

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
ROBERT W. WINNER
Paratrooper and Mortarman, Marines, World War II
2001

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Winner, Robert W., (1922-). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 40 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Robert Winner, a Marshfield, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a paratrooper and mortarman with the 2nd and 5th Marine Divisions in the Pacific Theater. Winner relates selling extras of the Wisconsin State Journal on the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, enlisting in 1942, boot camp in San Diego, and doing paratrooper training at the same time as his brother, who broke a bone in his heel during a jump. He describes joining the Marine Raiders of the 2nd Regiment, 2nd Division and staging for Guadalcanal and Vella Lavella. He details preparation for the Bougainville Campaign and his unit's raid on Choiseul Island. During combat at Choiseul he describes swimming out to rescue a sergeant who had narrowly escaped capture by the Japanese and, while in the water, being saved from shelling by a sudden squall. The PT boat that picked them up was run by Jack Kennedy. During the rescue Winner cut his feet on coral reefs, and he mentions being unable to walk for days after. After Bougainville, the paratroops were reformed into the 5th Marine Division, and he describes his reassignment to the mortar section including training in Hawaii and Saipan. He speaks of preparing for the Iwo Jima campaign, the rough landing on Iwo Jima, and attacking the middle airstrip on Mount Suribachi with the 27th Regiment. He details his combat efforts and the difficulty of getting the Japanese out of the tunnels. He describes a couple near-misses: having a dud rocket land right next to his foxhole, and having shrapnel rip up the equipment in his backpack. He describes being hit in the leg by mortar shrapnel and getting flown to a hospital in Guam. He touches upon his hospitalization in Hawaii and occupation duty at Sasebo (Japan). He comments on his return home, using the GI Bill for vocational school, his involvement with the active Army Reserves at Camp McCoy (Wisconsin), and switching to the Navy Reserves. He mentions being a member of VFW post 1318 in Madison (Wisconsin) and attending a Marine parachute regiment reunion.

Biographical Sketch:

Robert Winner (b.1922), served with the 2nd and 5th Marine Divisions from 1941-1945. He served as a paratrooper, mortarman, and raider in the Pacific Theater of operations during World War II.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.

Transcribed by Jeremy Osgood, 2009.

Transcript and abstract edited by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

Jim: That's going. Okay. Talking to Bob Winner, it's the 27th of August, year 2001. When were you born, Bob?

Bob: September 19th, 1922.

Jim: In Madison?

Bob: Pardon?

Jim: Where?

Bob: Oh, Marshfield, Wisconsin.

Jim: So, what were you doing when Pearl Harbor day arrived?

Bob: When it started? The war started? I was delivering war extras on the corner of Knickerbocker and Monroe Street.

Jim: That's when you first found out that the Japs had attacked? When the newspapers came for you to deliver.

Bob: They came to deliver. Called me early. And said—

Jim: Oh, it was an extra.

Bob: Extra, yeah. And I stood on the corner there, and we sold more papers than I'd pedaled all month.

Jim: I suppose that you sold every paper you had.

Bob: Yeah. Every one. Cars would stop, left and right, war extra, about that high, you know.

Jim: Was that in the State Journal, or the Cap Times?

Bob: State Journal.

Jim: Really. Well, I'll be damned. That's good. Nobody's ever had that particular experience. Everybody had a little bit different experience on that day.

Bob: Oh, yeah?

Jim: But that's really unusual. So, then were you drafted or did you join something, or tell me how that went.

Bob: No, I signed up in Milwaukee. My brother signed up in the Marine Corps here, and I was in Milwaukee and I signed up for, I was going to join the Navy. So I came home, and then my mother says, Jim was in the Marine Corps.

Jim: Is Jim your older brother or younger?

Bob: Younger brother.

Jim: That's what I remembered, yeah.

Bob: And then, so then I went back, and then I switched over and told them Marine Corps, and they said, "Go out right away." So I came back home to Madison, and told the kid brother he had to wait two more weeks, but they pushed it up then, that I was going in right away.

Jim: Right, they wanted you in now.

Bob: So we both went the same time.

Jim: You recall what month you went in, in '42?

Bob: November. November '42.

Jim: That's when you went into service.

Bob: Yeah. Yeah.

Jim: Where did, for training, where'd you go?

Bob: San Diego. Boot camp there, and then out of boot camp I went into parachute school.

Jim: Was your boot camp a eight week or twelve week deal?

Bob: That was eight weeks, it was short.

Jim: It was short. And then before you went into a unit, you were just trained as a rifleman at that time.

Bob: Yeah.

Jim: And then you had an opportunity to jump?

Bob: No, no, you had to sign up for paratroops. You had to make five jumps to qualify.

Jim: But everybody didn't have that chance, though, did they Bob?

Bob: Oh, no. Well, they had a choice.

Jim: Oh, they could have?

Bob: Yeah, they could have. Went in the tank corps, or--

Jim: Did Jim do it?

Bob: Yeah, that's sort of a funny thing, is that Jim went, and he talked to this captain, and he was from Wisconsin. Paratrooper. And then, Jim was gonna go in there, and I was gonna go, I didn't care where they put me. Well, he comes back and he's, "Hey! Go in the paratroops. This guy's down here."

Jim: He signed you up? Your brother?

Bob: Yeah. So we both went.

Jim: Did you end up in the same barracks or the same outfit?

Bob: Yeah. Same.

Jim: They didn't separate you at all?

Bob: No. But on the fifth jump, a corpsman jumped on top of his chute, and he fell about twenty feet without his chute, and—

Jim: Broke something.

Bob: Broke his, a bone in his heel, and then they took a bone out of his shin, and put in the heel. And then he got infection on that. But he stayed right in the states, and I went overseas right away.

Jim: Yeah, cause that tied him up for a long time.

Bob: Yeah. So, all the time I was overseas, it was in February I came back to the states, they disbanded the paratroops, and then formed the 5th Marine Division. And my brother was there, and I says, "What in the hell are you doing here? Go, get back to sick bay and get a discharge." He went back and they kicked him right out of there.

Jim: They did?

Bob: Yeah.

- Jim: They didn't trust that leg anymore. That was his sole experience, then, was making a jump and then jumping right out of the corps. Out of the service, really.
- Bob: Well, no, no, no. He didn't go out of the service. They told him, kicked him out of the hospital.
- Jim: Oh, I see.
- Bob: And then formed your unit. So then when we went overseas again, second time together.
- Jim: Second time.
- Bob: Yeah.
- Jim: You went over the first time yourself, you mean?
- Bob: Yeah, first time myself.
- Jim: With who? With what unit?
- Bob: With, well, it was a replacement that I went, and then we got into the 2nd Marine, oh, what was it. Yeah, 2nd Marine Division.
- Jim: That's your first experience. With the 2nd Division?
- Bob: 2nd Marine Regiment, that's what it was.
- Jim: 2nd Marine Regiment. 2nd Regiment. Okay. Now, was that a paratroop outfit?
- Bob: That was paratroops, yeah. That formed in New Caledonia.
- Jim: That's where you got to when you left the states?
- Bob: Yeah.
- Jim: So, how did you enjoy the paratroops? Was that tougher or easier than you thought?
- Bob: I liked it. I liked it. I liked it very much.
- Jim: You did? Jumping out didn't bother you?
- Bob: No. It did at first. But you got used to it. But where we went, New Caledonia, we went up the island about sixty miles. We called it the Tontouta Airport. That's where we'd practice jump. Before we jumped off.

Jim: And where'd you jump off to?

Bob: We went to Guadalcanal.

Jim: You jumped there?

Bob: We were gonna jump at Henderson Field. But, no, they wouldn't allow it.

Jim: Yeah I didn't know that any paratroopers had jumped at Henderson Field. They never—

Bob: No. Never jumped.

Jim: They used you as riflemen, then. What was that, what division—

Bob: We worked as Marine Raiders.

Jim: I talked to another Marine Raider. A guy named Voight. He was with the Marine Raiders. Then you went to Makin Island?

Bob: No.

Jim: Cause part of them went to Makin Island.

Bob: Yeah, but that was 2nd Division, I think.

Jim: And your division, the 2nd Regiment, what division. I didn't get that?

Bob: Second, was in the first Marine paratrooper regiment.

Jim: First division, you mean? The 2nd regiment, 1st division, or how do you put that? I want to get it right.

Bob: Second Marine Regiment. That's what I was in. And then we connected with the First and the Third.

Jim: Right, so you weren't really in any regular division all the time, then.

Bob: No, no. Not with paratroop service. Too small a unit.

Jim: Okay, what was your first combat experience then?

Bob: Then we went from Guadalcanal into Vella Lavella. Was right off of Bougainville.

Jim: Did you jump there?

Bob: No, we didn't do any jumping then. We did it all in New Caledonia.

Jim: That was just practice.

Bob: Yeah, and then it was Marine Raiders. And then we're going from Vella Lavella to Choiseul.

Jim: C-R-O-I-S?

Bob: C, what is it?

Jim: I'll get it. And what was at Choiseul? A landing, or?

Bob: Yeah, we went in on a converted destroyer and over the side, and then we made camp. In about, oh, about a mile inland. Sacked up with, what do you call them? Hammocks. And then we went from there, and we went further down the island. And that's where we hit some Japs in there.

Jim: That was your first combat experience, then? At the other end of that island of Choiseul?

Bob: Yeah, at the other end of that island, and then we bombarded another small island on there, with mortar shells. And we had to put the mortars right into the water. Cause the leaves were hanging out, you know, and we couldn't get a shot at them. And then we fired a hundred and thirty five rounds on that island. And a then lot of smoke went up.

Jim: Yeah, I guess. It's a little island, I bet.

Bob: So they must have had oil or gas on there or something. Well, and then we went to go back, and—

Jim: How far back?

Bob: Well this was, we got lost. A native couldn't find his way, so we got lost, we camped overnight. And then we picked up some other natives that knew where we wanted to go, and they showed us the way. That's when we bombarded the island, then. So then when we went back, we were in kind of like a horseshoe, and the lieutenant and the sergeant went to go over to that way, to track the boats in. Wave them in. And PT boats were supposed to pick us up. So, this Lieutenant, anyhow, got captured. Japs captured him. The sergeant, he got away, and he started swimming down. And of course, volunteer, you and you, Winner and Sadlowski, go and get that guy. So we went and we got coral cuts, oh my god! We had to wade out on coral for about fifty yards. And finally we decided to swim on

top of it instead of cutting our feet all to pieces. Well, in the meantime, the shells were coming, there were machine gunning us.

Jim: The Japs were?

Bob: Yeah. And we got that guy, we got to him, gave him some pillows. You blow them up, you know, and then put them under his arms.

Jim: Was he wounded? Was the Captain wounded? You say you got to him.

Bob: No, no, the Captain got captured.

Jim: Right, but I thought that's where you were going, to get him.

Bob: No, no, yeah, we were going to go, but he got captured there and then we went after this sergeant. Well, and then it just happened that it started to rain to beat hell. That's what saved us I think. Had a big squall. And, so, that Higgins boat that I'm supposed to get on, they had to scuttle it. They hit the bottom of the reef, and all that. So the PT boats came in, PT boat number 39, was run by Jack Kennedy.

Jim: Oh. I thought he was 109.

Bob: Yeah, this was later he had 109, but before that he was on 39. Of course we didn't know this until after the war was over. Well, anyhow, we got aboard that ship, aboard his PT boat, and then they took us back down the island.

Jim: You get the sergeant back okay?

Bob: Yeah, we got him in okay.

Jim: Was he wounded?

Bob: No, he was all right. He was just a little worn out. He was going so fast that, you know, scared.

Jim: Sure. Damn right.

Bob: [laughs] Well anyhow, we got back on shore and then they had a native hut there that was church, on stilts. So we stayed there overnight before we went back into our camp. And my feet were so bad they had to paint them all that purple stuff, you know? I don't know what the heck that was. But, five days we couldn't walk or a darn thing.

Jim: They were all swollen.

Bob: Yeah. From the coral cuts. Well, then we were there for about six, seven days. Well, anyhow the Japs found out where we were. So they went and they land mined everything around there. Booby trapped, and razor blades in the trees and everything else, you know. And then we took off, and then just as we took off, the Japs came in. And those mines were blowing, and [laughs].

So, we captured a map of Bougainville, which they sent back, and we had an Australian was the observer on the island, he stayed there. So he radioed back and everything. So when they were going in on Bougainville they had to change it, because this map showed all the landmines and water mines that they had. So they changed there landing. And that was the only good thing that we did about the thing.

Jim: Well, that's a lot. That map saved a lot of lives.

Bob: Yeah. I don't know. That's about all we did there. Well, anyhow, we got back to Vella Lavella. And the only thing we had there was, when we were unloading the ship LST [Landing Ship, Tank], the old Jap plane come in, and heck, he wasn't fifty feet above it and he dropped a bomb down the smokestack.

Jim: That was the end of that.

Bob: Of course, and then everybody started, you could see him. Big little teeth shining, you know, and then everybody's firing with handguns, you know, pistols and rifles. And by god somebody hit him.

Jim: He went down?

Bob: He went down, about a mile down the island. Well, they didn't have air support then, see. And them Japs they just maneuvered all over, flying. And then, where do I go from there? Oh, and then we went from there back to the states.

Jim: Aboard ship?

Bob: Yeah. That's when they broke up the paratroops and formed the 5th Marine Division.

Jim: They moved you to the 5th Marines, then? When you were back in San Diego?

Bob: Yeah, I was back in San Diego, and they gave us 29 day furlough. In February.

Jim: February '43.

Bob: '44.

Jim: Your feet finally heal? Your feet were healed by then?

Bob: Yeah. By then they were healed pretty good.

Jim: So, what, you had a different mission with the 5th Marines? Did you do anything differently?

Bob: No, about the same. From the 5th we went from the states to Hawaii. It took 21 days on that ship to go from San Diego to Hawaii. They had to zig zag, you know. Stay out of the war zone. Then we went from Hawaii, that was in Hilo, and then we went to Pearl Harbor on standby, that's when we found out that we were going into Iwo Jima. And we were laid over in Pearl Harbor there for about three or four days.

Jim: Before Iwo Jima? Before the landing?

Bob: Yeah. We went to, we started toward Iwo Jima and then we side tracked into Saipan, stayed there and then they were giving us the business on how this map worked for Iwo Jima. They said within 48 hours we'd have that island secured.

Jim: When you were on Saipan, you were doing training? Training, practice landings?

Bob: Yeah. And then, each day, as we went along then, it went 48, then 68, and then it said a couple days. Well, then by the time we were ready to, the beach in there, they said it'd be about a week. And the *USS Wisconsin*, I can remember that, they were bombarding Mount Suribachi there. Oh, man did they bomb that thing, and you'd wonder how in the hell can they come through that, you know. Well, then, we were supposed to go around to the other side of the island, but the sea got rough. And they claimed afterwards that that was a good thing, because they were all waiting for us on that other side. So we went in on the rough side, and the beach was just like that, uphill.

Jim: The sand was hard to walk on, I understand. You'd slip.

Bob: Oh, every step you'd take, you'd slip and then take two. But, getting off of the APA [Amphibious Attack Transport] on the cargo net, and then the Higgins boat is waiting down there. And that water was so damned rough, and that Higgins boat would almost come up to where we were, and then down, and you know, they're pushing you, "get on there, get on there!"

Jim: That's a way to break an arm or a leg.

Bob: Yeah! And I thought, oh my god, I'm gonna do that. So I had mortar ammunition on my back, and I jumped, oh, must have been twenty feet. I jumped right in the middle of that boat, because she was coming up like that. Well, anyhow, we got on the beach, you know, and then we didn't get more than 25 yards, first day. That's how far we got in. About the third, I think it was the third day we finally

got in about to the middle, and then we went to the right. And Mount Suribachi that was the 26th Marine Regiment went there. And the 27th, we went down the middle.

Jim: You were on the 27th regiment then?

Bob: Yeah, 27th Marine regiment.

Jim: Your only cover then was in a bomb hole, or something like that, a bomb crater? That was the only protection you had.

Bob: Yeah, volcano ash, and that was the only protection you had. That's right. And like, *Wisconsin* is shelling, you know. And you'd get into one of their bomb holes. And they aren't supposed to fire within a thousand yards of the front line. And we're getting em about 200 yards of the front line. That was really something. That was a mess.

Jim: Yeah, you had to keep your eyes looking both ways, right. Awful. Was the noise bad? A lot of guys spoke of the noise there, they said the noise was just overwhelming. With the bombs, and the screaming, and the shells, and everything, it was just noise, noise, noise.

Bob: Well, you'd get night, you know, and you'd have all those tracer bullets, you know. Make it almost daylight. Mortars firing, um—

Jim: White phosphorous?

Bob: No, the parachute, what do you call it?

Jim: Oh, oh, right. Flares.

Bob: Flares, yeah. They'd fire them. Oh man, that would really light it up. You could really see. Well, anyhow, we got down by the first airport. Airstrip there. That's when old John Basilone, he was a Congressional Medal of Honor from Guadalcanal. And he was in our regiment in a machine gun section. And right by the first airport, and right away he made a banzai attack by himself with a pistol. And Japs got him with a hand grenade. So he got the Congressional Medal of Honor again a second time, posthumously.

And, in the meantime, all this is going on, and we're only, I'm in a mortar section, and that's supposed to be way in the back, you know. So we're right on top of them with the rifle platoons, and the machine gun section and everything. And they'd go up and find a hole, Jap hole, and they'd come out and they'd shoot a machine gunner. So then we'd put a guard on the hole, throw a 35 pound satchel of charges down that hole, 3 or 4 of them. Smoke grenades. And hand grenades. And then when she went up and they'd say, "Oh, they won't come out now." You

know, about an hour later, they were out. They'd sneak, and away they'd go. They were dug in so far, it was just like coming into here, you know. Tunnels all over the place and then one big room. They had the Koreans. They made them do all the digging for that.

Well, anyhow, we'd get down, almost to the second airstrip. And I seen this Jap 88 firing out of, it was on a cliff like. Course, I didn't know it was a cliff. And I wasted about 200 rounds of mortar ammunition on him. Over, and under, and over, and under. Couldn't get that thing and he'd still keep coming out. And then finally a tank came along. And I got on the phone and then I directed him to where this guy was. And he put a couple bursts of machine gun. And I says, "Up a finger." And he put one in, and I says, "That's it," right away. And he threw about three, four 75mms in there. That dang thing never came back out. And then when we got up to where it was, that was straight up and down. And they were right in the middle of it, and they had that thing on the railroad track. And they'd pop it out, and then go back in. That was really something.

Jim: They were so prepared for you guys.

Bob: Yeah. Well, and then when we got a little past that one, and almost on top of the airstrip, then we got, oh, that was about six, seven days I was in there then. And, you know, we didn't have any rest or anything. So they sent us back to rest.

Jim: Where? On the beach?

Bob: Yeah.

Jim: Or off the beach?

Bob: No, no.

Jim: Right on the beach.

Bob: Right out, right off of the beach. Right down the middle. That was the rest, and we were only 200 yards from the front line. Getting a rest.

Jim: There in the back territory, 200 yards, Jesus Christ! Not much protection there.

Bob: No. Course, they didn't do much firing on it then. But then they fired, we called it a leaping lizzy. It was a big rocket, oh, my god, it was as big around as this room, and it was as long as that. And they had it on a sled. Which, I seen the sled later. And they'd [wooshing sound], and you could see that thing go through the air, and [whistles], and wouldn't you believe it, he'd hit right on my foxhole. Almost. About fifteen yards from the foxhole. And it was a dud.

Jim: Otherwise you wouldn't be talking to me.

Bob: Yeah. But it sunk all the sand in on me. I was in the foxhole, I had a foxhole about that deep. And I was standing up, and it buried me right up to there. And the guys had to dig me out. It was, "Weren't he lucky that was a dud." I don't know, and that thing come through the air so slow.

Jim: You watched it the whole way.

Bob: And everybody laughed about it. That was funny, afterwards.

Jim: And they didn't send another one, that was the only one they sent?

Bob: No, that was the only one. The only one they sent. Well, after we were rested there for a day, we'd go back up to the front line. And I had my squad, and then there was another squad behind me. And here's a dead Jap laying on the, in the sand there, he was half covered. And his belly was way up in the air, bloated, you know. Had his head up, and he had his hand up like this. And I just lit a cigarette, and I told the guys, I said "Don't say anything, pass the word back." And I put the cigarette in there, and he was laying there just like that, and the smoke, and it was hot, you know. And the smoke was just going straight up in the air, just like he was smoking that thing. After the second squad got by there, then all of a sudden the machine guns are up there and everybody [machine gun sound, laughs]. That was comical to see. Everybody talked about that.

Well anyhow, we get up to the front line, and we get under an hour of mortar barrage. And I got in a hole that was made by an 81. I think it was, you know, it just barely, barely off the ground, you know. And I had about 10 rounds of mortar ammunition in my jungle pack. I had that on my back, and I'm laying down there. And for a whole hour, laying there. Saying the rosary and everything else. And then finally they let up on it, and I got up, and all the ammunition fell out of my pack, because I was getting that shrapnel.

Jim: Oh, it tore the pack.

Bob: Yeah. Tore the pack all to pieces. And it just fell right out. And I had one, they had a little zipper bag on top, you know. A jungle pack. I had a bar of soap in there and a meat can ration, and a little hand towel. And this piece of shrapnel went all the way through, went through the bar of soap and everything. And it would have hit me, right in the back of the neck. And it stuck into a cigarette lighter I had there. Bent the cigarette lighter right in half. And I said, "Oh, man." I still got that piece of shrapnel. That was really something.

Jim: What was your mortar company, what was your mortar the 60, the 61, or the 81?

Bob: 60. Yeah, we had 60s then.

Jim: 60s. And your team was what, about ten guys, or around that?

Bob: No, we had six. Six guys.

Jim: Six guys? A lot of them carried the mortars.

Bob: Carried the mortars.

Jim: And the base plate and the tube, and the—

Bob: Right. My brother was in 81s. He was back at where we turned up, he was right there waiting on Mount Saribachi there.

Jim: Oh, he made the landing on the same day you did?

Bob: Oh, yeah, he went in on, I think he was in on the 5th wave or something like that. And they let them in. And I was in on the 14th wave. And they let us in there. But from 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, they just bombarded the hell out of them. Why they let five of them in, I don't know.

Jim: Did you know he was on the island, or made the landing? Did you know he was there?

Bob: Oh, yeah, I went back and seen him one time. And he had a lieutenant they called Cheesey. And he didn't like cheese, and they called him Cheesey, I don't know why they called him that. But anyhow, he knew I liked cheese, so he'd give me all of the cheese, and then I'd give him other rations, you know. So, I went back and I seen him once there.

Jim: Did he get through okay without getting hit?

Bob: He got hit, oh, a great big piece, about the size of a piece of paper. He got hit right here, and all it did was burn him. And they didn't take him off the island. See if you got wounded or anything, they took you off the island right away, on account of that volcano ash. Well, anyhow, when I got hit, it was by a mortar. That was March 8th. That's when I got hit. So they took me off the island and flew me to Guam.

Jim: Where were you wounded?

Bob: In the leg. In the thigh.

Jim: Mortar? Shrapnel?

Bob: Mortar shrapnel, still in there. And one of them grazed the side of my knee, but that didn't hurt anything.

- Jim: They took you down the beach, and took you out on a landing craft out to a hospital ship?
- Bob: No, they took us from there on a jeep, must have had about ten guys on that jeep. You know, laying on stretchers and everything else. And then they took us right down to that first airstrip. And then, laying there, and waiting in line to get on a plane and fly you into Guam there.
- Jim: That's where you went directly? To Guam?
- Bob: Directly to Guam from there.
- Jim: And they'd put you in a hospital there.
- Bob: Yeah, in a hospital there. For about a week.
- Jim: What did they decide to do about your shrapnel?
- Bob: They said it was too small, don't worry about it.
- Jim: Never gave you any trouble I understand.
- Bob: No, never did. But I had hip replacements, and that gave me more trouble than the shrapnel.
- Jim: I'm sure!
- Bob: Every time I went, he operated on me and I says, "Check around there and see if you can find any shrapnel in there." And I don't know if he thought I was kidding or not, but he told me, he says, "I'm trying to—" [laughs]
- Jim: Well, how long ago did you have that done? The hip?
- Bob: The hip? About ten years ago I had one done. And five years ago I had the second one.
- Jim: The other side, or the same on twice.
- Bob: No, the other one. Both of them. Steel hips on both of them. And then on the old one I had to have a socket replacement. It came loose and they put a new socket in. So I had three operations on that.
- Jim: That's a lot. So after you got back out of Guam, where did you go then.

Bob: Then from Guam, you know, I can't remember if we flew in. I think that we flew in to Hawaii, to the hospital there. And I was there for about, oh, it was the end of, when they secured Iwo Jima. That was in March. That was the end of March, I think it was. And then they came back to Hilo. So then I formed back with them again.

Jim: You went back with the 5th Marines?

Bob: 5th Marines, yeah.

Jim: They were in Hawaii by that time you said?

Bob: Yeah. And, well, that was it. Oh, no, then we were there for a while, then we steamed to, where in the heck did we lay over? I think it was Saipan again. And we were there. And then we went in, and we laid off of the beach, and we were going into Japan. That was August, what was that, August 15th when they surrendered? So it was about the 12th.

Jim: You just went into Japan to do Guard duty?

Bob: Yeah, police. All it was was police. And we went in, it was two days before they surrendered. And we went right along side of a pier, and they had a few guys there that would pull anchor for them. The Japs did. Outside of that you didn't see any Japs. They all went into the back hills. And, Sasebo was a Japanese navy base.

Jim: Yeah, Sasebo, I've been there.

Bob: Were you there?

Jim: Oh, yeah.

Bob: Well, that's when we went there, then. And they had all them, what do you call them? Boats with the, suicide boats, you know. Oh, they had thousands of them there.

Jim: That's what we'd have run into if we made a landing in Japan.

Bob: Did you stay in that barracks there?

Jim: No, I was aboard ship. I wasn't there till Korea. I was aboard a hospital ship in Korea. But we went back to Japan a couple of times, and we stayed in Sasebo.

Bob: Oh, yeah. That was really something, that navy base. I had to laugh. Can you say something bad? Or you'll cut it out anyhow.

Jim: Oh, sure.

Bob: We're in the barracks, you know, and then the heads, the standing room, you know, and it was just all one piece, and then water running down it. And then, the other ones, they had a door on it, and then you'd squat over—

Jim: A hole in the ground.

Bob: Horse trough, you know. And it was just running, and you could see the one guy's floating down, and the other guys [laughs]. Well, anyway, you know I was there, where they dip all that stuff out of the, what do you call it. And there's one day in there I went in there, and here's this Jap woman in there. Her pants down, standing up, she's going right against the trough, you know. Hollered for everybody, and they come. She just stood and looked, you know. That was, oh, my god, did that stuff stink. And they dumped that right into the rice paddies. That's why I never eat rice. [laughs] No, they had it that the people, if they had to take a crap or anything like that, you had to go right into the rice paddy.

Jim: They still do that.

Bob: They still do it?

Jim: Well, sure. It's great for growing crops.

Bob: Yeah, yeah. But, no, I mean, you couldn't do it on the side of the road or anything like that. You had to get right into the rice paddy.

Jim: Where it counted. So how long were you in Japan?

Bob: I was there for, ah, jeepers. That was August. September. I did a birthday in there. And, it wasn't too long. Anyhow I got out on a point system, they had a point system. And you had so many for combat, and so many points for, well, getting wounded and stuff like that. Anyhow, I had 117 points, so I was one of the first ones that left there then.

Jim: You got out in '46 or—

Bob: In '45.

Jim: Oh, still in '45. You only stayed in Japan a couple of months, then.

Bob: Oh, no, it wasn't.

Jim: Well, August. August of '45 is when the war was over.

Bob: Yeah, August '45. It was two days before they surrendered, on the Missouri there. That's when I was there. Must have been. Jeez, three weeks, anyhow, I was on there. I got up to see that, oh, what's that— **[End of Tape One, Side One]**

You know, and then you'd say something "What'd you think about the big bomb?" And then they'd go [wooshing sound], and then they'd laugh.

Jim: It was still radioactive when you were there.

Bob: Was it?

Jim: Well, sure. That was that way for about a year. But if you weren't there very long, it didn't matter.

Bob: If you didn't hang around that long, yeah. Boy, that was a mess.

Jim: So, they sent you back from San Diego, then, from there?

Bob: Yeah, from there, and then we steamed—

Jim: Discharged from San Diego?

Bob: Yeah, I got discharged from San Diego. November '45.

Jim: So, when you got back home, did you use your GI bill?

Bob: Yeah, I went to school. Vocational school.

Jim: What'd they teach you?

Bob: I was doing mechanical drafting. But I never did get into that. I ended up in the post office.

Jim: I remember that. I remember you used to deliver the mail. How long did you work at the post office?

Bob: 36 years.

Jim: Jesus Christ! Well, they must have had a big pension for you!

Bob: Oh, no, I don't think so.

Jim: That's quite a while.

Bob: I was in the post office, and then I went in the Army Reserves. And they had a paratroop outfit there.

Jim: Where?

Bob: At Camp McCoy. We jumped at Camp McCoy.

Jim: You joined the active reserve?

Bob: Yeah.

Jim: Holy Toledo, I didn't know that.

Bob: Yeah, right after, when was it. Forty, fifty, I think it was, 1950 I went in there. I stayed in there about ten years, and made Master Sergeant, and then I jumped over to the Navy Reserve. And 13 years in there.

Jim: They didn't try to send you to Korea, did they?

Bob: No, I missed all that. Missed it all. That didn't hurt my feelings.

Jim: No. Terrible place. Terrible place. And, so, then, did you join any veteran's groups? Any veteran's organizations?

Bob: Oh, VFW. 1318. One other one, I can't remember what it is.

Jim: Wasn't the legion? American Legion?

Bob: No, no.

Jim: Maybe it was some Marine outfit. Did you have any reunions with any of your Marine group?

Bob: Yeah, Marine parachute regiment.

Jim: The second regiment? You've been to reunions with them?

Bob: I went to one. My buddy, oh I didn't tell you that. When I was up on the front line, and I seen this guy go by on a stretcher. And I look, and here it is, Harry Town. And I didn't recognize him, he was purple and everything else, and, went by. But then I got up to the line there where he got hit, and there was a boot laying there. And then somebody from their squad, they told me, they said, "That was Harry Town's leg." And I said, "Oh, my God!" I couldn't believe it.

Jim: Harry Town? I don't know him.

Bob: No, you don't. He wasn't around here much. Anyhow, he went out to, where'd he go? San Francisco, I think it was in there. And then when I see him afterwards, he

came here after the war was over on some visit. And we went out, got bombed, and he walked out of the tavern down on, what the hell's the name of that? The one by the railroad tracks. Do you know Tramery's? Tramery's Bar? And he fell down. His leg gave, you know, fell off. And there was a drunk sitting there, and he says "How much [coughs, laughs]?" he couldn't believe it. Harry picked it up, and screws the thing right back on. I think that guy quit drinking after that.

Jim: That's great. So you haven't seen any, that one reunion is all you went to then?

Bob: Yeah, that was the only one I went to. I met Harry there. I didn't know too many of them. And of course, every year, I'd look in the book that they send, somebody that I knew died. And there isn't too many of them left that I knew.

Jim: Okay. I can't think of anything else to ask you. That's pretty good. All of their training you thought was adequate, for what they asked you to do? You had good training? Mortar training, where you could—

Bob: Oh, yeah. When I was in the Army Reserve I was a sergeant of heavy weapons, four-point-deuce mortar. Boy, that was a nice, did you ever see one?

Jim: No. Is this better than the 60?

Bob: Oh, yeah. I tell you, it was about this high. And the 60s, well they're down here.

Jim: Oh my, that is big.

Bob: Yeah. And it had lines and grooves in it, too.

Jim: Rifling? Yeah.

Bob: Yeah. Where the 80mm, the 60mm was a smooth bore.

Jim: That 60, that would shoot about a half a mile?

Bob: About that, yeah, 1400 yards, something like that. And, well, then when I went in the Navy reserve, went in as a gunner's mate. Chief gunner's mate. That was pretty good, I enjoyed that.

Jim: Did you get on board a ship? On some two week deal or something?

Bob: Mostly on destroyers, but I was on the *Kearsarge*.

Jim: These two week trips in the summer, that sort of thing?

Bob: Yeah. Two week encampment. Sometimes, I liked it when you went and then the ship was welded to the pier. Then you didn't have to go out.

Jim: You weren't a good sailor?

Bob: Oh, yeah, I liked it.

Jim: It didn't make you sea sick?

Bob: In fact, no. Not at all. In fact, if I would have had it to do over, I would have went Navy and said, to hell with that Marine Corps.

Jim: Well, you eat better. That's one thing.

Bob: Yep. Three square meals a day and clean sheets. And you sure didn't get that in the Army and the Marine Corps. That's for sure.

Jim: Okay. Thanks.

[End of Interview]