

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
RAYMOND GIBERT
Army, World War II
2002

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Gibert, Raymond, (1919-2013). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 2 audio cassettes, analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 audio cassette, analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract:

Raymond Gibert, a native of Milwaukee (Wisconsin), describes his service with the 93rd Battalion Battery B (machine gun unit) at various Hawaiian and Japanese islands, including Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima. He explains the fortification and defense of Baker Island in the Pacific Ocean. Gibert describes reunions with his unit years after being discharged in 1945.

Biographical Sketch:

Raymond Gibert (1919-2013) served with the 93rd Battalion Battery B in World War II. He served in various Hawaiian and Japanese islands, including Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima, before being discharged in 1945.

Interviewed by Russ Horton, 2002.

Transcribed by Michelle Kreidler, 2010.

Transcription checked and corrected by Channing Welch, 2013.

Corrections typed in by Casey Rogers, 2013.

Abstract written by Rebecca Cook, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

Horton: This is an interview with Raymond Gibert, who served with the Army during World War II. This interview is being conducted at his home in Hubertus, Wisconsin, on July 3rd, 2002. The interviewer is Russell Horton. Now, Mr. Gibert, could you tell me a little bit about your background and life circumstances before you entered the military service?

Gibert: Oh, yes. I came from a normal family. I have a brother, a father, and a mother, but then in 1931, when I was eleven, my father died. That left me being the oldest to help my mother. We owned our own – we were paying on our home, and the mortgage payments, the interest was \$16.40 a month. Don't laugh. And wages were nil, and I was working – I had to work part-time, so I set up pins every night in the wintertime and caddied every summer and gave all my money home. And when I was seventeen, I graduated from high school, and jobs were very hard to get. Finally, I got a job at the Greenbaum Tannery [Milwaukee, WI] making 40 cents an hour, and I gave my check home, and then I got a break. A friend of mine got me in the foundry. I learned how to enamel bathtubs. You know what bathtubs are?

Horton: Sure, yes.

Gibert: Okay. Anyway, then I was making \$2.15 an hour, and then I got noticed to be drafted for one year, and I was drafted.

Horton: Where were you living at this time?

Gibert: At the old – what they call the Old North Milwaukee, and it's part of Milwaukee now, but it was 30th right off of Hampton Avenue.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: And so my mother took quite a blow because of the fact that I was making most of the money, you know.

Horton: Sure. Sure.

Gibert: But I left there, and my brother was still at home, and my mother had promised when my father died she'd never subject us to a stepfather, but after I was in the service a few months, she wrote and said she was getting married, and, fortunately, she married the most wonderful man in the world, and – but, anyway, I was going with her from May of 1940, and then in April of '41 I was drafted, April 26th, into the Army, and I didn't know what a traumatic impact that would have on my mother until our son went in the Navy, and then you realize it must have been terrible for my mother. Not only was I giving her my check, but the fact that I wasn't around to cut the grass and help with the decisions, you know,

must have been terrible for her. But then she got married in August of '41 after I left. So she had it pretty nice after that. Her husband was a great man. And like I told all the third graders that wrote to us from the American Legion, they said, what was your greatest experience? Your greatest experience is leaving your home where you live alone and where you have your own bedroom, and, you know, practically freedom in the bathroom, and then going into a barracks where there are forty fellas in one room and [both laugh] thirty-eight in the bathroom and showering and shaving all at one time, and leaving home and nobody to talk to about your problems, you know. That's a traumatic experience, you know.

Horton: Yeah, I bet.

Gibert: And not only that, they take you to Camp Grant, which isn't far from home, and three days later you're on a train. Where the hell are we going? All I know is we're going east, you know. You could tell by the sunset, you know. And we ended up outside of Wilmington, North Carolina.

Horton: So you were working at the foundry when you were drafted?

Gibert: Yes.

Horton: Okay. And where did you have to report?

Gibert: I had to report at the – well, first of all, every district had their own little place where you reported, you know.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: And mine was on 35th and Villard. And then from there we went the day of our draft – being drafted, they put us on a bus and took us to the Whitefish Bay Armory, and there was hundreds of us, you know. And then we had simple physicals and things like that, and a lot of speeches, talked to and everything, and that night we were on a train, we're in the Army, and we're on a train to Camp Grant in Illinois, and we stayed there like four days, and then off to North Carolina.

Horton: Do you remember the name of the camp in North Carolina?

Gibert: Oh, sure. Camp Davis.

Horton: Camp Davis.

Gibert: D-A-V-I-S. Yeah. That's no longer there. We went down looking for it. By 1998 – but, anyway, there was – I sent her all the pictures of Camp Davis. I don't know if I have any here, but we were the first ones in camp, and the barracks were built, but the windows and everything were – I didn't keep too many of them damn

films. These are all from overseas. But then we had to put our own cots together and everything, and then not only that but we had to do that for the rest of them that were coming in later. It ended up there was three units in there. I was the – we were in the 93rd, Battery B of the 93rd. Each unit had four batteries and a headquarters division, and we ended up setting up the cots and everything and washing the windows and sweeping them out for those that came after us, you know. And then the parade grounds where we were supposed to go to have a parade grounds, all the tree stumps were from this side to this side, they were all sticking above the ground, and we ended up grubbing out all those stumps so that they would have a parade ground to march us around in, and we had no – absolutely no weapons to speak of. We didn't have any rifles, and we didn't have a – we had one 3-inch – old-fashioned 3-inch antiaircraft gun, but then we were told we were going to be in the coast artillery or the antiaircraft, see.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: And we ended up in the antiaircraft. This was in May of '41, and in August I volunteered to go on maneuvers in North and South Carolina because they said everybody that goes on maneuvers will come back at the end of November and will be guaranteed a Christmas furlough.

Horton: Oh.

Gibert: And so I was a truck driver, and a fella, one of my friends, volunteered to be my helper, and I think they took about thirty of us out of Battery B, and we went down there. And maneuvers are make-believe wars, you know, and we were out in the field. You'd put your clean clothes on on Monday morning including your leggings, and then you took them off on Friday night. You never took them off all week, and you didn't bathe all week [Horton Laughs], and, well, you shaved, I guess, because of the fact there was no facilities. You were always on the road. And every night you'd park your truck underneath trees and camouflaged it just like it was a regular war so nobody could go over the top and picture you out and drop a bomb on you, and it was quite an experience. At one point during maneuvers they had a big forest fire, and we were called to help the government in the forest fire. My job was to put a ten gallon tank on my back and go to the creek, submerge my body until the tank was full [laughs], and stand up and walk around and squirt out the stumps and that after the fire had gone past, you know, and we did that for eight days until they didn't need us any longer, but it was an experience. And then I in the meantime before I left, I had put in for cooks and bakers school because I was doing cooking at home from my mother was teaching me. And I thought that would be a good experience, and, well, when I come back from maneuvers they called me in the office. We got back the Saturday after Thanksgiving of '41, and they said that --they called me in the office on Monday, and they said, "Your request has been denied because you're getting out in April and the school is eight months." So they said, "You are not going to the school, the cooks and bakers school, but we have a brand new bakery on the premises – in

the area that's going – that opened up two weeks ago, and they are going to start baking bread there on Monday. Would you like to go there?" And I said, "Well, sure, that'd be alright." So I went to this brand new bakery on Monday, and I found out that because I had worked in a foundry they asked me to work on the ovens panning bread. I don't know if you know what panning bread is. It's a long paddle with a stick with a real thin paddle. The bread goes in, and you pan it out and move it around until it's brown, and then you take it out. But, anyway, that's the job I had. What I liked about it was the fact that I didn't have to start 'til 10:00 in the morning. The guys that were mixing the dough and that, although a lot of it was, what do you call, automatic, and the flour came – you pushed a button and 500 pounds of flour came in a container this size with wheels, and then so much water and so much yeast, and then they had the mixers would go around and around and around, and then they'd put it in to rise. I don't know if you know how to make bread.

Horton: Yeah.

Gibert: Okay. Anyway, I ended up on the ovens. Well, I was on there for a week, and on the following Sunday, it was December 7th, and I went back to work on Monday, and the major called me in the office, and he said, "Right now you have to tell me if you want to stay in the noncombatant quartermaster corps and make bread, or if not, you go back to your outfit," [clock chimes] and I said, "Well, I don't want to make bread if there's fighting to be done. I want to go fight for my country." So I went back to my outfit, and we were all – just like I said, December 7th was a – made a big impact on our lives. We couldn't go to town any longer. You couldn't – all your furloughs were canceled, and they said you're just getting ready now to ship out. Well, we shipped to California right after – right over New Year's we were on a train.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: We went to California, and when we got there we received the brand new 90-millimeter guns, and they were brand new, and there we set up practice to go overseas. And in the meantime they gave us yellow fever shots. And they were spoiled, and we all ended up with yellow jaundice, 1,500 of us out on the desert, the Mojave Desert, and in order to cure us some of the guys ended up in the hospital, but the rest of us had to lay around naked all day in the sun [Horton Laughs]. They said that's the best thing, and no activities. I mean, you couldn't play volleyball, baseball, horseshoes, or nothing, just lay around until you got better. Well, then we did that for about a month, and then they finally said we're doing better. And, of course, in the beginning of May we got on a train and went to Oakland, and right from the train we got on the boat and went to Honolulu, USS Johnson, the ship, and it was an old – we went without escort. Even though there was a war on we went without escort. Took us seven days. And when we got to Honolulu – well, I got to Hawaii anyway. Why then they – some of them went up to Schofield Barracks up in the mountains, and the rest of us went down to the

coast. We were stationed on what they called Ewa Beach. It's called – E-W-A; it's spelled, Ewa. E-V-A, it's pronounced “Eva”, but it's north of the entrance to Pearl Harbor. And we set up our guns, all four guns, right along the water, and we could shoot out to sea or we could shoot up, and that was the object of us being there. And then life over there was very hectic to begin with because at the time we were setting up the – our equipment, the Battle of Coral Sea was going on, which was a very pivotal thing in World War II for us, which we didn't realize it, but we worked thirty six hours straight through setting up our guns and everything because they said we had to be ready if there – if we would have been defeated, there would have been a possibility of invasion, you know. In the meantime, we had all this beach area. We took over three homes, and we had maybe a quarter of a mile of beach area. So we strung mile after mile of barbed wire, and not only high but like 12-foot deep, you know. And then we got empty cans and put little pebbles in and strung them on there so any little breeze would make a noise. So that was our experience right there.

Horton: So you got to see Pearl Harbor after the attack?

Gibert: Oh, yeah.

Horton: Like a couple of months after the attack.

Gibert: Yeah, yeah.

Horton: What was it like?

Gibert: It was a mess. It was a mess, yeah. I really had a good view of it because I was elected as gunnery mechanic. I had gone to the school where they made the 90-millimeter guns for a week outside of Baltimore, Maryland, and they were brand new guns, and I learned the basics of them, and then we had the classes. But we got the guns, we had classes from the armory people, and then we set up our guns, and we had the first guns in California. We did a lot of practice shooting, and it was – life was a lot different there. We were thirty five miles from Barstow. You heard of Barstow, California? Not much of a town. But, anyway, I had to go thirty five miles by GI truck. There was no public transportation to go to town in Barstow, and because of the financial situation – let's see, we were only being paid \$21 a month minus our insurance, so I got \$15.80 cash every month, and out of that you had to buy your smokes, tobacco, your toothpaste and brush and shaving cream and [laughs] razor blades, and everything. You had your clothes, and you had your food, but they had goodies there, and once in a while you'd like an ice cream cup, things like that. The money didn't go very far. I never had any to send home, and lots of people in my outfit, we were from all walks of life, a lot of them had their folks sending them money every month. A couple of them had their cars there, a couple of the wealthier fellas. It was quite an experience. And the fact that you get thrown together with so many different people, that were so different. Different educations, different backgrounds, you know, but it was – we

got along, you know. It's surprising. The men didn't fight too much or anything like that. And you could tell who--those that had the education and those that didn't, and they started weeding out some of those educated guys. I know one guy was an attorney. He ended up in the Judge Advocate's office. One guy -- a couple guys were taken out of the service. One guy was -- you won't believe this. He was an ice cream maker, and the only ice cream maker they had in Honolulu died so they pulled him right out of the service, and they gave him an apartment downtown across from the ice cream factory, and he got paid from the factory and from the government for making ice cream, and he was very provoked. He wanted to be with the boys. A couple other guys that were tool and die makers, they got sent home because they were needed in the tool and die industry. Another couple guys could speak fluent German. They got sent the other way because they were needed to go towards Germany, you know. But we ended up -- most of the guys in my outfit were from Illinois -- I mean, from Michigan and Wisconsin.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: And we had a few from Illinois, and then, of course, as you go along, you get people in there, you know, from California and Texas and every place else. It's an experience, and you often dream of home. You dream of your mother's cooking, and you wonder. You write letters every day, but it's not the same as being there. And, of course, the first Christmas was bad, but then [laughs] I missed four in a row. I went--once we left the United States, we didn't get back to the United States until October of '45. We left in May of '41, '42, and we got back in October of '45.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: It's a long time to be gone from the United States, you know. And then we got down -- we were on Ewa Beach, like I said, and there we could go to town, and fortunately for me, my boss in the foundry sent me a letter of introduction. His sister had married a Hawaiian guy and lived over there so I was given the run of the house. I was given my own bedroom. So any time I could get to town, I could go there and stay, and it was very nice. He and her both worked for Dole Pineapple. They had three children, a girl -- one girl was a little older than I, and then the other girl and the boy were a little younger. And the oldest girl died about two years ago, and the youngest one, the fella, went to Punahou High School, and he ended up down here in Deerfield, Illinois which isn't too far from here. He worked for Nielsen rating for thirty-some years and ended up -- I think he ended up as eighth vice president. They have like fifty five vice presidents [Russ Laughs]. He started out like the fifty-fifth one. He went to Northwestern University. He was a great mathematician, and he ended up being a computer whiz, and that's how he got that job with Nielsen. He worked there thirty-some years. Yeah, I still see him. I talked to him last week one day. Don't talk to him too often, but a couple times a year, and his wife just went in to have a knee

replacement so we're going down to visit them in September, early September. And so life for me was bearable over there because, whether you believed it or not, seventy-five percent of the people in Honolulu were GIs, and the young GIs when they come to town and have a few drinks, every girl that they see, they hoot and holler at, you know, and they were ignored, and the reason they were ignored is because the people over there were kind of proud people. A lot of them were part Hawaiian, and some were full Hawaiian, but they are a very proud people, and unless you are introduced to them personally they won't even look at you, you know, or talk to you. Well, I was fortunate that the people that I stayed with, the Husseys, were --introduced us to -- me to a lot of young people, you know. And I was able to go a lot of places and meet some of these people, and I -- not that I went out with any of them, because I didn't have that much kind of money, but when I went to the show or something and I met one they would speak to me anyway, you know. The fellas would say, "Oh, boy, where do you know her from?" "Don't worry, you're not going to get introduced. She wouldn't talk to you anyway," things like that. You know how the GIs are. Another thing is, I met a couple by the name of -- a Chinese couple by the name of Chang. They had no children, and he owned the Waikiki Tavern and bowling alley, and he owned a lot of businesses and a lot of real estate, and when I would go -- I'd be invited over to their place, I sometimes stayed overnight, and I would always do the cooking, and they liked that. And the first New Year's Eve I was there, I spent as their house guest. They had nothing but admirals and generals staying there. They were very wealthy people. They had a house made out of stainless steel and glass. Stainless steel. Tinted glass where you couldn't look in but you could look out. And they lived up off of Waikiki Beach, about five miles up towards the -- higher than the university. The University of Hawaii is part way up. They were above the university, and they were very wealthy, and Mr. and Mrs. Chang took a liking to me for some reason or other, and I, like a night that New Year's Eve, I mixed drinks for them, and I washed glasses, and I made a turkey. We had turkey sandwiches in the evening and things like that. And so they were [laughs] -- everybody -- all the generals and admirals were in uniform, and I was in civilian clothes, and they -- one general says, "You're in the service, aren't you, sir?" And I, "Yes, sir." [both laugh] That's all he asked. But, yeah, it was nice knowing people. Besides which Mrs. Hussey, the lady that I stayed with, and her husband, I went -- '43 we went to Baker Island.

Horton: Okay. Was that your first --

Gibert: Our first trip away from Honolulu.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: I have the dates all in there someplace.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: We went to Baker Island. Baker Island is 1,700 miles west of Honolulu. It's a small atoll shaped like an egg. It's 5,300 and some feet long. That's a mile, about a mile, and eleven feet above sea level at the highest spot. And we went there with a big convoy of aircraft carriers and everything. We had no idea if there was anybody on there or not, but there was nobody occupying it so the Army engineers leveled it off and put this matting down – this mat down for airplane landing, and then they dug big pits alongside the runway, and the B-24s would come in, and we had some P-40's there for protection. That was an old fighter plane. They couldn't go very high, and they weren't very fast, but they were there, and after we got situated, the B-24s would come from Canton Island and then empty, and we would load them up with gas and bombs, and they used them to bomb the Gilbert Islands, Tarawa, and Eniwetok, and those places, and then they could go straight home from there. So our main faction being there was to protect the island. There was two batteries of 90 millimeters. There was 400 and some men. After the convoy left, after they left, the colonel in charge of the island said that in the event of a tidal wave, we're all expendable.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: Well, I mean, there was no – where you going to swim? Forty-foot waves, where you going to swim? You know, they'd go right over the top of the island and wash everything away. But we had no tidal waves, but we did have rain once, and we were very well rationed in water because we were eleven minutes from the equator. You know what distance that would be? When there's sixty minutes in a degree. We were eleven minutes from the equator, so it was hotter than hell there, and there was no vegetation. It was coral and sand. And at night I kept track of the temperature because the gun's recoil system was made up of hydrogen and oil [clock chimes], and hydrogen expands and contracts very easily, and I was in charge of the systems so I had to keep a temperature check every hour for the first couple months, and the coldest it ever got, the coldest was 95 at night.

Horton: Huh! Wow.

Gibert: During the day it was usually around 114 to 117, and, of course, we didn't have much activity. Every morning we'd get up at the break of dawn and go and uncover the guns because we were like from here to the house next door from the ocean, you know, and the spray, the salt spray is very bad on everything. We'd make sure the guns weren't getting rusty or anything, uncover them, and have some practice, and do our maintenance, and then have breakfast, and then the rest of the day was your own. You could do anything you want, but you couldn't leave the island because the next island was sixty-two miles away. It was too far to swim, and that was Howland Island.

Horton: So what did you do in your free time on the island?

Gibert: We played a lot of ball, and we laid in the water. We collected seashells, different kinds of seashells, and played more ball [laughs].

Horton: Baseball, basketball?

Gibert: Softball.

Horton: Softball.

Gibert: At night, every night we had a movie. Because of the fact that the island is so small, if you look at a small place like that from up above, wherever the water breaks up on shore the phosphorous shows up, and taking a picture of the island at night you can just see the outline of the island because of the phosphorous. There's a lot of phosphorous in the water, you know, so there was no need to have a blackout. And while we were there, oh, maybe about five times the Jap submarines came up and surfaced, and we would pick 'em up on radar right away, [clock chimes] and then by the time we got over to our guns they had started to shoot. They'd get in a few rounds, and then we'd get a few rounds, and then they'd submerge because they didn't want to get hit. A lot of times we got fooled. When steel barrels would float by radar would pick them up, and we would have to run out there. And during the day when we first got there, every day at noon three Japanese bombers would go over. They were so high, our P-40s couldn't go that high. We couldn't shoot that high. And they'd drop some bombs, and they never hit the island. They had such poor bombsights years ago, you know. Our main object was to keep the island, the runways open, and make sure that the bombers came in, got loaded, and got off, you know. And that's all we had to do.

Horton: How long were you on Baker Island?

Gibert: Eight and a half months, and we left – we brought our guns back home and our radar, but lots of --hundreds of thousands of small arms ammunition we left there and some of the bigger ammunition. It was too much trouble to take it. In order to load when the supply ship would come, twice we had a supply ship come, they stand offshore about eight miles, and the engineers had blasted through the coral, and the only time you could use that runway, that causeway there, was when the tide was in because when the tide was out it was too shallow. So when we worked we worked six hours on, six hours off. Even when we were going to go home, we worked six hours on, six hours off. When they brought us supplies, it was to our advantage to be on the – I was always on the barge crew because then we'd go out to the ship. They had better water than we did. They had better food. And it was – we were so, so dark that when I came home after almost three and a half years in the South Pacific, I went into a dark tavern the first night that my buddy owned, and two guys said to the bartender, buddy, they said, "Hey, Wayne, since when do you let niggers in here?" Well, I threw them both out personally [laughs].

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: Yeah. I was so dark that, you know, your skin gets dark, and your blood gets so thin that I damn near froze the first winter.

Horton: Oh, really.

Gibert: Well, we got out the end of October, and it's cold [laughs] . Cold for me because the coldest weather I ever experienced in the South Pacific was 68 degrees. **[End of Tape 1, Side A.]**

Horton: Now, you were just talking about the exploits of your old battalion and your new one.

Gibert: Yeah. Well, where we were, we fired – the first two nights we got set up, we fired field artillery for the Marines on the other end of the island. We kept a – by firing at a low trajectory, when these shells get down twelve, fifteen feet from the ground they would explode, and then – but you never --you never were really safe because the Japs were dug in. Everything underneath the island was tunneled, and when you'd find an opening, you would just pour a flamethrower – flamethrower fuel and gasoline, whatever you could down there and hand grenades, and all of a sudden you'd – a half mile away you'd see smoke come up [both laugh]. Oh, yeah. I killed – I only killed one Jap. I was sergeant of the guard, and I was walking around. I carried a .45, and I saw something move on the ground. I hollered "Halt." I took a few more steps. I took – I had my gun out already, and it was somebody dragging a five gallon can of water, and when the guy turned over he had something in his hands so I just shot, and I shot ten – eight times. I hit him three times. I was nervous, to be honest.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: But he was dead. Anyway, then we found the hole that he came out of, so we quick dropped some satchel charges down there, and sure enough, smoke came out over there and way over there. See, that whole thing was undermined with caves. That's why all the bombing that we did, it never fazed them. There wasn't a tree left standing on the island, and actually it's a beautiful island once, you know, if left alone. One of my friends made me a cribbage board out of one of the fallen trees. I have it in the drawer there. And one of the guys in my outfit made me a – he was from the chain gang from South Carolina. He had a choice of going in the Army or going back on the chain gang. So he went in the Army, and they put him under my care, and he and I got along well, and he made me that friendship ring out of a piece of metal from the Jap plane that was knocked down. And after -- after about, oh, ten days or so, life became kind of routine, you know, but there was still Japs underneath you, and you didn't dare say just, well, I'm going to sleep, you know, and we're not going to have any guards or anything like that because that – I was sergeant of the guard the night of the – in August. No, it wasn't in August. Whenever V-E Day [Victory in Europe] was. And we had trip

flares. You know what trip flares are? You pound a couple stakes in the ground, and they got a mechanism with a real tiny wire about that far off the ground and then again about that far, and if somebody touches that wire a flare goes off and lights up the whole area.

Horton: Oh.

Gibert: And that's all within your machine gun range. We had four machine guns, one in each corner of our outfit. Well, this one particular night I was sergeant of the guard, and I was in the communications tent when I heard the – my outposts shoot, and then I called them, and they said, "There's Japs crawling around. We're shooting at them." "Keep shooting." "Bring us some more ammunition." I says "Okay." So I took them a .30 caliber ammunition canister down there, and I crawled on my belly to get down there. I wasn't taking no chances. Well, I got down into the gun pit where they were, and the telephone rang. It was the captain, and he says, "We just got orders from Fleet Admiral Nimitz not to celebrate V-E Day." And I said to the captain, "What is V-E Day?" "Oh, you didn't hear? The war in Europe ended today. We thought you were celebrating." I said, "No, sir. My men are shooting at Japs crawling around out there." Well, the next day we went out there when it got daylight. We killed four Japs, and we fired 2,800 rounds [both laugh] of ammunition, but that wasn't too bad. Incidentally, in that write-up that I gave to – about the history of our outfit, we were commended for the fact that we knocked down more Jap planes for the amount of shells that we spent than anybody in Europe or England.

Horton: Wow.

GIBERT: In England I think it was they had to fire a hundred – averaged 175 shells to knock down one plane, and ours was more than half – less than half that.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: But you got to realize, we had these new shells that I could say they went off –

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: And another thing, we had radar, a better radar system than they had over there. You know, everything got better as it went along. Matter of fact, the 90-millimeter guns almost became obsolete because they came out with a 105 antiaircraft, which is a bigger, longer barrel, longer barrel. Yeah, and, of course, when the war ended, why, I was on Iwo Jima, and then they had to have so many points to get home. You got so many points for every month overseas and so many points for every month in the service. Well, you had to have 84 points, and I had 120, but we had no transportation. So then we finally went from Iwo Jima to Saipan. Then we stayed there a couple weeks. Finally the ship came in, and we went from there to Frisco, and we got to Frisco. Then that was a foul-up there

because they were going to get us out in twenty-four hours, but it took forty-eight, but then they put us on the plane – a train, and we ended up at Camp McCoy [Sparta, WI] the end of October.

Horton: Of '45?

Gibert: Of '45. When we got there, they had so many people getting discharged, they told us to take a week off and then come back because they couldn't handle them all so fast. So a week later I went back, and then I got discharged. I was four and a half years in the service, and then when I came home then I had – all I had was a mother, a step-dad, a brother who was in the submarines and still in the service, and a girlfriend, and no job. They didn't make any bathtubs during the war [Horton laughs]. Nobody [laughs] needed bathtubs. They weren't building any houses. And I had yellow jaundice from the service. I've never been able to give blood in my life. Matter of fact, when I went to have my new knee put in eight years ago, I had to give blood twice for myself, and the girl at the blood bank said, "Don't ever try to give your blood to anybody. You got the worst blood in the world." [laughs] I guess that tells you something, you know.

Horton: Yeah.

Gibert: So they don't even want my blood for direct transfusion of any kind. You go on there, you can read this. This is – I brought this to go to that museum. This was an eating place on the beach, Waikiki Beach.

Horton: Okay.

Gibert: And inside is the menu. But this is so cute because of the wordings that he uses. You look at the prices in there. Maybe I turned the page too fast. Some place in there – oh, here is the price. They only served two dinners, Chinese or steak. And, see, during the war we had no problem getting meat in Honolulu because the largest – second largest ranch in the world is on the island of Hawaii.

Horton: Oh.

Gibert: It's still there. We had all kinds of beef. The most expensive meat you had was chicken. We had lots of pork, too, but the pork was a very poor quality because the pig farmers there, they ended up getting all the garbage from all the GIs, and that's what they fed to the pork. They didn't feed 'em grain. I want that to go to that museum.

Horton: Sure, sure.

Gibert: If you have time, you can read it.

Horton: Definitely.

Gibert: This guy is quite – his vocabulary in there, even the back page, you know, he tells you, “Buy war bonds,” he says, you know. So, yeah, I look at it now, the only thing, lots of times I get disgusted because we came home from the service, Michigan paid a \$500 bonus for everybody that was in over four years. Wisconsin paid nothing. What happened is the legislature was mostly Republican. In order to get off the hook, they says, we'll have a referendum, and the people just voted no. Why give those jokers a bonus, you know. I guess they didn't realize that maybe if they'd – if what happened at 9/11 would have happened just before they voted, maybe we'd have got a bonus, but they never got anything from the state of Wisconsin. I thought it was pitiful. And being one of the highest taxed states in the United States anyway, they still could have done something. And you hear about six years ago or so, seven years ago the United States government voted to give all the Japanese-Americans that were interned during the war a \$20,000 bonus. So I wrote to Steinhorst --what is it – Feinholz – [U.S. Senator] Feingold, is that it?

Horton: Feingold.

Gibert: And I wrote to Kohl and told them that if they could get me a check for \$16,000, I would be on the same level as the Japanese people, but right now I'm actually a third-class citizen because the Indians got more rights than I have, and the Japanese-Americans got more rights than I have. But I managed to survive.

Horton: So were you on – were you on Iwo Jima when the Japanese surrendered?

Gibert: Yeah, but they didn't surrender there.

Horton: Right, right, but that's where you were?

Gibert: Actually, my friends on – here's my picture with my dog. See that?

Horton: Uh-huh.

Gibert: I was kind of young then, you know.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: I think – here's what I looked like with hair. [both laugh]

Horton: Were you relieved when the war ended? Were you anxious to get home?

Gibert: Oh, yeah, see, they called you in the office. When the war ended in Europe, immediately over in Europe, which we didn't know, they were preparing the troops to go to Japan.

Horton: Oh, sure.

Gibert: And that's when they came out with the point system because they wanted to take all those that had enough points. Here is the barracks that we lived in, barracks, the double-deck barracks at Camp Davis. See 'em?

Horton: Mm-hmm.

Gibert: But, anyway, here is the old 3-inch gun [clock chimes]. It had four wheels. See, the new 90s only had two wheels. They were easier to put up and take down. Yeah, so –

Horton: So what did you do when you got back? You said that you didn't have a job initially.

Gibert: Didn't have a job. I had a mother [laughs] and I had a step-dad. I lived at home. This is Baker Island. See, those are real pictures of Baker Island. Here's the story about it, and it was the best kept secret, they said, of the war. This money was given to me by – this is Mexican, I think. This is Japanese. This is New Zealand. While we were on Iwo Jima my mother used to send me – send me and my girlfriend packages of Mrs. Grass' Golden Nugget Chicken Soup. Did you ever hear of that?

Horton: Unh-unh.

Gibert: It comes in a little package, a little envelope, and inside there was a little golden nugget of chicken fat, and you put this in your canteen cup with water and you heat it, and it makes real rich chicken soup. Well, we were in our – we'd just set up our tents, and every morning the Marines that go up to the front lines, they stay there twenty-four hours. Then they get relieved. Well, these guys were coming back, and they'd stop at the tent, you know, and when they heard you talk, one fellow says, "Boy, you guys, you must be from the Midwest." You can tell by the accent just about where a guy is from, see. So I said to the guy, "Yeah," and he says – this guy I think is still living, and he says – I told him I'm from Milwaukee. "Yeah," he says, "my father is the greenskeeper at Greenfield Park," and, sure enough, you know. And I had – I told you I knew Mr. Chang that owned the Waikiki Tavern and bowling alley. Well, he used to get me whiskey. Whiskey was selling for \$15 a bottle during the war if you could get it, but, see, if you had to take the bus or the train you had to have some way of concealing it. So I came upon a brilliant idea. I bought a brand new pair of shoes. I went to town, and I threw the old shoes in the trash, and I went by Mr. Chang, and he gave me two quarts of Kentucky Tavern, and I put them in that shoe box, one each way with paper in between so they wouldn't rattle, and I walked to the depot, and the MPs and the SPs [Shore Patrol] were all there, and the guy'd say – they shake down your socks. Guys would buy a half pint and put it in their sock, and they'd take their night stick and they'd break that so that the glass and the booze goes down

into your shoes, you know. And they would shake me down, you know, "Oh, you bought a new pair of shoes?" "Yeah." Every time I went to town, I had the empty shoebox, and every time I came back, I had it full of two bottles of Kentucky Tavern. So when I went to Iwo Jima, I had like sixteen bottles of quarts of whiskey. As a matter of fact, I did some bartering for that. I went down to the shore where the supplies were coming in, and there was a real tough Marine there, sergeant, you know, and he – and I said to him, "How about a couple cases of that?" We were eating K-rations, cold K-rations. Here they had like beans and franks and spaghetti and meatballs all in smaller cans, you know. "What, are you, are you the president or something like that?" Oh, and I said to the guy, "Well, I tell you what, if you – if you think of it, I got a little something here to offer you." "Now what?" I showed him the bottle. There was a little gone out of it. "Oh," he says, "what did you do, piss in the bottle you want me to drink?" "No," I says, "I tell you what, I'll drink it. You can keep your damn stuff." So I took a drink. "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Come on back here." I walked away, you know. "Well, I can give you a couple cases." "Well, I think I could go over by the other guy and get more than that." Well, I ended up I got a jeep full of canned goods, you know. And the CBs [also Seabees, Navy Construction Battalion] were right across the street from us, and I don't know if you knew anything about – CBs are guys anywhere from eighteen to fifty-five years old, all tradesmen, you know. And the captain says to me, "If we can get the lumber, we can build a mess house, mess hall. We don't have any Skilsaws and we don't have any nails." So I said to the captain, "Well, Captain, you got any whiskey?" And he says, "Yeah, I got some." "Well, I understand you don't drink much." "No." I said, "I tell you what, I'll donate a bottle." This was – this plane here is called the Clipper. Every day, every – every other day it made a trip to the States. San Francisco Clipper. This was the Aloha Tower that you see when you get into Honolulu. That's still there. This thing would fly every other day. Anyway, so he got me a bottle of whiskey, and I went over there to the CBs, and my buddy Andy was in the CBs. He was from my neighborhood. I asked him which one of them guys [laughs] likes to drink the most, you know, which one of the chiefs, and then he pointed the guy out. So I went over there, took the jeep over there. It was right across the street. I took the jeep over there, and I said to the chief, I says, "What we desperately need is a couple kegs" – you know, nails came in kegs years ago – "and a couple kegs of eight penny nails and a couple Skilsaws." "Well, I can't give you two Skilsaws." "Well, can you give us one?" He said, "Yeah, I could give you one." "Well," I said, "Then borrow us one. Then we would have two. And we need a couple kegs of eight penny nails and maybe some sixes." Well, they had so damn many nails. I loaded up the jeep, and I came back and I said to the captain, "This is what your quart of whiskey bought." I told him I also donated a quart, see. Well, we made ourselves a nice mess hall. We had a couple carpenters, but they didn't have any tools. We ain't gonna saw every board by hand, you know.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: Then my buddy Andy in the CBs said to me, he said – he always called me “Gib”-
- "Gib, I know you like to fish," he said, "down there where that Japanese ships
are, they're sunk in the sand on the beach, and the rear end that sticks out, way out
over the water, and it's sixty, eighty feet of water there." So I don't know if you
know anything about fishing. We took chalk line, which is a heavy line, and we
put snelled hooks on there. We put five hooks on there with beads in between so
they wouldn't tangle and a big heavy weight on the bottom. Then we would take a
can of salmon, a sixteen ounce can of salmon, take the juice and we'd make – with
flour we made little dough balls, and you put a dough ball on each hook, a little
one, and then you drop that down in the water. In order to attract the fish, you
took a handful of that dry salmon and you threw it over the edge, and then these
fish would come up, hundreds of them, and then you'd just keep jiggling your
line. You'd get one on, get two on, until you had [laughs] three or four, and then
you pull it up, you know. By that time then the food was gone, the fish would
disappear again. Well, we went fishing, he and I, twice a week. Once we'd take
the fish over by the CBs, the next time we'd take it to our place. Oh, yeah, that's
what we did. We liked to fish.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: But any of these people that tell you that being in the service is easy, even when
there is no hostilities, you know, when the war is over, it's still not like being
home, you know.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: And like I told the kids in the third grade class that I went to visit, why, I said, it's
an awful experience to leave your home and not have somebody there to discuss
things with. And I says, fortunately most everybody is in the same position you
are. A couple people cried at night, you know, when we first got in, and I guess
it's bound to happen, you know, but we all tried to live through it.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: I lost a couple of my neighbor boys when I went in. They went to Europe. I guess
they didn't fare as well as I did, 'cause they didn't come home. I was gone a long
time. It kind of – kind of bothers me the fact that these people nowadays they go
for six months, and they come home, they got a band waiting for them, and I was
gone [laughs] three and a half years without ever being home, you know, more
than three and a half years, missed four Christmases in a row, and there wasn't
one damn soul to greet me, you know. If I hadn't called my mother and my
girlfriend, they wouldn't have even known I was home, you know. I could have
come home and never even – nobody would have even missed me, you know.
They wanted us to go to Japan. They wanted to give us a big increase. “Forget it,”
I says, “Japan is that way, and Milwaukee is that way.” When I got off the boat
and I walked out to the back of the base, there was a Milwaukee Road boxcar, and

I went and kissed it [Horton laughs]. That's a fact. I went and kissed it. And the guy said [laughs], "You so glad to see the Milwaukee Road?" I says, "You're damn right." And then they had WACs – a WAC outfit there, and we never saw WAC all the time we were in the service. They told us if we go down to the WAC outfit, we get caught inside their territory, we would get court-martialed, we wouldn't get out for another six months. We went down there. We looked at 'em from a distance, and that's [laughs] all we ever did. Yeah, so they looked the same as regular GIs, except they're women.

Horton: So after you got back to Milwaukee, what kind of job did you eventually find?

Gibert: Well, what happened, I went back to the foundry, and my boss was so glad to see me, and he said, "We're just converting. During the war we were heat treating metal for the service," and he says, "Now we're just converting the furnaces to go back into production, but it will be six, eight months." I said, "We're getting married." She wanted to get married right away, you know. "We're getting married," I says, "I gotta have a job." Well, when I went to go home on the streetcar, the guy that was operating the streetcar, I had caddied with him when I was a kid. He said --this was on a Friday. He says to me, "Hey, you're going downtown?" I said, "Yeah." "Stop down on Third and Michigan at the electric [railway] company building there, put your name in," he says, "they're hiring right now." He says, "You know what's nice about driving streetcar? You can sit down or you can stand up." So I went down there. I stopped there, maybe it was 1:00 in the afternoon, and the fella says, "You got time to take a physical?" I said, "Sure." So I took the physical. He said to me, "You can start Monday." Well, meanwhile I had taken the exam for the police department. I ran the half mile. I was second –

Horton: Oh.

Gibert: In the half mile. Well, I was a good runner.

Horton: Uh-huh.

Gibert: I held the mile record at Custer High School for many years.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: I only weighed 138 pounds then. Anyway, so I was on the eligibility list for the police department when they called me, and my wife and I went out for fish fry that Friday night, and on Tuesday I was supposed to report to the Fire and Police Commission. On Friday night we went out, and she met a sergeant that she had gone to high school with, and he said, "Oh, your husband will make a fine officer. He's nice and tall and slim," you know. And, "Yeah," she says, "and he can run. And he said, "That's great." Well, then my wife says, "How many years will he be on the third shift?" "Oh," he says, "about fifteen." [clock chimes] My wife says, "Just stay with the streetcar company. At least there you only got to work nights

for three months. You can go on days.” I said, “Well, I’ll take that for a while until I find something better, and I ended up retiring from there.”

Horton: Oh, wow.

Gibert: I drove street cars, interurbans [electric city trains], tractors, trolleys, gas buses, and diesel buses.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: Yeah.

Horton: Did you ever take advantage of any veterans benefits like the GI bill or anything like that?

Gibert: Well, first of all, I didn't have good grades in high school because I didn't study because of the fact that I was working all the time.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: The last year I was in high school, I set up pins every night, and I cut my load down to a half a day of schooling. I started school at quarter to 12:00 because I worked in the bowling alley every night, and the bowling was over, I cleaned out the pits, and I changed the pins, and then I cleaned out cuspidors. And the guy that owned the bowling alley lived three blocks from me, so by the time he got me home it was like 2:00, 2:30 in the morning, and I did that all winter. And, of course, in the summertime I caddied all summer so my mother would have extra money. Any time I made a dollar, I gave it to my mother.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: I think my mother prayed for me all during the war, and I think that she's probably still praying for me, yeah. I'm still above ground, and I'm going to be eighty three next month, so that ain't too bad, huh?

Horton: No, not at all.

Gibert: But I couldn't – we were getting married. I wasn't going to go to college –

Horton: Right, right.

Gibert: You know, so besides she wanted to have kids right away, so it was her fault. [laughs] I guess things could have been different, but we've never had a check bounce. We've never been garnisheed. We've never had a lot of things. I haven't made out income taxes in twenty years. You know, I'm on Social Security and a

small company pension. But our son lets us live here. We have this room, kitchen, the bathroom, and a huge bedroom. That's it.

Horton: Very nice.

Gibert: We have a lovely place here. It's nice and quiet, out in the country. I have everything I want. I have my big garden. I got apple trees, pear trees, peach trees. I got a swimming pool in the backyard. We got everything. And my home in Milwaukee was great, too. I had a beautiful home there. We decided to sell and get out of the city.

Horton: Have you kept in touch with any men from your battery throughout the years?

Gibert: Oh, I've been in charge of the reunions. When we were on Baker Island we all gave George Evans, the company clerk, who was a Mormon from Salt Lake City, we all gave him our name and address at home. He said ten years after the war we would have a reunion in Kansas City because that's the center of the United States practically, and I thought – I joined the VFW right after the war because the post I joined was named for four boys that were killed, and I knew all four.

Horton: Oh.

Gibert: Anyway, so I kept looking in the VFW book for reunions and never saw anything, and in 1978 my mother called me one day, and she says, "You have a first class letter here from Salt Lake City." I hadn't lived at home for years, you know. Well, I wonder if that's from George. Sure enough, he finally had enough time to start to organize a reunion. He sent letters to everybody. Most of those addresses were defunct, you know.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: Like two of the guys from Milwaukee, they lived where the freeway is now, so they had to move. Well, anyway, they said, "Anybody that you know from the Milwaukee area, send me their new address and everything," and he says, "I want to get a reunion going for 1980." That's what he did. He organized it for 1980. In the meantime one of the guys that was in our outfit worked at Miller Brewery, and I had a – I always had big station wagons, and I said to him, "Let's go," I said, "to the reunion" I says, "in Kansas City. I'll drive." He never liked to drive. "I'll drive, and we'll take some beer." He worked at Miller. We'll take some beer, and I'll go get some good Wisconsin cheese and summer sausage, and we took paper plates and nice knives along and napkins, you know. So we went down to Kansas City. It was great. We knew everybody right away the minute we saw 'em, you know.

Horton: Did a lot of the guys show up?

Gibert: Huh?

Horton: Did a lot of the guys show up?

Gibert: Yeah, a lot of guys showed up. Anyway, then that night we invited everybody up to my room, which was as big as this room or bigger. Of course, you got forty-five, fifty people in there smoking and drinking beer and telling stories and everything, you know. Oh, it all ended up that the next day my wife said, "There'll be no more of that stuff," she said. So I said to the guys, "You guys all give me five bucks. We'll rent a hospitality room." So we rented a hospitality room. **[End Tape 1, Side B]** So anyway, the next – we had that hospitality room for two nights. Oh, and then they told me you can't bring any beer into the hotel, so I went around to the back where the supplies come in for the kitchen. [both laugh] I give the guy ten bucks, and we got all ten cases of beer in that hospitality room. [both laugh] You know. Anyway, then we were at – two nights in a row we were in the hospitality room, and Mondale was vice president, and he was coming for a commencement exercise so they kicked everybody off that floor except us guys. But our hospitality room was where he slept. They kicked us out of there. They gave us one downstairs. It was just as nice, but it was down in the basement, you know. But, anyway, we had a ball. It was so nice. Meanwhile, when you wrote to George Evans in Salt Lake City, you told him the history that you're married, you have children, and all this and that, so he put out a booklet about everybody that was coming to the reunion and who they were. And a couple guys came to the reunions without their wives, and like I said to one guy, "Aren't you married?" "Well," he says, "I can remember you guys - when you got ahold of beer, you guys were holy terrors," He said, "I wasn't going to subject my wife to your behavior." I said, "That was when we were young and single and we didn't give a damn because we might die. Now we got responsibilities." Now we drink but only to a certain amount, you know what I mean.

Horton: Uh-huh.

Gibert: And, [laughs] yeah, that guy says, "Oh, boy," he said, "I wish I'd have brought my wife now." He said, "People are so wonderful." And like my wife says, you won't believe this, the women got along fabulously. They didn't know one another. Nobody knew anybody else's wife, but they all got along. They got along. So, anyway, at the end of the week, on Saturday night, we had our banquet, and then this guy George Evans got up, and he said he would like to see these reunions continue, and he said he didn't have the time to do this every year, and then he said, but he said, "I know the guy that can do it," and he [both laugh] pointed to me. I've been in charge ever since.

Horton: Oh.

Gibert: I've organized every reunion now. Now, don't get me wrong, when we went to Detroit, a lot of our guys were in Detroit, I had help. When we went to Houston, I had help. A guy lived in Houston, Dallas, Corpus Christi, and what's the other

one? We went four places in Texas. Anyway, somebody always helped, you know. And we went to Las Vegas a couple times, and we've been out east. We've been south. We've been in LA. You know, somebody always helped that lived there. So it's worked out, but we had our last reunion in '98 in Wilmington, North Carolina, because that's where we started, and only eight people showed up. You know, everybody is older. Like I said, the cook was just 90 last month. Joe Reikland [phonetic] was ninety years old last month. Imagine that.

Horton: So did you have them pretty much every year?

Gibert: Every year. Every year.

Horton: Wow. Wow.

Gibert: Yeah.

Horton: And this was for the – was this for the 947th Battery?

Gibert: No, no, for Battery B.

Horton: Battery B, okay, the original one.

Gibert: The 93rd, yeah.

Horton: Ok.

Gibert: The original outfit where I was in the longest, you know.

Horton: Uh-huh.

Gibert: It was interesting. We had some real nice times at every – and Mrs. – what's her name? She wanted some information from these reunions. Well, like every one we went, when they came to Milwaukee I rented a bus, took them through town, took them to the domes, took them to the zoo, took them to Miller Brewery. When we went to Detroit, we went to – what's the name of that place? Greenfield Village.

Horton: Mm-hmm.

Gibert: You been there?

Horton: Yeah.

Gibert: Okay. Beautiful, you know.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert:

Spent a day there and one day out in the country, and it was tulip time. We went to Holland [MI], and that – and when we went to Houston, we went to San Jacinto where the battleship Texas is. And when we went to Corpus Christi we went through the canals and the shopping area. When we were in Los Angeles we took a trip to the studios and up and through the hills where the rich people live and everything like that. Every reunion was fabulous, you know, and the only problem is every time – every time you would write to somebody, somebody would write back and say, sorry, we can't make it, we're ill and things like that. So, now, these menus here, I just found this, and my buddy from Detroit – I mean, from West Bend, in his album. She called me about three months ago to come and get them, his albums, and look through there. I just found the original one there, and my daughter is in the printing business, so I had her copy twelve of 'em., and I sent 'em out to my buddies that are still living, and I haven't heard from 'em. I thought I would hear by now, but I haven't heard from 'em yet. But this brings back old memories. Now, this P.Y. Chong [Honolulu, Hawaii] first time – that's the first time I ever ate what they call Chinese chop suey. You go in there, you have six people, they put you with a small plate – a great big bowl of salad and all the dressing, and you eat your salad, and they got buns. You get all done, they come clean everything off the table. Out comes a great big bowl of rice and seven dishes around it, seven different kinds of food, and you help yourself to one of them. If you like one better than the other, just keep the one. When the dish is empty, they fill it up for you, and you never run out of food. And this P.Y. Chong, that's where we went. But most of the guys went there for the steak, you know. You could go there for one steak, but for Chinese you had to have at least four to sit down and eat. But we used to go – Mrs. Hussey used to go there. And us, we used to go there with the family, you know. Six, seven of us would go down there. But lots of fellows did not like Honolulu and because of the fact it was more like a tourist trap. First of all, you can't blame the natives. These guys would get a few drinks in them, and, man, they're ready to grab any girl they could see on the road. She could be a married woman or not, you know. They'd just go wild, you know, the young fellas that come into the service. So the people there were very disgusted with the military, but once you got to know some of the people – now, the Husseys belonged to the Hawaii Surf and Canoe Club. So every Sunday morning that I could get into town we'd go to church. I'm Catholic, and they were Catholic. And we'd stick a turkey in the oven, and we'd go down and we'd surf. Now, I never did very good on the surfboard, but her son in Deerfield here, he was excellent on the surfboard. Anyway, and we'd swim, and then we'd come back and have a cocktail, and then – and then we would have a big dinner. Her husband worked in the citric acid division of Dole Pineapple. Citric acid is taken out of pineapple, and it's made into soda water, the stuff that makes soda water, you know. And she worked in the main – the main switchboard for all the big shots upstairs, and any time – she sat there with mirrors, and she could watch any one of 'em going out. She'd wave, and they'd holler, "Yeah, I'll be gone a couple hours." So that was her job. She wanted my wife to come there, and she'd give her a good job. Her mother wouldn't let her go. She was single, you know. And I

didn't know how long I was going to be there anyway. But when I came back from Baker Island, I came into town, and we were all given three three-day passes, and I wasn't one of the first ones to get one because they had to draw numbers, you know, and I went into town maybe a couple weeks after we were back, and while I was in town, I picked up a newspaper, and there Mrs. Hussey's husband was being buried that day. So I took a cab out to the house, and I got to walk down the island with her to church. Anyway, after that I was her escort. Mrs. Hussey had these three children, and she --do you know what a muumuu is, what the women wear?

Horton: Mm-Hmm.

Gibert: Well, she wore a muumuu because she was this wide [laughs]. Anyway, she was a big, big woman. After that, I was her escort wherever she wanted to go and I could get into town. She would always have me as her escort. And they had a brand new 1942 Dodge. They just got it just before the war broke out.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: Were they lucky. Lots of times that they didn't have enough gas, but I would take the thing out to camp and make sure that it accidentally got some gas in it, you know.

Horton: Yeah.

Gibert: We got along. And a lot of guys didn't like Honolulu because, first of all, they robbed you on prices.

Horton: Yeah.

Gibert: But they knew you were the GI and you were at their – at their beck and call there, [clock chimes] and if you went in a tavern and you had two drinks, you had to leave, unless, of course, the drinks were 50 cents a piece, if you gave them a dollar for every drink, then they never counted over one, but if you didn't have the means to tip them, well, then after two drinks you were out, you know. And then a lot of times the bouncer at the door of the tavern would say, "Sorry, the building has got its limit." There's only so many people in the building. And when I went to Waikiki Tavern, of course knowing the guy, I would get a table, and I would get unlimited drinks for myself and my friends and no pay, but we always left money on the table, you know, because the guys thought it was pretty nice that I had such great connections, you know.

Horton: Sure, sure.

Gibert: Yeah. So for me life was not quite so boring in Honolulu as it was for the other guys, anyway.

Horton: Okay. You said that as soon as you got back you joined the VFW. Did you join any other veterans' organizations?

Gibert: I now belong to the American Legion also.

Horton: Okay. When did you join that?

Gibert: Oh, about twelve years ago.

Horton: Okay. Have you been pretty active in those organizations?

Gibert: That's where I was this morning, working [laughs] at the bar –

Horton: Oh. At the Legion –

Gibert: For the American Legion.

Horton: Sure.

Gibert: I was very active in the VFW when I lived in Milwaukee because the post was less than two miles from my house. As a matter of fact, one year I was given the award for the most voluntaring hours in a year, you know.

Horton: Which post was that?

Gibert: 6498 Gross – it's called two names, Gross, G-R-O-S-S, Yaksh, Y-A-K-S-H. The two Gross boys I went to school with, grade school with, they were killed. The two Yaksh boys I went to high school with, they were killed. The two Yaksh boys were in the airplanes, and one Gross boy was killed in the South Pacific and one in Europe. And I still – I still play golf with Eddie Gross. He's the last boy. So five boys they had. All five were in the service.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: They also had six girls. Mrs. Gross used to say, "We had five boys, and then we changed position. [Clock chimes] Then we had six girls." It's a fact. She lived to be 105.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Horton: So looking back on your military and your war experiences, how do you think it's affected your life?

Gibert: Well, [laughs] I often wonder, some of my friends or some of my acquaintances that were here, not in the service, they managed to start buying houses at \$3,000. You know, houses were cheap, you know. And then every time they'd see a little bit better house, they would make money on the one they had and move up, and I was always very conservative, and I wanted to buy a house after we were married. One of the customers on my bus offered me to sell – sell me his house, one of his houses, and I asked my mother's banker, he was a little, short, roly-poly guy, and he said, "I want to tell you something, Mr. Gibert, right after World War I it was the same thing. Houses were going like crazy, people bought 'em, and then the bottom fell out of it." He said, "Everybody lost everything. You should just sit back and wait, sit back and wait." Well, the guy offered to sell me that house for \$11,000. Two years later he sold it for \$14,000, and I think now that house is probably worth a hundred thousand, you know what I mean.

Horton: Uh-huh.

Gibert: But eventually we bought a house. We bought a house in '40 – '53, and we lived in it forty-five years.

Horton: Wow.

Gibert: Yeah. And it was a great house. It was very nice. Very nice. It had everything, well-built, well-maintained, everything. Yeah. I loved it. But we wanted to get out of the city. My son wanted us to get out of the city. He lived out here. My daughter lives in Sussex. The other one lives in West Bend. So they said we don't want the old folks in there. If they have any problems, every time I got problems, I got to run into the city. So he says, come out here and live upstairs from us.

Horton: Huh.

(Mrs.) Gibert: Could I interest you boys –

Gibert: Watch for us, that's all you know.

Horton: Mm.

Gibert: And I don't make enough money on my pension. See, I retired at 62, so my Social Security isn't a lot, and my company pension isn't a lot. But the only good thing about the company pension is that they pay all our medical expenses.

Horton: That's very nice.

Gibert: That's a very big thing. We just signed up for six more years. I'm going to be eighty-three next month. That will take me until I'm eighty-eight years old, you know [laughs].

Horton: Nice, very nice.

Gibert: I have no complaints.

Horton: So is there anything from your war experience that we haven't touched upon yet that you'd like to add?

Gibert: Well, for a while it bothered me that the government would allow all these Japanese and places to come here and sell their cars so readily and everything. And knowing that the Japanese didn't want our fruit there, and they didn't want that there, and they didn't want that there, and it bothered me that why we were so generous. And, of course, I have to admit – I will never buy a Japanese car, but I have to admit that their expertise has made the rest of the American dealers put out a better vehicle, you know.

[End of Interview]