Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Where are you guys going? This is not a troop train.” I showed him our tickets on the Super Chief. So we got Pullman berths again. And then the conductor saw us and he said, “I suppose you have meal chits?” Right. Seventy-five cents for breakfast and lunch, and dollar for dinner. He said, “That will buy you a cup of coffee. But, all right, I’ll take care of you. But I want you people to come in and eat before the regular passengers come in. We’ll give you scrambled eggs and toast and coffee.” So, of course, I was in charge of the detail. And they said the usual story, “Do not get off the train. We were supposed to stay on the train. Yea, sure. So, every time it would make a stop, I didn’t know these guys. Most of them came off the

battleship Missouri, I think. They were sea-going. In fact, one of them gave me a pair of dress shoes because I still had boon dockers. But I would check their names on the roster because I didn't know them. All went well until we had a lay over someplace in, I don't know, it might have been Ogden, Utah, or some place. And after the train started up again, I checked and I was missing three. Oh, shit! Now we're in trouble. Because when we get in there, I'm going to be three men short. So I am in my bunk sleeping about two o'clock in the morning and these three drunk Marines come in and woke me up. "We're back, Sarge!" "How did you get in?" "Well, we got into the rail station there. We went out and bought some liquor. We missed the train so we told the trainmaster. He said, 'well, there's a mail train that goes right behind the Super Chief so we'll put you on the mail train and then they can flag stop the Super Chief, and you can get off, and get on the Super Chief.' Which is what they did." And, they said, "We shared our booze with the people in the mail car. I don't know if the mail got through tonight because some of them got pretty drunk." But, anyway, I had my full detail when we arrived at Great Lakes. Whatever works. And I got discharged from Great Lakes and joined the Reserves there. And I ran into my old buddy, Whitmore, who had been wounded and admitted to the Naval Hospital. And now he was to Marine Detachment there. So, he said he got married while he was on his furlough home. So then I went home and was an usher at my brother's wedding. And that was it. So then that January I started school with the University of Detroit. Went there for a year and wasn't that interested in anything. So in July, in June, '49, I got a letter from Headquarters, 9th Marine Corps Reserve District. They were looking for Reservists that had had clerical or administrative specs to come back on voluntary active duty. So they were using that to replace the Regulars so they could feed them out to the regular units. Because the Marine Corps was getting cut back. So I said, "What the hell, why not?" So I said, "Yea, I'd be happy to come back." So I got ordered to go up to Chicago to report the Navy recruiting there for the physical examination. Took the physical. They caught me on the color blind chart. I told them, "Doc, I never could read them numbers." "Well, what about these?" "Oh, those I could read." He said, "Well, if you can read those, you're color blind." And then he went to a doctor and said, "I got a Marine sergeant here with previous service and he's color blind." So they endorsed my orders, "Not physically qualified for active duty." So I took them up to the headquarters which was 1212 North Lakeshore Drive. It was up in kind of the garret of the Appellate Court Building there on Lakeshore Drive, and gave them to the first sergeant. He said, "What's the problem?" I said, "I'm color blind." He said, "Ah, this is bullshit. We'll get you a waiver on that." So he scratched out "not qualified" and wrote "qualified," and under that "temporarily assigned pending waiver from Bureau of Medicine and Surgery." So a little while later they sent me up to Great Lakes and showed me different colored screens, and he had a light and flashed different colored lights. And I identified the colors. And so he wrote a thing out that said I passed, and got a waiver, and I was on active duty.

And I worked in the file section and it was on subsistence and quarters, and sat around and drank beer when we came off work, you know. Did our work during the day. And my wife was a Reservist. She was from Chicago, and she had been working as a telephone operator at the Federal Building, downtown Chicago. And they had a reduction in force. A woman who was working with her was a widow who needed the money, so my wife said she could take the risk because there was another friend of hers who was a WR, both of them belonged to the Marine Corps League. And I first met her down there, because the other WR said they go to the Marine Corps League and meet other Marines on active duty and get free beer. So that's where we went. So then she volunteered and she came on active duty in January of 1950. Then August, 1950, the balloon went up. And we were no longer on voluntary active duty. It was continuous active duty for the duration of the emergency. And our job was to send other people to Korea. Of course, when the Chinese attacked, it turned out our executive officer, Colonel Smith, had been getting coffee one time, and we had taken the patches off, but he saw the outline of the patch, and he said, "First Division?" And I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "What outfit?" I said, "Charlie Company, 5th Marines, China." And he said, "Were you at Hsin Ho?" I said, "Yes, sir." "During that attack?" "Yes, sir." He said, "I was the staff officer on duty that night in Tientsin."

John: Oh, wow.

Jim: He said, "I was the one had to call up and we sent down a rifle company from Tientsin to back you people up." I said, "We needed it. They were a lot more than we could handle."

John: Yea. Yea. I'll be darned.

Jim: And it turned out another one of the captains there, Captain Pickerel, was an OSS officer with the Communists in Northern China.

John: Oh, yea?

Jim: And his team leader in his old OSS team was our battalion commander, Colonel John Masters, so we got along good. He used to come out and drink beer with us, too, you know. But there was a bar and restaurant down the street from headquarters. And when we got off duty, we'd go down there and get a beer. So, as I say, my wife and this other WR used to hang around with us. And then my wife and I were hanging around together. And then we became engaged. And the time the Korean War broke out. And so we decided we weren't going to tell anybody. It was supposed to be a secret, because they weren't giving any furloughs or time off or anything with the mobilization. So there was another WR woman stood up for her, and another Bailey she was going with was best man.

And her father was at the wedding. We just had a quiet wedding. Then we went over to the hotel in Chicago and we planned to go into work the next day. Then it turned out Bailey and Clem went over to the bar we hung out, and the first sergeant was there. Van Noy. And he said, "Where have you been?" And they said, "We're not supposed to tell anybody. But Erwin and O'Brien got married." "They did! I'll be damned! Where are they?" "Well, they're coming to work tomorrow." "Well, bullshit!" "They're at the Marriott." So my wife and I are in the hotel there, and the phone rang. And it was the first sergeant. "Why in the hell didn't tell me you were getting married?" I said, "Well, you know, there is no leave or anything like that." And he said, "Well, you got a 72 hours. That is what I can do for you." I said, "Aw, gee, thanks." Because now we can go into Detroit. My mother knew we were getting married. My mother had come up to Chicago before and she had met Mary, and she knew her. We had gone out together with my mother. So that was it. We did our duty there. And I ended up acting first sergeant in the Reserve Records Section. Had a real good CO and he really didn't care what rank or rating you were. Whenever he thought you could do the job, he just gave it to you. He was one of these guys who delegated responsibility. He had to go to a meeting in Washington, oh, maybe two or three months into the mobilization period. May have not been that long. And he came back from Washington, and on Saturday morning he called us into the detachment office, and he said, "I want to thank you for making me look so good at the meeting in Washington. The general started off, he was very unhappy at the rate of mobilization that was going on, and he was going through the districts one by one, and telling them their deficiencies. When he came to the 9th District, I figured, 'Well, it's my turn in the barrel.' But instead, he said the 9th District was the largest district in the States, and yet they have the fastest mobilization rate of any of you. So I would suggest when this meeting is over, that you talk to Colonel Bowen to implement some of his practices into it. Perhaps he can help you." And he said, "Being praised in front of your peer group does not endear you to them." So, he said, "I got out of it by telling the truth. I said, 'Sir, I don't have the vaguest idea how the system works. It was implemented and put into practice by my sergeants, and if it can be of any help to them, their sergeants could talk to my sergeants, but I knew nothing. But, again, thank you for making me look good.'"

John: Great.

Jim: So, anyway, by 1951, things had quieted down in Korea, and we were starting to release Reservists. First in - first out. And my wife had had enough military life. She had been down at Parris Island during the war. She was a mail clerk down there. And it was time to go out and think about getting a job and raising a family and so forth. And when they said we could get out, why, we both applied for inactive duty. We weren't discharged, we were just released from active duty. So got out, but just before I got out, I had to take the test for promotion to staff

sergeant, which came out of Headquarters, Marine Corps. In fact, everybody got the same test. It was a standard for staff and above. Headquarters, Marine Corps, wrote the test and sent it out and you had to send it back to Headquarters, Marine Corps. And I made staff. I never wore the stripes or anything. But I went out a staff sergeant. And the nice thing about it was, since I was staff, the little household effects we had, the government paid for to ship them back. And we moved in with my mother—at that time my two brothers were married—so temporarily, until we found an apartment and I found work, and everything. That was it.

John: What did you do after?

Jim: I ended up, I got a job with a chemical company who worked on chemical pre-treatment prior to paint operations. This was used in automotive, in appliance, and also in ordnance. So I did ordnance work, too. I worked on projects with 240 millimeter howitzer projectiles which were cold extruded rather than machined. It was German technology and it had never been done on a shell that big before. And I did 105 projectiles during the Vietnam war up in Minneapolis. In fact, I got a commendation from Army Procurement for the high quality that they put out. And 20s, 40s, M79s, whooper rounds which were Ameron in Waukesha, Wisconsin. I worked on military Jeeps at the old Jeep plant down in Toledo. Six-by-six trucks, at the Reo Truck, in Lansing, Michigan, making Army six-by-sixes. Another plant up in Lansing, Michigan, was making recoilless rifle cases. They were not the brass casings, they were metal pieces with a high heat resistance phenolic. I worked on that line, set that up. And that was it. And we have five children. None of them went into the military, thank God. And they have also, two older ones are girls and the three younger ones are boys. They were all too young for Vietnam. I guess now there is no draft anymore. Although I think they did have to register for the draft.

John: Yea, you had to register. What a remarkable story! Jesus. This is a part of history I have just never, I have done over a hundred interviews, and I have never heard this part of it. This is remarkable.

Jim: I'll see if I can get another copy of the book, *The United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949*. That monograph. That's it, I guess.

John: Let me ask one question.

Jim: Sure.

John: You were a young guy. Your whole life was ahead of you. And then this happens, and pulls you out. What is your reaction to that happening?

Jim: Well, during the Second World War, as far as I was concerned, it was a duty. My grandparents came over to this country as immigrants, poor immigrants from Ireland, you know. And, of course, at that time, Ireland was under British occupation. They had no rights of citizenship or anything of their own country. They couldn't vote or anything. My grandfather retired as the chief stationary engineer of the South Side Pumping Station in Chicago. My father studied law and became a lawyer, you know. This country, we are kind of repaying our country back for what they had given them. My grandmother, Larkin she was Erwin but her maiden name was Larkin. She was from Drogheda. I had two great uncles that were killed by English soldiers. They don't know why. They just took them out and shot them one time.

[End of Interview.]