

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
MARK H. KERSCHENSTEINER
Anti-Aircraft Artillery, Marine Corps, World War II.

2000

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Kerschensteiner, Mark H., (1921-). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 60 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Mark H. Kerschensteiner, a Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin native, discusses his experiences with the Marine Corps and his World War II service in the Pacific theater of operations. Kerschensteiner talks about enlisting in the Reserves, finishing his degree at the University of Wisconsin, boot camp at Parris Island (South Carolina), boxing training, tough treatment by drill instructors, and officer candidate school at Quantico (Virginia). After being commissioned as a second lieutenant, Kerschensteiner mentions getting married, weaponry training at Camp Lejeune (North Carolina), and having trouble with his men after one was caught transporting liquor. He speaks of being sent to a replacement center on Oahu (Hawaii), doing busy work like censoring mail, and assignment to the 2nd Anti-aircraft Battalion as adjutant and mail officer. Kerschensteiner talks about spending a few days at Enewetak (Marshall Islands) and socializing with Army nurses during mail trips. He comments on duty in Guam where he and others patrolled for Japanese soldiers, touches on an incident of friendly fire, and discusses the rainy climate. He reflects on Japanese troops who continued to occupy islands for years after the war ended. At the Battle of Okinawa, Kerschensteiner relates serving as anti-aircraft security for Yontan Airfield, a raid by Japanese suicide paratroopers, and attaching bayonets to the Marines' rifles to avoid friendly fire from the Army unit behind them. He relates occasions when typhoons struck Okinawa and seeing his son for the first time. He relates how Bob Baumann and Dave Schreiner, friends from the class of 1942 University of Wisconsin football team, were killed in World War II, and he talks about keeping in touch with other friends. Kerschensteiner speaks of men firing their rifles during V-J Day celebrations, smelling rifles to figure out who had done so, and demoting them. He reflects on the difference between his homecoming and that of veterans returning from later wars. He talks about sitting on his helmet and listening to an ecumenical religious service every Sunday. Back in the states, Kerschensteiner explains he and most other officers entered the inactive reserves because they didn't want to wait around for days to be discharged. He states he is a life member of several veterans' organizations.

Biographical Sketch:

Kerschensteiner (1921-) enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1942. After graduation from the University of Wisconsin in 1943 he went to active duty. He was discharged from the service at the rank of captain, worked as advertising director of *Hoard's Dairyman*, a dairy industry magazine, and settled in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Kerschensteiner is the great grandson of former Wisconsin Governor William Dempster Hoard.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.

Transcribed by Jack Craver, 2009.

Transcript edited by Channing Welch, 2010.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

[Approx. 15 sec. gap at beginning of tape]

Jim: Mark Kerschensteiner from Fort Atkinson, entered the military service March of '42. And you went directly to Parris Island, is that correct?

Mark: We boarded the train in Madison and headed for – there were five of us - headed for Parris Island.

Jim: You didn't have any previous --?

Mark: Military.

Jim: Military at all?

Mark: None at all, none at all.

Jim: Just total civilian to a total military?

Mark: Total military, let's go.

Jim: Yeah, 'cause so often it's just the other way around. They dink around here, there, and the other way before you finally get to where you're supposed to be.

Mark: Well, as I say, we signed up March of '42. The Marine Corps let us finish school.

Jim: That semester, right.

Mark: No, they let us finish to get our degree.

Jim: Oh.

Mark: So Dave [Schreiner] and I, and Bob Baumann and Dick Thornally [all members of 1942 UW Badgers football team] weren't called or the fact that we had to fight to get out of school in about March of '43. We had to get special permission from the dean of men; I think his name was Taylor at the time. To escape final exams and to take one grade point less. A B went to a C; a C went to a D. All of us had enough credits with those markdowns --

Jim: That was in '43?

Mark: That was in '43.

- Jim: I thought you said you went in the military in '42.
- Mark: We signed up in '42. We took our physicals in '42. The Marine Corps wanted us to stay in school to get our degree. Now, those after us, like Elroy and Bob Rennebohm -- They had to go to Michigan for a year to get their degree. But we were able to get ours and to take that downgrade and not have to take final exams so were not any of us at graduation – we were at Parris Island.
- Jim: And you arrived – when was that you arrived at Parris Island? Do you recall?
- Mark: No, I can't recall but it was a trip by train all the way by train, and I would imagine it would have been in the spring of '43 – probably in late March.
- Jim: How long was the basic training on Parris Island?
- Mark: I'm gonna say six or eight weeks. However long it was, we had a calendar and we checked off every day as we went through it. It was almost as tough as World War II. The drill instructors knew that this class was going off to Officer Candidate School, and they took a big delight in making it a little bit tougher and a little bit rougher and a little bit – less humanitarian, may I say to have us finish. And I'd add from the time we started Parris Island and the time we finished at OCS [Officer Candidate School] over a third of our people hadn't made it – had been dropped out.
- Jim: Physically they couldn't --
- Mark: Physically, mentally –
- Jim: Which is more common?
- Mark: Probably physically at that stage, particularly Parris Island, however when we got into the intelligent, the scholastic stuff for training intelligence and so forth and Quantico [Virginia], a few others dropped out. My best friend dropped out or was moved out because of his voice. He didn't have what was deemed to be command presence in his voice. So for any number of reasons they dropped out. Those of us that got through it were – felt ourselves very fortunate.
- Jim: So, as a second lieutenant where did they send ya?
- Mark: Second lieutenant, we had to stay at Quantico for what they called the reserve officer's class. I think that was about two and a half or three

months. But it was just an extension of OCS is what it was. Although we had bars on our shoulders.

Jim: You had more field training?

Mark: Oh, yes.

Jim: Of a different kind then? Leading some groups of men and that sort of thing?

Mark: To a certain extent. But basically it was learning weapons, it was learning command procedure, it was not as much physical as it was mental. We had some tough field trips to go through – we were taken out to special camps where we were put under adverse conditions for three, four, five days – maybe a week. And marching, forced marches, and so forth but basically it was a mental thing at that stage.

Jim: You were learning how to take command really, isn't it?

Mark: Yes, it was, it was really learning how to take command. And still that was a ways away from us. Because we went to further schooling. After I went to Quantico I got married, came back –

Jim: Then you came under a new control?

Mark: Oh yeah, then it was controls all over me [laughs]. I had more commanding officers than you can believe. From there I went to Camp Lejeune [North Carolina] and went into an artillery school.

Jim: Now you're getting into a specialty?

Mark: Yes, now I'm getting assigned to a specialty here.

Jim: Right. Now, what kind of weapons were you dealing with?

Mark: The biggest weapon was the 155 millimeter [155 caliber field gun]. Which at that time was a seacoast weapon to uh – fire on ships that were attacking or preparing to attack. The most common weapon was the 90 millimeter anti-aircraft gun. From there it went down to – I guess – 40 millimeters -- see this was over 60 years ago, remember [chuckles]. We went down to 40 millimeters and 50 millimeters and 30 millimeters and so forth -- the .30 caliber.

Jim: So, were you assigned to a unit yet or not?

Mark: No, no we weren't. We did a lot of training. Our seacoast was at a place near Onslow Beach [North Carolina]. I lived in Kinston, North Carolina, which was a trip of about an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes away. We didn't have to stay on the base, we were free officers, we could do as we will but we had to report every morning. We had Officer of the Day duties – I had a strange job as an Officer of the day at camp Lejeune. I was over by the war dog platoon, and one day I was very conscious of doing my duties exactly as I should because, as I said, so many people were being cut for as little as nothing. And all the sudden an officer of the guard at the gate brought in a marine corporal from the war dog platoon, who was caught taking liquor off the post. And I'm looking through all my records and nothing did I see that you can't take liquor off the post. You can't bring it on! But you can't take it out [laugh] either, but it said nothing about taking it out. So I got together with the brig instructor, brig officer, who was a friend of mine too, Phil Connell (??) from Manitowoc. And we didn't know what to do, so we decided he would take the liquor up to the brig and confiscate it and we'd let the guy go. So we let the guy go and the first thing that happened wrong was he thumbed his nose at the guy at the gate. That let us know we were in trouble right there. And Phil gave the liquor to his sergeant of the brig to dispose of it down the toilet. The sergeant went in and flushed it down the toilet. So we thought. The next day we were in the hand grenade pit throwing hand grenades for practice and the word came out that a chaser and two prisoners came back to the post drunk. And it didn't take Connell (??) and I long to figure out where they got the liquor. And so we hovered in misery for a day or two.

Jim: Wondering when those bars are gonna disappear?

Mark: [Laughs] Wondering when those bars are gonna be gone! I don't know if they ever figured it out or if they just let it pass, but it was an interesting little anecdote.

Jim: Yeah, that was pretty close. So, then after Lejeune, then where?

Mark: After Lejeune we were put on a troop train and sent silently through outskirts of cities and we were allowed to get off and do a little shaking of our legs in New Orleans – marching in the streets and back in quietness in the middle of the night, and headed for San Diego and in San Diego we were placed in kind of a holding pattern waiting for ships and transportation to take us out to the Pacific.

Jim: I need to know what kind of a group were you in now. You say “we”, and I don't know – is it an organized group or just several of you, young officers?

- Mark: I best answer that by saying it was a disorganized group. We were with enlisted men, we were officers, we had control over them. Still we didn't know where they were going; they didn't know where we were going.
- Jim: But you didn't have an assignment number that you wore – a regiment or something?
- Mark: We must have because as we did close order drill in the streets of New Orleans we had signals, we could snap our fingers instead of going 1,2,3,4. Hut one, Hut two – so we had some control over the men, but we were not assigned specifically to them. They were not our unit. When we got in San Diego we were split up, waiting as I say, for transportation. I left the States on May, 1 1944 – with enlisted men and officers. Again, see we were headed for a replacement center on Oahu, right near Honolulu, where there were literally thousands of tents – from men coming back from the Pacific operation to men going out, waiting to be assigned. Eventually I was assigned to an anti-aircraft battalion that had just come off of Tarawa and it was regrouping in Kauai, in preparation for moving on westward, eventually to Guam.
- Jim: So you didn't really have any duties at all in Hawaii?
- Mark: Censoring mail.
- Jim: Busy work?
- Mark: Yeah, busy work. There were probably officers there that were in charge of marching the men. We were allowed one day in four as liberty. The rest of the time I don't think we were very active, I can't recall being very active.
- Jim: So when did they send you out from there?
- Mark: We boarded a sampan which is a fruit boat that goes between the islands of the Hawaiian islands. I can't tell you just when that was but we headed for Kauai and we were assigned to the Second Anti-aircraft Battalion. There were three of us – just three of us! Two other officers. Lieutenant Langston, myself, and Lieutenant Connell (??) And we reported in with other officers on that same boat that we were joining other units that were on that island of Kauai which was a training island.
- Jim: Right. So you practiced using those guns? [Mark coughs]
- Mark: Yeah, well first of all I was made the surveying officer, to fire the big weapons -- the 90 millimeters [anti-aircraft gun] -- you have to have a baseline. I can't recall how long the baseline had to be but let's say it's a

thousand yards – so that when you fire, you spot your shell, you have an observer here, an observer there, and you triangulate – you know where you work compared to where the plane was, and you were able to hopefully bring your shell explosion right to the plane.

Jim: So you stayed in training there until they moved you?

Mark: Till they moved us farther west. We moved on December 25th, 1944, Christmas day in the rain. And we boarded ship at a place called now Nawiliwili in Kauai for Honolulu where we gathered into a convoy.

Jim: Now by this time you had a designated name or number?

Mark: Definitely, definitely. The Second Anti-aircraft Battalion.

Jim: The battalion is about 800, 600?

Mark: No, it was about 1600. We were close to the size of the regiment. A normal battalion is about 900, and we were about 1600 and a regiment is 1800. I happened to have been appointed as the adjutant by the colonel – I don't know why but he chose me from many other officers to be his right-hand man – so called adjutant. And I had the fortune of being the mail officer. So when we were on Honolulu, waiting for our convoy to form, I was allowed to go ashore every day to get the mail.

Jim: Can't beat it.

Mark: [Laughing] Oh, from the guys on board ship didn't – it. It was a love-hate relationship. They wanted their mail – they didn't wanna see me go and have a good time. We would go in as early as we could – the sergeant and I – and come back as late as we could. And we saw all of Honolulu and had a good time [laughs]. And the guys back on ship, uh, they weren't always kind in their remarks [laughs]. But they understood.

Jim: Sure. Did you get a promotion then?

Mark: No, I didn't get a promotion until after Guam when I was on my way to – Marine Corps doesn't promote very fast. Not like the Air Force where zoom, zoom, zoom. I got my first lieutenantcy – my first lieutenant's bars – after we left Guam on our way to Okinawa.

Jim: So tell me about getting to Guam?

Mark: Well before we got to Guam we stopped at Enewetak [Marshall Islands; also spelled Eniwetok]. Enewetak is about six inches above sea level.

- Jim: I know.
- Mark: And it's – oh have you been there?
- Jim: No, but I've been to Kwajalein.
- Mark: Oh, Kwajalein. It's –
- Jim: About the same thing.
- Mark: Yup, it's –
- Jim: Nothing there.
- Mark: We had colored troops on Enewetak, it was an anti-aircraft battalion again; I think it was the 52nd. And we stayed there for four or five days again for another convoy. The only good news was there was a ship of Army nurses that were also waiting to go to convoy.
- Jim: [Unintelligible question]
- Mark: Well yeah I was the mail officer. And I went into Enewetak every day to see if there was any mail. So they had what we called at the time a “slapshoot,” which was a beer place – , the Quonset hut – and the Army nurses would gather there and we would – again I'm the only officer, I'm the only one from my battalion -- so we had a great time, I went every time. But, typical of the Marine Corps, they forward all our mail to Kwajalein. So we never did get any mail!
- Jim: [Laughs] But you had to check to be positive.
- Mark: [Laughing] But had to check for eight hours every day to see if we had any mail. And then we boarded our ships and went further west into Guam – I guess the nurses went into Tinian or Saipan I'm not sure. But we landed at Guam, near Agana as I recall.
- Jim: You didn't make the landing there?
- Mark: We didn't make the landing but the island was not secure.
- Jim: I see.
- Mark: We were –
- Jim: Had a coup (??) later or something like that?

- Mark: We had to send patrols out every night. The Japanese that were left were becoming quite wild and quite hungry. They were taking food, they were stealing food whenever they could get into a camp, and they had weapons, they were quite dangerous. So we had to send patrols out – and we caught a number of them, we lost a couple of our men by not knowing –
- Jim: Did you bring the Japanese in or just shoot them?
- Mark: We brought them in. We shot a couple. Uh, one of the things we had trouble with when we circled these Japs – one of our men was shot because his buddy was on the other side of the Japs were in the middle and he saw movement and he fired and killed his buddy. I guess if you found out how many of our own men were killed by our own men it would be an astounding figure.
- Jim: Yeah, that's been recorded before by –
- Mark: I'm sure. I'm sure it has.
- Jim: In other situations. Whenever there's confusion like that's when accidents happen.
- Mark: But we were on Guam for – I can't remember how long. It was a terrible, terrible experience. It was rain, rain, rain. Two or three feet of rain coming a week. And we were in mud up to our knees most of the time, and hauling this big, heavy equipment around and getting stuck was a daily experience. And the morale was pretty low, with the weather the way it was. Again, I was adjutant, and I had my own jeep, and was able to go up to island command headquarters – It wasn't General Nimitz. Nimitz was in charge of the Pacific – he might have been I can't really recall. But it was pleasant country up there, from where we were. We were probably located at the geographic center of Guam.
- Jim: I spent a night in Guam.
- Mark: Did you?
- Jim: On my way to Korea, yeah.
- Mark: I bet you had better quarters than we did.
- Jim: They were very nice, but this is 1950's.
- Mark: Yeah, we were in tents of course. And sloppy and muddy, just terrible weather.

- Jim: Some of those Japanese stayed long after the war was over.
- Mark: They became cannibalistic.
- Jim: In Guam and in New Guinea, too.
- Mark: I'll betcha.
- Jim: And in the Philippines. They caught 'em 20, 30 years after the war, these guys.
- Mark: Yeah, yeah! Well, these guys were eating each other and we knew it. There were news releases every day saying how many had eaten – One of the things – there was an island in the Marshalls – I think it was the Marshalls or called the Marianas --- I can't remember which was which -- and it was called Rota, it was right near Saipan.
- Jim: That'd be the Marianas.
- Mark: The Marines never did bother to take it. They just let it go. But every time the planes came back from a bombing mission and had anything left over, they'd drop 'em on Rota. Those poor guys. Those poor Japs must have been in agony because every time a plane came over – they couldn't land with their bombs. They had to drop 'em somewhere so they'd drop 'em on Rota. I'd like to meet a guy from Rota sometime to find out what he thought about all this.
- Jim: Not much.
- Mark: No, no, I'm sure.
- Jim: So after you're doing your mopping up here sort of, but you didn't -- your artillery didn't seem to be very useful for that chore, was it?
- Mark: No, not really. We were set up ready to fire, and we did do some firing. But when were on Guam, the permanent -- we were transient, we were going in and out, everybody knew that. The defensive forces around Guam had control, when the control was red in an air raid that means we couldn't fire, because either there were friendly planes in the area, or the permanent defense forces were in action. So when the control went green is when we were allowed to shoot. But basically the Air Force – the Marine Air Force thank God – were in charge of the air and did most of the firing.
- Jim: So it was ball low-level stuff then?
- Mark: Yeah, a lot of low-level stuff.

- Jim: Sure. Well, mostly it was – mostly Guam where the Japanese were was jungle, wasn't it?
- Mark: Yeah, Guam was basically jungle. It was with all that rain, it was kind of like it was tropical, I can't tell you whether it was in the tropics or not but it was rain, rain, rain in Guam. And they had their share of typhoons and so forth. I have another story about that on Okinawa.
- Jim: So how long were you on Guam?
- Mark: I'd say we were on Guam four or five months. We were intended to go into Iwo Jima, but the Iwo Jima campaign did not need – the size of the island there and the activity there did not need anti-aircraft. I think the Navy took care of it.
- Jim: That they could have some so close to shore.
- Mark: Right.
- Jim: Then they could put their ten or fifteen inchers --
- Mark: So we just warmed our feet and stayed in Guam and got ready for Okinawa.
- Jim: Which was April 1st of '45?
- Mark: April 1st '45. "Love Day" and it was Easter. Which seemed rather unusual to have a – Ya know the Battle of Okinawa was the biggest battle in World War II. It was bigger than the Bulge, bigger than the landing in Europe. The ships that were involved, the men that were involved.
- Jim: Huge operation.
- Mark: I've read articles of it since I've been home. Of course we weren't aware of any of that when we were there. We were assigned to defend the island airstrip called Yontan which I don't believe is any longer there. Marines landed in the middle of the island. The Marines went North and the island of; the air strip called Army went south. There was a deceptive move by the Navy, with the ships all hiding behind the Kerama Retto Islands. And they made a move as though they were gonna go South. The Japs pulled all their people South. And when we did land we landed in the middle of the island, where Yontan airfield was. And the Army went south and the Marines went north. And the Marines had very little problem going North – that was a piece of cake. And then they came back and helped with us and that's where all the great battles were.

- Jim: I know that's the Japanese concentrated the majority of their forces.
- Mark: I give credit to the Navy for a pretty smart move, through intelligence, through whatever means they used, to fake the Japanese into going south and then we intended to go north. My unit was located on what's called Bolo Point. Bolo Point was in the middle of the island, and was in viewing distance of Ie Shima.
- Jim: How many 90 millimeter guns did you battalion have? Do you recall?
- Mark: Oh, I would say 16 to 20. Now, if that's gonna be held up for government perusal I should probably say I don't know – but I think. But, we fired quite a bit on Okinawa.
- Jim: Into the hills?
- Mark: No, over the water. As we saw them coming in. Funny thing is, in my tour as adjunct, I was responsible for headquarters and service battery. And we had it down so pat, that when the siren sounded for an air raid at night, we didn't even bother to turn over. And when the guns from the outside perimeters started to fire, we turned over and scratched our eyes and got ready. And when the search lights went on, we swung our feet up, got into our boots and headed for a pillbox that was right within ten feet of –
- Jim: Had it all organized.
- Mark: Had it organized and we became very callous about the whole thing.
- Jim: What kind of attacks would you receive? From when they did attack?
- Mark: Well they were shooting for Yontan Airfield, which we were defending.
- Jim: So it was ground fire from their big guns?
- Mark: Speak of that again?
- Jim: You were up by the time the search lights went on?
- Mark: Yep, and we were firing our 90 millimeters, anti-aircraft.
- Jim: Right. What kind of airplanes were attacking you?
- Mark: Oh, I recall Jap Bettys, but I'm sure there were Zeros [Mitsubishi A6M Zero] –

- Jim: But they came with bombs?
- Mark: Oh they came with bombs, absolutely. One of the scarier experiences, the night that we received four siren rings – ring, ring, ring, ring four sirens, – and that meant paratroopers. And what had happened was the Japs had loaded a number of Bettys – old time Bettys, hung together mainly with baling wire and everything – they were on a one way trip. To go to Okinawa, land, and spread their troops out who were to blow up our airplanes. And, of course, we hadn't been trained in paratrooper attack very much, nor had the Army around us. So we heard that four siren signal -- I took my men, headquarters and service – battery -- must have been about 50 men. Quartermaster men were included. And we went into a ditch, and I made them all take their shells out of their chambers and to fix their bayonets. Because the people over our head in the back, the Army – I don't know if they were engineers or what but they were – permanent personnel started to fire their 30 caliber machine guns and they just didn't stop. They kept on firing. They figured they were gonna hit somethin' - somebody somewhere. And we were down below them. So we were more afraid of the Army than we were of the Japs at that time.
- Jim: Getting' hit from behind.
- Mark: And so we waited there until the “All Clear”, but I made sure that with our people having their bayonets on they would identify the person they were shooting or they were attacking, so that we wouldn't get involved in killing any of our own friends.
- Jim: The Japs came in and landed on the –
- Mark: On Yontan Airfield.
- Jim: On that airfield and then discharged about, what, a dozen per plane --
- Mark: Oh yeah we could watch the planes going up, and then after they were finished they held a depth charge in their stomach and blew themselves up. So it was a suicide trip, it was a kamikaze for all practical purposes.
- Jim: Right, a joint kamikaze.
- Mark: Yeah, a joint kami – the pilot was --
- Jim: How many planes are we talking about now?
- Mark: That were blown up?
- Jim: Yeah, the came down with troops in 'em. A dozen or two dozen?

Mark: Well, we never knew. From where we were we could see two or three, but Yontan was quite a field. Maybe they went other Yontan. I'm not sure, but --

Jim: But they never got out of their airplanes, they were killed primarily --

Mark: Oh yes they did.

Jim: They did?

Mark: Oh yes they did. They blew up a lot of our planes. We could see, being in anti-aircraft we were above the field -- we could see the planes being bombed, and being exploded, and going up. For a Kamikaze trip they probably considered that a successful mission. But they didn't plan on anybody coming back.

Jim: I understand. They just shot 'til they ran out of ammunition and blew themselves up.

Mark: They carried depth charges and -- some type of bomb they would put on the plane. It was -- we never really knew -- I presume at the top level they knew what they did but it never got down to us. We were just glad to have it over.

Jim: How long did that last? Four, six hours?

Mark: No more than four, probably about four hours, three or four hours. You never knew when everything was over with. It was dark; it was the middle of the night. The "All Clear" signal came I presume when people at the airport made their reconnaissance and their trips around to determine that there were no Japs left.

Jim: How far were you from the airport?

Mark: Couple hundred yards. Yontan is no longer in existence. It's Kadena now, the big airport is. Kadena.

Jim: Is that the one in Naha?

Mark: I presume, not having been back there. Kadena was in existence when we were there but Yontan was *the* field. It was in the middle of the island, maybe that was the reason -- see I'm talking about things I have no reason to know anything about, it was echelons way above me that made all those decisions [laughs].

- Jim: Right.
- Mark: [laughs] “Ours but to do or die, not to question why.”
- Jim: Sure. So, then what next?
- Mark: Well -- interesting story. Bob Baumann from here [Wisconsin] was killed **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** on Okinawa. And we were all, the Wisconsin delegation – well, I guess I can say it now.
- Jim: And where did you find him, tell me about that? Because you weren’t with him in training –
- Mark: Oh yes, I was with him in training, on Parris Island and Quantico – [Dave] Schreiner, and Baumann, Thorny [Dick Thornally] and I were all together. But we split up. They went to infantry and I had to go to artillery. And I don’t know what all of them went to really. But Dave Schreiner was a very close friend of mine. And Dave came to our wedding in Fort Atkinson, and he’s the guy that talked me into going into the Marine Corps when we were in the classroom together – in that March of --
- Jim: Nice guy. I knew him a little bit and enjoyed --
- Mark: All American, in every way. All American in every way. So when we were nearing the end of the war, a graves registration officer came through my camp and found me – he was with us in Parris Island and was with us in Quantico, and said, “Do you know Dave Schreiner’s up ahead?” And I said, “Geez no, I’d sure like to see him.” So he says, “Well Dave’s gonna bid on R&R quite shortly. He’s about due for R & R to come back through the lines for a little rest. I’ll have him stop here when he goes through.” And that was great. So Dave and I had contact together. But the rest isn’t. The guy came back name was Soule, Gordon Soule, and he came back a number of days later and said that Dave was dead. His company commander was killed. Dave was at that time a first lieutenant, as I was. And he had gone up a hill in southern Okinawa with a white flag, to take the surrender of the Japanese group that was trying to hold and keep the hill. And I choose to think that it was without knowledge of the white flag that a Japanese sniper saw Dave coming up the hill and shot him. And Dave died of wounds in the back lines of Okinawa shortly after that. So in spite of the fact that we knew each other was there, we never got together.
- Jim: How about Bob Baumann?
- Mark: Bob Bauman -- Dave was killed on the day that Bob Baumann’s death was announced back in the United States. That’s all I can remember.

Jim: Dick Thornally?

Mark: Dick's alive.

Jim: Did you get a chance to be with him?

Mark: No, I never saw Dick. He's in Naples, Florida now and he comes up – I saw him last year – this '42 team [1942 UW Badgers football team] has a reunion and Thornally comes up – he and Negus [Fred Negus], we're quite close friends. I've seen Dick down Florida too. We winter in a place called Sanibel Island, which is right off of Fort Myers. So we have gotten together, Thorny and I, and –

Jim: Oh how nice.

Mark: He's not – he's not the same old Dick. His wife has died and he's lost a lot of weight. But he's still happy-go-lucky and a lot of fun to be around and I consider him a very good friend.

Jim: Do you have a copy of that small picture that I have? Of Schreiner and Baumann standing there in a boxing pose?

Mark: No, no.

Jim: I'll see to it that you get it.

Mark: I'd like to have it. I'd like to have it.

Jim: Because it was given to me as the last picture taken of these two fellows.

Mark: Is that right?

Jim: I'm trying to think now where I got that photograph.

Mark: Where was it taken? Do you know?

Jim: Well I don't think it was taken on the island [Okinawa], but I'm not sure of that either.

Mark: It could have been taken at Parris Island.

Jim: Possibly.

Mark: Cause we had boxing --

Jim: I think "Gunner" Johnson gave it to me.

- Mark: Oh Connor [laughs]. He's quite a guy – he was a marine too. He's a great friend of Fred Negus, and Fred and he are in constant contact.
- Jim: I'll see him when he comes to Madison. He visits --
- Mark: If you don't think training was tough at Parris Island – we had boxing. And one of our instructors that we frequently had to go against and with was George Makris [member of '42 team].
- Jim: That's not fair!
- Mark: [Laughing] It was just awful. I remember if he didn't see blood, he was kinda like – Dynie Mansfield – I took boxing at the University in intramurals and if Dynie didn't see any blood it wasn't a successful class. But Makris had us put boxing gloves on the ends of long sticks and then swing at each other – and you really had to be on your toes. Of course here I am, a little guy, and I'm doing it against Schreiner and Baumann –
- Jim: I was gonna say, these are big football players. So you were out of your class.
- Mark: Yeah, yeah I was, but I was quick.
- Jim: So anyway –
- Mark: The end of my story would be V-J Day. We knew that the war in Europe was over, and we were very happy about it. We were very happy for our friends that were there, and we were very happy that maybe some of those guys would be coming over to help us. And we knew nothing of the atomic bomb nothing of any or of that sort at all – And the people they sent over I don't think were as qualified as we'd liked to have imagine, because they sent reserves from America over, not the warriors from --
- Jim: Oh, you were getting ready to invade Japan.
- Mark: Yes, we even had our beach. We knew what beach we were gonna land on. All assigned to us. Then the atomic bomb went off and that plane that let the atomic bomb go – the first or second one – flew right over our camp. And we could have hit it with a stone – it was heavy, B29, and in those days a B29 was an enormous airplane. It's a small shrimp now but big, big, big – Well it flew over us, and the atomic bomb was dropped. Word got back to us – we were at a movie, we went to movies prêt near all the time that was the only entertainment we really had. And the movies are run by a generator that shot sparks off every once in a while, but we were watchin' the movie and saw the spark. Didn't think anything of it. And all

the sudden it became evident that those weren't sparks, those were tracers. There were people firing their weapons – the V-J had been announced. We didn't know anything about it; we were watching some love scene or something. Well the tracers going up in the air, about one out of every seven bullets or so is a tracer, the rest of them are silent. It wasn't long before our guards got onto it – are guys that were out on the perimeter of our camp were on to it and started firing. Our colonel was a real strict disciplinarian, a real Marine Corps – addict kind of guy. He was just right down the middle, very tough. He called -- we had our siren sound conditioned red that meant everybody back to their quarters and no more firing. Well he had us -- all the officers were to spend the whole night until five o'clock in the morning going by every rifle of every man in our 1,600 group battalion and finding and smelling who had been firing their rifle. You could tell by the smell if they'd been firing. And those that had been were demoted sharply – on the spot.

Jim: Oh my.

Mark: The next day.

Jim: I'm sure it was (??)

Mark: Immediately, immediately. Whether they had court martials or not I can't – but I gotta believe --

Jim: There's so many of 'em I can't believe that they should really wanna do that.

Mark: I think our guys were a little more savvy than some of the Air Force guys – not Air Force, but Army guys I think they were probably elated – see, you compare the Marines, they're all volunteers and you compare the Army, they're a lot of draftees were involved in this stuff. Some of them couldn't barely speak English. Shooting, they were “Going home!” “Going home!” all over kaput. I think our Marines were a little more disciplined. I don't think we had nearly the trouble. But we did –

Jim: How many guys were killed that evening?

Mark: Yes, there were 45 or 50 men killed on the island that night. Just from careless. What goes up must come down. Some of those bullets came down of course. It wasn't a very popular decision that we liked, whereby having to put everybody into close-order drill, and then have their rifle with them, and we made sure we smelled every rifle, and every one that had been fired, the guy was court marshaled or degraded. The last thing. As I left – I had to be on my ship at three o'clock. I had enough points early in the war. I mean, October I left. The war was over in August I left

in October. We had two terrible typhoons in the middle. Two typhoons that were a disaster, devastating. That's another whole story – but as I was going home, I got in a small boat at one or two o'clock in the morning, and went out to my ship that was berthed way out that was gonna take me home. It was gonna be a 27 day, 27 night trip all the way back to San Diego. And I went right by the ship, the *W.D. Hoard*. The *W.D. Hoard* was a liberty ship commissioned in Portland, Oregon in 1943. And W.D. Hoard happened to be my great-grandfather. If I'd have known it was there I would have gone aboard or tried to go aboard, gotten permission to go aboard and to visit with the men and officers. I was on my way home; I was not to muddy water now. I was going home. I'm glad to have seen it but let's get going.

Jim: Like the milk horse, right?

Mark: Yeah [laughs], that's right.

Jim: When you get pointed, nothin' gotta stop you.

Mark: [Laughs] That's right. Took us almost 30 days to get home. Way up by Alaska to San Diego, and I departed the ship I was on no more than ten yards from where I boarded the ship in 1944.

Jim: Incredible.

Mark: Incredible. Just about ten yards – course it was a lot different. The bands were playing, the drum majorettes were there. The ship was at a tilt about like this as everybody was on this side. Nobody was on the other side. But it was an experience, and I was just glad to get home.

Jim: Yeah, coming home is very – when our hospital ship came back from a year in Korea – everybody has the same experience.

Mark: Wonderful, yeah.

Jim: Yeah, it's just incredible going under the bridge in San Francisco.

Mark: The Golden Gate bridge. "California here we come." I bet you were singing that.

Jim: Ah, I suppose. We were hollering I know.

Mark: Well we were tickled to death to get home. My son was then sixteen months old and I hadn't seen him. So we had gone through all kinds of family – the absence was felt probably by her more than by me.

- Jim: Yeah, I left a three year old and a one and a half year old.
- Mark: Did you really? And of course your war was different than ours. Our war was – you wanted to go. We fought to go. We wouldn't have any part of it. America was being threatened. Korean War – I don't think it had the stigma like the Vietnam War but – Thank God we manufactured reasons to go and we certainly developed our armed forces so that we could take charge and at least win or at least neutralize, as we did in Vietnam.
- Jim: Yeah I didn't have a chance to do much in World War II. I was mostly a corpsman at Great Lakes, and then I went to medical school. The war was over before we were through, so –
- Mark: That was in '52?
- Jim: That's how I got to Korea so fast. Because they wanted that time back. You know they put me through medical school. They wanted some repayment so –
- Mark: Oh yeah.
- Jim: I had my orders to Korea, I think, within two weeks of when the Korean War started, and the orders were direct to Incheon.
- Mark: You were not a medical doctor but you were a corpsman [Navy Hospital Corpsman]?
- Jim: In World War II I was.
- Mark: Oh, I see. In World War II you were a corpsman.
- Jim: Then, yeah, and then ended medical school and then so when the Korean started my training as a surgeon at that time. They whisked me over there in a big hurry in an airplane and just –
- Mark: Well you know, as a Navy man you know the Marine Corps doesn't have any doctors. We don't have any chaplains and we don't have any dentists. And the poor guys that were assigned to the Marine Corps just hated it. They would be able to stay on a hospital ship or an aircraft carrier where they could operate in nice clean situations but – I had tooth repaired on Guam from a naval dentist who was standing in mud and didn't have electricity and had a corpsman with a treadle and he was drilling [grinding noises] and that poor doctor – he was a good guy, I loved him – Dr. Merchant. But – tough duty. Tough duty for Navy to be with the Marines. But we didn't have chaplains either. One thing I learned about religion is that when Sunday mornings came around, we had a preacher come. We

had a minister come. We sat on our steel helmets – we might have been up all night. We might have had two hours of sleep or maybe no sleep. We sat on our steel helmets and we had a minister come and conduct a service. We didn't know whether he was Lutheran, Episcopalian, Catholic, Jewish, whatever religion he was. And it didn't matter. It didn't matter. We were just all involved with him.

Jim: They gave ecumenical services 'cause we had – we rotated aboard our hospital ship. We had a Catholic priest then we had a Protestant minister. And they just rotated about their Sundays.

Mark: Well we didn't know who the guy was or what his religious background was. But the message he delivered was all we wanted to hear. And I remember sitting on our steel helmets – that's the only place we had to watch him. If the service was long that steel helmet got a little -- we didn't have any singing or anything it was just a straight absolute black and white service.

Jim: When you got back home were you immediately discharged or did you spend some time --

Mark: No I went to your place in Great Lakes. When we got all the officers in a room, they asked, "if you wanna get discharged it will take five or six days before we can get all the paperwork done. If you'd rather go on [Approx. 10 sec. gap in tape] when they said if you want to get discharged it will take you four or five days. If you want to be released to inactive duty you can go home this afternoon. You can imagine only one or two officers of 500 said they wanted to be discharged. The rest said "Let me go home! I'm done. There'll never be another war. I don't have to worry about that." But Korea came along and the Marines took every lieutenant. Lucky enough I was a captain, I wasn't called back in. I was close enough that I bought a lot of life insurance in the meantime. I still have it, I don't know why.

Jim: So if you took the discharge and you were just out in a day or two?

Mark: Yeah, we were out almost immediately. Another officer in our town, Al Holcomb, and I went to Camp Lejeune for summer camp two or three times.

Jim: Oh, in the Reserve?

Mark: In the Reserve.

Jim: You were on Active Reserve?

- Mark: No, we were not on Active Reserve. That's the only thing we did. We went on summer time duty in Camp Lejeune for schooling. We did not have meetings every Wednesday or every Thursday or once a month or whatever. The reason we didn't is that there was nothing in Fort Atkinson. We'd have to drive to Madison. And that would have got pretty old and the war was over. There was never gonna be another war, there was no reason to.
- Jim: They said that after the First World War.
- Mark: Yes that's right.
- Jim: Did you use the G.I. Bill?
- Mark: No I didn't. I had my degree. So I didn't have any more schooling to go to. The G.I. Bill guaranteed you a \$200 a month payment if you applied on the G.I. Bill no matter what you were paid. I was getting paid at that time \$125 a month. And I just flashed that in front of my employer a little bit and I soon got \$200 a month. [Jim laughs] But I had a wife and child to support.
- Jim: I understand. So what did you do?
- Mark: I became associated with W.D. Hoard and Son's Company in Fort Atkinson. Gov. Hord being my great-great-grandfather, it was a natural tendency, natural move. And I joined a circulation department of *Hoard's Dairyman* for three or four months and then our newspaper in Fort Atkinson became a daily paper, it was the Jefferson County Union, and March 1st, 1946 – it became a daily. See I had enough points that I was out of the Marine – I was out of service on December 1, 1945. I was on what they called "terminal leave". Very early, because I had been out overseas long enough, and been in enough – what's the term I'm tryin' to think of? Not battle, but enough –
- Jim: War zones.
- Mark: War zones so forth [coughs], and I was on terminal leave, and I went right to work and been there ever since. I retired.
- Jim: So you've run the newspaper then since that time?
- Mark: No, after the newspaper, I was in *Hoard's Dairyman*, I was in advertising; I went to the *Hoard's Dairyman* advertising department. I eventually became advertising director of *Hoard's Dairyman* and traveled all over the country.

- Jim: Oh really? What would your duties be?
- Mark: Well, we had offices in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. We called on every major manufacturer that had a reason to market their products to farmers, dairy farmers. Which meant automobile companies, which meant General Mills, which meant so many milking machines and bulk tanks and Pfizer and the American Cyanamid and all the drug companies – the world was our oyster, really. We made a lot of cold calls and were very successful. We had a 367,000 circulation at one time, and we were one of the leading advertising publications in the United States.
- Jim: And all these companies would advertise through your paper.
- Mark: Oh yeah. If they wanted to reach the dairy farmers and the dairy farmers were a very good – [coughs] --
- Jim: And your circulation extended how far?
- Mark: Oh, internationally.
- Jim: Internationally.
- Mark: I internationally. The dairy farmers got a paycheck twice a month. And that's different than the corn farmers with the harvest and the beef farmers – they all have marketing periods. Where the dairy farmers have a steady income. So we could build quite a story on why they should go to the dairy farmers.
- Jim: Right. 'Course they've been getting subsidies for a long time.
- Mark: Yeah, they were getting subsidies, but really the subsidies didn't come in to play that much because the prices were above the floor, the price level, where the government would step in. [Coughs]. Excuse me; I don't usually talk this much.
- Jim: You're doing great.
- Mark: I'm married [laughs].
- Jim: That's how you've been trained.
- Mark: [laughs] Yeah, I've got a lot of bases, yeah.
- Jim: [Laughs] So then you retired? And when?

- Mark: I retired about 1986 or '87.
- Jim: And did you join any veteran's organizations?
- Mark: I am a life member of the Marine Corps Officers Association, a life member of the Marine Corps League, a life member of the VFW, life member of the American Legion. I don't know many others that would let me in. I'm proud of my service, I'm proud of my country, I'm proud of my being in the Marine Corps. Probably the thing that I'm proudest of my lifetime was getting through Marine training and being part of the war effort. But so it shows – I'm not active in those organizations, but I'm a member. I support them.
- Jim: I support them too. I didn't join any of the things I get that stuff in the mail from 'em all the time.
- Mark: Yeah, I do, too, but the Marine Corps Officer's Association I think is rather unique.
- Jim: Do you attend any conventions or anything like that of that group?
- Mark: No, no.
- Jim: Never have?
- Mark: Never have.
- Jim: Is that a very active group in Wisconsin, the Marine Corps Officers Association?
- Mark: Well, of course it's not Wisconsin, it's national. I guess I'd have to say it's mainly a lobbying group for the Marine Corps. They are in Washington where their headquarters are, and they're constantly trying to upgrade the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps is part of the Navy you know.
- Jim: Oh, I know that.
- Mark: You're a Navy man, you would. There's always the thought that they're gonna do away with the Marine Corps. That they can make Army guys do the same thing that we're doing. And they think they can but they can't.
- Jim: I don't see any of that happening.
- Mark: Oh, I don't either, but I'm glad to put my money into –

- Jim: Particularly because we're dealing with countries now that we have access to from our aircraft carriers. Normally a Marine with an aircraft carrier can get close to the situation now –
- Mark: I think you're right.
- Jim: And the Army could never do that in that same speed, and no matter how many planes they got, it's not the same.
- Mark: You know I think and I wonder at times – I was in anti-aircraft. With these jet planes letting their bombs go five miles before the target, and the speed that they go at. I don't think anti-aircraft is probably even in existence any - more.
- Jim: Well, it doesn't have the versatility. When a plane can look on the radar and spot the target and press a button and then turns around and go home because he knows that the bomb is gonna go –
- Mark: That's right.
- Jim: Exactly where we sent it.
- Mark: Right.
- Jim: No artillery man would ever have that luxury.
- Mark: No way can we get at him; no way can we get at him.
- Jim: No. Well, that's interesting. I'm running out of questions to ask you. Well, did you have any trouble with mail and Well, food? Did all that seem to follow you in good stead? Was that ever a problem wherever you were? When you got to Okinawa?
- Mark: Well when we got into the Pacific it was a problem.
- Jim: Sporadic?
- Mark: It came through. You couldn't rely on it. I was glad when it came – we made every effort we could to locate it and to get it. Because it was a great morale booster for the guys – it was something that they just lived for. They'd rather read their mail than eat.
- Jim: Did you get hot food on Okinawa?
- Mark: No, no.

- Jim: There was no kitchen set up for you?
- Mark: We were on rations practically all the time. And the two typhoons that we went through, the second one the wind gauge broke at 150 miles an hour. We were saved by the Seabees [Construction Battalions].
- Jim: Funny it didn't turn you over.
- Mark: Pardon?
- Jim: Funny it didn't turn you over.
- Mark: Well, the waves came over a 90 foot cliff. And we got into pillboxes; we got into anything we could to save ourselves. The Seabees were smart enough to build below the hill, and eventually we found the Seabees and got in and – they had some food for us.
- Jim: You were this close to the beach?
- Mark: Oh yeah, we were right on the beach. In fact we had a -- after the typhoons we could walk down a walkway down to the beach. Wooden steps then, but we could weave our way down and we used hand grenades underwater. We set them loose underwater and had a lot of fish that would rise up. So we had fresh fish. That's about the only fresh thing we had. One of my friends in Fort Atkinson who's editor of *Hoard's Dairyman*, Bill Knox – I couldn't tell anybody where I was, but he could, and we both corresponded with my father. And my father got word back to me that Bill Knox was in Okinawa on one of the ships out in the harbor. So I made arrangements to go out and visit with him, and I'd never eaten so well in my life. We were on rations and the Navy always ate quite well, you should know. Their ships were coming back and forth all the time with food. I could eat anything I wanted and I ate like I could hardly move anymore. And we spent the afternoon together and then I had to go back and he gave me all the free food that I could carry. And I had a knapsack on, I had eggs in it. I had everything. But the only problem was they made me go down a cargo net from up here to way down there [motions with hand]; where there was a little boat waiting. It was waving this way and waving from front and back and sideways, and I had to get in that thing with all these fresh eggs and all this sort of stuff. I managed to get enough back to our area though. I was quite a hero for a guy that got one egg – every third guy got one egg or something. They were just beside themselves.
- Jim: That was a real treat.

Mark: Absolutely. Leave it to the Navy. They took care of us. [Jim laughs] Navy and the Seabees.

Jim: Right. When things were quiet in Korea in March of '51, briefly, someone got the idea of taking both of us physicians with a couple of corpsmen – several corpsmen – and put us into the 7th Division, a medical group, from shore and then takin' those docs and corpsmen and put them on our hospital ship. We traded for three days, and –

[End of interview]