

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JOSEPH F. TAUCHEN, JR.
Truck Driver, Army, WWII

1997

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Tauchen, Joseph F., Jr. (1922-2003). Oral History Interview, 1997.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 71 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 71 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Joseph Tauchen, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his service as a truck driver in the Army during World War II with the 37th Infantry Division, 129th Infantry Regiment. Born and raised in Madison, Tauchen worked as a drill press operator at Gisholt Machine Company after graduating high school in 1941. He states his reaction to the news that Pearl Harbor had been attacked was simply: "Here we go!" Tauchen reveals he enlisted in the Navy in 1942, but his new wife tore up the papers before it was finalized. A month later, he was drafted into the Army, inducted at Fort Sheridan (Illinois), and sent to Camp Walters (Texas). He describes basic training at Camp Walters where he worked as a lineman in the telephone section and became acting corporal in his platoon. Tauchen comments that money was automatically deducted from his paycheck and sent to his family, and he had to pay for items at boot camp such as insurance and toiletries. He notes his wife worked for a telephone company and as a cleaner while he was in the Army. Tauchen states boot camp was not a big adjustment for him and that he volunteered for kitchen duty so other recruits could visit their wives. Tauchen tells an amusing story of being ordered to drive some officers in a jeep, although he had never driven a jeep before; after transporting the officers, he was made a jeep driver in the motor pool. Next, Tauchen describes his deployment to the Pacific aboard an old Dutch cattle ship via Camp Stoneman (California), San Francisco (California), the New Hebrides Islands, and Guadalcanal. Tauchen learned a month later that his son was born the day he left the United States. Tauchen reports the ship was very hot and it sailed unescorted; he saw only one other ship during the entire twenty-one-day journey. Tauchen mentions half the men onboard were African American. He is unsure what happened to them, but he heard a rumor they later went to Bougainville (New Guinea). Tauchen describes spending three or four days in Guadalcanal, noting it was his first experience in a war zone. From Guadalcanal, Tauchen and his unit moved to Bougainville, where he saw one Japanese soldier, "a stray," during his entire thirteen-month stay. He explains his Division faced the Japanese 6th Marine Division, perpetrators of the Rape of Nanking. Tauchen portrays Japanese soldiers as brave, fierce fighters. He insists the Japanese knew where every American gun was placed, and he discusses Japanese style of combat. Tauchen heard rumors of Japanese soldiers eating breakfast in the open, allowing Americans to mow them down, and he claims that during a bombardment, the Japanese hid in trees, and if a soldier died, another pulled his corpse away and took his place. Tauchen states he volunteered to join the 37th Infantry Division motor pool in Bougainville; his primary duty was to drive hot food to the front lines. He describes daily life in the tropics, remarking that ticks were everywhere. Tauchen also discusses the entertainment available to soldiers: he went to movie theaters, saw a USO show featuring Jack Benny, participated in a poker party, and brewed alcohol with his

buddies using fermented fruit. Tauchen claims that overall there was not much drinking. He also recalls listening to music from American radio stations while he washed his unit's command car. Tauchen fondly remembers meeting New Zealander troops in Bougainville, and he portrays their relations as cordial; the New Zealanders shared food in exchange for help with their duties. Tauchen touches upon a few scandals and disagreements with superior officers: a captain ordered Tauchen to get rid of his non-regulation sidearm, leaving him with nothing but a jeep-mounted BAR. He also tells how two officers were disciplined for a scandal involving missing beer. Next, Tauchen talks about his near court martial. Returning to base after dropping off a patrol, an officer ordered Tauchen to drive across a flooded river. Initially recommending against it, Tauchen relented, and the truck was immediately swept up. Another officer jumped into the river with a rope, attached it to a wrecker truck, and managed to pull Tauchen's truck out, upside-down. Tauchen states that he almost received a court martial for disobeying his superior officer, but instead he was forced to stay behind in New Guinea for thirty days while the invasion force went to the Philippines. He was ironically given training in water-proofing vehicles and driving them underwater. After his punishment, Tauchen describes boarding a Liberty Ship that took him to Hollandia (New Guinea) and then the Philippines, where he joined his unit just outside Manila. Tauchen was given a tour of Manila while the fighting was ongoing, and he describes how the Walled City at the heart of Manila was flattened. When driving through the city, Tauchen comments that repairs had to be made on the jeeps fifteen to twenty times a day because shrapnel kept piercing the tires. He characterizes the Filipinos as friendly and remarks two Filipinos who were attached to his unit had American girlfriends. After Manila, Tauchen was sent to Baguio (Philippines), where he was housed in a freezing church. He reports a close friend of his had a pet monkey from Manila that he had to leave behind in the Philippines when they were sent home. Tauchen left Baguio and spent a month working at the Cabanatuan Prison Camp (Philippines), before being deployed north to Luzon Island (Philippines). He states his duties in Luzon were to drive troops to outposts and to deliver water to the barrack kitchens in a ton-and-a-half water truck with a water trailer attached. He reports that his unit was preparing to invade Japan when he heard that the atomic bomb had been dropped. Tauchen returned to the U.S. aboard the *Sea Corporal*, a relatively luxurious troopship. He states he volunteered to work in the ship's mess to earn extra pay. Tauchen reveals the ship stopped at Enewetak (Marshall Islands), avoiding a typhoon that hit another ship carrying members of his division. Tauchen arrived in Los Angeles and was sent to Camp Anza (California) before being decommissioned at Fort McCoy (Wisconsin). He tells how he meant to surprise his family, but the bus broke down, and one of the passengers, a coworker of his wife's, managed to contact his family. Tauchen describes arriving in Madison and meeting his son for the first time. Tauchen mentions he came down with malaria once a month for two years after his return home; however, he was grateful to receive an unusually large malaria pension. Tauchen explains he returned to work at Gisholt Machine Company, which was required by law to reemploy him under the Selective Service Act. When the workers there went on strike, Tauchen went to work across the street for Ben Anderson Milking Machine Company until the strike ended. He left Gisholt to work for Phillips Petroleum Company, which he depicts favorably. After twenty years with Phillips, Tauchen states he started a ceramics business in Oregon (Wisconsin) with his wife and manufactured a variety of items including cups and dishes.

Biographical Sketch:

Tauchen (1922-2003) was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin. He served as a truck and jeep driver in the 37th Infantry Division, 129th Infantry Regiment in New Guinea and the Philippines during World War II. Following his discharge in 1945, Tauchen returned to Madison where his wife and infant son awaited him. He worked at Gisholt Machine Company upon his return but soon transferred to Phillips Petroleum Company, where he worked for twenty years. After a three-year stint in Michigan, he moved to Oregon, Wisconsin and started a ceramics business with his wife.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1997.

Transcribed by Michael Chusid, 2005.

Abstract written by Kevin Axe, 2009.

Abstract edited by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2009.

Interview Transcript:

Mark: --with the date, and then we'll start with some questions.

Tauchen: Alright.

Mark: Today's date is March 6, 1997. This is Mark Van Ells, archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Joseph Tauchen – is that pronounced correctly?

Tauchen: Right, right.

Mark: -- of Madison, Wisconsin, a veteran of the 37th Infantry Division in the South Pacific in World War II. Good morning, and thanks for coming in.

Tauchen: Thank you.

Mark: I appreciate it. I suppose we should start by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised, and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Tauchen: I was born in Madison and raised in Madison, went to Madison West High School. And when I got out of high school – I graduated in 1941 – I went to work for Gisholt Machine Company, and I was there until December nineteen-forty – well then, in the meantime I got married in 1942 – in June – and in December of that same year, I was drafted into the army on the 21st of December. And we went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and I think, I believe, if I remember right, that's where we got some of our clothes. And then we went on a train again, went to, um, Mineral Wells, Texas.

Mark: Is that Camp Walters?

Tauchen: Camp Walters. And I was there for, I think, thirteen weeks. I was in the telephone, telegraph -- telephone part of it.

Mark: How'd you get in that?

Tauchen: Well, that's what they assigned you to. And, you know, some of them were cooks, and some were mechanics, you know, different barracks and stuff. And I got into their telephone section and climbed poles and everything, just like they did way back then, you know.

Mark: Now this is boot camp?

Tauchen: This is boot camp, yeah. And we were there for thirteen weeks or a little over, and had our basics and everything. And then from there, we got on a train – we had shipping orders. We were all looking for a furlough about that time. And we went to Camp Stoneman in California. First of all, everybody -- The old thing was – we were going to Pittsburgh, and everybody thought we were going to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We ended up in Pittsburgh, California. [Laughs.] So we were headed the other way. And we were there, it must have been, a couple of weeks, because we had time enough for a ten-day furlough to go home, but they never did give us -- We were on shipping orders, and that was it.

Mark: And you went to California with the expectation that you were then going to the South Pacific?

Tauchen: Right, right.

Mark: At what point did you end up getting assigned to the 37th Division? I mean, was that before --

Tauchen: Oh, no, it wasn't until we until we got overseas.

Mark: You went over as a replacement, then?

Tauchen: Yeah, right. Yeah.

Mark: I want to backtrack and cover a couple of other things before we go overseas. First of all, your work at Gisholt – now what did Gisholt –

Tauchen: They made the world's best balancing machine at that time. They used them for aircraft propellers.

Mark: You see, I was going to ask –

Tauchen: -- and they made one of the big turgelese [unintelligible]. They were a war production outfit, you know. And I was a drill press operator. And, um, that was that part of it, until I got draft notice. And they wouldn't give me a deferment. [Laughs.]

Mark: You weren't essential enough, I take it?

Tauchen: Well, there was a guy on the turlead [?] next to me that – well, he was there when I came back. And there was nothing wrong with him. But he got by, some way or another.

Mark: Now as a young man --

Tauchen: Twenty years old.

Mark: -- you had graduated high school in 1941 – as America sort of drifted towards war, I'm wondering what a nineteen-, twenty-year-old young man's perspective is on all of that. Did you follow the headlines, did you imagine you might end up in the military at some point.

Tauchen: Well, there was a little bit about that, but -- I was down in a place on State Street, it was called "Fred Lomeyer's" – Foamy Fred's, we always used to call it, 'cause they had eighteen-year-old beer in there and coke and popcorn all that stuff, you know. And the young guys hung out. And I was sitting in there that Sunday – I believe Sunday night – and they said Pearl Harbor got bombed, and I said, "Here we go!" And I never heard of Pearl Harbor really before then. But when they said Hawaii, then you know where it was. So that's the first inkling I had of it then really.

Mark: And so your draft notice came about a year after that.

Tauchen: That was in '41.

Mark: Yeah.

Tauchen: Yeah. Then it took about a year later that I was gone. Or went in service.

Mark: And when you finally got the greeting from selective service, were you surprised by that, or were you pretty much expecting it by then?

Tauchen: No. Oh, just to back up a little bit, I – when I figured I was going to get drafted, about a month before I was gonna get drafted, I went up to the old post office up here across from the city county building, and I went down there and enlisted in the Navy. And of course I was only twenty years old, and you had to get your parents' permission to get in. You know. So I signed up anyhow and everything. And of course I was married then. And I came out to the car – told the wife (she was with me), and, I says, "I'm in the navy," I says. "I've got about two weeks and then I've got to ship out, or go." And she says, "You're not going on a boat, being bombed," and she tore up the papers. [Laughs.] 'Cause my folks had had to sign them. So I said, "Well," I says, "it's either that or I'm gonna be drafted – either one." And about one month later I was. And I was still bombed over there. [Laughs.] Didn't make any difference.

Mark: So why the navy? I mean, what attracted you to them?

Tauchen: I would have went in as a fireman first class. Now I don't know what that rating is, but I was –

- Mark: I was in the air force, I don't know the navy ratings.
- Tauchen: Yeah, right. They confused me anyhow. But I would have got a little higher pay, instead of the fifty dollars a month, you know. And that's about all I can think of about that part of it.
- Mark: And so you went to boot camp.
- Tauchen: Yeah.
- Mark: And you had to get sort of adjusted to military life.
- Tauchen: Yeah, that I didn't mind. I liked the marching and stuff, you know. I got to be an acting corporal in that outfit – platoon, so. We had thirteen weeks of instructions for, you know, marching and shooting a gun and all that kind of stuff, you know.
- Mark: And so there wasn't a particularly difficult adjustment period?
- Tauchen: No, um, we – you know, in high school we had a little bit in that in gym classes and stuff, you know. We had a little marching and all that kind of athletic stuff, so it wasn't that much different. I didn't mind it. In fact, I used to volunteer doing kitchen work. 'Cause some of the guys had their wives there, so anyway they'd get to see them, you know. If they were stuck on a Sunday or something like that, well I'd take their place. In fact, I used to sell my beer for a buck a can, 'cause I didn't drink beer [laughs]. So. And it was warm beer anyhow, so it didn't make any difference.
- Mark: Now basic training often brings together people from all over the country.
- Tauchen: Oh, yeah, yeah.
- Mark: At that time had you traveled far from Madison?
- Tauchen: We picked up a bunch of guys from Illinois – they were out of Chicago. Yeah, um, and when we got to Fort Worth – yeah, which is Camp, um – the camp we went to -- I don't remember how they assigned us to the different platoons, but they must have had something on our records that they checked over. But I know the day we landed, we drove, we went into – into Texas, why, there was snow on the ground – that was Christmas Day. And I had never seen snow down there or hadn't heard of anybody having snow too much down there. But by ten o'clock it was gone. So, um -- Other than that, we had rifle practice, then I -- We had night problems: go out and lay telephone wires and stuff at night. And they were looking for a volunteer Jeep driver, and I never drove a Jeep in my life. I drove cars, but I didn't drive Jeeps. But I know -- The officer told

me, he says, "Go down to the motor pool and get a get a Jeep." I kind of practiced on the way back up to the company to pick him up, you know – him and a sergeant and another lieutenant, and we went out into the hills to see where we were going to do the night problem. And, boy, I tell you, I gave them three a ride I don't think they'll ever forget. "Cause I didn't know really how -- 'Cause there's so much shifting in it, you know, two different speeds shifting. But then I stuck that way all the way through: I was a Jeep driver and I stayed in the motor pool. When I was overseas, they were looking for volunteers for motor – to clean up the Jeeps and stuff. You know, we were out for roll call in the morning, and nobody volunteered, 'cause, you know, we were smart then, you know. And the sergeant says, "No, this is for real. We want Jeeps cleaned up." So I volunteered, and I've been on that til the day I come back. Always a driver. 'Cause I didn't want to walk. I hated that walking. [Laughs.]

Mark: I suppose it's time to discuss your trip overseas.

Tauchen: Yeah, that was –

Mark: Why don't you sort of walk me through that. I assume you took a boat?

Tauchen: Yeah, oh yeah. We had a boat – I believe it was a Dutch ship – Coda Agoing [sp?] was the name of it, I believe. It was an old cattle boat. And it was so hot when we went over that we -- none of those guys ever slept down below on the decks. We all slept on top on the upper deck. And we had – oh, half of us were white and half were black.

Mark: Was that right?

Tauchen: Yeah. They -- And we even had a couple guys, they put on boxing matches and stuff. It took us twenty-one days from San Francisco to New Hebrides. That's where we landed.

Mark: That's a long voyage.

Tauchen: Yeah. And of course we only made six knots an hour, you know. In twenty-four hours – that ain't too much, you know. All alone – no convoy or nothing. Just all alone by yourself. I thinking we saw one tanker going back, and that was – otherwise, we were a sitting duck, more or less. But that's the only time that I couldn't smoke. Going overseas I couldn't smoke. I never got sick, you know from the waves or anything. And I could eat alright, but I couldn't smoke. I'd take one cigarette and draw -- take one drag and throw it away. And I'd give the pack to somebody else, I says, "I can't do it." Til I got on land, and I was alright. And on the boat rides in between I was alright, but it was those long ones that nail you. [Laughs.]

- Mark: So you got off in New Hebrides then?
- Tauchen: Yeah, New Hebrides.
- Mark: Why don't you just sort of walk me through what happens then? I mean, that's when you ended up with the 37th Division.
- Tauchen: Yeah, um
- Mark: You're a replacement – you go over there and what happens?
- Tauchen: Yeah, we ended up with -- I think some of them – I can't remember, I think some of them who were there were Illinois National Guard, 'cause those guys – I don't remember, I don't think they were on the boat with us, but they were down in Louisiana, where they used to have maneuvers down there. In the '40, '41 era, someplace in there. So that's when we were assigned to be the 129th Infantry Regiment and 37th Division then, which was an Ohio division. Actually we were supposed to be in the 32nd division, because we should have been Wisconsin with the 129's. Because the others – the 127's, 128's and 129's were the three in that regiment, or division, yeah.
- Mark: So you get down there, and you get assigned, and then what happens?
- Tauchen: Oh, I don't know, we were there quite a while – I don't remember how long. But we went through our training and everything down there again. And of course I was in the motor pool then, so all I had to do was take care of the Jeep. Or a truck. Or a command car, or whatever. And we lived in tents, and we went on hikes – twenty-five-mile hikes. Overnight hikes and stuff. And, um, I never saw so many centipedes in my life as I seen over there. Not centipedes – ticks. In fact, we were on this overnight hike and I never slept a bit all night, and I was in the tent – we had two bunk beds put together, you know, and this other fellow was a Mexican from Minneapolis, and they never bothered him at all, on account of his dark skin evidently. But, boy, they sure picked on me. And I couldn't sleep, no, not with them things running around.
- Mark: Now I assume you've seen the film "South Pacific" or read the book.
- Tauchen: Oh, yeah, I watch all them war movies they've got on now.
- Mark: I would presume your experience is a little different?
- Tauchen: No, some of it is -- No, they've got one of Bougainville where we ended up, and I can remember some of the stuff in there. But some of the

divisions or something they say were there, I don't remember seeing them. That's what I couldn't figure out. 'Cause, um -- Well, from there, after we got through horsing around at New Hebrides, why, they put us on a boat to, we went up to Guadalcanal. And of course they were just about finished with Guadalcanal – the marines were and stuff. And we got off the boat there – I don't remember how many days we stayed, probably about three or four days. In fact, I think I got a couple of pictures on them. O Bougainville, um, Gualadog [?]. Guadalcanal – 'cause I can remember that, I see it in the scenes now that they show on that History Channel. It shows where the boat is beached on Guadalcanal. I was right near that one.

Mark: And this is your first time in a war zone?

Tauchen: Yeah. Yeah, right.

Mark: What were your impressions and what were you thinking?

Tauchen: Oh, what was it? New Hebrides. We used to have a Japanese plane come over every so often. At night a bomber'd come over and drop bombs. And we used to call him Washing Machine Charlie, because their engines are not synchronized like American engines are, and you can hear them coming at you. Never'd do any damage – just shine a couple lights up at them, and that was it. [Laughs.] But we thought nothing of it.

Mark: I suppose by this time you're twenty-one and [unintelligible].

Tauchen: Yeah, yeah. You're half crazy anyhow – you know, those fellahs: they aren't any different than today.

Mark: And so from Guadalcanal you went to Bougainville?

Tauchen: Went to Bougainville, yeah.

Mark: And it was in Bougainville where you had your first real combat experience?

Tauchen: Well, not really too much, 'cause, see, the marines – the 1st Marine Raiders went in. That was a Jimmy Roosevelt outfit. And I had a cousin in there and I didn't know about it until after the war. I could have gone down and saw him when I was on New Hebrides. They were at New Hebrides also, see, then they go up, hit these islands for ten days, and then the army's come in and they'd go – oh, go back again, see? And that's what we did – we replaced them in Bougainville. And, boy, that was a rotten place. There was no roads or nothing in there – everywhere you'd have to walk in, you'd have to carry everything in. I think I saw one

Japanese the whole time, and he was a stray -- I don't know where he'd come from. And the reason they went to Bougainville, they built three air strips: two bomber strips and a fighter strip. And, um, I was on that island thirteen months. And in March of that next year, of that year, that's when the Japanese were on the northern end of that island, and we were at the southern end, and they had to come all across the mountains to get to us. And that was the Sixth Marine Japanese Division that was causing the rape of Nanking. We got to fight them guys, and they were big tall guys, you know. And, um, we just went in, and the idea was to take twenty square miles of that part of the island, and that was it. We didn't care about the rest of it. 'Cause they used to send the dive bombers up there and bomb them with napalm -- the gardens and stuff -- to starve them out. And they had -- I know they got a letter that was six days old off of a Jap that'd come in by submarine (that's the only way he got that letter, 'cause they had it pretty well sealed off). And they were only there for about two weeks at the most, and all we did is dig -- They had pillboxes, all in a line. And the funny thing is, they had every gun that we had -- they had a map of it and what it was. How many guys were in it. How they got that knowledge I'll never know. But they had every gun that we used, and yet they were -- I know one marine, they said that -- I wasn't there at the time, I was back in the camp farther. They said that the Japanese come out in the open -- in the wide open space -- and they all sit down and have breakfast. Started making breakfast. Of course our guys just mowed them down -- just like that. I know they had a 30 mm Boper [sp?] gun that shot right down this way. And the one night they had a navy -- pumped in, they call it a million dollar artillery barrage, 'cause it -- all night long. It just flattened everything for hundreds and hundreds of yards, these big banyan trees and stuff were just mowed down to just nothing but brush. And they were down in these banyan trees in the roots. They have a little hole about that big -- they'd sit in it. And one guy'd get in, and if he'd get killed, another guy will pull him out and he'd sit in it and stuff. But they thought that they -- The reason they stopped to have breakfast is that they thought they were going to push us right into the sea. And, of course, we weren't about to have that happen. But we had the Bob Mern [sp?] fighter strips out of there, and then I don't know how many -- oh, quite a while -- probably a year later -- the, um, it's some Australian-owned island, so they came in and of course we were on the way, getting ready to go to the Philippines, and to make the invasion of the Philippines, so but they come in, and we had learn to drive on the left-hand side of the road and everything, and then, um, well, before we left, I always took a patrol, about ten guys, across the, I think it was the Passaic River then.

Mark: That's in the Philippines then?

Tauchen: No, no, this is in Bougainville yet. And we went across the river -- I'd drive across the river and dump them off, then drive back across again.

Then pick them up later in the afternoon. And this one morning I come to the river, and during the night it'd just rained like crazy up in the mountains, the water had come down through there, and where we'd always drove in – I said to the sergeant who was with me, I says – he was sitting in the front seat – I had a six-by-six Guninahalf [sp?] truck, “By Golly,” I says, “I don't think I want to go across that river!” I says, “That water looks high!” And he says, “Well, you got to go. I'm not going to walk!” And, I says, “Well, you know, I'm in command of this truck,” I says. “I'm responsible for it.” He says, “I don't give a damn.” He says, “Go!” So I no sooner stuck the front wheels in – and that river was so swift that it pulled the truck out into the middle of the stream, pretty wide stream: must have been 75 feet across or something like that. How this sergeant got out – he went out across the top of the hood in front of the windshield into the water. The water come in and hit me, and there's always a tire on the left-hand side – it shoved me over the tire. And both of us were scratching gravel to get out of the river. And it ended up the truck was upside down, the six wheels shining in the air out in the middle of the river. So the transportation officer, they gave him a small rope, and he went upstream and went into the river, and tried to swim out to it, went past it the first time – didn't grab a hold of the truck. So he made the second one, and he finally got it and they put a cable out to him from a wrecker truck and pulled the thing in. Boy, that was the cleanest truck there was, 'cause there wasn't a bit of paint on it or nothing. But they dragged it upside down, of course all the bows and stuff on it were all shot and everything. At first they were going to court martial me for it. And I went to the regimental lawyer, they had there, and he says, “Well, I don't think they're going to do that. But maybe they want to give you more training or something.” “Well,” I says, “the guy wanted to get across, and I didn't want to, but --.” “Well,” he says, “don't worry about it.” So I didn't. But for [unintelligible] they made me stay back, while our invasion force went up to the Philippines. But in the meantime, we had training where we'd waterproof all the vehicles. And then you'd go out in the ocean – you ever drive a vehicle under water? Sitting in the seat? [Laughs.] You got three stacks [?] up, and that was it. And that's the funniest feeling, driving that truck into the water and coming back out again. But for a penalty they made me stay back for thirty days, and then I come up with the rest of the trucks on another ship. So, we had the ship that was a real nice Liberty ship. And we had the radio station with us besides that we could -- They beamed all the music and everything out of the United States. They'd pick it up, and they'd broadcast it to us on the ship, see? Oh, back in Bougainville they had a high [unintelligible] command car, too, that I used to take down to the waterhole and wash it, you know. And it had a radio cross the whole back end of it, you know. And I used to tune in the radio and listen to the states playing music back in the '40s, or '41. Playing all that music from back there. But then getting away from that again now. After we went through – They were

there, what, figure it was thirty days – something like that, or twenty days. And the Japanese just turned around and went back, ‘cause they got beat so bad.

Mark: At Bougainville.

Tauchen: Yeah. There was 1-4-8, 1-4-5, and a 1-2-9 infantry regiments. And then there was the Americal Division. And I can’t remember if there was another division or not. I thought there was three, but I may be wrong.

Mark: Well, if I’m not mistaken -- You mentioned there was some black troops on your ship, and if I’m not mistaken, it was a battalion or regiment or something.

Tauchen: I don’t know exactly where they went, but somebody told me that they were on Bougainville with us. But I don’t know. So that’s -- I thought that the Americal Division replaced them: that’s what I -- I don’t know for sure.

Mark: Now in a combat situation -- I mean, you’re in the motor pool – and I’m just trying to narrow down exactly what it was you were doing –

Tauchen: Right. My job there was to take – when we’re in combat – was to take hot food up there to the front lines. And then they would in turn come out and eat right there and go back again.

Mark: Sort of maintain contact between the front [unintelligible] essentially.

Tauchen: That’s right. We always brought two or three meals a day up to them, you know. And a -- So there was hot food all the time, you know. Because that guys were living in them – na, what do you call them? They’re just holes in the ground.

Mark: Foxholes.

Tauchen: Well, they’re bigger than that – big square ones, with a -- we, um – The one I was in up there we had a, it must have been a ten by ten square hole, and then we put big logs across the top and threw canvas on top of that, and then put dirt on top of that. And we had a pretty nice place. And then we just had our hammocks – there were four of us together. And we had our hammocks slung down below. We had to crawl down into it. And that’s [unintelligible] a lot of the gun positions were the same way.

Mark: And so what’s going through your mind in these combat situations? I mean, were you scared?

Tauchen: No. I don't think I was ever really scared. I don't know – it never really bothered me. I mean, I thought, well, the only thing that really bothered me was when I was driving the truck, they gave me -- Oh, I bought a -- One of the guys was going back home, and he sold me his pistol. And I think I paid thirty-five dollars for it -- .38 special with a side pump. And I had it for about three days [laughs], and I was giving a captain a ride and he saw it in the Jeep someplace, and he saw it and he says, "You get rid of that." I says, "Captain, what am I going do? I got a gun mounted there in the corner. I got a B-A-R in there. I can't drive and shoot the B-A-R at the same time." He says, "That is not government issue – get rid of it." And I had to sell it again. But I complained about it [laughs].

Mark: Now this was what is called – pardon my French – "chicken shit."

Tauchen: Yeah, right, right.

Mark: Was there a lot of that, do you think?

Tauchen: Oh, yeah. I'll tell you about the officer and the sergeant, first sergeant in Bougainville. We used to get two cans of beer every other day.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Tauchen: That's so we wouldn't get drunk. And it was warm beer anyhow. And that's where I sold some of my beer too. But every man in the company was supposed to get a case. And when the case was done – when the twenty-four cans were supposed to be up – we only had twenty-two. Everybody was short two cans. So somebody, or one of our outfit, went down to the inspector general and told him about it. And he got on their butt but good! The captain and his star [?] first sergeant, and he made them go 'round the whole island and buy up all the beer they could, so that every man got his two cans of beer back again. And then the sergeant got busted to a private and the captain – I don't know whether they busted him, you know, or knocked him down one grade or not. I don't know – or they transferred him. I think they transferred him, 'cause I don't remember him being there after that. But sometimes, you know, the big shots'll work for you a little bit, you know, and help you out. In a case like that. We had a pretty good regiment. We had a pretty good general for our outfit, division. And, let's see, what else is there? Then New Zealanders come in too, and the air force, and they took over the army, air force's planes. All the Corsairs and stuff like that, fighters. And three of us guys got acquainted with them – we'd go down to the strip and shoot the breeze with them, and we used to help them load the guns on the ships and stuff. And then every afternoon around three o'clock they'd come around and have tea and a cookie or something. And they drove a truck around, you know, give it to all the guys. All the crew working on the

planes. And then once in a while we'd go and eat their meals, which was pretty good stuff, too. So we got along with them pretty good. I enjoyed that part of it. And I like airplanes anyhow, 'cause I used to build them as a kid, in fact I still do yet. I've got about eight or ten of them at home now yet that I still build. But -- I don't know why I never joined the airforce, and I should have done that in the beginning. Saved me a lot of trouble [laughs].

Mark: Hindsight's twenty-twenty.

Tauchen: Yeah, right.

Mark: So you went from Bougainville to the Philippines?

Tauchen: Yeah, we got on the ship, and they had already -- thirty days that they had advanced, went to Luzon. And we went from Bougainville to Hollandia, New Guinea. And we were there one day or so, and you could see McArthur's million dollar road up there, that it cost to build that road up to where he was at his place up there. You've probably seen it in some of those movies and stuff. And then from there we went to the Philippines. And got off the boat there, and my outfit was already in Manila. And they took the airfield and all that, and that was when they had the race between the 37th Division and the First Cavalry, which was McArthur's favorite outfit. And it was a race. And they said that the First Cavalry got into Manila first, but our guys said, no. We were there first, because we had a -- Some of our guys went in on an all-night march to Manila and got in there first. But I remember they put us on a truck and drove us to our different outfits, you know. And I can't remember the name of the little burg I was in anymore, some Filipino little burg right on the edge of Manila. And our outfit had a -- I think it was in an old beer place, beer depot at one time. And they had an underground garage, and we used to have mechanics, and the sergeant used to live upstairs over it, you know. And we had houses, more or less, to sleep in. And then they took a -- I think it was a sergeant, the transportation sergeant -- took me when I got there. He took me on a tour of Manila, and I tell you, it was flat all over. I mean, there was nothing there. Right up to where it was Walled City, they called it. That wall was so thick you could drive a Jeep up on top of it. And they had to use direct fire into it in order to break it down, so that they could get somebody inside, otherwise you couldn't get through it to it. But that was the only thing that was left when I got there, was the Walled City. They were still fighting at that one. And our trucks -- We used to have to repair wheels, or tires, oh, about 15, 20 times a day. You run over shrapnel and stuff like that, you know, and you puncture your tires, and we took them off -- The Jeep tires we took off civilian cars over there, 'cause we were short, and -- had a heck of a time. [laughs.]

- Mark: I imagine the Filipinos were pretty glad to see you.
- Tauchen: Oh, yeah. We got to know them pretty good. And in fact the two – the sergeant and the mechanic – the staff station sergeant and the mechanic, they had a couple of girls – couple of American girls, there was three of them, as a matter of fact – and one of them, her husband was on -- left with McArthur on the torpedo boat to go to Australia. And of course she was left there, and so were the other two. And another one, or her husband was killed – I wouldn't know their names or anything – but they were all pretty nice. Yeah. Used to pay fifty cents for an egg. [Laughs] And the egg was like a little pullet egg.
- Mark: That was a lot of money at the time.
- Tauchen: That was a lot of money. And we got paid in pesos, which is victory money. And it was -- It took two of their dollars – which was still good – two of their money to make one of ours. So when we got paid, you know, we got paid twice as much.
- Mark: Now in terms of staying in touch with people back home while you were overseas – The Philippines weren't as remote as Bougainville. Bougainville's a pretty remote area.
- Tauchen: Oh, yeah.
- Mark: Did you have trouble staying in touch, or did the military sort of keep the mail flowing, and that type of thing?
- Tauchen: Oh, no, we always had plenty of time for mail. In fact – I missed this part – the day I left the states, my son was born. And I didn't know about it until after I got over to New Hebrides. My wife had sent a telegram – no, the doctor had sent a telegram. My wife had written me, said that I had a boy, and about a month later I get a telegram from the doctor saying, come on home! You have a son. Now I be a thousand miles away, or six thousand miles away. [Laughs.] I says, boy, that's a pretty slow telegram. But that was pretty part of that, you know.
- Mark: And I suppose you had to make some sort of arrangements to take care of your family while you were gone?
- Tauchen: Oh, well, yeah, that's automatic. That was fifty bucks a month, and they took twenty-eight out of my pay and left me with twenty-two. And I had to pay, when we were in boot camp, I had to pay for my cigarettes, my toilet articles, and my insurance, and I ended up with about ten bucks a month, maybe, or less. So you didn't make much money. [Laughs.]

Mark: And so that money went back home? Now did your wife work or did she-

Tauchen: Yeah, she was working, but, see, the government snatched that to make the fifty bucks she gets. Even though I earned fifty already, they took twenty-eight and they in turn gave twenty-two. And that made the fifty dollars she got. Yeah, and she worked for the telephone company. She worked for the telephone company, and then she worked for Savedesky [sp?] Cleaners down on the east side.

Mark: Now in terms of entertainment and keeping yourself occupied when combat wasn't going on -- First of all, did you have any such opportunities?

Tauchen: Yeah, we had two USO shows.

Mark: Yeah, I was going to ask --

Tauchen: Yeah, that's the only two I saw.

Mark: Anybody famous?

Tauchen: Yeah, Jack Benny was one of them.

Mark: He's one I've heard of. A lot of times, World War II vets come in and tell me that so-and-so was in, and I have to say, "Yeah, I've heard, I know."

Tauchen: Yeah, and I can't remember who the other one was. It wasn't nobody really of importance, that I can recall. I think there was two at the most. Not so many entertainers I saw.

Mark: Now were these important to you? I mean, keeping moral up and everything?

Tauchen: Oh, yeah, we liked them. Well, I don't think anybody had too much -- especially on Bougainville -- we never had too much to squawk about, you know, other than the jungle conditions and other than that, and you know, everybody has that. But they had nice roads, they kept the roads nice -- theaters: we used to go around, five or ten theaters, different movies. Every night, yeah, on Bougainville.

Mark: Were they current movies?

Tauchen: Oh, yeah, I guess so. I don't remember what they were, but they were brought over there for some reason or other. And, um, I know that -- on Bougainville, we had a -- we were up sort of against the side of a hill. And our motor pool, where our tent was, we were at the beginning of it,

and the road would pass this, and -- Every night, this dog would come down the road, and we called him Joe. And Joe's going to the movies tonight, and this is about six o'clock, six-thirty at night -- he's going around to the movies. And then the next day he'd do the same thing again. And he belonged to one of the -- he was a major, I believe, he was a major of the D Company.

Mark: I presume people would feed him or something like that?

Tauchen: Say what?

Mark: I presume people would feed him.

Tauchen: Oh, yeah, yeah, sure. In fact, I think, I still think he was the one that the rangers used to bring around on the airplane. He used to fly on the airplane all the time with them. And then he deposited him with us or something or other -- that [unintelligible], you know. And then, we gave him to someone, I can't remember who, when we left. But I think he stayed right on the island, as far as I know. But it was comical to watch him coming, just walking right down the road -- he's going down to the movies, that's what we always said.

Mark: Now in terms of -- again, this theme of entertaining yourselves, and that sort of thing. Now, boys will be boys sometimes, and I'm interested in the underside of the war, I suppose. The drinking and gambling and that type of thing.

Tauchen: Ah, there wasn't too much gambling. Once in a while --

Mark: Were you busy enough so that people didn't turn to that sort of thing?

Tauchen: Oh, yeah, well they always give us something to do anyhow, you know. But at night, they used to have poker parties and stuff like that. I know I made one one day. I haven't made one since then -- I never played poker again, because I won pretty big that night, and I don't know why, but -- Then we used to make some of the guys get a five-gallon watering can and fill it full of fruits and stuff, you know, set it out in the jungle and let it ferment and make our own -- what the heck did we used to call it? -- oh, raisin jack. And you could smell it, when it started to ferment, you know, so. It was pretty good stuff, too.

Mark: Technically, you weren't supposed to do that.

Tauchen: No, no, no. No, they never checked on us. You know, each guy would probably have a little shot of it, and that was it, you know. Nobody ever drank or got drunk -- you couldn't.

- Mark: Well, you see, I was leading to that, I mean –
- Tauchen: It was just enough to take the pressure off and stuff or whatever.
- Mark: So alcoholism wasn't necessarily rampant. It wasn't getting in the way of effective operations.
- Tauchen: Oh, no. Even when we got to the Philippines where there was a lot of whiskey – but a lot of it was, I don't know, they'd drill a hole in the bottle, in the bottom, and fill it full of half-and-half or something, you know. Call it Seagram 7. I paid seven dollars a bottle for it one time, and that was it. 'Cause I never drank that much like that. Never cared to.
- Mark: So you went Bougainville, then the Philippines, and then of course there was fighting still going on, I mean up until August of 1945, so when the war ended, I presume, you were still in the Philippines.
- Tauchen: Well, before that, after we got Manila cleaned up, then they sent us to Perry -- I mean, Baguio, which is a summer capital of Philippines, and they did –
- Mark: It's on a hill somewhere.
- Tauchen: Oh, that's all mountains. And one of the outfits – it wasn't in our division, but they were in another division that just didn't move, and our outfit had to go in there and replace them. We finally took the thing. But that was -- I know we got into Baguio up there: there was a church right up on top of a hill, and that's where we stayed: in the rectory or stuff. But after three o'clock in the afternoon you couldn't take a shower, it'd get so cold. You're five thousand feet above sea level. So -- And then we were in Manila. The buddy, him and I, we were always together. We were always together – slept in the same tent and everything. He got a little monkey, a little baby monkey, out of Walled City, and it didn't have a bit of hair on it. Just – barely new-born, you know. Maybe a week or so at the most. And when we went to Baguio and got up in them hills, that monkey had to grow hair in a hurry. And his name was Jocko. And we had more fun with him – and the Filipino women hated him. 'Cause he'd run up underneath their skirts. [Laughs.] And we finally had to put a leash on him, because he was aggressive all the time, you know. But he slept with us and everything --just like a little baby. And we had him for a long time. We finally – When we left, why, we gave him to navy or marine guys or somebody, you know. But -- Well then after that, after we got through with Baguio, then they pulled us back down, and we went to that Cabanatuom Prison Camp. Yeah, we were there for about a month. And we were rebuilding back up again, and then we went up to the northern tip

of Luzon, which is a Perry [?], went up through the Bilaydi Pass and all that. And I remember one night, I don't remember what the name of the town was, they said that we were supposed to connect with a glider outfit – parachute outfit. I don't know if it was the 82nd – some airborne outfit. And I know that there was my truck and another truck, I think, behind. And an officer with me. And we drove at night to go up there and connect with them. And in between there were supposed to have been ten thousand Japanese [laughs]. The roads we'd never seen – we never had any headlights on or nothing, you know. And we drove that – it took about seven or eight hours to get up there to connect with them. And we come to find out all those Japanese went out to the east – towards the eastern part of Luzon. They never did connect up to them – whatever happened to them, I don't know. And so we went on – when we connected up with them, then we went on to Perry, and we stayed up there til – well, until the war ended. But I used to drive, um -- I had a ton-and-a-half six-by-six truck, had a 250-gallon tank on the back, for water tank, and then I pulled a trailer, 250. And I used to go down to the water point, fill up with water, and then deliver the water to all the kitchens. And I did that twice a day. And then I used to -- We had an outpost way out there to the east, where them guys went: where those Japanese were supposed to have gone. And I used to take those guys out there about every ten days. They'd stay out ten days and come back in. I used to go out – it was about a twenty mile ride out there. But there was like fifty by-passes, because all the bridges were blown, so we had to go down back up, you know. So then when we got the word that they had dropped the bomb, why then, they said the war was over. We were almost scheduled to go to Japan. 'Cause we were getting ready for it.

Mark: Oh, you mean the invasion of Japan?

Tauchen: Yeah, yeah.

Mark: Now did you realize that at the time?

Tauchen: Well, yeah, we figured it out. Yeah, because they figured –

Mark: They didn't tell you –

Tauchen: They didn't have to -- The old dope that we were -- The rumors were flying around, because, well, we didn't do a heck of a lot, you know, on the way up to Perry, so we didn't lose too many guys or anything. And it was just that we were there, so we were actually scheduled for it.

Mark: Now I'm interested in sort of the G.I.'s – sort of the G.I.'s image of the Japanese soldier. I mean, there's been a lot made of how fanatical they were and that sort of thing.

- Tauchen: Well, see, in my case I didn't see very many. I saw –
- Mark: I realize that, but even in your position, when you talked about the invasion of Japan what sorts of images came to people's minds at the time?
- Tauchen: I don't know, I really didn't have anything to – 'cause it was, it wasn't for sure, you know, it was just rumored, that's all, we didn't know for sure whether we'd go or not. And then they loaded us on the boat and I know we had Thanksgiving on the way home.
- Mark: Well, now I was going to ask when you got rotated home? You'd been over there a lot longer than a lot of guys had.
- Tauchen: Oh, yeah. Well I missed it by five points. They had a rotation. [Laughs.] If I had had a Purple Heart, I'd have made it, but I didn't have one. So I missed it by five points, and they took us home then. That's when the war ended – right about there. But this Mexican guy was telling me about -- He went home early, because we found out later that he had a family at home. He had never talked about it. But we didn't -- You got credit for so many children or something or whatever – I can't remember it exact. I was short five points, I know, coming home. And on the way home on the boat we had a -- We were on the *Sea Corporal*, which was a beautiful, luxury boat, really. And I volunteered to – every night about nine o'clock, they'd give the officers a little coffee and a little something to eat or something, and I volunteered to work in the mess, you know, so I could get some – close to that food! [Laughs.] And I got paid like a buck or two, something like that, besides, so -- I didn't mind. Then we got in to -- When we were coming back, we stopped at Enewetak, and I was with the first boat out of our outfit that went back home, and there was a second one behind us, and I don't know exactly where this hurric- what do they call them? Out in the Pacific, these storms?
- Mark: Typhoons.
- Tauchen: Oh, typhoon. We had just got through it in time. And they were behind us – I think they got caught in it. [Laughs.] And we stopped at Annaweetauk for, I don't know whether they fueled up or what, I don't know – and then on we went. Got in to Los Angeles, got off the boat and put us on a couple of trucks and took us up in the hills at Camp Anza. I don't know – I've never seen it since then or whatever. And we slept there over night, and I never felt so cold in my life. 'Cause you're coming out of 80, 90 degree weather all the time.
- Mark: This is, what, December?

Tauchen: Yeah, this is December. And I got into California, you get up in the mountains or up in them hills, it's gonna be cold. And I had about three blankets on me – I couldn't get enough to cover me. Well, then we got on a train to ship us back to Wisconsin. And that took about – I don't know – two or three days, something like that. Well, anyhow, before we got into - - We didn't have any heat in our car til we got into Illinois-, um, cross the Wisconsin-Iowa border. You know, that's like Cor de Chien [Kordesheen?] before we got any heat.

Mark: You're going to Camp McCoy, I presume?

Tauchen: Camp McCoy, yeah. Before they fucked up -- They missed one of the bells, and they turned the bells on, and finally they got, adjusted the heat. I woke up in – you know, they had the Pullman car, and the top bunk, and when they pull that thing down it was all frosted inside. That's how cold it was. And the guys behind us – Oh, at that time they had the train strike in the United States. And we got the last train out of California. They were, like, two weeks behind us, you know, before they got that train strike settled, you know. And they got in a little later than we did, you know. But some of those guys didn't go through -- I think they went through Illinois someplace, 'cause a lot of them were Illinois people, you know. And then I got to Camp McCoy and got discharged up there. Put us on a bus to Madison, and just south of Sauk City the bus broke down. And they had to get a bus out of Madison. And the guy I was with, his uncle, his aunt and uncle – yeah – and his uncle was a major, I believe. He come up there to pick the kid up. And come to find out that his wife and my wife worked together. And I figured – you know, I had stopped writing and everything, 'cause I, about a month before going home, I figured: what the heck? I'm going to be there anyhow. She didn't know that I was on my way home, see? But then when this guy picked up -- When this major picked up his nephew and brought him back to Madison, why, his wife called my wife and said they were here. And, of course, she knew all about it, and when I got off the bus in Madison, there stands my wife and son. [Laughs.] I hadn't seen him for -- since he was born.

Mark: Yeah.

Tauchen: And my dad.

Mark: Good to be home, I presume.

Tauchen: Good to be home, yeah. And I was really surprised. I thought I was gonna pull a fast one on them, you know, get into the house quick, and it never worked. [Laughs]

- Mark: So the war was over.
- Tauchen: The war was over, yup.
- Mark: Now's the time to get on with the rest of your life, basically.
- Tauchen: Well, I stayed out about a month. Oh, then about the -- Let's see, that was the 19th of December when I got home. And Christmas Day I got sicker than a dog, and I mean sick. I sweat and then I'd freeze and everything -- come to find out I had malaria. And of course I had stopped taking the atabrin [sp?] pills when I was over in the Philippines, 'cause that was supposed to be just a holder. And, um -- So when I got -- They diagnosed it as -- Doctor said it was malaria.
- Mark: Had you contracted malaria overseas?
- Tauchen: No. This was the first time it really hit me, see, we always took the pill.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Tauchen: That was what it was designed for. We come to find out it was also a cure. And I didn't know that until afterwards. But when I was working with Gisholt, when I'd have these attacks -- one day a month! -- and I had the bottle down in the nurse's room down there, and whenever I'd feel it coming on, I'd go down and take a pill. And of course I'd have to go home, because I was really out. And of course she would write that on my records and everything, you know. And it lasted about two years. And towards the end, why --- Every six months the government would write and say -- Oh, and I got a pension for it, you know, a payment.
- Mark: About 20% or something?
- Tauchen: I got pretty high -- I don't know, it was thirty-four dollars and something the first time. And when they asked me if I still had it, you know, on paper, I'd give them the doctor's report and the nurse's report and everything, you know. And they automatically kicked it up to -- I think it was sixty-five dollars. Sixty-nine dollars. 'Cause the rent on my house was sixty dollars a month, and my wife could bought [?] while I was overseas, and it paid for the rent, plus I had nine dollars extra. [Laughs.] For two years, so it wasn't too bad, you know.
- Mark: Out of curiosity, there were a lot of guys from Wisconsin who were also in the South Pacific and also came back with malaria. And I misunderstood; at Gisholt were there other vets who also had malarial problems that you knew of?

Tauchen: Not that I knew of.

Mark: There was a nurse there – I wonder if she had other patients.

Tauchen: I don't know – I never inquired about it. But I know some of the guys now, years afterwards, that I talked to that had malaria – some of them would be down in bed for a week. And they only got like ten bucks. And here I was drawing sixty-nine bucks for one day, you know.

Mark: Why do you suppose that was?

Tauchen: I don't know. Whether it was because I kept records or not, I don't know. I have no idea why it happened. Oh, by the same token, when I didn't write, why, my wife contacted the Red Cross to find out where I was. [Laughs] And he says, "Rowd [?], we'll look into it." And I think it was about a month or two after I was already home, he called up and says, "Well, we contacted your husband – he's on his way home." "Thanks," she says, "he's been home for two months." And he felt about that high. And the guy she talked to – I knew his brother, I went to school with his brother – he kind of felt bad about it, but I says, "Don't feel bad," I says, "bad communications and all that stuff." "And," he says, "What else can I do for you? Were you sick or anything?" And I says, "Yeah," I says, "I had malaria." "Oh, okay," he says, "I'll get on it." And he's the guy who got me the malaria pension. And that I'm thankful for.

Mark: Yeah, well, it might have been the critical difference.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

Mark: So there was the selective service act that allowed veterans under certain conditions to get their old jobs back. Is that how you got yours back?

Tauchen: Yes, yes. I went back, and I went back and the guy that I went back and talked to, he said, "Well," he said, "I don't know if you want to come back or not. We're going to have a strike in two or three days." So, I says, "I gotta get to work." So I worked there three days, and they went on strike. And I says, "Well, I can't afford this." So I went across the street to Ben Anderson Milking Machine Company, and I worked over there for a buck an hour. Otherwise I was supposed to get the same -- There was another guy that I started out with in 1941 or '40 – no, '41 – on the same drill press: we both learned on it and everything. And of course he was an older fellow, and he stayed home, and he got all the raises in between. I was supposed to get same thing when I come back – I was supposed to get the same amount: never did. I bitched about it, but it didn't do no good. So, I said the heck with it. So then they went on strike for \$1.17 an hour. And I said, I can't afford that – striking, so I went across the street and

worked there for a buck an hour, til they settled the strike, and then I come back. And I can't remember how long I was there – maybe a year or so. Well, maybe a little longer. It was there in 1948 that I got a job with Philgas, which is Phillips Petroleum Company. And when I was a kid in high school I used to wash all their trucks at the gas station. So I knew most of the people there. And the only way you could get that job would be to have them recommend you. So I put in an application for it, and they hired me. And I know the boss asked me, he says, “When do you want to start?” I says, “Tomorrow, if you want me.” He says, “No, give Gisholt two weeks.” So I gave them two weeks and then I went to work. From my \$1.17 an hour I started out at \$.85 an hour. At Philgas. And within a year I was caught up with everybody else: I got a nickel an hour raise the first month, every two month or something after that you got an automatic nickel an hour raise, until you caught up with everybody else, so it was a good deal. And they paid for our clothes, instructions and everything. They were a good outfit, I don't care – they can say what they want about Phillips, but he treated his people nice.

Mark: Did you stay there for how long?

Tauchen: I was there twenty years. Going into my 21st year when I quit and went into business for myself then. Wife and I started a ceramic business.

Mark: Now as the war ended there was a lot of concern that all these vets were going to come home and not find work. I don't get the impression that this was a problem for you. You were able to shop around and find --

Tauchen: Nope. No, I didn't even have – just went back -- They had to take me back. According to the law, you know.

Mark: Yeah, but you could also quit and go somewhere else. You weren't stuck in that position necessarily, you could work your way into something more to your liking.

Tauchen: Oh, yes. Yeah. And then, after I quit Gisholt, I stopped down there a year later -- I stopped in to see some of the guys who were still there, some of the guys I knew, and my boss kicked me out of there. Okay, if you want to be that chicken, you know. I said, “I just stopped in to see some of the fellows.” ‘Cause he's the one who would give me a deferment. He said, “If you have somebody to support besides your wife, like your mother,” he says, “maybe we could get you one.” Now forget it. I was ticked off about that [unintelligible]. [Laughs.]

Mark: Now there were other veterans' benefits after World War II – there were home loans and that kind of thing.

- Tauchen: Oh, yes. I got one when we lived in Oregon. I got one for a duplex. And I was old then. I mean, fifty, forty-five. And they gave me a federal loan for a house. And -- Only thing is I had to pay a thousand dollars a month which is kind of steep, you know. But then we got into this ceramic business, and finally we built a house next to the shop. We were all together. And I was lucky I was able to sell the house then again – Made out, I got abandoned, I mean. Broke even on the deal, so I didn't have to owe anything. I was scared of that one. That was the only time, but I didn't think they'd give you it at that age, you know.
- Mark: There were no programs that you used then?
- Tauchen: No, not that I know of. The only one I got now is something out of the VA at the Veterans Hospital – a check for – oh, I don't know what they call it: it's in the blood. And it's a – should have brought that thing along, I don't know what they call it. I mean, if it ruptures or anything, it could kill you, whatever this thing is.
- Mark: Embolism or something?
- Tauchen: Yeah, something like that.
- Mark: Now let's discuss some of the medical problems you've had. The malaria part. Now were they a source of emotional and psychological adjustments you had to make, coming back to society? I think, for example, of the son you had never seen when you come back in the house.
- Tauchen: Yeah.
- Mark: How did he take to the new dad?
- Tauchen: Oh, he called me dad – daddy. [Laughs.] Yeah. And I used to save phonograph records before the war. I had a lot of phonograph records – I had about three-hundred. And when I come back from the service, I'm lucky if I have twenty left. My wife had let him play with the doggone things, and he had broke them, you know. A lot of that stuff were antiques now. They would have been, you know. But I've got them all captured reback [sic] on tape again. So I don't worry too much about it. But other than that –
- Mark: But he took pretty well.
- Tauchen: Yeah, I didn't have any trouble adjusting. As long as I had a place to work, what the heck? Had a family, had a car. I had a '34 Ford coupe that I had before the war, and when I left, that my father put it up on blocks.

And when I come back out, we put the wheels back on again, and I drove it again for quite a while.

Mark: 'Cause there weren't very many –

Tauchen: Oh, no. The thing was getting a hold of tires. And I worked for a gas station so I could get the tires for that. And it was a 17" wheel on that type of car, instead of 16", you know. So I used the -- My boss usually gave me first crack at whatever 17"s come in.

Mark: It often does pay to know people.

Tauchen: Yes. Right. And I did a lot of work for him and – you know. I made him a few bucks.

Mark: Well, I've just got one last area, and, as I discussed before we turned the tape on, it doesn't apply to you all that much, and that involves veterans' organizations and reunions and that sort of thing. So when you came home, you didn't join any groups like the legion or anything?

Tauchen: No, I didn't.

Mark: Any particular reason? You were just too busy.

Tauchen: I didn't know of any. And really I didn't care much for army stuff anyhow any more, you know. And -- but I don't know, I get a letter every so often from a G-Company, I believe, or H-Company, and they have – they're way out in Colorado or someplace. I don't know what the heck they're doing way out there. But they're split up, you know – they're all over. And I've never been to a reunion of any kind. Never even heard of one, other than this one guy. And he was H-Company, as far as I was concerned, he was way down the line from any of us anyhow. He was in a rifle company, you know. And I was in headquarters company.

Mark: Well, those were pretty much all the questions I had. Would you like to add anything? Anything you think we've skipped over?

Tauchen: Nothing, but we had a ceramic business after we – after I quit Philgas.

Mark: Which does pretty well now, I think.

Tauchen: We were really a big one in Oregon. And we had 7000 square feet of working space and stuff.

Mark: And what kind of ceramics do you make?

- Tauchen: Oh, anything. Cups, saucers, plates – anything you can think of. Whole lot of ceramics.
- Mark: How'd you get involved with that?
- Tauchen: My wife. She wanted to make a set of dishes, and she went up to a place on University Avenue called Terza – it ain't there anymore, but that's where she learned. And that's where they throw it on the wheel. She says, "I don't want that." It's too much work. She wants to pour the stuff. And so that's how she got started going to class, and then I then I bought her a kiln, and we did the firing, and we kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger in our home in Oregon. And then we moved – then we took a chance and built out on County Trunk B: that's north of Oregon. And – oh, God, let's see, we went there -- we were there for – since 19 -- well, '84 we moved out, we went up to Michigan. Lived up there for three-and-a-half years, then we came back to Madison again. And finally ended up in Oregon, 'cause we originally lived in Oregon. Well, we lived in Madison first, and then we moved to Oregon, and then we always feel Oregon is our home, even though I was -- We were both born in Madison, went to high school, and, um –
- Mark: It's all growing into one thing anyway.
- Tauchen: Yeah, and she and I are the only ones in our class that married, um, same classmates. The longest. We'll be fifty-five this year in June.
- Mark: Congratulations.
- Tauchen: [Laughs.] Thank you. And of course we're still having class reunions yet. We got another one coming up now – this fall.
- Mark: Now I'd imagine at a class reunion there a lot of vets. Class of '41 –
- Tauchen: Yeah, there is. Yeah, and we got all the literature on that kind of stuff, you see, they've got everything they've done, written and everything. We've got it all catalogued – and the whole works. I don't think there's another outfit that's got as much, 'cause everything that written or everything that's printed on paper, death notice and all that stuff -- There was one in there today that we got, or yesterday – can't remember what his name is, but he married a Cockrill girl, and, um -- He was a professor. You got a column that long, this way, and another one that long, next [unintelligible], so -- He was pretty well known. And we keep track of all the people like that, you know. And we had a class of about three-hundred-and-five or something like that in '41. And we still get about 150.

Mark: Not bad at all.

Tauchen: And they come from all over.

Mark: I know I'll never go to mine.

Tauchen: Huh?

Mark: I'll never go to my class reunion.

Tauchen: No? [Laughs.]

Mark: Not interested.

Tauchen: I enjoy talking to those people though that way. We just sit down and we shoot the breeze. They want to hire a dance band and stuff. I says, "Who do you want to dance? We're too damn old for that stuff anyhow. I says, we'd rather talk about old times. A lot of them don't though. A lot of them don't want to associate with us at all.

Mark: I had a class of about 600. Sort of a late bloomer, I guess. I don't want to think back to those days. Well, thanks for coming in. I appreciate it.

[End of Interview]