

**JOHN POWERS**

**Interview 279a**

**December 2, 2015, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:**

In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Fastrill and Diboll native John Powers reminisces about growing up in the Cherokee County logging camp and moving to Diboll when it was closed. Mr. Powers delivered ice, fished, and attended school in Diboll until he joined the Marines during World War II. Mr. Powers served in the Pacific Theater as a sniper, taking part in the invasion of Iwo Jima. After the war, Mr. Powers married and returned to East Texas, where he worked for Texas Power and Light company, eventually ending up back in Angelina County, where he retired and spent much of his time fishing.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today's date is December 2, 2015. My name is Jonathan Gerland. I'm with Mr. John Powers. We are at The History Center in Diboll and we are going to do an oral history today. Mr. Powers just, you were born in Fastrill, is that correct?

**John Powers (hereafter JP):** Born in Fastrill, March 29, 1926.

**JG:** 1926.

**JP:** That is one of my birthdays and I'll tell you later on when I got in the military, I lied about my age. I put my age as December 3, 1925, but that is alright too.

**JG:** Okay. So, tell me about Fastrill. [You were] born in 1926, I think the camp had been there just a few years.

**JP:** 1922, moved there and I'm not sure who the first child was born.

**JG:** What were some of your earliest memories?

**JP:** My earliest memories of Fastrill is just all beautiful, just indescribable. It was such a town that everybody loved everybody. If anyone had a problem, I don't care what it was, everybody come see what it was. It just went on and I was a youngster there, grew up and my grandparents, John Richard White and Rose Cox raised me.

**JG:** Your grandparents okay.

**JP:** My grandparents. Jonathan I'm still to find out why that they raised me. My sister said, right after I was born, well then mother had twins and Johnnie Faye and Lillie Faye, and they died a week apart with pneumonia, and she thinks that Ma White and my Aunt Alma McMinn, they were instrumental in me staying with Ma White and Pa White to

help mother, and it just went from there. But, I stayed with my parents just a little small bit, but they raised me up and my...

**JG:** So your grandparents and your parents lived at Fastrill?

**JP:** No, they moved away, they lived there for awhile, but they moved away.

**JG:** Okay. Did your dad work for Southern Pine Lumber Company?

**JP:** Well he worked for Southern Pine for awhile, and then he and my granddad, they went in business for themselves and borrowed a bunch of money from a bank at Alto and went into the lumber business. Well, the lumber business did good there for awhile, and then the Depression era hit along and so they lost everything they had. They had a bunch of people working for them, but it was a situation they just couldn't go it. So, then daddy came back and my granddad, and started working for Temple.

**JG:** But you lived at Fastrill the whole time.

**JP:** I lived at Fastrill all of that time, sure did.

**JG:** Talk about, what did your grandfather do before he started the other?

**JP:** He was an engineer for the TSE [Texas South-Eastern] Railroad.

**JG:** A locomotive engineer?

**JP:** Yes, and they had an accident and he was injured, and I guess Temple just kind of kept him as...I don't know where they got the money from. I knew they had enough to survive on and Pa White, he took care of the engines in the afternoon, you know, because they run the train from Diboll to Fastrill every day. Pa White, then he took care of the trains.

**JG:** Are you saying Paw like p-a-w or Paul?

**JP:** Pa, P-a, Pa White.

**JG:** But what was his first name?

**JP:** John. I was named after him exactly (**JG:** okay) and I don't particularly like the Richard end of it, but everyone that is from Fastrill when they call the house, and mother answers the phone, they want to talk to John Richard. [She says] "someone from Fastrill." (laughter) But we all went by double names. (**JG:** yes) Just I guess that was typical in those days.

**JG:** Yes sir.

**JP:** She raised me up and Ma White was a very, very religious person. We come to Diboll every now and then on the train.

**JG:** You would ride the train from Fastrill?

**JP:** We would ride the train. Boy that was a big deal to.

**JG:** Was it on Saturday's or Sunday's or just any day?

**JP:** No, just during the week, and Pa knew all the engineers and so forth, so we would go with Mr. Hill and the other engineers down there, see we visited with all of them.

**JG:** Would you ride in the caboose, or a car, or the locomotive?

**JP:** We probably, in the caboose I'm going to guess, but you know, thinking back I can see right now that track. So I might have been up there at the train. I'm not sure. I don't remember that.

**JG:** You don't remember okay. Do you have any memories of being around steam engines and things as a child?

**JP:** No, that was the only one. That was the only one. When we got to Diboll though, I remember just so pleasant. Mrs. Hill made the, I want to say the first fruit cake I ever had, but I mean fruit salad, but she put everything you could think of in that salad. I mean you name it, and it was so delicious and I still remember that. I'm not going to tell you how old I am, but I can still remember that salad. But, we would also go to Fastrill, I mean go to Diboll, and I'm not sure whether my grandmother was Apostolic church, but she went to every church she could go to, but we would go up to the little old churches down at Diboll. They put a, I guess just limbs and whatnot, and kind of made an arbor...

**JG:** Kind of like a brush arbor?

**JP:** Yes, a brush arbor, yes, and they had it under that. But on up through the years, I hunted and fished a lot, and Aunt Gertie White, her name was Gertrude Waltman before she married my granddad's brother. His name was Lee, Uncle Lee White, Robert E. Lee, was his name and I don't know why but boy they were particular about what they named those people then. But Uncle Lee and Aunt Gertie, they had three kiddos, and I think y'all have some information from one of them, two of them rather, Eula Clark and Edith, and they had a boy named R. L., but we were so close in that family. It was just unbelievable how close we were. Had a hotel there, and I remember that as a little 'ol bitty boy, big old hotel, two story, and I think the lady's name was Richie... Vina Wells.

**JG:** Vina Wells, yes.

**JP:** Vina Wells and she was the wife of Richie Wells and Richie, he was one of our superintendents or boss, but they ran that. They tell me they had as high as 600 people

there, but when I was growing up that area had already gone. There wasn't that many there, but I do remember the little hotel there. I also remember that we had movies there every now and then. These traveling shows would come around and they would show us movies.

**JG:** Where would the movies be shown? No, no, where in what building? Would it be open air or what?

**JP:** No, no, it was their building; they had a tent.

**JG:** Oh a tent okay.

**JP:** And they showed these old horror movies, you know, and everybody almost got killed at the last second, but then you went back the next night and got some more of it.

**JG:** Did pretty much everybody in the whole town go to the movies?

**JP:** Oh yes.

**JG:** That was a big deal huh?

**JP:** And they sang a bunch of songs. Excuse me. (sneezing)

**JG:** You need some Kleenex's or something?

**JP:** No, I'm fine.

**JG:** Well just holler I think I got some in there. What about revivals did you have any tent revivals that came through?

**JP:** No, this was not tent revivals there. I don't remember that, but Temple built us a church, what you call non-denominational, anybody could use it and so they had a revival there and Brother Williams out of Rusk came and preached, I guess it must have been all week long. This was in July. Anyhow, there was 19 of us boys and girls surrender to the Lord. I know I was young; but I was 7 years and 4 months old, I felt the tickling of the Lord. I was on the back row, but I felt the feeling of the Lord that I must make a decision, so I went down front and I surrendered my life to the Lord. I can't say I lived it like I should have all those times, but I did get away, I guarantee you, I got away. But there was 19 of us baptized on one day on July 3, 1933. 19, July 3, 1933.

**JG:** In the river?

**JP:** In the Neches River. We were in what they called the shallow swimming hole. It was up the river a ways. I don't know maybe a half a mile or so, and they also carried a bunch of watermelons up there and they put the watermelons in the river so we had a watermelon feast afterwards. I was a little guy and they had the rock bottom and I must

have been floating down, anyhow, Clifford Trevathan, he grabbed my hand. Clifford Trevathan, he worked for Temple and then worked for Lufkin Industries a long, long. He might have been their treasurer, I'm not positive. But Clifford grabbed my hand.

**JG:** You were only like 6 or 7 years old.

**JP:** I was seven years and four months old.

**JG:** Seven years.

**JP:** So, I was young, very, very young.

**JG:** So you remember that, huh? What about school do you remember going to school there?

**JP:** We went to school. Mrs. Kilgore was my first teacher. We had six grades at Fastrill.

**JG:** Six grades.

**JP:** Six grades in one building and then [in]the seventh grade we went into Rusk. And they had a junior high and a high school at Rusk so I was at that age I went to junior high, before we moved from Fastrill down to Diboll. I remember really a lot, not a lot but some, about the school situation. Mr. Thomas, Thompson, he was our bus driver. Well Mr. Thompson now...

**JG:** You're talking about at Rusk now?

**JP:** At Rusk, but he kept the bus out at Fastrill and they had a little old garage for it or building for it but he would leave the key in that bus.

**JG:** A gasoline powered bus?

**JP:** A gasoline powered bus. And he would let us boys go down there and crank that darn automobile. We was just youngsters, but we would go down there and crank that automobile, and some of the Trevathan boys, the older ones see, well they even got to where they could even back it out of there so. That was a big deal for us.

**JG:** Did y'all go anywhere or just back it up?

**JP:** I remember the first whipping I ever got. I guess the only whipping I ever got from my daddy. My grandmother passed away, Aunt Rose, everybody called her Aunt Rose Cox. Ma White, she was an orphan girl and she was real young when she married Pa White, Pa White. But anyhow they had three children, but now Aunt Alma said she had some children there that they lost during the ages, but that is the three that I remember, Aunt Alma and Uncle Jimmy, Jimmy White, and then my mother Johnnie Amesia White, and they was a real close family, really. But through the years, well it just became too

that when we first went to Fastrill, Jonathan you would not believe how large those pine trees were. They put just one log on a...

**JG:** A cart, logging cart.

**JP:** A logging cart, just one log on a logging cart see, and they had probably six or more mules or something another. And they was back in the hills area, across the river over there, where I remember. I don't know how they got those logs on and off, but they got those logs there and then they brought them down to Fastrill itself and then loaded them on the cars and carried them down to Diboll, where they processed them. But the first whipping I got, J. D. Burchfield's mother and dad, they were divorced, and she moved to Lufkin. And I had never been out of Diboll, I mean out of Fastrill, but anyhow J. D. wanted me to go with him to Rusk and we went to the big town of Rusk then. Anyhow we saw his mother and his mother had an automobile, and so she brought us back to Fastrill and I don't know what time of night, but it was at nighttime when we finally got back. And anyhow, well my dad there he had a belt, and he said, "Well I'm not doing this for me I'm doing this for your granddad." He said, "You have had him worried all afternoon long." See I didn't tell anybody where I went. I didn't think it was necessary. Anyhow that is the only whipping I ever got in my life, but I should have gotten it really because I should have let Pa know where I was gone, because Pa and I was just like this.

**JG:** Tell me about what you ate. What foods did you eat back then? Today everybody eats out of package stuff.

**JP:** Mostly, we had a grocery store there and a barber shop there. Mr. Kendall was our barber. I don't remember the grocery store man but...

**JG:** So you ate what you bought at the store? Did anybody grow crops there?

**JP:** We had crops there and everybody had a little patch or a garden.

**JG:** What crops did you grow?

**JP:** Primarily just vegetables. Now the Mexican boys on the other side of the creek down there they grew corn and watermelons, and naturally us boys would go down there and we would have to borrow a watermelon every now and then. (laughter) They didn't care, but anyhow we would go down there and eat one of their watermelons and go in swimming at the little old creek there.

**JG:** What about meats?

**JP:** Meats...

**JG:** Was that provided by the company or did y'all hunt?

**JP:** No we...yes, we hunted too, but we got our beef from the market there.

**JG:** Did anybody have wild hogs that y'all tended to?

**JP:** They raised their own hogs, I remember that. I remember putting them down in a big old hot barrel and then they scrapped the bloomin' hogs instead of skinning them. We skin them now, but they scrapped them then, you know, and they saved everything on that hog.

**JG:** Did you ever get involved in doing that?

**JP:** I got involved very much and I did not like it. It stunk for one thing, but anyhow you had to scrape and get all the hair off that hog. And then they would cure it and they had a little smoke house and they would hang up the hams and whatnot.

**JG:** Would everybody kind of do it all together on a particular day or just individual families?

**JP:** No, it was kind of individual families that did that, yes.

**JG:** Is there a particular time of year that was done?

**JP:** I'm going to think it was probably in the fall of the year, when they started killing the hogs.

**JG:** Did y'all smoke them or salt them?

**JP:** Smoked them. Salt them and smoked them. I know they had some fires out there. I guess they were using hickory logs but they smoked those hams and boy that ham was good. Go out there and slice a little piece of that ham off and also use it for catching crawdads. You had to catch crawdads. (laughter)

**JG:** Now the crawdads were used for fishing?

**JP:** Fishing and we did do lots of fishing.

**JG:** Talk about fishing. How would you fish back then?

**JP:** We fished then with just poles.

**JG:** What kind of poles, cane poles?

**JP:** Just cane poles.

**JG:** You would just find some cane and...?

**JP:** I was fortunate. We had a Peg Leg Smith there and he did kind of janitor work, cleaning toilets and so forth out, he had an old trailer. But he had a boat and Smith would let me go with him and I paddled him. I was young, I was very young.

**JG:** A little wooden, flat bottom boat?

**JP:** A flat bottom boat, I guess it was cypress that he made the boat out of.

**JG:** Homemade boat.

**JP:** I would get in the boat in the back of it, and he got in the front, and he had two baits. Let's see he had a Shannon twin spinner and a spinner bait. What was the name of that? I forget the name of it. He had two baits though, and he would catch those trout.

**JG:** Two artificial baits.

**JP:** Artificial baits. They said they was trout, but they was not trouts. They were just old black bass but everybody said they were trout.

**JG:** Trout.

**JP:** But he would let me paddle him and that was good. But Aunt Gertie, she loved to fish.

**JG:** Now did he ever let you use his bait?

**JP:** Never let me use his bait. (laughter)

**JG:** You were his trawling motor huh? (laughter)

**JP:** All I did was paddle him down and up the river.

**JG:** Did he have a reel or just use a rod?

**JP:** No he had a reel and rod then.

**JG:** Oh he had a rod and reel.

**JP:** Must have been a Shakespeare, I'm going to guess.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** Because they were one of the first one to come up with rods and reels, and I'm guessing now that Shakespeare. I'm not positive.

**JG:** But he would actually cast out and reel it in.



**JP:** Isn't that something.

**JG:** Y'all probably thought that was...

**JP:** I thought man I was number one just being able to...

**JG:** Just be able to paddle him around. (laughter)

**JP:** Oh lordy, we would go fish in a river and had small, small hooks.

**JG:** What kind of line did he use?

**JP:** It was braided line. There wasn't monofilament, just regular braided line. Aunt Gertie and I and Ma White we would go and catch those, call them crappie or white perch. And I remember what Aunt Gertie used to do so much. If I was fishing over here and I caught a white perch and got it in and put it on a stringer and I start to put my bait back there, well Aunt Gertie, she had already moved over to where I had just caught that fish. You know, that's just something, I loved it, I loved it.

**JG:** Yes, one fish was there, there might be another fish there.

**JP:** Ma White passed away and she woke me up and said son you need to go get Dr. Evans. So I went down and woke up Dr. Evans and he wasn't too far down the street. Dr. Evans came up there and Ma White had already passed away while we were gone and Dr. Evans told me said, "Your grandmother is gone." She died of acute indigestion. Well, we had a salad that day, a salad made out of the vegetable we had in our garden, well she had made that and she had some hot grease and put on top of that. Jonathan, for I don't know how many years, but I always thought that salad killed my grandmother. That wasn't no salad. She had a heart attack, acute indigestion, and boy I would not eat that salad, no way I was going to eat a salad. Then we came on about 1941, well Temple decided we had just about done all the logging up there we were going to. So, he moved us down to Diboll and what you call Red Town, which is kind of the east part of town. Now the story goes...

**JG:** Now you were about 15 then?

**JP:** Yes, I was 15 then.

**JG:** Eleventh grade or tenth grade?

**JP:** Yes, moved into a nice, I thought it was nice little old houses down there. It wasn't nothing wrong with them. They were small but nothing wrong.

**JG:** So the houses were already there, they didn't move the house you were in at Fastrill here?

**JP:** No.

**JG:** You just moved from Fastrill to here.

**JP:** Yes, we lived there for, you know, until well then I started to school and those girls and boys they didn't like us strangers coming in to their school.

**JG:** The ones who were already here in Diboll, yes.

**JP:** Yes, they didn't like that coming down there so Temple sent part of us to Diboll and part of us to Pineland.

**JG:** Really? To Pineland?

**JP:** Yes, sure did. Part of us to Pineland, sure did.

**JG:** Now did you go to Pineland or Diboll?

**JP:** I went to Diboll. I went there in '42 and part of '43. Then in 1941, you know, the war broke out and I was, let's see I was 15 years old then, when the war broke out.

**JG:** Yes, I wanted to ask you where were you on December 7, 1941?

**JP:** I was down at Ryan's Lake hunting, deer hunting, and came back and everybody was telling about it. Well lots of our guys at Diboll, they were upset, and a bunch of them went right on up to Lufkin and volunteered. And some of those boys were, oh lordy I wish I could remember some of their names, part of them were the Trevathan's and Jr...oh, I forget his name. Anyhow, but there was a number of boys that went on up from Diboll into Lufkin and volunteered.

**JG:** So, y'all had just moved here?

**JP:** Just moved there, right, see.

**JG:** Because December 7<sup>th</sup> of '41 and December is when they shut down Fastrill.

**JP:** I mean.

**JG:** So, y'all weren't here long at all.

**JP:** I guess we shut down Fastrill, must have been about September, somewhere in that neighborhood, of '41.

**JG:** Oh okay. December must have been the final date or something.

**JP:** It was.

**JG:** So you had already enrolled in school that fall here in Diboll.

**JP:** School and gone to Diboll and then the next year in '42 and '43 rolled around.

**JG:** So the Trevathan's they were already, you knew them from when you were at Fastrill?

**JP:** Fastrill right, yes some of those boys went on into service and some more from Diboll if I could remember their names, but they went in also.

**JG:** Were you ever able to make friends with the ones who were already here in Diboll?

**JP:** Yes, I made friends with every one of them. Harold Turner was the guy who took care of the ice situation there in Diboll and so his wife wanted me to continue his ice business. So she hired me and I got a couple of boys that I knew and then we had two ice trucks and they would get ice from Lufkin and bring it down to Diboll and put it in the ice house in 300 pound blocks. I would always brag that I could pick up 300 pounds, really I wasn't picking up 300 pounds. I picked up the end of 300 pounds.

**JG:** And then slid it?

**JP:** But I told people, yeah I could pick up 300 pounds. I was telling a story. That was just bragging I guess, wasn't it?

**JG:** Had big ice tongs?

**JP:** Yes, big old ice tongs and pick up, but then we chipped it up in 25 or 50 pound blocks.

**JG:** How would you chip it?

**JP:** We had an ice chipper (**JG:** okay) and the ice was already scored when we got it.

**JG:** Oh okay, it was scored in Lufkin? Lufkin scored it?

**JP:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** Temple, he had us bring ice over there in his mill see, in the sawmill, so forth, so we made that round real, real early and filled up his ice cans or his water cans with ice.

**JG:** How was the ice house insulated?

**JP:** It was just real thick wood.

**JG:** Sawdust?

**JP:** No, no, just thick wood, and I think that is what it was just primarily thick wood for insulation, and I remember they had a little canvas on the side of it, too. That might have been some preservation. But I was going with Mabel at that particular time, and anyhow Mr. Richardson, he was Harold's...

**JG:** I'm sorry Mr. who?

**JP:** Mr. Richardson.

**JG:** Richardson okay.

**JP:** He was Harold's son-in-law. Oh I remember, her name was Hazel, she is the one that hired us.

**JG:** For the ice business?

**JP:** For the ice business. Well, we lived, at that particular time, right close to Mr. White's office, close to the sawmill. We had moved from Red Town over to that real nice, big building.

**JG:** Mr. White of the handle factory?

**JP:** Yes, right next to his office, and my bed was right there by our porch, and so Mr. Richardson, he would come by early, early, early, and wake me up see, and well he had to, then I would go down and get on the ice truck.

**JG:** This is when you were like 15 or 16?

**JP:** Yes 15 or 16.

**JG:** And y'all would just go through the mill? Did you go to people's houses as well?

**JP:** We went to the mill first, then went to all the houses. That is the way I got to know all the people.

**JG:** How would you do it, just deliver? Would they put a card out or something?

**JP:** They had a little card that said I think, maybe 25, 50, 100 or 12 ½ you see, and that is what we put in their ice boxes.

**JG:** You would just go and read the card and do what they would say?

**JP:** Yes, we went to the colored groups and the Mexican groups and everybody. And everybody was the same really. I know we called them a different word, but listen we had respect for those colored people. We loved those colored people, and I don't care what these other guys said, when I said "nigger" that doesn't mean that I hate that person, that is just the name we grew up with. That is just the way it was, and it was not disrespectful at all. In fact I still know one right down there now that he and I was raised together. I can't think of his name right now either. He is still living and he and I were buddies when we were kids. Marcellos Jones, that is his name and Marcellos's aunt and uncle raised him and her name was Lillie Mae and we called her Aunt Lillie Mae and his name is Mac and I call him Uncle Mac. We ate together and everything else. It just wasn't no big deal really, but they lived on one side of the track and we lived on one side of the track and that is the way it was. Anyhow let me get back to that deal. He woke me up one morning and I must have been sleepy.

**JG:** Mr. Richardson?

**JP:** Yes, so they had a little old bridge going there across something or other in the mill area.

**JG:** A little bridge, a walkway?

**JP:** And I must have went to sleep going over that bridge, anyhow I run off the side.

**JG:** Oh man!

**JP:** So, I didn't know at that particular time, but Mabel's daddy and his brother in law, Cecil Hogue, they came and got the truck out some way or another. But, oh it was so nice. (laughter) We had some nice teachers at Diboll too, just as sweet as they could be. I can't remember, but one of them was Dixie Hunt.

**JG:** Hunt, okay.

**JP:** She wasn't much older than we were, and man she was my sweetheart, well she wasn't really, but she was just nice, nice, nice to us. And so about November I just could not stand it any longer that I wasn't in the service.

**JG:** Now this would be November of '42?

**JP:** November of '43.

**JG:** Oh '43 okay.

**JP:** A year had already gone by.

**JG:** Now were you still in school?

**JP:** Yes, I was still in school.

**JG:** Still in school, okay November '43.

**JP:** And one of my buddies, Dick Burchfield and the other Burchfield boys, Dick went in the Marines and he was a year older than I was, or about a year and a half. I just couldn't stand and Dick, because he and I were hunting buddies, him going ahead and getting in the Marines and here I was just hunting and fishing was all I was doing. So I decided that I'm going to get in the Marines. So, I went up there and we had a...

**JG:** In Lufkin, you went to a recruiter?

**JP:** Yes, in Lufkin a recruiter. Her name is Mrs. Anderson. I didn't know this, but Mrs. Anderson knew my grandmother, and they had a horrible incident at one of the towns and I don't remember which one of the areas it was, Bluff City or some place or another. The lady was washing clothes and she got her gown or got her dress afire and it killed her. Well, Mrs. Anderson and my grandmother both knew about that. I didn't know Mrs. Anderson even knew who I was, but anyhow, I told her who I was and...

**JG:** Now this is at the Marines?

**JP:** At the Marines, at the place where you register; she was the registrar.

**JG:** At the register so it's not any particular branch?

**JP:** No, no.

**JG:** Because I was going to ask you why the Marines? I don't want to interrupt your story, but I want to get to that part to. Go ahead.

**JP:** I went in there and told her I wanted to get in the Marines and she said well you have to be 18. She asked me first how old I was and I told her 17. And you have to be 18 and I said, "well, well, well." So I went back home.

**JG:** And this is December 2<sup>nd</sup>?

**JP:** This is December 2<sup>nd</sup>, so I went back home and I didn't talk to no one about this, but December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8 o'clock or before I was up there on her doorsteps and when she come by there she said, "What are you doing here." I said "Today is my birthday." Good Lord, it didn't bother me at all, it really did not bother me, lying. Anyhow she signed me up.

**JG:** And you said it with a straight face? You didn't laugh or smile or anything?

**JP:** I said it with a straight face and I smiled. I still try to smile but she took me in and made all the registration papers out and then Red Rector and I, we went up to Dallas and

was inducted. Then in January the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> somewhere along in there, it wasn't too far after December 3<sup>rd</sup> we went in and went into San Diego.

**JG:** Why the Marines why not the Army or the Navy?

**JP:** Well I had always heard about the Marines and I just loved what they did and I knew they was all in the Pacific and I didn't want to go to the European area. I didn't want to be in the Army and I didn't want to be in the Navy or nothing like that.

**JG:** Why not Europe? I'm just curious?

**JP:** I wanted to get in the Pacific see. That is where they had all those islands and all those jungles and stuff. And Europe is just like the United States over there. It wasn't like in the jungle.

**JG:** So you wanted adventure.

**JP:** I wanted to be there...so I did hit San Diego and Cecil Hogue, he was in the National Guard and another real good friend. I forget his name too. He was in the National Guard or Texas Guard. They let me go with them, Cecil. I had a little experience, military experience, because they let me shoot and I helped them cook.

**JG:** Now where would y'all do this? Where did y'all go?

**JP:** We would go out Polk County someplace or another kind of a little bivouac area and go through your procedures and march and get the commands and setting up some objects.

**JG:** So you had already been doing that.

**JP:** I had already been doing that, but when I got to Diego I just knew boy, I had it made. So our drill instructor he was over there and I went to the drill instructor and started talking to him and said something another and I said the wrong thing. That guy, he started letting me have it with both feet. I never had heard some of those curse words he was using. But he let me know that he was a Sir and anytime I said something to him it was sir, yes sir, and that is it, nothing else. Anyhow that went along good.

**JG:** Let me just ask you this before we get into that. Were there any particular, this was '43 now, were there any particular movies or like news reel like the Bataan death march and stuff? How much of the news you that you got or movies influenced you in joining, or was there any of that?

**JP:** I don't remember a movie then.

**JG:** Okay. But did you go to movies where they would have carried some of the movie tone news reels and things?

**JP:** They had the movie house down Diboll at the Antlers Hotel.

**JG:** Did some of that influence you?

**JP:** It might have had, it could have had, who knows, it could have had.

**JG:** I was just curious.

**JP:** I forget the guy's name that run the honky-tonk there.

**JG:** Shirley Daniel.

**JP:** Shirley Daniels ran a honky-tonk and we played some of them old timey dancing songs and we bounced the floor there in the honky-tonk quite a bit.

**JG:** How would you have gotten your news, you know, you mentioned you wanted to go not to Europe but to the islands, how would you have gotten the news of what was going on about the war?

**JP:** We got very little news. Our newspaper editor here at Lufkin...Beaumier?

**JG:** Yes, Mr. Beaumier.

**JP:** Yes Mr. Beaumier he wrote some articles, see.

**JG:** So y'all kept in touch through the newspaper.

**JP:** So we got a little news through the newspaper and we knew that it wasn't going good for us.

**JG:** Radio?

**JP:** They just didn't say a lot either. And I don't think they wanted to get too many bad stories out, actual stories, because we was in bad shape. I had a brother-in-law that was at Pearl Harbor, his ship had just moved out of Pearl Harbor when they bombed it. Another brother-in-law was in Corregidor, and he was on the... they have a name for it, he was on a death march.

**JG:** The Bataan Death March.

**JP:** He was on the Bataan Death March, see. You know, that boy never told me a thing about that.

**JG:** Really?



**JP:** And he was in a prison all that time. I know how those darn Japanese treated those prisoners. It wasn't good like you and I treated them. They treated them bad, bad, bad, but he would never mention a word about that. But, that was after the war see.

**JG:** After right.

**JP:** We got there in Diego and everything was...

**JG:** And you are adapting to military life now.

**JP:** I was adapted to it and just went in real, real, good because I could march good and I knew how, what that M-1 was. And pretty little old Yankee boys, they never even had a gun on their shoulder. If they got out of step, the drill instructor told us to kick them in the butt. See it's kind of hard to kick your buddy in the butt, but anyhow that was part of the procedure. Got over that and they were going to assign us where we were going to go to. I went down and told the guy, I wanted to be a scout sniper. He said no you can't be a scout sniper you're too small.

**JG:** So this is early '44 now right?

**JP:** Yes, early '44, yes. Early '44. I was about 150 pounds, but like I told him I could pick up that 300 pounds, well it wasn't 300 pounds.

**JG:** And all the while you were in San Diego, they were starting to bomb Iwo Jima aren't they?

**JP:** Everything, they were bombing everything, fellow, they were bombing everything. But we had a good Navy. We had some good admirals in the Navy. Anyhow that old boy let me get in the scout sniper, so I went to scout sniper school over at Greens Farm, stayed there about 3 weeks. Also that was O. C. S. School [Officer Candidate School].

**JG:** What did you train with what weapon?

**JP:** Well see we could have any kind of weapon we wanted in scout sniper school.

**JG:** For sniper?

**JP:** Oh man, they had some of the prettiest scopes. I had never seen scopes like that. I bet that scope was a foot long.

**JG:** A foot long, huh. What distances would y'all shoot at?

**JP:** I'm not sure of what kind of scope it was. It wasn't a Redfield or a Leopold or something like that, but it was a real good scope and used that .03 bolt action see, the Springfield.

**JG:** Was it a .308 or .333 caliber?

**JP:** It was a .30-06.

**JG:** A .30-06 is what y'all used, okay.

**JP:** I had a spotter behind me. We shot a thousand yards a bunch a times and at 500 yards, and I'm not bragging, I do not believe I could miss at 500 yards.

**JG:** Is that from lying position or squatted down?

**JP:** Lying position, or squat position. I just don't believe I could ever miss at 500 yards. But we had Thompson machine guns, used those. What else did we have? We had pistols.

**JG:** Y'all used the .45's, the Browning 1911's.

**JP:** The Browning .45's a big old six shooter, is what they were.

**JG:** Oh revolvers, okay.

**JP:** Yes, revolvers but we could shoot any time we wanted to and I was a little old hunter see, so every chance I got out and we wasn't in school, I would run down to the rifle range and grab up one of those weapons and bang, bang, bang away. I just loved it, just loved it! Then we left Greens Farm and took out and went over to Hawaii on Azalea City, we stayed at Hawaii for replacement, to get the replacement number just for a short time. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division was formed in Camp Lejeune and then from Camp Lejeune went to San Diego. On September 22, 1942 they was formed and then that was eventually my group, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division. They went to New Zealand, and I thought New Zealand was way above, listen New Zealand is below Australia. It was way, way down there and that is what they were down there for, is to protect some of those Australian people. But Danny Marshall, Captain Danny Marshall, later on my captain, he was a farmer from New Jersey, Vermont, a farmer, so he helped those people down there in New Zealand farm. So, they just loved him. They had lots of those darn sheep running around, but he helped them a great deal and then our group then left from New Zealand.

**JG:** So you actually went to New Zealand?

**JP:** No, I did not.

**JG:** Oh you did not. You're talking about your group okay.

**JP:** Yes, my group. They went from New Zealand to Guadalcanal... no, excuse me, to Bougainville, and they took Bougainville. Then they went from Bougainville over to Guadalcanal for more training. Well, the Army kind of fouled, I kind of hate to say this but anyhow, the Army didn't do what they were supposed to so they brought our group back from Bougainville over to Guadalcanal and vice-versa, and got rid of the Japs then

too. Then we took off from there and went to Guam, and that is when I joined them in Guam.

**JG:** After the battle or before the battle?

**JP:** I went there during the battle of Guam.

**JG:** Okay, during the battle and you joined up with them then.

**JP:** Yes, and...

**JG:** How many approximately were with you coming in, I mean y'all hadn't seen combat yet right?

**JP:** No, we were a replacement group from Hawaii and then sent us to Guam and I joined the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment on Guam.

**JG:** Did you see combat on Guam?

**JP:** Yes, they secured the island on August 15<sup>th</sup>. I must have got there about August 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, or 18<sup>th</sup> but there were still a bunch of Jap's on Guam. And so, since I was a scout, then they did put me up in front of our patrol. We had lots of patrols and that was right down my...man you talk about jungle it was jungles. In fact, it was so thick there sometimes you had to take your machete and cut you a hole so you could crawl through the darn jungle. But anyhow, let me tell you about my first shot. I was a scout and there was a Jap came up out there in front of me, probably not over a hundred yards, and he probably saw me about the same time I saw him so I just raised...I didn't have a scope then, just an M-1.

**JG:** A .30 caliber M-1.

**JP:** Yes, so I raised up that M-1 and cracked down on him and he just dropped. Well, I always thought I said, I don't know whether I hit him or not, but I wasn't that gung ho to go through that jungle over there where he fell and find out, so as far as I know the first Jap I shot at, I missed. I don't know whether it is true or not. But we went on a lots of patrols. Oh and I got one just so cute. We had a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant came in as a replacement don't know who he was, anyhow well he was kind of half way assigned to me. So we took the rear echelon up front and they...we had a huge or there was a huge radio station on Guam way back up in the jungle that the Japs had built. Well they were still communicating with Tokyo, and they wanted us to take that radio out. So, they told us where it was, so we went in the truck as far as we could, then went through the jungle.

**JG:** How many are in your group?

**JP:** There must have been 20 at least.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** We didn't know this, but they also had given another group the same objective to hit it, you see, and the way it was going to run pretty parallel with each other. I didn't know it, and I'm sure our officers knew there was another patrol over there. Anyhow, there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant him and me were in the back there, and he looked over and he saw it and he, "Pow! I got him I got him." Guess what it was? It was a Marine on that other patrol he hit in the leg. "I got him, I got him." Oh he was proud. Anyhow we cut a couple of bamboo, big old bamboo cane or whatever you want to call it, and took our shirts off and button up the shirt and made a little old litter for him and we loaded this boy that he hit in the leg on that litter. So, we had to go back then instead of going on, and we went back and dumped him off down there at the truck and carried him on. Then we went on up there then and we did go to the radio station and there was just a few Japs there and that other patrol, I guess because I didn't see any live Japs at that radio station, came back. But that is one of the funny things that happened. But we did make a complete sweep of that island.

**JG:** Guam?

**JP:** Guam, a complete sweep. I mean we just, [unintelligible] the whole group and we just started making an advance. We would go so far every day and then at night time we would dig a hole, just like we were in regular combat. Get in that hole and see what happened. We also put out, this is another cute thing, we put out some alarm systems. We had wire and we would put tin cans, it was empty tin cans on that wire. Okay, if a Jap hit that wire, well then, the tin can would make a noise. So you would know the enemy was there, so you would shoot. Well, sure enough tin cans started going off and everybody started shooting. It turned out to be a little old deer. (laughter) Oh good Lordy mercy! We made a deal though and Captain Danny Marshall, like I said, he was my captain. We got to the end of the island, we had to go down a cliff and I think there was 13 of them down there and they killed most of them, but there was a couple of Geisha girls and then one boy just dehydrated so bad, just terrible. I bet he didn't weigh 80 some odd pounds. Well Captain Danny Marshall wanted Sergeant ...Blackmore...I forget the sergeant's name now, it will come to me, but anyhow he wanted the sergeant to strap that Japanese on his back to take him up that cliff that we come down. That little sergeant, he cursed, he wasn't about to take that Jap. So, Danny Marshall, you see what kind of person he was, he strapped that Jap on his back and he carried him up that thing. Danny was one more super...in fact after the war he went to Japan and taught English. He was a professor. He ended up retiring from Tufts University. He must have been a super, super guy. Anyhow he took him on back and we left there and stayed there a long time. We captured a little old Korean boy. I don't know what his name was. He gave me a book, but I put the book in one of my sea bags coming back from Guam to the states and somebody swiped it. I say an Army boy swiped it but I don't know if that is true but anyhow they swiped that sea bag and I didn't get the book. They assigned this little Korean to me and I nicknamed him Bush Roosevelt and everybody knew who Bush Roosevelt was, and I would take him out on patrol with me.

**JG:** Now how old was he?

**JP:** Bush was older than I was.

**JG:** Oh, okay.

**JP:** He was probably 25. He was one of their construction engineers, Japanese construction, he was a laborer is all he was, but he didn't like the Japanese at all. He didn't like them at all. But he would go with me on patrol.

**JG:** Could he speak English?

**JP:** No, well, a little bit, very little, but we communicate enough. But we would go to these caves on Guam and he would speak the Japanese language see, and trying...he got some to come on out and surrender. I thought that was nice. Some of them that he didn't, so our demolition boys or flame throwers you know, they killed people. I never did trust Bush enough to give him a rifle, but I did give him a machete. You can do lots of damage with a machete. But I did give him a machete for protection. But we left Guam heading out to Iwo.

**JG:** What were you told when y'all left? Did you know you were going to Iwo? What did they tell you?

**JP:** Yes, see I was in intelligence section, G2. Captain Danny Marshall was an intelligence officer. We knew where we were going. We had big old maps of it and also had what would you call it, had altitudes of the ...

**JG:** Like a relief model map of it?

**JP:** Yes it was a model of the landscape. The Air Force go take shots and bring it back and bring it to us.

**JG:** So you had been studying photographs and everything for awhile.

**JP:** Yes, and Danny Marshall, he would look at those and he said, "I don't know what the problem, is but something is wrong, something is wrong." Every time he would get them see. Well the scenery would be a little bit different. What those Japanese people were doing see, they were making those caves and getting that dirt out of that cave and throwing it out, see. Well, you were getting a different picture looking down at it. But Danny said something is wrong. We took off. U. S. S. Bolivar is the one I was on.

**JG:** Say that name again.

**JP:** U. S. S. Boliver, B-o-l-i-v-e-r.

**JG:** Oh Bolivar, Bolivar, yes.

**JP:** And then later on I did meet two of the boys, they were Higgins boat operators on the Bolivar. I met them in New Orleans and I was really glad to see them. I still had a little old chip, an eating chip from the U. S. S. Bolivar and I gave it to one of them.

**JG:** A what chip?

**JP:** An eating chip, they gave you a little old chip and I guess you use that to eat with.

**JG:** Oh an eating chip, o.k. I see what you're saying.

**JP:** But, Cummings was his name and I always kidded him. Any time I got a group I always kid them I say yes they did good. He was on that darn Higgins boat and as soon as they hit the beach he had that thing in full reverse. And he might have had because they didn't want to stay there. But anyhow we had lots of fun and I still communicate with his wife. In fact both the guy's wives; both guys are already dead now. But we hit that beach and Jonathan, you cannot, you cannot just visualize or try to [unintelligible] just...we hit it the second day.

**JG:** So, February 19<sup>th</sup> was when...

**JP:** This is February 20<sup>th</sup>, it was February 19<sup>th</sup> when our group hit, the fourth and fifth division hit. We were supposed to have come in, in the middle but we didn't because we didn't think they would need us. I tell you what, there were so many ships, and bombing and airplanes and stuff hitting that island, that if somebody would have told me, "Well John it's going to take y'all a long time." "No, it's probably not going to take over two or three days to take that island."

**JG:** Well they had flown I think 27,000 sortie for 70 days.

**JP:** Yes, how could anybody survive? No way! But anyhow we found out different.

**JG:** So you yourself went in on the 20<sup>th</sup> is that what you are saying?

**JP:** I came in one day...we went in the second day afterwards.

**JG:** In the daylight?

**JP:** In the daylight. We went in the morning there, but there was so many casualties on the beach from the day before...

**JG:** By that time, huh.

**JP:** ...that the beach master he waved our 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment off, Danny Marshall's ship, because they knew who he was. They let us come in on a Higgins boat and me and him

and the other guy that I remember...well there is three or four ,but Onie Stanfield was my scout buddy. But we went in on the 20<sup>th</sup>. I know I was silly but...

**JG:** And you were showing me one time you came in right here near Suribachi right?

**JP:** I came in somewhere right along in here, yes, close to Suribachi. (looking at a map) I could see it real, real, good. There were so many dead people on my right and my left, I just couldn't believe there were so many dead people there, but it was. I was as gung-hoe I guess. Anyhow they had that little beach area, had that volcanic ash, sand, and you take one step and go back two, but anyhow I got up to the top of it because I wanted to see over it, see what was up in front of me. There was one boy from artillery group, he cursed me out good and proper. He said, "Get your so and so head back down." So, I got my head back down from the horizon there, and so I didn't see what was ahead of me, but anyhow.

**JG:** But you are not able to see to even shoot at anything are you?

**JP:** No, no, nothing to shoot at.

**JG:** So you are just trying to...

**JP:** Just survive.

**JG:** Just find a spot of ground.

**JP:** Yes, trying to dig a little bit, get on in, and just stay there.

**JG:** Total chaos, huh?

**JP:** Total chaos is exactly what it was.

**JG:** And shells going off all around you being shot at?

**JP:** All night long and there was a number of boys got killed real close to me, but none ever hit me so I guess I was lucky. But the third day, that would be the 21<sup>st</sup> okay, well since Danny was a G2 officer, intelligence officer, okay he knew the whole island deal, so he ordered, they ordered him out to go to each one of the regiments, go to the command post of each regiment and get their exact location. Now this is for security reasons or friendly fire reasons, so they wouldn't get shot at. So we did that and went all up through there.

**JG:** And the meanwhile you are just in the open?

**JP:** We were in the open, man we were in the open then.

**JG:** You are just crawling around in sand huh?

**JP:** That is it. We were already on the airfield and [unintelligible].

**JG:** And they had already dropped gasoline, so there was no vegetation.

**JP:** Nothing left.

**JG:** Nothing.

**JP:** Let me tell you something another. Danny and I and Onie Stanfield, we went on up and got all the information that Danny needed and then we came back and Danny reported all the locations, everybody's location, but we run across just a hole in the ground and there was a Japanese soldier laying in that ground. He had on a silk uniform. He had on riding boots.

**JG:** What color was the silk?

**JP:** It was bluish color, blue kind of silk.

**JG:** Blue silk.

**JP:** And his boots were just beautiful, had on silver spurs. Well, Danny he started going over and I got his name here.

**JG:** Was he dead or alive?

**JP:** He was dead. See, I don't know how he got killed, but he was just laying in the hole. But how you spell his name is T-a-k-e-i-c-h-i, Takeichi N-i-s-h-i, Nishi, but he was the one that won the gold in the Olympics in 1932, had it in California, and he was one of those riders. In fact I understand...

**JG:** An equestrian rider?

**JP:** Yes, the horse rider deal. I understand they put a horse on Iwo for him and he rode it. But he was a captain of the artillery group, I think is who he was. But anyhow Danny, he was going over the body trying to get some intelligence information from him and Onie and I, this guy had a beautiful saber. So we took the saber off of him and Onie got his spurs. Anyway we went on back and gave the report, and we kept those spurs and that saber. Later on there was Bill...Sergeant Bill, I don't know where he got the watermelon, but he brought a watermelon to us and we had this saber, so we had a big picture. Bill he was a photographer too, and a Marine Sergeant, Marine, he wrote a book, and I'm fixing to remember the name of it, but we cut the watermelon and they got a picture of it. I can tell on and John Racouskey and a few more of my scout buddies, cut that watermelon. Then we took that saber, I know we're getting a little ahead but we took the saber back to Guam and carried it down to the Air Force unit and we got 8 fifths of liquor for that saber. I just wonder how much that saber would really be worth now.



**JG:** Do you know where it is by any chance?

**JP:** No way, no way. Anyhow we came back, and we sold 7 of those 8 fifths to the boys, the Marines, for fifty dollars a fifth. We kept one of those for medicinal purposes in case we got snake bit over there. You understand, don't you!

**JG:** You mean at Guam?

**JP:** No still on Iwo.

**JG:** No still on Iwo, okay.

**JP:** No, no, no, you are right we were at Guam when we sold them.

**JG:** When you did your bargaining.

**JP:** Only he kept the spurs.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** Mother and I, Mabel and I have hunted on it for years and years and years and I just knew the policemen in lots of towns and they would look and couldn't find them. What it was, we were spelling Stanfield wrong. It is S-t-a-n-f-i-e-l-d. His name is Onie E. Stanfield. Well I found out about two years ago, my son-in-law was down here and he is a captain and police chief there at Garland they got some sort of an instrument, man they can tell, they know all about you Jonathan. I guarantee they know all about you. He looked Onie Standfield and said, yes, yes. Onie E., he told me what the E stood for it is S-t-a-n-d-f-i-e-l-d. Onie passed away in 1970. I got a copy of his obituary. He had five sons and I've contacted all five sons and it's just gone. Anyhow, we went on and after that we got here at Airfield Number 1 area.

**JG:** How long did it take you to get from the beach to Airfield Number 1?

**JP:** It didn't take very long, but you didn't go very far. Boy I mean they had you fired down.

**JG:** Talk about that sand, what was the sand like?

**JP:** That sand was kind of, I've got some of it at the house, people brought it back to me.

**JG:** Did it have that sulphur smell?

**JP:** It is kind of a black sand is all it was.

**JG:** Black sand.

**JP:** Just pulverized I guess volcano.

**JG:** Real fine or thick?

**JP:** Yes, real fine. Well it wasn't too, too fine no, it was kind of coarse. But you just could not walk in it.

**JG:** It was just all stirred up from all that bombing and shooting huh?

**JP:** It sure was.

**JG:** What about the smells? Do you remember any smells?

**JP:** Well the dead people yes, you remember that, you remember that very well, Jonathan. You never forget it. We was laying down here on Airfield #1 and they were shooting above us, and this was 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, five days after the campaign had gone on. We should have already been on the other end of the island. We were still there on the airstrip and the boats started, I think ever boat, there must have been a thousand or more boats there, but everybody started blowing their darn horns see, and you know, you think the war is over or something. But anyhow I looked back and they was raising the flag, so I can say I was one of the person's who saw the flag go up.

**JG:** On Mount Suribachi?

**JP:** On Mount Suribachi. Isn't that something? But we went on from there and it just got worse and worse and worse. We got, I think it was...

**JG:** Now did you ever...I know I'm getting ahead, but when things had settled down were y'all ever able to go up to Mount Suribachi?

**JP:** No, no we went...our object was going to the other end of the island.

**JG:** The other end of the island, okay.

**JP:** Kitano Point that was our object.

**JG:** How do you say that Kitano point?

**JP:** Yes.

**JG:** So y'all came in down here. I guess this would be the south. (looking at a map).

**JP:** We came in right here I guess, in this area, and went right up this way, the fifth on this side and the fourth on this side, and we came up the middle.

**JG:** Do these names mean anything to you? This Yellow 1 does that mean anything?

**JP:** I think this is about Yellow 1 is where we went into I'm going to guess.

**JG:** But y'all didn't call it that, not that you remember?

**JP:** No, I don't remember that. I should because I kept a little diary myself of where we were and all.

**JG:** So y'all came in here hit the Airfield and kind of went down the middle of the island.

**JP:** Yes, we got to Airfield #2, Motoyama village, oh good lordy. We lost about 600 men on Airfield #2, 600 men. Colonel Duplantis was my colonel, Colonel Withers was our regimental colonel and Graves B. Erskine was our general. Anyhow we finally...see your tanks and stuff they couldn't even come up that sand, so they used bulldozers or something another and brought them up. I think they got 12 tanks up here, and it knocked out 6 of them. So Colonel Duplantis told Onie and I, gave us explicit instructions, "Go find that gun knocking those tanks out" and sure enough Onie and I, we took off and I don't remember where it was but in some of these cliff areas right in here, we found the gun that was shooting and knocking those tanks out. Okay, we found them, we called back and asked the Colonel...Erskine and he notified the Air Force and then they bombed it, but they didn't do any good. Anyhow they saw Onie and I at the same time, so they started mortaring us, shooting mortars at us and this is unusual, but there was a big old hole there where one of those sea shells had just knocked a big hole in the ground. So we jumped in that hole and they started lobbing those mortars at us and one of those mortars went between my legs and didn't go off. You don't think the Lord wasn't with me? Well there was a blacksmith down at Diboll, oh Lordy I forget his name now, but anyhow the blacksmith had taken a World War I bayonet about that long and he had cut it down and he had sharpened both sides of that bayonet and made me a knife out of it and sent it to me. Why can't I remember that guy's name? Anyhow, well I had that bayonet with me at that particular time, I mean that knife, and it dropped out of my little old scabbard he gave me, and that knife is still in that hole. I didn't go back and get it. Anyhow we went up here and I'm going to tell you something another now that is kind of questionable, but I think it is the truth. The day before, we were up someplace in here and I still had my knife at that particular time. I had made a long, long shot and on an M-1 it has a rear site, so you just raise up that rear site just as high as it will go see, and I had a pair of binoculars and I used Kentucky windage and I shot from here over here on this side. They said I made the longest shot on the island, but that is not so, that is just somebody talking. But, anyhow I left my site up, why I don't know, I shouldn't have had, but I left my sight up, maybe I forgot it, but just at dusky dark, well there is a big old mound of dirt and Onie and I went up on this mound of dirt. And not knowing what it was, I just thought it was a mound of dirt we stayed there and the next morning my group, the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment, they moved out. We was moving forward, and they was probably 15 or 20 Japanese came out of that. What it was, we were on top of a cave, and we couldn't see the mouth of it you know, unless you look right over it. There was probably 15-20 Japanese

came out of that cave, and just went up there and started shooting at our boys. But Onie and I we didn't even have to aim we just started pulling the trigger as fast as we could. We killed them pretty fast. Well, and this is the bad part of it Jonathan and I hope I don't break down. Just no where right to my left there was a green uniform over there and a helmet come up right over a log, so I just aimed it at a Jap I thought.

**JG:** Now is this kind of dusk? This is kind of at dusk you said?

**JP:** No, it was daylight now.

**JG:** Daylight I'm sorry.

**JP:** It was early in the morning after we shot that bunch up.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** Anyhow I knocked his helmet off and then I could see or I thought he was a Marine. This has always been on my heart, everybody tells me John, that was not a Marine. Why would a Marine be there with that bunch of Jap's, see? But he had a green uniform on and a hat and I didn't look at his face. I wish I had looked at his face to see whether he was a Marine or a Jap, but all the psychiatrist and people I talked to me tells me, try to make me feel better says, John that had to be a Jap. That was not a Marine. But, that has been on my heart; I've prayed about this Jonathan, I have. (emotional) I wouldn't want to kill a Marine for the last thing in the world, but anyhow I had to go get him. I had to go in front of this cave and I looked down in the cave and there was two Japs, one sitting on the ground he had his finger on the darn Nambu machine gun and the other one standing up by him. Well they didn't pull the trigger, and that was their mistake. And I just ducked down as fast as I could and pulled the grenade pin and I think I either held it either four and a half or five. I don't remember, but they told us we had a period there of time you know that was safe period before the grenade would go off. Anyhow, I held it about a half a second too long, because when I dropped it in the cave well, the thing went off and that is why I can't hear in my left ear right now. But anyhow I went on and got the boy over there, grabbed a hold of his leg and pulled him back behind that big old mound of dirt. Somebody helped me, I don't know who he was but somebody had a pistol in their hands and he grabbed a hold of his other leg and pulled him around there. Then they got a corpsman and put him on and carried him on down the beach. But...

**JG:** And that was somewhere in this ridge over here?

**JP:** It was somewhere in this ridge right in here.

**JG:** Between Airfield 2 and Nishi, whatever.

**JP:** Yes, Airfield and Motoyama.

**JG:** Okay, and again you're still carrying the M-1, that is your main weapon right?

**JP:** That is what I used there, yes. Now, I saw after I shot this boy and I don't know why, I get we were going on forward, and I don't know why I looked down at my rifle, but I saw that my sight was way up and I had forgot what I had done, but there was an M-1 laying on the ground and so I just threw my M-1 away and grabbed that one up because that one was okay, and went on. But, I'm going to throw something out to you right now. Why were we on that mound of dirt? Why was Onie and I on that mound of dirt? We didn't have no business being up there? Why was my sight way up like it was? I just wonder how many lives that we saved by shooting that many Japanese people because they were shooting at us, our group, a bunch of them. Anyhow that night or the night after that Onie and I we was up front and it was late at night and I heard this Marine I thought, hollering "Corpsman!" And it is very, very, disturbing noise that somebody that is hurt and hollering out a corpsman and he did. And so that particular time, I still had my knife with me, so I grabbed that knife out, and I know this is not kind of...but anyhow, I grabbed my knife out and jumped out of that hole and Onie grabbed my foot and said, "John that is a Jap." I said, "No that is a Marine," "No it's a Jap," "No it's a Marine, you can hear him." He sounded just like an American the way he was saying corpsman. Anyhow, Onie convinced me that it was a Jap and I didn't go after it, but I thought I could take care of him. The next morning sure enough, it was those darn Japs over there and not a Marine. So, I say that Onie saved my life right there.

**JG:** Yes, yes.

**JP:** I do believe it.

**JG:** Y'all were all looking out for each other.

**JP:** For each other. And then let me tell you another story. This is, I know this is one of those stories, but we were pinned down someplace in here and a Nambu machine gun was shooting right across us. Well, one of the boys got hit and it wasn't the Westmoreland boy because that was a different time. Westmoreland, he was one of the big football players here. He was in my outfit, got killed, and I will tell you about it in a minute. But...where was I.

**JG:** Somewhere up in here. (pointing at map)

**JP:** This guy, he was hollering over there he had been wounded, and there was a big old Marine just came up from our group, stood up, big one, went out there and grabbed that boy up and brought him right back through that and laid him down over in our area and left. Nobody had ever seen that guy before; nobody knew who he was. Now who was that fellow? I'm going to let you think. I tell you what it makes you wonder. It makes you wonder why it's Onie and I up there saving all those lives. Well, it was lots of stories there. We lost 6,900 and some odd men on that. We lost, like I said, we lost 600 going up to that airfield, but it was bloody, bloody, bloody. Another good time the Lord, I say the Lord was with me, must not have been, but we got some water so we pulled our shoes off and we were washing our feet, and we had a hole here in a little ridge to it and instead of

me getting down in the hole I got up on that ridge and sat down and was washing my feet. Darn sniper shot and I was bent over like this, and that bullet went under both arms and through my jacket and hit Dave Winfrey right in the back of his head, dad burn it!

**JG:** This is how many days after?

**JP:** I don't remember, I don't remember. Kind of days went in to... I couldn't tell you what it was. Anyhow killed Dave and I never did try to get a hold...I knew where he lived. Why didn't I go tell his parents or say something to them? But I didn't. Anyhow Dave, he was barefooted and they got a stretcher up there and carried him back down to the beach area. But Nick White, he was the guy who took care of our count of how many got killed and their name and so forth. Well Nick was there and I didn't know Nick at that time, but he said he would always remember that boy barefooted and him going down to the beach. Later years I got ahold of a boy here in Austin that I knew, Pat Luckett, and Pat was a very good friend of Nick's and Nick had seen Pat and had thought Pat had got killed because he was real wounded bad and carried him down to the beach. So, I got the two names together and so we met then in California at one of our reunion and those two boys got together. I was so glad, because they were glad to see each other. Nick he retired, he was a Professor at the University of Alabama. He was a super, super guy. Went on through there and got to the end of the island and one of our captains from K. Company, I Company was killed, Sullivan, and so Colonel DuPlantis, he put Danny Marshall in charge of that rifle company and Danny had never been in a rifle company before but anyhow he did a good job. I know he did a good job. We got up there and they went down and got some water and a canteen and sent it back to the area down here and put a little note on it not for human consumption. That was the first sea water they had got from the island and brought it back to our general, Graves B. Erskine. It was some deal.

**JG:** I was going to ask you where would you have gotten your fresh water? Just all the water that was brought ashore right?

**JP:** Brought ashore, yes.

**JG:** There was no fresh water on the island.

**JP:** See that was so bad on the Japanese people there. They didn't have anything to drink. That is why they...they had one Banzi right at the last there and that General Kuribayashi, I think he must have led that Banzi attack right on the beach there. The Air Force was down there and the Air Force didn't have any weapons, and they...I got pictures of them and lots of them were killed. They think Kuribayashi was killed there. They don't know for sure.

**JG:** Were there any Japanese planes on the island when y'all were there or they all got rid of them?

**JP:** No, they were all gone.

**JG:** All gone.

**JP:** Well there were still some there.

**JG:** But they were disabled I'm sure.

**JP:** Yes, I got a little piece of their plane and I brought it back with me.

**JG:** A zero, I guess.

**JP:** A zero yes.

**JG:** I was looking at an aerial photograph here. So y'all came ashore here and went to Airfield 1 and then 2 and then y'all kind of worked your way back here.

**JP:** Yes.

**JG:** I see it dark here is that from a cloud or vegetation? It's kind of like a ridge.

**JP:** No, that is vegetation, a cliff.

**JG:** Okay, so that is where y'all were. That would have been the north, pretty much the north end of the island.

**JP:** The north end of the island yes.

**JG:** Kind of the northwest.

**JP:** I think this was Airfield #3 is what they were working on.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** But, this letter that I got here that I 'm going to give you was written by a woman, she goes into detail on a bunch of this.

**JG:** Okay, okay.

**JP:** I think you will enjoy it, and then this diary that this Japanese... and that will be something another you might want to read.

**JG:** Yes, I will look at that. So describe when you got to the beach, once you went through all that you went through and now you got to the beach, was that any significance there or what?

**JP:** Yes, they had told us, this is strictly bull, but we will have a steak for you when you get to the end of the beach. (**JG:** okay) We didn't get no steak that was just... (laughter)

**JG:** Just something to say. (laughter)

**JP:** But the ground was warm there and we would put our c-rations down in that sand and it heated it up for us.

**JG:** Really?

**JP:** There was a sulfur mine on that.

**JG:** I was going to ask you, could you smell the sulfur smell?

**JP:** Oh yes, you could smell it and it was warm when you laid on it to, surely was.

**JG:** So it was several days then for you to get from here all the way across.

**JP:** 36 days.

**JG:** 36 days.

**JP:** 36 days.

**JG:** 36 days to get probably what, 3 or 4 miles?

**JP:** They say it is 8 miles.

**JG:** 8 miles from where you went across.

**JP:** They had Easter Sunday services, April 4, 1945 that Easter Sunday services there. I wasn't a real, real strong religious person, but Jonathan, I had a little old prayer every night and I know it was a kid prayer. "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Lord my soul to keep, if I should die before I wake pray I the Lord my soul to take." And I said that every night.

**JG:** Did you have a military issued Bible, a New Testament or anything?

**JP:** I didn't have one of them, no I didn't have one of them. I got home no, we left...I got to tell you a sad part about this, too.

**JG:** How long were you on there after the fighting stopped, how long did you stay on there?

**JP:** Well see we got there on the 20<sup>th</sup> and we left there on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April.



**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** We were there...

**JG:** Oh okay, so you did the Easter service and then you left.

**JP:** Yes, and we got back to...

**JG:** So you didn't occupy, your mission was to...

**JP:** ...to get it and then the Army came in and they occupied it.

**JG:** Occupied it.

**JP:** And they also, they still was shooting Japs. See, sixteen miles of caves down there and they was still there. In fact, I understand it hasn't been too long ago two of them came out and gave up. This girl, she will kind of explain it in her letter. Got back to Guam and...

**JG:** So that is what y'all did, y'all left here and went back to Guam?

**JP:** Yes. The only time I ever got sea sick is when I first got on that first boat right off of Iwo and boy I got sea sick. But anyhow...

**JG:** After all you had been through, then you got sea sick.

**JP:** Got onto Guam and then went down to my tent. When we left Guam, well we had a six man tent and they was all buddies, and some of them had already been through two campaigns. And we had some of them from Carlton Raiders and two of them Racouskey and Winfrey's, John Racouskey and Winfrey's. But let me tell you one on Guam before I get to that, that is kind of cute. We was hunting for some eggs and chickens on Guam, that was before we went to Iwo, so our little old scout group went out and Sergeant McAvoy was with us, Racouskey and a few more of them. Anyhow we heard some banging on some trees out there and it was Japanese people. I guess they were getting some sort of fruit, anyhow McAvoy said, "I will go get the bar." That Browning Automatic Rifle. "I'll go get the bar." Well Onie and I we just stayed there and there was eight Japs just walked right up and we killed seven of those Japs. I'm not bragging, but it's just part of war, we killed seven of them and then one of them started running and I started running after him, and this is another time that Onie might have saved my life. Anyhow I started running after that Jap and Onie hollered at me, "No, stop, don't" or something or another see and he let me know I shouldn't run after that Jap, let him get on and go on in the jungle and I did. Who knows. But anyhow the other bad part back when we got back from Iwo to Guam and I went down to that tent. I cannot come up with a word of how I felt. If you can come up with a word, the deepest you think you will ever feel that is what I felt right there. Jonathan, we left that island at Guam there were six

men in there, and when I walked back in there to it (emotional) I was the only one left. Lordy, lordy, lordy I wish I knew. (emotional) I shouldn't...I'm sorry.

**JG:** That is okay, that is okay.

**JP:** I'm sorry.

**JG:** That is alright.

**JP:** I haven't told a bunch of people this. One more experience, we left there and then let's see December said we were going to be home for Christmas but we wasn't, but we got into San Diego on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. I called mother and talked with her, she paid the bill. (laughter)

**JG:** Now when was this when you're back in San Diego?

**JP:** San Diego, it was February 2, 1945, no '46.

**JG:** 1946, okay. Where...go ahead and tell that. I want to ask where you were when you heard about the surrender?

**JP:** Oh good Lord I got another story on that. This is not a good story either.

**JG:** I want you to tell both of them. Whichever one you want to tell first.

**JP:** This is kind of a cute, half way of a cute anyhow. We heard about the bombing and the signing of it and Onie didn't drink beer and W. F. Smith didn't drink beer and I didn't drink very much, but anyhow I had saved a bunch of beer for some reason or other and we heard about that and I started drinking beer that morning. I don't know how many.

**JG:** You heard about Japan's surrender.

**JP:** Surrender yes, and I don't know how many I drank, but anyhow I finally...

**JG:** Where were you?

**JP:** I was on Guam.

**JG:** Guam still, okay.

**JP:** I finally made it over to my cot and I was drunk, drunk, drunk, Lord have mercy. I fell out of my cot on the ground and I stayed there all the rest of the night. I woke up the next morning. And listen fellow, that was a happy part of our life. See we had, when we got back to Guam from Iwo we started getting ready to hit Kyushu, Japan, which is the southern part of Japan and our 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, which was made a reserve on Iwo, we had the 21<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> hit Iwo and they kept the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in reserve for something another.

And anyhow, Holland Smith and General Holland Smith and Graves B. Erskine, they went aboard the flagship and tried to persuade those...S-C-H-M-I-T-Z, he is the one in charge of operations, they tried to persuade him to relieve the 3<sup>rd</sup> because man, we had lost so many people. We were getting these little replacements, but the replacements, they weren't doing much good, but they wouldn't let them. They were destined to hit Kyushu, Japan but the 21<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> was going to be right by them when we hit Kyushu, Japan. So, we had something to celebrate for.

**JG:** Did you hear about the first atomic bomb dropping?

**JP:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay what was the reaction? What was everybody thinking about that? How was it presented? We know now it was an atomic bomb but what, how was it then?

**JP:** We wanted them to drop a bunch more. I tell you what that was something else. People don't know it.

**JG:** You are wondering why they just dropped one.

**JP:** That is right. One of the guys is in Pinecrest down here and he was on the little island there and he saw the hole where they had the bomb and he saw when it, the Enola Gay coming back he was there. Oh good Lord have mercy! So many things happened, so many stories.

**JG:** So you heard the news that they were surrendering?

**JP:** That they were surrendering and they had already signed it. I've got a picture and a video of the signing of it.

**JG:** So from August to February, the war is pretty much over. You stayed on Guam the whole time?

**JP:** We were on Guam getting ready to hit Kyushu, Japan.

**JG:** But I mean once Japan surrendered in August?

**JP:** We did nothing. We just waited there, see.

**JG:** September, October, November, December, January.

**JP:** Yes, I know it. We were ready to come back.

**JG:** Just waiting.

**JP:** We were ready to come back to the United States.

**JG:** What did they have you do to keep you occupied?

**JP:** We played ball, yes we did, we played ball.

**JG:** Baseball, football? (laughter)

**JP:** No, baseball primarily.

**JG:** Baseball, okay.

**JP:** That gave us something to do. Played lots of poker. We didn't have any lights, but we had a candle and we played penny ante poker there just something or another to do.

**JG:** Just something to keep out of trouble huh? Keep away from the beer.

**JP:** Yes, there was a kid that was killed there, and I thought of his name awhile ago. Name, name, name, you know that is another bad part of this. When I lost all those boys there in that tent, I tried to quit remembering names and you know that has kind of stuck with me.

**JG:** Where were they from? What parts of the country?

**JP:** All over the United States.

**JG:** Any of them from the south, any southern states?

**JP:** Well yes, one from Mississippi.

**JG:** Mississippi, okay.

**JP:** What was his name? I don't remember his name. One boy from Mississippi, yeah.

**JG:** What kind of backgrounds did some of your closest buddies have in the context of, you know, you grew up in a sawmill logging camp, what were some of the other backgrounds? I mean talk a little bit about that.

**JP:** It was various. Those boys from Mississippi, you know, they knew about us.

**JG:** They knew about logging camps and that type of life?

**JP:** Yes, they knew about logging camps. Alabama, Louisiana, and they had one boy from Florida with us, Pennsylvania, New York, like I mentioned, Vermont. They were just all over the United States. But you all come together. Burt Westmoreland was that boy's name. He was killed at Iwo, and I think Airfield No. 2 and he was in my outfit. I didn't know him, but he was a football star and that whole team, I think in 1943 when

they got out, a bunch of those boys joined the Marines and he was one of the boys, Burt Westmoreland. Well it was a bad story on him. I didn't see it but a boy from Beaumont, he saw it. There was a mortar or something and he had a piece of tin and that mortar went through that tin and stuck in his stomach and he was just hollering, but they were under machine gun fire, so nobody could go get him. But eventually, I worked at Texas Power & Light Company, and people come in and talk about their high bill, anyhow Mrs. Westmoreland, well she called in and fussing about her bill and another girl couldn't satisfy her so they gave her to me. She told me her name I said oh Lordy, and we kept on talking about the bill, and I asked her I said, "Did you have a boy by the name of Burt?" "Yes, he was in the Marines; he was killed." I said, "Yes, he was in my outfit." Well, I would not go and talk to her at that time, but then finally Mabel and I, we got up enough nerve that we went over there and talked to her. And I told her the prettiest story that I could think of see, about how her boy got killed. I couldn't tell her the story. That would have been too bad, so I just made up a story and told her. I felt good about that all these years that I did go to one of them and talk to them. I wish I would have gone on to the others too, but I didn't. That is behind us.

**JG:** Talk about, you said when you got back to San Diego you said you called your mom. Talk about that.

**JP:** I called Mom and I also called Mabel. I think the telephone bill was fifteen dollars.

**JG:** Wow, that was a good bit back then.

**JP:** Well we had a lot to talk about. She sounded just like a little old Texas girl. We got a language down in Texas that is different from anybody else in the world, I do believe.

**JG:** So you mentioned Mabel, y'all were going steady when you were in high school, so were y'all able to write?

**JP:** She was my sweetheart and we wrote each other, communicated with each other all the time. She kept the letters until they were moving she lost most of the letters, but she did find one and she let me read it the other day. I don't believe I wrote that there. No way, you talk about mushy! (laughter)

**JG:** Who is that guy? (laughter)

**JP:** Who is that guy? That was mushy, mushy, mushy.

**JG:** That had to be someone else. So what was one of the first things you did when you got back? How long did you get mustered out or whatever?

**JP:** We got back here February 2<sup>nd</sup>. They gave us a gooney bird on our uniform and they told the boys said now, "Y'all be careful now. They see that gooney bird, and those girls, they are going get you. They are going to get all your money." Anyhow, we got off the plane and was going over there to the bus station and there was two beautiful automobile

and two girls in there and they wanted to know did I want to have a little fun. (laughter) So, I asked...well I don't know if I ought to put this on there or not.

**JG:** Now, the recorder is going, now.

**JP:** I said how much is that fun, she said, "Well, \$20." And I said, "no, no, no." Anyhow because I knew what they was after, they was after my money. Heck with that they weren't going to get my money. Anyhow I went on and got the bus. Took off to Diboll and that was such a meeting. Mabel's mother and I we were just friends, double friends...

**JG:** So they met you getting off the bus at the Antlers or Houston or where?

**JP:** No, no, they were on the highway, old Diboll highway in a house. It was early, early morning when I got there. Well it was after daylight, but it was early, early, early, and they were still all in bed. You know you didn't lock your doors, so I just opened the door and went in back there and sat down on Estelle's side of the bed and talked to her and cried with her. Mabel was in the other room. I went to see her Momma first. Estelle was a very, nice, nice, mother-in-law. She really was. Then we got, that was February 2<sup>nd</sup>. I went to Dow Chemical Company and Uncle Morris got me a real fine job, a pipefitter. I will have to tell you a few things that is not good. I had lots of bad memories of this, so I thought alcohol would take care of it, Jonathan. Alcohol will not take care of anything. It will just make it worse, I do believe. But anyhow, I was pretty bad on alcohol, but after I married Mabel, it was March 16<sup>th</sup>, we moved to Freeport then. Went down there and I quit drinking a lot. Mabel had never been around anybody that drank, nothing like that, no honkytonks or nothing. She is just a little old East Texas girl. And anyhow, a couple of my buddies that I knew at Diboll, they came down. So she did go with us to a few of them, oh Lordy. Well, I know we drank way, way, way, too much. The Womack's were there and my cousin J. L. White came down, and J. L. he drank too much. He told Womack, he said, "Stop down at this stop sign," well Womack knew what that meant. He was getting sick at his stomach, so Kenneth he stopped the automobile and J. L. got out and did a little vomiting. Oh Lordy, and then I had a good job with Dow Chemical, paid good. Anyhow I had drank a lot that night, mixed it up, and they called me out and I went down and hooked up those big barges and I was so sick, I mean I was double sick. I couldn't even go down there and I said, "I tell you what John this is going to be your last one." So, I quit drinking that day for years, and years, and years, and I just wouldn't drink anymore because it didn't do any good, so I quit it. Then Mother and I came back to Diboll and stayed at our parents a little bit and I worked a little bit for an old lady putting in some gas lines in Diboll and that didn't work too good either. I helped my Paw-in-law, he was a mechanic – best one in Angelina County, Harry Nivens. Then we decided to go to college, so we went to Stephen F. Austin. We went over there four semesters I believe. I didn't get my, see I didn't have too much high school education. Really, I wasn't prepared to go to college. Mr. Pate gave me a certificate that I could go, but I wasn't really prepared to go to college. But Mother she was valedictorian in high school, so she helped me a lot on my books, but still it wasn't up here and see I never told her anything

I've told you here today. I didn't tell her that probably for forty years and it was still on my mind. That probably had part of it too, I don't know.

**JG:** What about your grandfather, did you keep in close touch with him?

**JP:** Grandfather passed away before I left.

**JG:** Before you left to go overseas?

**JP:** Yes, he did.

**JG:** What about your dad? Did you keep in touch with him?

**JP:** Dad, then I came back and stayed with him just a week or so.

**JG:** I mean was your relationship such with your dad that you ever talked to him about it?

**JP:** No, I didn't tell him a word, didn't tell any of them anything.

**JG:** Did he ever ask?

**JP:** No, no, Fatty Landrum was there and he come down and...

**JG:** Did anybody in your family serve during World War I? Did you have anybody in your family that served or anything?

**JP:** No, but after that, all three of my brothers went into the service. Then... but they didn't have to see combat. I didn't tell them anything about it at all.

**JG:** I want to...if you are up to it I wanted to ask you a few questions about fishing.

**JP:** Alright. I fish.

**JG:** But before we get to that I thought we would close maybe with that unless you want to continue on, but I would like for you to talk a little bit about what it has meant, and you've already done this but what has it meant to you to be a Marine? You know all these many years afterwards?

**JP:** In '89, Jack Warner, I think it was '89, Jack Warner and Jean and I were going someplace and Jack, see he knew I was in the Marines, and he said, "Did you know that you're third division is an association?" I said, "No." He said, "Yes. They are having a meeting this so forth," and said, "You ought to call some of them and maybe join that association." So I did and got in the association. We went to that reunion that year.

**JG:** Where was it, do you remember?

**JP:** Seems like to me it was Wisconsin.

**JG:** Okay.

**JP:** We had gone all over the United States. (**JG:** right) I think it was Wisconsin, and so I met a bunch of them see, that I had been in the service with. That sergeant that I was telling you about that wouldn't put...he was there. Hall was there; and a bunch of boys see that I knew. So, it was...and we talked about it and you know, we had similar experiences and I guess it kind of eased off on me and I enjoyed that reunion so much. Then I started going every year and I've got to meet some real, real, nice people now. I have got a picture at the house of 28 of us of the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment that were left, and so I got a picture of them. And we got down to about five or six, something like that and then down to three and we just... See I formed the reunion myself, mini reunions so we just decided we would just forgo that because it just wasn't enough of us. But in the meantime I have joined the Texas Chapter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Association and I've got active with that and some of the boys, we have still got two of them in there that was on Iwo in that, so I enjoy getting with them and also most of them were in Korea and Vietnam. Those Vietnamese boys, to me they had a worse time than I did. Washington had set up what they call "Rules of Engagement." Rules of Engagement is still going on to this day. They give you a plan one day and say okay you can shoot if you're shot at. The next day you cannot shoot, the next day you can shoot. It changes all the time; the boys never knew what they were going to get into. Now, my brother-in-law, he had a similar experience like I did. He shot his best buddy. His best buddy, he come up into the line with that noise maker deal and he shot him and the next guy in the fox hole shot him and then he found out that he was his best buddy. My little brother-in-law he hasn't got over that yet. He really hasn't. He and I have taken just about the same drugs and I have doubled up on my drugs trying to help me, so I won't just what do you call it. Anyhow so it won't bug me too much. And, I didn't answer your question did I.

**JG:** Well, just what has it meant to have been a Marine and to experience all the many years since then?

**JP:** It's camaraderie. I will guarantee you, if a grenade had fell down here amongst you, some of those guys are going to jump on top of that grenade to save the lives of the rest of them. I never had that experience. It never happened to me as such, and I don't know whether I had that much nerve to jump on that grenade or not. But that is a camaraderie that we had for each other. We loved each other; that is exactly the way it was and you would just do anything in the world for that buddy of yours. That is just the way it is. We were taught one thing, and we are not fly boys, we are not tank boys, we are not artillery boys, we are boys that were trained to fight. I hate to say that, but we are guys that were trained to fight. We were trained to kill, just that simple. I've often thought about that boy that I shot. Jonathan, if I had waited just maybe a second or two that he had exposed more of himself and I could have seen who he was and I might not pulled the trigger.

**JG:** But if you had waited, he might have pulled the trigger on you.



**JP:** I know it see, that was...

**JG:** That is just war, isn't it?

**JP:** That is just war; that is just survival. Lord, I wish I could go over that second again. I'd give anything in the world if I could. That is part of it.

**JG:** Okay, well if you are up to it let's move to fishing.

**JP:** Okay.

**JG:** Talk about the early days of Sam Rayburn and all that and when did you get into it. I know you got into it pretty big.

**JP:** We got into it real, real, well when we moved up to Dallas. Texas Power & Light Company hired me in 1948. George and Faye Honea they had just married and left on their little honeymoon down to New Orleans. He run the TSE Railroad for Temple, but TP&L...I tried to find a job after I had went college. I went all over East Texas and couldn't find a job, and so Louise Red she knew us – high school, so she told Mabel that one of her boys quit that worked for TP&L.

**JG:** Texas Power and Light.

**JP:** Yes, Texas Power & Light. That was a good company, a good company. Anyway, I went down there and applied there, and what I wanted to do was be a lineman. They didn't have any openings, but they did have for the office. Well, see I had gone to school and I had typing and shorthand and bookkeeping and all that stuff, so Mr. Horn, he and Mr. Bob Stroud were going to hire me. So we went in the office there. They offered me \$135 dollars a month. I told Mr. Stroud and Mr. Horn, I said, "Well, see I'm married now and my wife is expecting and I've already gone to college. I haven't gotten my degree, but I've gone and already got the military behind me and I just don't think we can get by on \$135." And they were sincere with me they said, "Well go out there and have a seat and we will call you in a minute." Well they called Dallas, our personnel department, they must have talked with them it seemed like to me for ages, but anyhow, Mr. Horn came out there and said come on back in the office. I went in there and Mr. Stroud said, "Well, we got good news for you. We are going to start you out at \$137.50." Gosh! Anyhow, that was a job, so and I loved it. I loved the job and I loved the employees there.

**JG:** And this was in Dallas?

**JP:** No this is here in Lufkin.

**JG:** Lufkin okay.

**JP:** Lufkin, 1948 and stayed there until 1955, and they transferred me to Palestine as the chief accountant over there, which is in charge of all your accounts. But they sent me over there as an assistant, because they didn't want the news to get out I guess. Stayed there awhile, and then began to know people with the company, and they wanted me to go up to Irving. In 1955, 'went up there in '56 and we drove through Irving and got the other side of Irving and an old man was on the side of the road and we stopped and asked him said, "Where is Irving?" He said "you just came through it. That is how small it was."

**JG:** Golly, nowadays it's...

**JP:** But we were gaining so many customers at that time it was just unbelievable. But then they sent me from Irving then, over to Mesquite, same way. We were gaining 200 to 250 customers every month. We put in the first gold medallion home unit in Irving. Well these Yankees coming down they had been used to a high summer [winter] bill, see they didn't have too much of a summer bill. Didn't have much air conditioner but anyhow, they started fussing at us and coming down TI and other companies there in Dallas. So Dale Moore and I we got it up, and said we know what it is. We went around and started talking to them and said I tell you what, you remember those high bills you got in the winter time? You are down here cooling, so you are going to have those high bills in the summer time. That satisfied everybody. I went out on one complaint. These people owned Coca Cola Bottling Company in Lufkin. Lupton was their name and I went out and she had one of those electric heat pumps also, but she had a big old fireplace. Well what Mrs. Lupton was doing...

**JG:** What was her name again?

**JP:** Mrs. Lupton.

**JG:** Lupton, okay.

**JP:** They owned Coca Cola there. So she had her service or who worked on it with her and they kept a fire in the fireplace. Well, that electricity was just sucking that right on up, and so we finally persuaded her she needed to cut down her furnace, so she cut it down and it worked out good. We stayed at Mesquite there and it was wonderful. Got into the Friends of the Library and became president of that group.

**JG:** In Mesquite?

**JP:** In Mesquite. And worked with the Kiwanis Club for years and years and got into politics. Rowe Hart was running for city council. Well I knew everyone on the city council, plus the mayor. The mayor and I had gone to a number of towns outside talking about the town and so forth. I was just a personal friends with all of them.

**JG:** How do you spell that?

**JP:** Rowe, R-o-w-e Hart, just Rowe Hart. And he was going to run for city council. Well he and I were fishing buddies, so he came up there and made TP&L his campaign quarters. Hell we couldn't have that. Anyhow, they transferred me from that office to Tyler. Went over to Tyler didn't have any job. They gave me an automobile and I spent most of my time on the lake down there.

**JG:** Lake Tyler?

**JP:** Yes, Lake Tyler.

**JG:** That was a pretty new lake wasn't it?

**JP:** A beautiful lake.

**JG:** Just put in right?

**JP:** Yes, man, I went down there and just fish, fish, fish. But we come up with a new computer system and I got it down real good, so I wrote out a bunch of outlines of what to do and what not to do. So I started going around to all the districts and presenting that to the employees and that is about the biggest job I had over at Tyler. Well, they had an opening over here at Fairfield putting in a new lignite plant. They needed a purchasing agent and purchasing agent job paid pretty good, so Vice-President Weatherby came over and Weatherby was one of my buddies too. He was one of the VP's. We went over there to Fairfield and talked to them and all and they already had two Texas Power & Light Company employees over there. They had one Texas Electric employee over there, but I just thought I would just go over and get that job just real, real easy. They had a new lake and it would be a place for me to fish.

**JG:** Power Plant lake.

**JP:** Yes, power plant lake, anyhow turned out they had too many Texas Power & Light Company employees at that plant and said okay they wanted to get one out of Texas Electrical which is Fort Worth. We had three companies together. So he got the job, so I just stayed here at Lufkin. Ray Horn, he got ready to retire and it was just an open job for me, so they gave me this job here at Lufkin and I was in charge of all the accounting and the meter reading and the collections and store room and you name it. Anything that had money to do with it, that was my responsibility. Had a big title of Manager of Production and by that time they had started paying a pretty good salary, I would say. That helped me a great deal, especially my later years. But lord I got to know these industrial customers here at Lufkin real good. The Papermill, the Foundry, Lufkin Industries, and just, I loved the job. I really did. I really did. A good, good company. Then I started fishing about 1970 when we got here, joined Lufkin Bass Club. We had about 100 members and that is a bunch of people. Well we met down there at our little office, well at our conference room at TP&L. Naturally I could get that for us, so that is where we met. So, I started competition fishing and I fished with all of them like Dr. Shelton, well all the bunch. Ended up I have probably got 150 trophies for bass fishing. Money-wise,

Lord it is no telling how much money I spent on fishing equipment. My fishing room was larger than this right here. I bet you I had over \$100,000 worth of fishing equipment. That is not including the boat and motor just fishing equipment. Lord have mercy! I loved it and I shouldn't have gone that much, really. I shouldn't have gone that much. But I loved everything and met so many good people and we had a state tournament, top 6 is what they called them. We would meet Lake Amistad or Lake Falcon or Rayburn or Toledo Bend, we met all over.

**JG:** So you traveled around a good bit.

**JP:** We traveled around all over.

**JG:** You were serious, weren't you?

**JP:** I was very, very serious. We would go and stay and get us a hotel room. Bill Shelton, his secretary, she kept a record of hotels and so forth, so when we were going to go someplace well she would go ahead and make a reservation for us so we didn't have any problems doing that. We just went and checked in.

**JG:** Were there limits when you were fishing in the early '70s?

**JP:** Had what?

**JG:** Limits?

**JP:** Oh yes, you had a 10 limit.

**JG:** Ten limit. Not five, but ten. And did the fish have to be alive to weigh them in? When did that start?

**JP:** Well later on, later on. We put on a number of tournaments ourselves and we were really criticized down at, where was that, Pendleton, no...Toledo Bend. There was a bunch of people and after the Top 6 members from all over the state came up there, and there was a bunch of our fish died, and there is some article, newspaper man so he gave us a real, real bad report us letting those fish...

**JG:** Killing all those fish.

**JP:** ...well really, just is part of it and now then they want you to keep those fish alive and if they are not alive, they penalize you for bringing in a dead fish.

**JG:** Right and you have to release them alive.

**JP:** You have to release them alive. And we did. And we, the Texas Park and Wildlife Department, they got in the Florida bass, okay. We bought the netting, our club did, we bought the netting, and they released them and we put the net out so the other fish

couldn't get them. So, we helped start the Florida bass here in Sam Rayburn. Now that has been years ago.

**JG:** Years ago, yes. Talk about how the lake changed during the years that you fished. You know it was impounded in the mid-late sixties and...

**JP:** We had all those stumps every place.

**JG:** Lot of standing timber.

**JP:** Lots of standing timber, see. I don't know how many boats I owned, but I knocked holes in every one of them. I think every insurance company here in Lufkin cancelled out on me. I'm not kidding you. (laughter) I would call them and say I got a hole. Even my little old son-in-law, Bill Bartlett, he married my number two daughter, they finally got a divorce, but he adopted my grandson, my grandkids and they just still love Bill, but his Bartlett Baggett and Shands even cancelled my insurance, my kinfolks!

**JG:** Kinfolks cancelled you.

**JP:** Yes, then I got in with Greg Gibbs. Toledo Fiberglass boy over there, Al something, he came up with some sort of deal that you put on the bottom of a boat, what they call a gorilla hull. Later on they started putting it in beds of pick-up trucks. It is almost just indestructible. But anyhow I have got a lifetime guarantee on my hull. So, I didn't have any more holes knocked in it. So Gibbs he has had it all this time and made money on me. Goodness gracious!

**JG:** Talk about how fishing techniques for bass have changed during that time.

**JP:** It has changed a considerable. See, before we did not have any plastic bait to use. That came up, that revolutionized. Because I had all mostly top water and spinners, but that worm boy, I mean it gets down there.

**JG:** The soft plastic worm.

**JP:** The plastic worm. And they do love it. Most of your big tournaments are won using that plastic worm or either a jig. A jig is good too. A jig was real good at Falcon and just push it down there, and you could tell when that old bass gets a hold of that jig and just a little bit see, then you got to set it.

**JG:** Did you fish long enough into all the line technologies like fluorocarbon, and...?

**JP:** I had, I bet you a dozen different lines in my tackle box.

**JG:** How recently have you fished?

**JP:** We fished year before. See I've had lots of heart problems.

**JG:** Right, right. But I mean so you have fished with fluorocarbon? Have you fished with that line?

**JP:** Yes.

**JG:** What is your favorite line? I'm just curious.

**JP:** I guess that would be probably the better line. It is the most expensive line anyhow, but it is very sensitive to.

**JG:** It doesn't stretch as much supposedly.

**JP:** That is right it doesn't stretch. Then they came up with this...

**JG:** I don't see how y'all set hooks on jigs on those bass with those little old bitty pistol grip five and a half foot rods. And nowadays, the longest one I have is seven. But there is some guys that have 8 foot long rods, sixty five pound braid and they're jerking the jaws out of those fish. How did y'all do it with those stretchy monofilament?

**JP:** I have still got one rod and reel and got 80 pound test, that braided line. You straighten your hooks out, you are not going to break that line, no way. But you know what, I don't think I've caught a lot of fish on 80 pound test line.

**JG:** No, I use 50 at the heaviest, 30 a lot.

**JP:** 80 is...

**JG:** But how did y'all do it with stretchy monofilament? I'm sure y'all missed a lot of fish.

**JP:** We missed a lots of fish, but try to take that slack out as much as you could, see.

**JG:** And you got low ratio reels back then to.

**JP:** Now they come up 4, 5 to 6.

**JG:** Now they got 8 to 1.

**JP:** 8 to 1 now huh? Gosh!

**JG:** Most of mine are 7, 7 to 1. I mean 4 to 1 was fast back then.

**JP:** Fast but lots of people still using that 4; they like it.

**JG:** I think for crank baits and stuff to slow down the retrieve.

**JP:** Yes but Bill and I and Otto Smith would go out to all these little towns around and see how many baits they had, and instead of just buying one or two we would just...

**JG:** You would just stock up, huh?

**JP:** We would just buy all of them. That was unnecessary.

**JG:** Now how did Mabel... how did she deal with all that?

**JP:** She just took it fine.

**JG:** She never complained?

**JP:** She never complained.

**JG:** Never?

**JP:** Never.

**JG:** Ever?

**JP:** Nuh uh, no.

**JG:** Never went on a spending spree herself?

**JP:** Well she might have had, but she went with me a few times, but she didn't like fishing.

**JG:** She didn't like it.

**JP:** But they formed boys and girls club here see, his and hers.

**JG:** His and Hers Bass Club. Did she join that?

**JP:** No, no, she went with me one time.

**JG:** One time.

**JP:** And then my daughter went with me one time.

**JG:** She might have gone with you more if you would have let her catch a few fish. Did you hog the front of the boat?

**JP:** No, I found fish and give her bait, worm mostly, and go up there and she would but she never did get no fun out of it, seemed like. But, our little daughter, she won her a

trophy and oh yes she has still got that trophy. When I had my garage sale getting ready to go to Pinecrest, I put a lot of stuff out there to sell, but on my fishing gear I gave it to my grandson. My rod and my boat and all, and he is going to put it on eBay and see what he could sell it for, because I got some of those real, real Calcutta Reels. I got one that cost \$495. Now, brother gave it to me. It has got 13 jewels in it. 13 of them. I have never let anybody else use that except myself to make sure...

**JG:** Nobody drops it in.

**JP:** That is right. But man that thing just throws like a jewel, goodness gracious! But he got all my baits up there to sell. Moved that home, I kind of lost lots of my freedoms. We had our will made out, so we looked at that reel and I had a big safe full of guns, and so we went down to each one of them that had a will and we gave them that gun and I also had thousands of rounds of ammunition that I had bought when Obama came along. We didn't know what was going to happen.

**JG:** So you had an arsenal, didn't you.

**JP:** I had an arsenal, exactly what I had. So, I gave all the kids and all the ammo that went with that particular gun and I kept one, it's a 22 .250. My brother-in-law, he was on the team, a rifle team for the Marines, he is good shot and knows all about rifles and so forth. We found two Remington's 22 .250 bolt and the one I have got, they call it a nail, anyhow you hit it and the next time you pull the trigger it will hit in that hole. It is just that accurate, that barrel, what it is. Old Bill would love to have that so bad, but he bought it for me but he bought another one but a super deal. Just a little bit prettier than mine but mine will shoot better than his.

**JG:** More accurate, huh?

**JP:** But I kept it and I killed a little old deer down there the other day.

**JG:** Yes, I heard you talking about that.

**JP:** Carried it to Massingill's.

**JG:** Twenty-two .250 is a pretty flat shooting gun isn't it?

**JP:** It is flat shooting gun. That is right. What you need to do when they come up is try to wave or holler at them or whistle at them, so they will look at you. That little white spot in their neck just shoot at that white spot. They don't go anyplace.

**JG:** It doesn't make a big hole though, does it?

**JP:** It doesn't make a big hole. They don't go anyplace though. They just sit down right there.



**JG:** I remember my grandfather always hunted with a .30-06 and about twenty five or thirty years ago he bought a .22-250 and I guess he wasn't hitting them in the right place, but we had a hard time finding them at times.

**JP:** Yes, you are not supposed to hit them... you need to hit them right in that neck.

**JG:** Yes, he would just shoot them in the chest and the heart, but they didn't leave much blood.

**JP:** I have got that .30-06. I have a Springfield 1903. I was smoking at that particular time in '63, and a boy at Brownwood, he made rifles. And so I made up a little contract with him that he would make me one. So he got beautiful stock. I mean an excellent barrel and use that lever action deal there and a good scope on it and got it's an Accutrack scope and I guarantee you I have shot deer in Wyoming at 450 yards just real, real easy. I mean you can knock them down.

**JG:** In Wyoming?

**JP:** In Wyoming, yes. And that .30-06 will get them. I usually try to shoot them in the neck too, but sometimes it didn't work out that way. But I gave that to my little daughter. She kept it and I had an M-1 with 280 rounds of ammo that was in the clips. That is unusual but this is just a regular ammo box, metal box. I had a full box plus a bunch more of .30-06. That M-1 will shoot.

**JG:** Yes, my dad got my grandfather's M-1 from when he was in World War II and...

**JP:** It doesn't kick that much. I guess all that weight to it.

**JG:** Well it's a pretty small cartridge isn't it?

**JP:** It is.

**JG:** I was surprised that y'all had that for sniper service.

**JP:** Yes, .30-06.

**JG:** Well no you said you shot .30-06 or just the .30, just the .30 M-1? Your M-1 was in .30-06?

**JP:** Yes, M-1 was a .30-06 also, sure was.

**JG:** Okay, alright because see my grandfather's was just the old .30, not the .30-06. But you had a .30-06 M-1?

**JP:** Yes, .30-06.

**JG:** Okay, okay, that clarifies what you were saying earlier, okay.

**JP:** I didn't tell you this' but we had a thousand yard range there at Greens Farm area and my buddy, the spotter, we would go down there lots of times and shoot at that thousand yard range and you got just real good spot in the scope behind. If you look close enough you can see that bullet going through the air. It will kind of make a little wave, a little heat wave. You can see that bullet going through the air.

**JG:** Wow!

**JP:** People kind of talk, but you can see it. Because I have.

**JG:** And your eyes are still pretty good, aren't they?

**JP:** Well I have got some fancy lens put in.

**JG:** You have got contact lenses?

**JP:** Yes.

**JG:** Oh okay. I'm sitting here looking through trifocals. My eyes have gone terrible the last few years.

**JP:** These are what they call Crystalens. They cost me \$2,000 each.

**JG:** Wow!

**JP:** But I can still see pretty good and I can read like this. But my distance is getting a little bit bad but I had a pair of glasses made like you have and I use those for distance, it's better.

**JG:** Well Mr. Powers I appreciate it very much you doing this interview.

**JP:** Thank you! I appreciate you asking.

**JG:** Okay, well I will go ahead and end the interview then, and we will just stop this.

**END OF INTERVIEW**