

Interview with Gaylord Harding Tapp

Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Program

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Interviewed by Brooke Tapp, Granddaughter of Gaylord Harding Tapp
Transcribed by Professional Transcripts

This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Gaylord Harding Tapp was recorded by his granddaughter with his permission on a digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska. All photos courtesy of Gaylord Tapp.

The transcript has been lightly edited.

0:00:00.1 Introductions and entry into the service

Brooke Tapp: There we go.

Gaylord Tapp: Okay.

Brooke Tapp: So, well, I'm Brooke.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. (laughs)

Brooke Tapp: I'm Gaylord Tapp's granddaughter, talking with Grandpa today. And so, Grandpa, if you'll say your full name and then -- when did you go into the service?

Gaylord Tapp: 1942.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And how old were you?

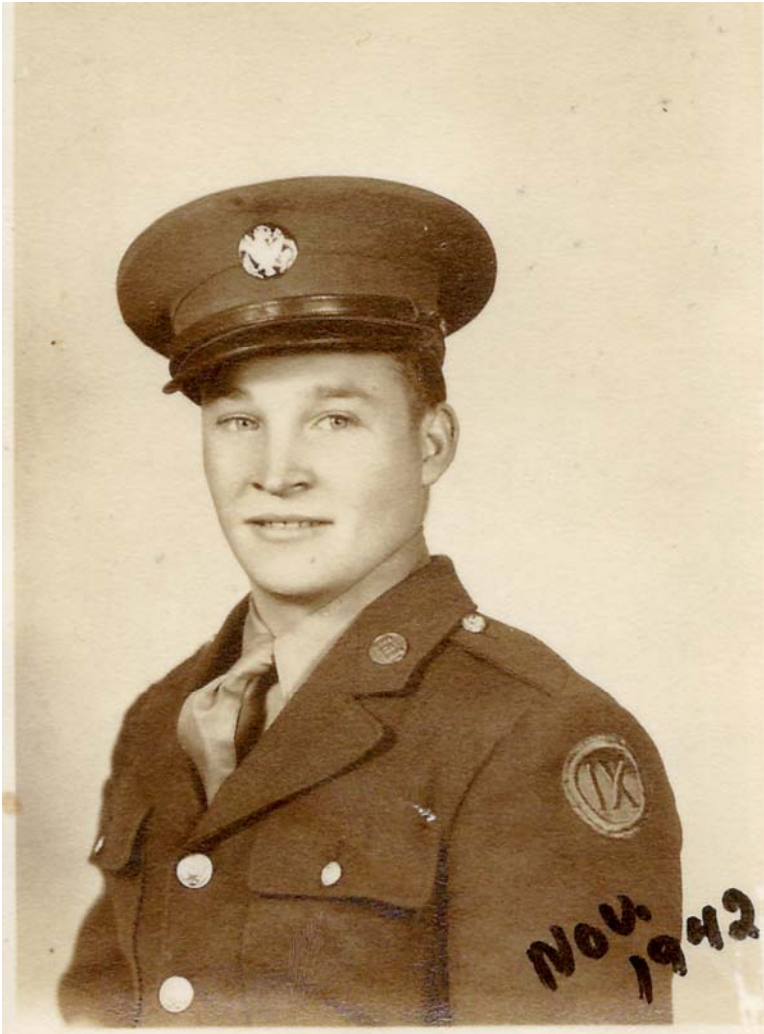
Gaylord Tapp: Twenty.

Brooke Tapp: Okay, twenty years old.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Did you enlist.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.



Brooke Tapp:or were you drafted?

Gaylord Tapp:
Drafted.

Brooke Tapp: And do you remember, kind of, what you were doing during the time of the draft, or when -- how about Hitler invading Poland? Or bombing Pearl Harbor? Do you have memories of that time?

Gaylord Tapp: It was right after that I was drafted.

Erene Tapp: Tell them what you was doing.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know what we was doing.

Erene Tapp: You was out in the field when you heard about it.

Gaylord Tapp: No, it

was in December, so we -- we couldn't have been shucking corn. I know I was shucking corn when we got my notice in the mailbox.

Brooke Tapp: So December was when.....

Gaylord Tapp: That's when Pearl Harbor.....

Brooke Tapp: That was when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. The seventh.

Brooke Tapp: And then it.....

Gaylord Tapp: September, I got my notice to go to.....

Brooke Tapp: was later?

Gaylord Tapp:the Army.

Brooke Tapp: So almost nine months later.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:you were drafted.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Right, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And so in December, were you in -- you were in Minnesota?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah. *[Note: still living at home with folks]*

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Living out.....

Brooke Tapp: Living here? *[Note: the interview took place at Gaylord's house, just down the road from where he grew up]*

Gaylord Tapp: Lived down there.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. Okay. And what did you think about the news? When you heard that they bombed Pearl Harbor?

Gaylord Tapp: I figured I'd be going.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. (Laughter)

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, I figured I was on my way, then, when I heard that.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And were there -- were any of your other brothers in the military? At that time?

Gaylord Tapp: Later -- later. No, no, none. *[Note from Mr. Tapp: I was the first of my family to go into the service. Later on, three of my brothers were drafted. My stepbrother Raymond Dunn enlisted while I was on Leyte. His ship went down in the Pacific Ocean by the Philippine Islands, November 25, 1944.]*

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: No, I was the only one.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And so what branch of service were you.....

Gaylord Tapp: Army.

Brooke Tapp:assigned to?

Gaylord Tapp: Army. Combat engineers.



Brooke Tapp: Army combat engineers. And did you get to decide?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: They decided for you?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they did.

Brooke Tapp: And how did you get to the engineers? Why were you.....

Gaylord Tapp: Because we were farmers, I guess. I guess that's the reason. And most of the guys in there were farmers. Midwest, Dakota.

Brooke Tapp: In the engineers?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Dakotas, and.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:in our company, most of them was farm boys. Iowa, Missouri.

Brooke Tapp: And so once you got drafted, you got your letter in September, when -- how long did you have before you had to go somewhere?

Gaylord Tapp: Uh, let's see. Wasn't too long, I don't think. I don't know. I don't remember. It wasn't too long.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, here on the timeline, I get -- it does say September 24 --1st, 1942, you were sworn in the U.S. Army at Camp Dodge, Iowa. *[see timeline in appendix]*

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And then in October, you left for the Army service.

Gaylord Tapp: True.

0:03:25.5 Serving in the Army Combat Engineers and going to Oregon

Brooke Tapp: And you went to Oregon.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Camp White, Oregon. *[Note: Medford, Oregon]*

Brooke Tapp: And what -- so you were part of the combat engineers. What company?

Gaylord Tapp: Company A.

Brooke Tapp: And how many companies were there?

Gaylord Tapp: I think three. A, B, and C. There was quite a few: A, B, C, D, E, and F, and H and S company.

Brooke Tapp: And you were called the Fiftieth. *[See history of the 50th Engineer Combat Battalion at the end of the interview]*

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: And why Fiftieth?

Gaylord Tapp: And I have no idea why they called us the Fiftieth. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: But Company A of the Fiftieth Engineer Combat Battalion?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And so, you did learn -- so as an engineer, what was your main job?

0:04:12.4 Duties as a combat engineer

Gaylord Tapp: I drove a truck. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And that's what the engineers were to do.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Cat -- build roads and unload the ship and supply the frontlines with ammunition and everything they needed.

Brooke Tapp: So what was your training like?

Gaylord Tapp: Just like any other training, I guess. You just took your basic training and did everything. Built bridges, and tore them down and build them up again. Went to the rifle range.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And then -- I read about the intensive amphibious training. What does that mean? The amphibious?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, we landed on the -- made a mock invasion at Monterey Beach. Unload the whole ship, put it on the shore, and then loaded it back up. Amphibious training.

Brooke Tapp: Okay, so it's kind of the.....

Gaylord Tapp: Just like we was going to do in combat, only nobody's shooting at you then.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, okay. So it's the landing, kind of that.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah, we'd land on the beach.

Brooke Tapp:sea to land transition.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And so what was your first assignment?

Gaylord Tapp: When I got in the Army?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: They asked for volunteer truck drivers, so I volunteered and they gave me a wheelbarrow. (Laughter) I didn't volunteer again. (Laughter) It was a brand new camp, up there in Camp White, Oregon, and we hauled rocks in wheelbarrows to make sidewalks, you know? Moving stones?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: That's what sidewalks were.

Brooke Tapp: Why -- why do you think they did that?

Gaylord Tapp: Huh?

Brooke Tapp: Gave you a wheelbarrow instead of bomb.....

Gaylord Tapp: Truck -- instead of truck? (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Yeah. (Laughs). And who were your commanding officers?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God. I had quite a few.

Brooke Tapp: Really? Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: I think Captain Harris, at first, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: Captain Harris?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And what was your title? In the Army?

Gaylord Tapp: T5 -- Corporal T5.

Brooke Tapp: Corporal T5.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: And what were your main duties?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, I was on machine gun duty down on Attu. I and two -- three other guys on machine gun on Attu.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't.....

Brooke Tapp: So your duties would change.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:depending on where you went.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah, right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Okay. So tell me the story about -- you're done with training and you're going to go on your first mission, if that's what it's called.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And what that, or how did you find out?

Gaylord Tapp: We didn't know until we were just about there, where we was going. We loaded up in San Francisco. Load the ships up, you know? I was -- I got German measles just before we was -- while we was packing to go. And I kept asking if the outfit had left yet, because I figured I'd have to go with some other outfit, you know. I got out of the hospital and they left that next day.

Brooke Tapp: And you went with.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, I went with them. I wanted to go with them; I didn't want to stay back here. I'd have got home if I'd stayed back here, might have got out.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah (Laughter) And so you guys left, your Combat Company A, got on a ship and you were just packed to go?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Just.....

Brooke Tapp: But didn't know where you were going?

Gaylord Tapp: No, didn't know where we was going till we got way out at sea and they didn't tell us for quite a while we was going to Attu.

0:07:45.1 The company arrives in Attu, Alaska unprepared for the weather

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And then you landed on Attu. And then what did you do?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, we got started on the machine guns and waited for action.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: We got plenty.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. (Laughter) So did -- when you arrived, was it kind of like, non-hostile? Like were you able to pull up to shore and unload and kind of.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we weren't afraid of that at all while we was unloading.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And then you set up camps?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. No, just pup tents. That's all we had to sleep in. Pup tents.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: On the ground. Sleeping bags.

Brooke Tapp: Sleeping -- did you have any sleeping pads?

Gaylord Tapp: No, just.....

Brooke Tapp: Any foam or anything to sleep on?

Gaylord Tapp: No, just sleeping bags.

Brooke Tapp: Sleeping bags on the ground.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Inside your tent.

Gaylord Tapp: On snow. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Was there a lot of snow?

Gaylord Tapp: Quite a bit.

Brooke Tapp: When you were there?

Gaylord Tapp: Quite a bit.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Did it remind you of Minnesota?

Gaylord Tapp: Pretty much.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: Wasn't quite as cold as Minnesota, though.

Brooke Tapp: Not as cold!

Gaylord Tapp: Wasn't -- didn't seem to be as cold, anyway. We landed with California clothes. We liked to froze to death, though, but -- we were there for a couple weeks before we got winter clothes. Didn't have the shoes -- all we had was khakis.

Brooke Tapp: No long johns?

Gaylord Tapp: No, we had nothing! We'd left California.

Brooke Tapp: Wow.

Gaylord Tapp: And it's cold.

Brooke Tapp: Did you have gloves and hats?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah -- no, we didn't have any gloves.

Brooke Tapp: No gloves.

Gaylord Tapp: Unh-unh.

Brooke Tapp: What did you have for footwear?

Gaylord Tapp: Just ordinary combat boots.

Brooke Tapp: Just leather boots?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, just like we had in basic. Then we finally got the arctic boots and stuff, you know, and.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:heavier clothes.

Brooke Tapp: So it took a couple of weeks before.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:you were getting winter clothes.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: And so were other ships coming in and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah.

Brooke Tapp:supplying you?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, you got infantries coming in.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:besides us.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Lot of ships.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: We couldn't see the shores. It was foggy. Couldn't even see the ship next to you, it was so foggy.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And did -- were you one of the first companies to arrive?

Gaylord Tapp: Well.....

Brooke Tapp: Or land on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we were. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And is it called D-Day?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it's D-Day, and you land -- first day's D-Day, when you land on -- some place. D-Day.

Brooke Tapp: Oh. Okay. So there are many D-Days?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Everybody's D-Day can be different.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Interesting.

Gaylord Tapp: You land on an island, D-Day, the day that the operation took place, that's D-Day.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And is it the first time anybody lands on the island? Or would -- if somebody showed up a week later, would it be D-Day for them?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't have any idea or whether it would be or not.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know.

Brooke Tapp: But it was your D-Day, May 11, 1943?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And so what was it like on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, we had to pass ammunition. Standing side by side on that mountain, you know? And pass ammunition up the front lines and stuff up the mountain a ways, and stand side by side and hand it up. Water and everything. We couldn't.....

Brooke Tapp: Did.....

Gaylord Tapp:just stood side by side and hand each other.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So, kind of a train of people.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, right. Stand side by side.

Brooke Tapp: Getting gear up to the top of the mountain.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. To the front lines.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And how were the front lines determined?

Gaylord Tapp: That's where the infantry was, in the front lines.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Just -- just up there in the mountains. Front lines.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And that's kind of the -- they chose that like as the advantage point where they could see the Japanese and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right, right.

Brooke Tapp:and fire at them.

Gaylord Tapp: They was in pill boxes and everything. They'd been there quite a while. They'd built in good. *[Note: Pill boxes are what they called the caverns the Japanese dug in the side of the mountains.]*

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, have you -- did you hear anything about the Japanese on Attu, before you arrived?

Gaylord Tapp: Never -- never heard a thing.

Brooke Tapp: So you didn't really even know what Attu was?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Or that the Japanese.....

Gaylord Tapp: Nope.

Brooke Tapp:were even there?

Gaylord Tapp: Nobody did. I knew the Japs were going to take it but they were getting closer to the United States, you know, in there. That's when we went to take it, before they got any closer.

0:12:08.7 Battle of Attu

Brooke Tapp: So what are some memories you have of the battles on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, we was up in Engineer Hill. We called it Engineer Hill. We was up there. First night, I and a guy from North Dakota, we pulled our clothes off first night and got in our sleeping bags. And just about sunrise that morning, the Japs broke through the front lines and come up the ravine and they come in there shooting and bayoneting, just jabbing them at us in the tents. They killed the kid beside of me and missed me. I saw a bayonet come in the tent four or five times while I was dressing. I don't know how he ever missed me, but he did. Cut the other kid's face about half off with the bayonet.

Brooke Tapp: And that was the second day you were there? So like May 12th? Or after a couple of weeks?

Gaylord Tapp: It was after quite a while. It takes a while to get up the hill, you know. You're fighting Japs all the way up.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: We kept working our way up the hill. Then they called it Engineer Hill because they -- I think they killed some four hundred Japs up in that one place. They come up that morning.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:and they killed one of our kitchen cooks. They was in fixing breakfast. We had a tent set up for a kitchen, you know? A bigger tent. And they was fixing breakfast and the Japs come up in there and they wrecked everything.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And that was after you were there on Attu a couple.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yes.

Brooke Tapp:of weeks.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

0:13:44.9 Army life on Attu Island

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So what would your daily life be like? On Attu? Kind of -- what time did you wake up in the morning? What did you do all day?

Gaylord Tapp: We never got to sleep.

Brooke Tapp: Never got to sleep (Laughter)

Gaylord Tapp: There was shooting all night!

Brooke Tapp: Were -- was there a lot of shooting all the time?

Gaylord Tapp: Quite a bit, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And did you have scheduled times where -- when you would eat?

Gaylord Tapp: We had K-rations. Just ate it when you got around to it. Had K-rations.

Brooke Tapp: And would that be they would give them to you.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:you would pick them up.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:and then you'd just eat.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:whenever you.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right.

Brooke Tapp:felt like it.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. What did you eat?

Gaylord Tapp: We had a little can that had heat in it, you know? You had eggs and stuff in little cans, you'd open them up and you'd put it on a little fire and heat it. That's what we ate.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: And they're good, though.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: For a change. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Would you eat them again?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, for -- yeah, we used to break down the ship, in the hatches, and get them over on a cart there -- where we were up in the ship, where we were staying and ate them there, before we got on the beach.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Sometimes better than food on the ship. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: And so you would work mostly during the day?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Hauling up the gear?

Gaylord Tapp: Right, yeah. Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And did you have any machines? With you on the island?

Gaylord Tapp: They had some Cats on there with half-track trailers, where you could drive in the ravine. They drove in the creeks and stuff with them, you know?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Hauled stuff around with those. Bring them with us on the beach so we could pass them up the mountains.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. What did you do for recreation? Did you do anything fun while you were on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: God, no. (Laughs) Call it all fun, if you want to. No fun.

Brooke Tapp: And so the -- when you were sleeping, the pup tents, they were just made out of canvas?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right.

Brooke Tapp: How many guys to a tent?

Gaylord Tapp: Just two, two guys carry half of a tent. Each had one in your backpack. Each one has a half. And it would take the two of you to set it up.

Brooke Tapp: And so how -- knowing that none of the -- you guys didn't know where you were going and you arrived on Attu and it was cold and you weren't prepared for it.....

Gaylord Tapp: No. No, we weren't.

Brooke Tapp: How was the morale? How did people feel? Was there.....

Gaylord Tapp: Well, I don't know. It was -- you were always wondering what you were going to do, you know. What's going to run into you from off that boat or ship or what your landing was, you know, there. The landing craft, drop that door down, what you're going to run into. Had to wade in water to get to the -- to get to shore.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Then the clothes froze.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Lot of infantry lost their hands and feet. They froze to death up there, a lot of infantry boys. Yeah, they lost their feet and toes. Yeah, I felt sorry for them.

Brooke Tapp: And why do you think they fared so bad? Compared to the engineers?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, they was up there fighting worse. I mean, they was up there where the fighting was -- infantry was.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, that's right. They was right in the midst of it.

Brooke Tapp: So they just stood out longer in the conditions and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah, they took them out of -- froze there.

Brooke Tapp: So what do you remember about the weather, besides the fog and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Cold and windy. We tried to put up a tent one night, a great big tent so we could six of us sleep in it. We couldn't get the thing to stay up, it was so windy. Raining. Wind blowing. We just left it lying down and got underneath of it. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Just laid on the ground.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:and kind of like a tarp over you.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Yeah, that's what it really was. Rain and windy. It was horrible.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And the snow? Do you -- was it up to your ankles? Or to your knees?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, it was about that deep, about ankle deep, you know. Sometimes it was deeper in some places, depends where you were.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: You're -- snow was no problem, really.

Brooke Tapp: Snow wasn't that big of a deal?

Gaylord Tapp: No. No.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Just cold.

Gaylord Tapp: Just cold. And windy. The wind was terrible.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Do you remember any of the temperatures?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I don't. I didn't -- nobody told us. (Laughter) I know it was cold! No thermometers around I seen. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And then -- was it always foggy?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Very foggy, all the time.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Out in the ocean, you couldn't see the ship next to you. All the way over. I mean, after you got just about there.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. And how was the trip over?

Gaylord Tapp: Rough. Pretty rough sea. When we got in the Bering Sea, I couldn't ask -- Prince William Sound -- nobody going on top because the waves were going to wash the deck every time. The ship would just dive down and.....

Brooke Tapp: Had you ever been on water before that?

Gaylord Tapp: No. First time, last time. (Laughs) I made about five of those trips.

Brooke Tapp: And did it -- how long did it take you to get from San Francisco to Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God. We was thirty -- thirty some odd days.

Brooke Tapp: Thirty some odd days on ship. And how -- how many people were on the ship with you?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God. Thousands. Forty thousand.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, so it was a big ship.

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Lot on the ships. It was loaded.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so that -- did that many -- but that many people didn't land on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, a lot of them landed.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, really?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

0:20:08:6 Contact with family during the war

Brooke Tapp: Okay. Was there any way for you or any of the other troops to keep in touch with family while you were at Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know. Long time before I got to send a letter home, I think.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Long time.

Brooke Tapp: Did you do any writing while you were at Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: I'm sure I must have wrote a letter home; I'm sure of that. (Laughs) I don't know!

Erene Tapp: They still got them.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't remember any letters home or not.

Erene Tapp: They still got them. Said, "Hi, folks! Love, Gaylord." They blacked everything out!

Gaylord Tapp: That's all blanked out. Les has still got some of the letters.

Brooke Tapp: Your brother, Leslie?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, he's still got some of the letters. They're just blanked out. Nothing. Says, "Hi, folks. How are you? I'm fine." That's all; the rest is all blanked out.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. When you were in your military training, did they tell you how to send letters home? Like that you can't give information, or did you just write what you want but they just screened them?

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't write anything that I didn't think I was supposed to, but I must have. I don't remember what I wrote. (Laughs) Anyway, it was blanked out.

Brooke Tapp: Did -- do you recall any kind of things you thought about while on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: I wished I was home.

Brooke Tapp: Did you think about home a lot?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I really didn't. I never got homesick. Delmar got homesick. I never did get homesick. I figured it was no use, wasn't going to get there anyway. I never -- never got homesick.

Brooke Tapp: And when you landed on Attu, was there any idea how long you would stay?

Gaylord Tapp: No. I suppose till we cleaned up all the Japs. And then we went to Kiska from Attu.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So the goal, when you landed on Attu, was to get the island back.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: However long that took.

Gaylord Tapp: Took a week. Yeah, that's -- whatever it took.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did your job as an engineer change? When you -- like what you were trained to do as an engineer? Were you doing other duties on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: That's about what I was trained, you know right there.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. So you were still like, an engineer.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Right.

Brooke Tapp: You still were building.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:their roads and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right. Building roads.

Brooke Tapp: And hauling equipment.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Airstrips.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And then from there -- so Attu -- how did -- cause you did leave Attu, so you must have completed your goal.

0:23:08.4 Victory on Attu

Gaylord Tapp: We did, yep.

Brooke Tapp: How did that happen? What -- what's that story?

Gaylord Tapp: Just got -- got all the Japs, I guess. Loaded us on a ship and took us to Attu -- or Kiska.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what -- because the -- you did talk about how the Japanese came to your village while you guys were in your tents and were kind of on a rampage. You know, bayoneting people through their tents.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So it was during -- while you were sleeping?

Gaylord Tapp: Right. We was all sleeping.

Brooke Tapp: And so from that point, how did it switch from them attacking while you guys were sleeping to then you guys were victorious? How did that change?

Gaylord Tapp: You mean, what did we do?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: You done the best you could! (Laughter) I got out of my tent after I got dressed and I got up the side of a mountain. I was up there, me and another guy. I didn't know him from heck. Couldn't see nothing yet. We got there and kept waving our -- they kept shooting at somebody down there. It was their own men they was shooting at, maybe. Then every night you have a different password, and we didn't know what that was. We had to get down there after night to get in our own companies some way. We finally made it.

Brooke Tapp: Oh! Tell -- talk about the password. What is that?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, they have a password and if you get stopped by somebody and they ask the password and you got to answer it. Answer the same word.

Brooke Tapp: To know that you're on the same team.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Where you belong. And they changed that every night.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And were you not told the password, or you forgot?

Gaylord Tapp: That night? Didn't know it.

Brooke Tapp: And so you -- a couple of you ran up a mountain.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we got up the side of a mountain.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:to get away from.....

Brooke Tapp: While some were still down in the camp.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: And the Japanese were still attacking?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm. Yeah, they killed four hundred there.

Brooke Tapp: Four hundred?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Four hundred Japs.

Brooke Tapp: So some of the guys were down there fighting.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: They were able to wake up and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:and fight with the Japanese.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: And then -- so through that fighting, did the Japanese go away? Did they retreat?

Erene Tapp: They killed them.

Gaylord Tapp: That's when -- that's when they got them all.

Brooke Tapp: So that was the last battle.

Gaylord Tapp: That was the last ones. They all came up there. Yeah, that was the last ones of the Japs. That's when it was all over in Attu.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: And they got a sign there on Engineer Hill.

Brooke Tapp: There's a sign on Engineer Hill?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm. Still there. Ain't it, Mom?

Erene Tapp: Yep.

Gaylord Tapp: Because we had a guy from Florida, he goes there or used to, every year. And it's still there.

Brooke Tapp: Was it a sign that you guys made?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Fiftieth Engineers.

Brooke Tapp: You guys made a sign?

Gaylord Tapp: Somebody did.

Brooke Tapp: And left it there.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So, back in 1942, there's the sign from you guys in 1943.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Excuse me. So did you run up the mountain with any weapons?

Gaylord Tapp: Machine gun.

Brooke Tapp: You had a machine gun?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, a thirty caliber machine gun.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I and two other guys. We were on that for quite a while in Attu.

Brooke Tapp: Okay, so that was stationed up on Engineer Hill.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: So were you guys using the machine gun? While the battle was taking place down in your camp?

Gaylord Tapp: No, we was all -- yeah, we was on it that night -- I wasn't on it that night. But somebody was on it, I suppose.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I suppose we might have mowed down a few Japs when they come up.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So were you able to grab any weapon that night?

Gaylord Tapp: Took my gun with me.

Brooke Tapp: Had your gun?

Gaylord Tapp: M-3.

Brooke Tapp: And how did you know when it was safe to come down from the mountain?

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't. We worked our way down.

Brooke Tapp: What does that mean?

Erene Tapp: Snuck.

Gaylord Tapp: Kept sliding down.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Sliding down the mountain. So we could get down to our outfit before night.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. And so that was in the night time that the Japanese came.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, early in the morning.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so did the battle last all day?

Gaylord Tapp: No, it was over pretty quick.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. So it was done in the daylight.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah. Lot of guys got killed. One got -- one sergeant got up and he got shot right through his nose. There was one Mexican; I guess he was a pretty rough devil. He got those Japs and he'd throw them in his foxhole with him. (Laughs) He was a tough guy. One big, fat Mexican.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so what happened after the battle? Like how soon were you able to leave?

Gaylord Tapp: God, I don't remember. I know we just packed our stuff and got in the ship and that's all I know about that, really.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. But you knew at that day that you won?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, it was all clear.

Brooke Tapp: And then -- so you pack up, and you -- do you know, when you pack up from Attu, where you're going next?

0:28:51.1 Heading to Kiska

Gaylord Tapp: We knew we was going to Kiska.

Brooke Tapp: You knew you were going to Kiska?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And you knew that was another island in the Aleutian.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Right.

Brooke Tapp:Chains? So how did people feel about going to Kiska?

Gaylord Tapp: About the same as they did going to Attu. (Laughter) What they're going to run into. But the Japs.....

Brooke Tapp: So they didn't know.....

Gaylord Tapp: No Japs that were there; they were all gone. They left.

Brooke Tapp: And were -- were you briefed on what Kiska was? More so? Because Attu, you didn't know anything about Attu before you arrived.

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Did you know anything about Kiska?

Gaylord Tapp: No, we -- about some -- we figured it was about the same kind of island, you know? Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. But you were told that there were Japanese there?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. They -- we didn't know that they had left though. Didn't -- we didn't find any. So all we done there was build roads. I drove a dump truck there, hauling stuff and building roads.

Brooke Tapp: (Whispers) Hold on. (Aloud) And why -- so there was no Japanese at Kiska, they'd already left.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Were there other American soldiers on Kiska before you arrived?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: You were the first to arrive?

Gaylord Tapp: Not that I know of, anyway.

Brooke Tapp: And -- but there were no Japanese there.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp:and so you did stay and build roads.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we built some roads. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Do you know why?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know why. Give us something to do, I guess. (Laughter) Keep us occupied.

Brooke Tapp: Did you search around the island? Did you do any walking around the island and exploring?

Gaylord Tapp: No, no.

Brooke Tapp: A lot -- just a lot of working?

Gaylord Tapp: Just all working.

Brooke Tapp: So did you see any of the leftover Japanese guns or.....

Gaylord Tapp: Not there.

Brooke Tapp:any of their stuff?

Gaylord Tapp: Unh-unh. They moved out pretty good. They cleaned up things pretty good.

Brooke Tapp: So what would be your most memorable experience from your time in either Attu or Kiska? Like what do you remember most?

Gaylord Tapp: Just like to get out of there alive, I guess. That's -- fighting the cold. Windy. Could not walk in the wind, it was so strong.

Brooke Tapp: How'd you stay warm?

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't. (Laughter) I was cold. Haven't got warmed up yet. (Laughter)

0:31:41.4 Men he served with in the Aleutians

Brooke Tapp: Who were your good friends while you were on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: God, all of them.

Brooke Tapp: All of them?

Gaylord Tapp: All just like brothers. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And how big was your company?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, there was -- I don't know how many there would be in a company. Just A Company?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God. There's -- let's see, there are four rows in a platoon. Eight, ten men in a row, times A, B, and C, those are the ones that went with us.

Brooke Tapp: So about 160?

Gaylord Tapp: I suppose, somewhere in there. Maybe a little over.

Brooke Tapp: And A, B, C and D, they all went to Attu with you?

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah. F. A, B, C, D, E and F, because Hutch come and he was in F and stayed there all the time, never did get out and leave there. He stayed there all the time.

Brooke Tapp: Who's that?

Gaylord Tapp: Company -- Ray Schwartz and Cecil Anderson, from Sargeant [MN]; stayed there all the time and they never got a chance to leave there.

Brooke Tapp: And what -- why did they stay?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know if they worked on that, built roads. I don't know what they did, really.

Brooke Tapp: Okay, so they stayed after -- there was no more fighting on Attu.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp:but they stayed there longer.

Gaylord Tapp: They stayed there. Yeah, they stayed there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: As far as I know, they stayed until the war was over.

Brooke Tapp: So they stayed almost a year.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: A year, almost a year and a half.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Maybe two years.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Wow.

Gaylord Tapp: I was over there two years and seven months, so they -- yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So -- yeah. So people were on Attu for a long time.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Even when there wasn't a battle.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: But they were from a different company, Company F?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah -- A. Let's see - A, B, and C all went together, and we went to At -- to Kiska. And the other three companies stayed on at Attu.

Brooke Tapp: And so Kiska looked much the same?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Only no Japs.

Brooke Tapp: And since you were in Alaska, and it was during the summer, was the sun up all the time?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Erene Tapp: No.

Gaylord Tapp: It'd get dark -- not real dark, you know, but just dusk -- is about as dark as it got.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm

Gaylord Tapp:when we was there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Was that different to get used to?

Gaylord Tapp: I never had time to get used to it. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Too short a time.

Gaylord Tapp: Just not long.....

Brooke Tapp: Maybe that's why you never slept.

Gaylord Tapp: Just went along with it, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: So from Kiska, where did you go?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, we went to the Philippines, I think. Or Okinawa. I mean, not Okinawa, but.....

Brooke Tapp: Or Oahu?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, that was -- that's in Hawaii. That's where we went for rest and recuperation after we was on Attu, I think. Or no.....

Erene Tapp: Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: Where is that book that tells us when? *[Note: history is captured in Timeline and 50th Engineer Yearbook in appendices]*

Erene Tapp: Leyte?

Brooke Tapp: So you did have some rest and recuperation?

Gaylord Tapp: Got sent back to Hawaii for a while, to get rest and replacements for men that we lost, you know. Get replacements.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. So after Attu and Kiska, you were able to go to Hawaii.

Erene Tapp: Leyte, Okinawa, and then Korea. You didn't go to Korea, though.

0:35:49.5 Heading to Kwajalein

Gaylord Tapp: Kwajalein. I went to Kwajalein first. I went to Kwajalein. That's in the Marshall Islands. I went there.

Brooke Tapp: And did you know about that assignment? Where you were going and what you were going to do?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: No?

Gaylord Tapp: Not till we.....

Brooke Tapp: So that's pretty standard.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. They didn't.....

Brooke Tapp: That they didn't tell you what.....

Gaylord Tapp: No, no.

Brooke Tapp:you were doing or where you were going.

Gaylord Tapp: No. It was just about standard that they didn't tell you.

Brooke Tapp: Were you excited to go to Hawaii?

Gaylord Tapp: That was really nice. (Laughs) That's pretty nice. Hated to leave.
(Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. What did you do while you were on leave? In Hawaii? Or rest and recuperation?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, just went to Honolulu and just laid around, you know, wait -- we'd done some training while we was there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: First we moved into the Kwajalein barracks. It was all full of bedbugs. Had to get rid of those first. (Laughs) Then we got a pass to go to Honolulu and you know, tear around.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Got drunk. (Laughs) I was walking down the street there in Honolulu and a cousin, I believe, was in the Marines, and we was walking along and I said, "God, I met that guy," and I says, "I should know that guy." Went back and called him; it was my cousin from Albert Lea, Minnesota.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: He was over there in the Marines.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: He was in Honolulu, too.

Brooke Tapp: Wow.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it was really something.

Brooke Tapp: And so you were in -- they call them "theaters." Right? So, like Attu and Kiska, was that considered a theater?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Just like the.....

Brooke Tapp: And then.....

Gaylord Tapp: Just like the European theater, I suppose. Only this was.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so after your time in Hawaii, did you get rested up?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we did.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Got new equipment and new clothes and.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:sent us to Leyte, in the Philippines.

Brooke Tapp: So then you left for Leyte?

0:37:55.9 Heading to Leyte and Kwajalein and the Shellback ceremony at the equator

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And it says here on this trip you went down under the equator.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: So, quite a difference from.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they made a shellbacks.

Brooke Tapp: What does that mean?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, I got a plaque upstairs I can show you.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. (Sounds of walking and shifting)



Gaylord Tapp: Made us shellbacks.

Brooke Tapp: Grandpa's going upstairs to retrieve something he made.

Erene Tapp: Where'd he go? When they -- when they were on the ship, there's blacks and white, but they were separated. And first the whites would get to eat and then the blacks would go, and then the next day, the blacks would go first and then the whites. They never were together.

Brooke Tapp: So they segregated the ships?

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Erene Tapp: Probably all dusty; it's hung up there for about twenty years.

Gaylord Tapp: Huh?

Erene Tapp: Probably hung up there for twenty years.

Brooke Tapp: So this.....

Gaylord Tapp: You know what that is?

Brooke Tapp: So it's "shellback."



Shellback. Issued to Gaylord H. Tapp on October 1, 1944. The ceremony of Crossing the Line is an initiation rite in the British Merchant Navy, Dutch merchant navy, Royal Navy, U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, Russian Navy, and other navies that commemorates a sailor's first crossing of the Equator. Sailors who have already crossed the Equator are nicknamed (Trusty/Honorable) Shellbacks, often referred to as Sons of Neptune.

Gaylord Tapp: Shell-back, I think.

Brooke Tapp: (Reads) "For battle areas of the Pacific. Be it remembered....." Oh, I should read the whole thing. (Laughter) So, "TO ALL SAILORS, WHEREVER YE MAY BE. Greetings and to all Mermaids, Whales, Sea Serpents, Porpoises, Sharks, Dolphins, Eels, Skates, Suckers, Crabs, Lobsters, and all other Living Things of the Sea. GREETING. Know ye: That on this first day of October, 1944, in latitude 00000 and longitude X, there appeared within Our Royal Domain the *USS Chara* bound south for the Equator and for battle areas of the Pacific. BE IT REMEMBERED That the said Vessel and Officers and Crew thereof have been inspected and passed on by Ourselves and Our Royal Staff. AND BE IT KNOWN: By all ye Sailors, Marines, Landlubbers and others who may be honored by his presence, that Gaylord H. Tapp, having been found worthy to be numbered as one of our Trusty Shellbacks he has been duly initiated into the SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP. *Be it further understood:* That by virtue of the power invested in me, I do hereby command all my subjects to show due honor and respect to him wherever he may be. Disobey this order under penalty of Our Royal Displeasure. Given under our hand and seal this October 1, 1944. By Davey Jones, His Majesty's Scribe, Neptunus Rex, Ruler of the Raging Main. By His Servant J.P. Blank Ande USNR" (Laughter) That is interesting.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Very interesting. So shellbacks.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Was that a stop along the way or before you got on the ship?

Gaylord Tapp: That was -- that was on our way.

Brooke Tapp: It was a stop along the way.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. I remember that like yesterday.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah? So what -- how did -- was there a ceremony?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, there was kind of -- they made you go through kind of a tunnel on the ship, you know? Big long tunnel. Everybody slid through that or something.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: Like a culvert? (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: And so how long were you on the sea from Honolulu to Leyte, Philippines?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God. I don't know. Leyte to the Philippines. Oh, Leyte -- Leyte is on the Philippines.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: That's the island we was on.

Brooke Tapp: Right.

Gaylord Tapp: You mean from Kwajalein to the Philippines?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't have no clue.

Brooke Tapp: Maybe almost two months? August, you left Hawaii. And September, arrived Manus Islands in the Admiralty Group? And then on October 15th, you left the Manus Islands to attack Leyte Island.

Gaylord Tapp: Where you get all that at?

Brooke Tapp: Your timeline. *[see appendix]*

Gaylord Tapp: Oh. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: I have this. I don't know where it's from. But so it was that fall you went to Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm. I went from Kwajalein -- rode an aircraft carrier to go to Honolulu.

Brooke Tapp: So did you know when you were going into the Army that you would be on water so much?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I didn't know. It -- they thought we was sailors, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. (Laughter)

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we done a lot of boating on the ships. Five invasions, you know. Only way to get there was by ships.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. You did five invasions?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Attu and Kiska and Kwajalein, Leyte, and Okinawa.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And what -- what was the middle? Or the third one? Attu, Kiska.....

Gaylord Tapp: Marshall -- what was the name of that?

Brooke Tapp: Kwajalein?

Gaylord Tapp: Kwajalein Island? Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Kwajalein Islands.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: And what was there?

Gaylord Tapp: Japs. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: And why -- so you landed there. Where you the first people to land there?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, D-Day.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. D-Day there.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And how long did you last there?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, let's see. When did we land?

Brooke Tapp: I don't know if I've read anything about -- oh, right here. Landed on Carlos Islands. You were there a week and then you landed on Kwajalein Island.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So February.

Gaylord Tapp: We rode to the Marshall Islands.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: So in June, they left there and went to Kwajalein [*in part of the Marshall Islands*].

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So how long -- so do you think you were there a few months? On Kwajalein?

Gaylord Tapp: I suppose we were.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what did that battle look like?

0:45:56.7 *Building an airstrip in Kwajalein with coral*

Gaylord Tapp: It was just all -- there are pictures some place. Just all -- trees were all -- no trees left. They bombed it so much, the trees were all cut to pieces.

Brooke Tapp: Hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: And the air -- we built an airstrip there. And just long enough for the big bombers to get off of.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: And they got to the end before they raised the -- wheels were still in the water.

Brooke Tapp: Really?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it took the whole island. (Laughter) That's how long the island was. Very small island.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, was that the one that....

Gaylord Tapp: We built a lot of barracks and everything there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And that airstrip, is that the one that -- did you build an airstrip on Leyte, too?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't think we did.

Brooke Tapp: So was that the island that it was like six thousand feet long, that airstrip.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp:that you made?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: So a little over a mile? Did -- was that the one you made out of the coral?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. That's it.

Brooke Tapp: You took the coral out of the sea?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm. Right.

Brooke Tapp: How did you know to build the airstrip out of the coral?

Gaylord Tapp: Had no black top, you know, so that packed good. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: How did you know it would? Or did somebody kind of think about and they were like, hey, we could use coral?

Gaylord Tapp: It was nice and solid around the beach.

Brooke Tapp: Uh-huh. Oh, so you noticed the beach was solid.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:so you could just reproduce it. *[Note: Looking at 50th Engineer Yearbook, see appendix]* Oh, there's Kwajalein.

Gaylord Tapp: There's Kwajalein there. Yeah, see the trees?

Brooke Tapp: Right.

Gaylord Tapp: Shot all to pieces.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, look at that.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: So were there ever trees there when you first arrived?

Gaylord Tapp: No, they was all shot up already. Bombed. See, they bombed it. We didn't find too many Japs there as they had them already killed.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, so they were bombing quite a bit before.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp:you got there.

Gaylord Tapp: Got there. Oh, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: But you were the first people to be.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right, yeah.

Brooke Tapp:on the ground.

0:47:57.2 Building barracks and a dock on Kwajalein

Gaylord Tapp: Right. And we built all these barracks and stuff. (Aside) I did not; I drove a truck.

Brooke Tapp: And so you were on Kwajalein for a couple of months?

Gaylord Tapp: We built that. Not a Seabee in sight. That's a dock, I think.

Brooke Tapp: What's a Seabee?

Gaylord Tapp: That's a kind of a Navy guy.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: They were named Seabees. Here's Kwajalein; I didn't take these, but somebody must have. Building.....

Brooke Tapp: So did you build the water tanks, too?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Storage tanks?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. And we had to purify our water with it. We purified the ocean so we could drink it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So you guys were pretty important for building up the camp.

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Yeah. Guaranteed not to leak. That's it. Building the barracks there. (Laughter) Hope it didn't leak.

Brooke Tapp: How long would it take you to build up a camp?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, I don't know. I don't remember.

Brooke Tapp: But there was quite a few of you.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: A hundred and sixty of you working.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right.

Brooke Tapp: What was your favorite material to build with?

Gaylord Tapp: We had a lot of lumber.

Brooke Tapp: Lumber?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they hauled -- it was shipped in. We had to unload the ships to get the lumber. Here's our mess sergeant. First bread on Leyte. God, he made good bread.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah? The cook?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's him.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. So you left Kwajalein.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Right? And then went to Leyte.

0:50:10.8 Close call in Leyte

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: And it's in Leyte, again, that there were Japanese still there.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, a lot of them there, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Okay, so.....

Gaylord Tapp: That's where I got buried in a foxhole, in Leyte.

Brooke Tapp: Tell me that story.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh. It was after night and we was all -- I don't know what he was doing. Anyway, we seen a plane up there in the air and had the searchlight on him and first thing you knew, a couple were circling and dropped his bomb right where we were. Heard the bomb coming and I ran to my foxhole and the dirt followed me in.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, so you -- you guys -- you don't know what you were doing, though? You don't know if you.....

Gaylord Tapp: I don't remember.

Brooke Tapp: were building anything?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't think so.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't remember what we was doing.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: They sent me there, around the ammunition dump, you know, and the gasoline dump?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: That was blown up. That bomb hit right by it. Hit right in it, pretty near.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Shell was going off and the gasoline barrels were exploding.

Brooke Tapp: So was it loud?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Had friends, said guys heard me hollering.

Brooke Tapp: Hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't know I hollered, but they said I did.

Brooke Tapp: And so the plane went over, but you didn't think anything of it.

Gaylord Tapp: Well, we knew he was up there for no good.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And then you heard the bomb coming?

Gaylord Tapp: Heard the bomb whistling -- coming.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: That's when we beat it for a foxhole.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. And you had foxholes just kind of built all over the place?

Gaylord Tapp: Pretty much.

Brooke Tapp: And you knew where some were.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: So did you go in the foxhole by yourself? Were they only big enough for one person?

Gaylord Tapp: I had another guy by me when they done it -- I was going to mention his name. Clarence Otten. We hit the foxhole together.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. So you and -- Clarence?

Gaylord Tapp: Clarence Otten, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Clarence Otten.

Gaylord Tapp: Yep, from Iowa. He's dead now, too.

Brooke Tapp: But you guys went in the foxhole together.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp:and the bomb hit.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And then what happened to the other guys?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, Harold and Gordon, see, and they got out all right and then they heard me holler.

Brooke Tapp: So they heard you hollering from your foxhole.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they must have.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And you were buried from all the rubble that the bomb blew up?

Gaylord Tapp: Buried, yeah. Just packed -- packed you right in there. I couldn't move my legs or nothing.

Brooke Tapp: Could -- were you talking to -- was it Clarence?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know if I talked to him or not. (Laughs) I don't remember.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Just wanted to get out of there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. But you were able to still talk.

Gaylord Tapp: I must have. I don't know how, but they said I did. That's how they knew where I was, I guess. I don't know. I don't remember hollering. [*Note from Mrs. Tapp: His helmet fell down over his face so could get air, that's what saved him*].

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. You remember them shoveling you out?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I really don't.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. But they say they.....

Gaylord Tapp: They used their helmets to dig me out, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: They used their helmets.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm. Just -- it's just a shell on head, see -- the helmet has a shell inside of it for.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And they got you out.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Were there more bombs that came?

Gaylord Tapp: No. The next morning, we -- lot of them were still in the foxholes. We dug several out. A couple -- one kid from the city had a bar of soap in his hand yet. He was washing up for evening. He had bar of soap in his hand yet -- dead.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So you weren't the only ones affected by that bomb?

Gaylord Tapp: No. It buried a lot of them. I just was one of luckiest and got dug out.

Brooke Tapp: Umm.

Gaylord Tapp: I heard Harold Johnson and Gordon Kellander (both from Fairmont, Minnesota) were the ones that dug me out.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Wow. What happened after you got out of the foxhole? Did you guys look for other foxholes?

Gaylord Tapp: They kept blowing up all night. Kept bombing us all night.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: I -- I run and got behind the -- a steam shovel and a dang bomb went beside it and shoved that thing over against me.

Brooke Tapp: And what -- how -- what happened there?

Gaylord Tapp: Nothing. I didn't get covered or anything. I hid behind the shovel, steam shovel.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. What -- so you didn't sleep much.....

Gaylord Tapp: Not too much.

Brooke Tapp:that night?

Gaylord Tapp: You never slept much any night, really. To make a long story short.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Got so you would catnap when you could.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so how long did that battle last, on Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, I don't know. When we go -- when did we leave. Went to Okinawa then, didn't we?

Brooke Tapp: Oh, so it was on October 25, 1944?

Gaylord Tapp: Could have been.

Brooke Tapp: Was they bombed Dulag Beach?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: That's where you were?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so a lot of people died in that bombing.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, right. Buried -- buried right in the foxholes.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Buried alive in the foxholes.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And how did you -- how did you find them in their foxholes? Did you go looking?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we did. We knew who was missing. Had a roll call the next morning.

Brooke Tapp: Umm.

Gaylord Tapp: Had a roll call.

Brooke Tapp: What was it like to listen to roll call?

Gaylord Tapp: You'd say "Hi!" "Here!" (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what -- was it a nervous time? Knowing that.....

Gaylord Tapp: Pretty much. We knew.....

Brooke Tapp:like.....

Gaylord Tapp:quite a few was gone.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

0:55:47.4 Bombing in Leyte that caused hearing loss

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. There was another bombing there in Leyte. This was at chow time and we was all in the line and the bomb was coming and I was running for my foxhole and didn't make it and the bomb went off, and I looked over in the crater, and it busted my shirt wide open, blew the watch off -- wristwatch off my hand. And -- what else did it do? Oh, busted my shoelaces. Concussion did.

Brooke Tapp: Wow.

Gaylord Tapp: Wrecked my ears, too.

Brooke Tapp: Is that what wrecked your ears?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, I looked over in the crater. Picked sand and dirt out of my eyes.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: One kid, we found his -- the next morning, we found his scalp -- all we could find of him was his scalp. He was our mail carrier, got letters for us.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Killed him but he didn't die right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And the bombs, were they more of their impact and kind of what they flew at.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right. They'd just hit the ground and just explode.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: It was a great, big crater.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: You could throw this house in it, probably.

Brooke Tapp: Oh. But they bombed all the time?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Every night, we'd see this gosh-danged plane. They come at night, you know? Well, they'd dive into ships and kill themselves with them. And one night, we was -- just bombs up -- they'd see -- they had a searchlight on them. In the day, they'd be shooting after that guy. They'd miss them. I don't know how come. You'd see stuff flying around and that danged plane would keep on going.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, so from the ground, they were shooting guns.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:up at the plane.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. They even had it lit up with a searchlight.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: But they kept missing him.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Well, and so it was the Japanese planes coming by and bombing.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Any U.S. planes?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: No U.S. planes were bombing the island.

Gaylord Tapp: No, they wouldn't. There should have been fighters up there getting him.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And there was also Japanese on the island?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: So, you would do direct combat.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:also?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Did you ever have to do direct combat, being an engineer?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I never did. Like Gordon, he would say he never fired a gun. Gordon Kellander. Never fired a gun. I never either.

Brooke Tapp: Really?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. I always had one with me, but I never -- never got a chance to fire one.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I never got that close to it. I could when I was -- with that bayonet in the tent, but.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Somebody else got to him first, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Anything else you remember from the battles on Leyte Island?

0:58:44.3 Japanese bomb rookies driving with their headlights on

Gaylord Tapp: Well, that's about it. I was driving all the stuff to the front lines one time and I stopped by -- it was hot in the summertime, you know? Yeah, I took a load of

ammunition to the front lines. Coming back and a bunch of rookies was in there -- just -- we always drove with the little cat eyes, you know, in those trucks? The light's about that big, just so you see each other, and there was some rookies kept turning their lights on. And they got bombed and I was right beside of it and it blew the truck I was on all to pieces. I went in the air and came down with the steering wheel in my hand. All the tires was flat but one.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Sure glad I got rid of the ammunition or I'd have still been going.

Brooke Tapp: Oh! So your truck blew up.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp:because the truck in front of you got bombed?

Gaylord Tapp: They got one.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Truck beside me got hit direct. Just blew them people all to pieces.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Bunch of rookies; didn't know anything about it, just got sent over there, you know.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: So they didn't drive with their little cat eyes.

Brooke Tapp: So you didn't drive with your cat eyes on?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we did.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, but they had their full lights on?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so your truck got blew up -- you got flown from the truck?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. I got up -- I was just -- chest -- I had no shirt on. Had no shirt on, laying in the seat beside of me, you know? I was just red with blood off the guy that was blown all to pieces. So they took me to the medics, cleaned me all up and give me another truck and sent me back to the front lines. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: They wanted to make sure that blood wasn't yours.....

Gaylord Tapp: It was.

Brooke Tapp:but it was the.....

Gaylord Tapp: It was mine.

Brooke Tapp: It was?

Gaylord Tapp: I was peppered with the shrapnel.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Shrapnel cuts.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. But they sealed you up quick.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And sent you back out there.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, gave me another truck and I started hauling ammunition to the front lines again. Should have sent me home! (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Just gave you another truck!

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, gave me another truck. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: So were you ever injured? You got -- that day you had shrapnel.

Gaylord Tapp: That's when they gave me the Purple Heart, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: The day that you had -- were peppered with shrapnel?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. And I was buried in the foxhole. That give me the Purple Heart and Oak Leaf Cluster.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what do those mean? The Purple Heart and Oak Leaf Cluster?

Gaylord Tapp: Got wounded.

Brooke Tapp: Wounded in action?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: The clusters were the second time that you get -- you don't get two hearts, you get an Oak Leaf Cluster.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. So that -- the Oak Leaf Cluster is for the shrapnel.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, the second time.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Then is that for those that are wounded in battle and survive? That get Purple Hearts?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Yeah, they do.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, everybody that has got wounded get a Purple Heart.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And then -- so you talked about -- yeah, when you were on Leyte, it's the Philippines, and it's the summer.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So different weather from when you were on Attu.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, it was nice there. Hot. Go without your shirt. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, how did -- did your uniforms change?

Gaylord Tapp: We had -- just fatigues, ordinary fatigues. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. Yeah. And so did you enjoy the -- Leyte better than Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God, yes.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: I took that twice.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. So the -- it was still a battlefield.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: You were still fighting, but.....

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah.

1:02:34.8 *Army life on Leyte*

Brooke Tapp:just the weather.

Gaylord Tapp: Weather was a lot nicer. Rain, nice and warm.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did it rain a lot?

Gaylord Tapp: Not too much. Rain, the sun would come out, just nice and bright. Dry it off real quick.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what did you have for food on Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, I'll tell you. We had a good cook and we'd unload ships, you know? We come by and unload flour and everything in our tent. Officers would always come eat down at our tent, too. Officers from other companies would come eat in our tent. We had a good cook. He made those raised donuts, you know? And he'd doctor up Spam and fresh baked bread. Oh, he -- we had plenty of sugar and stuff, flour.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we lived pretty good.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Made good pancakes.

Brooke Tapp: What was your favorite meal on Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: All of them.

Brooke Tapp: All of them?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we had good meals. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. And so -- you ate a lot of Spam?

Gaylord Tapp: Quite a bit.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And at that time, was it made in Austin?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. Right.

Brooke Tapp: Did you know that it was made close to your hometown?

Gaylord Tapp: It had Hormel's on the cans.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we knew where it was coming from. I did, anyway.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah? Was that a surprise?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I figured they feed us something like that ham, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Or Spam. Yeah.

1:04:06.7 Men who died on Leyte

Brooke Tapp: So you were on -- who is Leineweber? *[Note: Brooke is reading timeline date November 25, 1944. Full name: Private Clarence R. Leineweber]*

Gaylord Tapp: Leineweber?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: What about him there?

Brooke Tapp: It just says on November 25th, you were bombed again in another area, and that's the area where Leineweber was killed.

Gaylord Tapp: That's the one that -- that's where I got -- looked over the crater. He's the one that got killed. Leineweber. He didn't die right. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, he was our -- went and got our mail, you know? Letters? Yeah, that's -- he was our.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: He was in H&S -- took H&S -- got mail for all of us. Wherever that come to. Wherever it came, he went and got it. Come from some headquarters, I suppose, and he'd pick it up and then bring it to give to us.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And how -- what did you do with the people that died?

Gaylord Tapp: Buried them.

Brooke Tapp: You'd bury them?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Was there any type -- you know, now we do funerals and they kind of take a day. What -- was there any ceremony that you would do in burying them?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't -- I don't remember how the -- that one kid that his scalp? I was driving a Jeep at that time and the company commander, we took him down and put him in a grave and put a cross on the -- put his dog tag on the -- or put his name, I couldn't find his dog tag -- put his name on the cross.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Just put his scalp in the ground.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so -- was it anybody's job to bury people?

Gaylord Tapp: I think -- I don't know, really.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Whoever wanted to, I guess. Whoever took them down there to where the cemetery was.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so you had a designated cemetery?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, there was a spot down there already.

Brooke Tapp: On Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Was there one on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Had to be. I never -- I didn't see it, but there had to be.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I know they was all buried someplace.

Brooke Tapp: They didn't ship them home?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't think so.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't remember if they did or not. I couldn't say about that.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And on Leyte, how did you know you were done on Leyte? Did you win the -- that battle?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: On Leyte?

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So you stayed until that battle was finished?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it was all done when we left.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So then you left for -- from Leyte to go where?

1:07:14.5 Heading to Okinawa

Gaylord Tapp: Okinawa.

Brooke Tapp: And that's in Japan?

Gaylord Tapp: Right close to Japan. Real close, right on the back door of Japan, real close.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: They visited us quite often.

Brooke Tapp: The Japanese would?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: And what did you find when you were on Okinawa?

Gaylord Tapp: You know, by gosh, I don't remember much about that island. I got sent home from there. Come around one morning, and he says, "Tapp?" "Yeah?" "You're going home." I says, "God, I can't go now!" Because after you go home, you

come back to a new outfit. So I went -- they sent me home for 45 days. The war ended while I was home.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so if you would have went home and then, let's say, the war would have continued and you'd come back, you would maybe in a different company?

Gaylord Tapp: That's what I was afraid of. But the war ended and -- while I was home.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I know they done a lot of strafing there -- those Japs did on Okinawa. God, they were strafing it all the time. Come over firing -- the machine gun did on the planes. They were just shooting all the time. Just one bunch after the other.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Done a lot of strafing.

Brooke Tapp: A lot of what?

Gaylord Tapp: Strafing.

Brooke Tapp: Striping.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Strafing. Firing.

Brooke Tapp: Firing.

Gaylord Tapp: From the airplanes.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Along the beach and all over, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: So it was pretty fierce on Okinawa.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: As far as what we did, I don't remember what we did do on there. I wasn't there long enough to find out, really. I was there awhile, though, because I landed there on April Fool's Day and didn't get out of there until, what? The first of September? Or October, sometime?

Brooke Tapp: When.....

Gaylord Tapp: August! August, August. I got sent home in August, because.....

Brooke Tapp: You got sent home in August?

Gaylord Tapp: They was threshing when I got home.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: So I hauled bundles all the time I was home.

Brooke Tapp: Hauled bundles?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Drove the teams where they was threshing. Dad was on the threshing machine, and I drove their teams and hauled bundles.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

1:09:32.6 Going home and the end of the war

Gaylord Tapp: When the war ended, we was threshing on Jim Kirchner's over here, straight across here? And he stopped the machine and everyone went to Austin to celebrate. Had a parade and they tied a Jap behind the car and drug him down the street -- a dummy. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: So a big celebration, the day.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right, right.

Brooke Tapp:the war ended.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Dad shut the machine down and everybody went to Austin.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Had a big parade.

Brooke Tapp: So when you came home -- so you were -- you left Okinawa -- did you fly back to somewhere or did you.....

Gaylord Tapp: I went.....

Brooke Tapp:have to take a ship?

Gaylord Tapp: I went from ship to Hawaii, then a plane from there, home.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: And then, how was it, being home?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, God, it was different. Everybody had changed. Three years -- I was gone three years, you know. Everybody had changed. Leslie and Delmar [Gaylord's younger brothers] had grown up and God! (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: How old were Leslie and Delmar when you left?



1942, right before Gaylord left for the Service.

Gaylord Tapp: Ten. Leslie was ten and Delmar was a few years younger.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it seemed like the whole country was different.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did you talk a lot about the war?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I really didn't. They never asked and I never told them anything.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I know I'd wake up at night with my pillow over my head. Dreaming of a bomb, you know? Wake up with a pillow over my head.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So you could hear bombs in your sleep?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yes. I'd wake up with the pillow over my head.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Heard them quite often, when I first got home.

Brooke Tapp: Because three years you had been sleeping in.....

Gaylord Tapp: Pup tents.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: With a lot of shooting and bombs.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:going all the time.

Gaylord Tapp: All night long.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Never pulled your clothes off; didn't dare to.

Brooke Tapp: Didn't -- you never took your clothes off?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Did you ever -- did you get issued more than one outfit?

Gaylord Tapp: Well.....

Brooke Tapp: In the Army? Or did you only have one set of clothes?

Gaylord Tapp: We had a couple sets of them, but we didn't have time to change!
(Laughter) Yeah, she was pretty rough.

Brooke Tapp: So what was it like being back and you know, kind of during the day,
while you were working, do you remember thoughts that you were having then?

Gaylord Tapp: You mean while I was threshing?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: No, I didn't think of it at all.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Just glad to get away from it.

Brooke Tapp: So you were happy to be home?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Once you got home?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did you think about what your company was doing?

Gaylord Tapp: I wasn't -- I had an idea what they was doing.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't know for sure what they were doing, but I had a good idea what
they was doing.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Dodging bullets and hauling ammunition and everything to the front
lines and building roads and probably docks and stuff like that.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

1:12:27.6 Friend accidentally ruins homecoming surprise with a letter

Gaylord Tapp: No, I was -- I was -- took me a long time to get home. And a kid from
Fairmont sent me a letter, and it got home before I did. The mail carrier stopped and

read it. He stayed there awhile and opened it up and read it. He went on and forgot to leave the mail.

Brooke Tapp: He went off and got more mail?

Gaylord Tapp: Forgot to leave their mail.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: Got to the neighbor's and had to come back and bring them the mail. (Laughs) He stopped there awhile and letter sent to me, it was something different

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: He waited till he opened up and read it and then he left and forgot to leave the mail.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Because he wanted to know what the letter said.

Gaylord Tapp: Right, right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did your family know you were coming home?

Gaylord Tapp: No, I didn't tell them.

Brooke Tapp: So how did they find out?

Gaylord Tapp: He told them.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: I was in.....

Brooke Tapp: Oh! The boy from Fairmont!

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah! I was going.....

Brooke Tapp: The letter!

Gaylord Tapp:to surprise them. I was going to surprise them. (Laughter) I.....

Brooke Tapp: So the letter the boy from Fairmont wrote, that got home before you.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, he sent me a letter.

Brooke Tapp:sent you a letter.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: No, he was still in the troops.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, the boy from Fairmont was still in the service?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Yeah, he was still over there. He sent me a letter.

Erene Tapp: Gaylord hadn't got home.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, because he knew you were going home.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: So he sent you a letter.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. And it beat me home.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: He sent the letter too soon. (Laughter) And I was going to surprise the folks and just come home.

Brooke Tapp: You still surprised the folks?

Gaylord Tapp: I was going to.

Brooke Tapp: Hmm. Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: But that gave it away.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. And so how did you get home from the airport?

Gaylord Tapp: My stepmother's sister and her husband brought me down from Fort Snelling.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So was Fort Snelling -- could you stay there? Was it a real place back then, a fort?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It's still there, too. You know Fort Snelling.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Actually, a lot of people left from it then. See, it was full when I went, so they sent us to Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: You know, the night we left, why, they took us into Fox Hotel [*in Austin, Minnesota*] and gave us breakfast, a whole bunch of us -- supper, I mean. And we marched down to the depot station from Fox Hotel, where the bank is down on the corner, down to the depot and loaded on the train and away we went to Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Brooke Tapp: So you took the train?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, took the train.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did people have their personal cars, then? A lot of personal cars?

Gaylord Tapp: I suppose some did. Not this young we didn't. I didn't know any more about driving a car than I did an airplane, really. Twenty years old and never got a chance to drive! (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: Didn't have no car of my own.

Brooke Tapp: So it was in the military that you first learned to drive.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yes. When I volunteered to drive that truck, I didn't know if I could drive it or not! (Laughter) But I handled a wheelbarrow pretty good.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Maybe that's why they gave you the wheelbarrow!

Gaylord Tapp: Maybe! (Laughter) I thought, "God, am I going to be able to manage that truck?" (Laughter) Didn't have to worry.

1:15:30.1 Life after the war

Brooke Tapp: So what did you do after the war was over?

Gaylord Tapp: Well, I come home, bought me a new tractor, new car and started farming.

Brooke Tapp: How did you have the money to buy the tractor and the car?

Gaylord Tapp: Nothing to spend on over there -- sent it all home.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, nothing to spend over there.

Brooke Tapp: So you got paid while you were in the military.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:but didn't spend.....

Gaylord Tapp: Sent it.....

Brooke Tapp:any of it.

Gaylord Tapp:all home.

Erene Tapp: Twenty-seven dollars a month.

Brooke Tapp: Twenty-seven dollars a month?

Gaylord Tapp: It was sixty-five, wasn't it?

Erene Tapp: Sixty-five? Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, sixty-five.

Brooke Tapp: Sixty-five dollars a month.

Gaylord Tapp: Overseas, you got a little more.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I was overseas longer than I was in the States. Yeah, I was saving up to buy a new car and new tractor and a two-row cultivator and had money left.

Brooke Tapp: What kind of car did you buy?

Gaylord Tapp: Five passenger Chevy coupe. Maroon.

Brooke Tapp: What year?

Gaylord Tapp: '45.

Brooke Tapp: A '45.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, down at Usems -- lot of guys wanting cars and I had seniority.
[Note: Usems is a car dealership in Austin, MN.]

Brooke Tapp: You had seniority?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, because -- in the service.....lot of guys wanting cars.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So they were kind of short on cars, but since.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right.

Brooke Tapp:you had seniority.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. It's what I courted her in.

Brooke Tapp: What's that?

Gaylord Tapp: It's what I courted her in -- that '45 Chevy.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: Five passenger coupe. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: So you started dating Grandma?

Gaylord Tapp: Not right away.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Little while, wasn't it?

Erene Tapp: I don't know.

Gaylord Tapp: (Laughs) One time we was hauling grain.....

Erene Tapp: He had other girls first.

Gaylord Tapp:we was hauling grain and hauled an extra load to take her from the corner to her home. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: How far away did you guys live from each other?

Gaylord Tapp: I lived here and she lived..... [*Note from Gaylord Tapp: Mike Sorensen, her brother, now lives at the place where Erene lived – that was across the road from Howard Tapp's, Gaylord's brother.*]

Erene Tapp: Mike's place.

Gaylord Tapp:over where Mike does.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: Brother lived across the road. Howard -- my brother, Howard -- lived across the road.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, on Delmar's place? [*Note from Gaylord Tapp: now Delmar's place.*]

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, where Delmar lives, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Oh.

Gaylord Tapp: Dave and Dean's dad.

Brooke Tapp: So it -- did your wartime experience guide you in any of -- changing profession, or did you want to come back and be a farmer?

Gaylord Tapp: I've always wanted to become a farmer. I tried Hormel's; that didn't work.

Brooke Tapp: You tried working at Hormel?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, that didn't work.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't like being inside. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: So you still liked being outside?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Do you think you became a better farmer? From what you learned as being an engineer? And building stuff?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't think so.

Brooke Tapp: No? (Laughter)

Gaylord Tapp: They didn't teach you how to farm. (Laughter)

Erene Tapp: That's why he don't fix nothing now. (Laughter) He got tired of fixing.

Brooke Tapp: So are there parts of your wartime experience that stayed with you?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah. I always wanted to think how did I ever get out alive? I think about that every once in a while. How did I ever get out alive?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Some awful close calls.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. You never forget them either.

Brooke Tapp: The close calls?

Gaylord Tapp: Yes. I was always going to go out to the Dakotas and tell that boy -- how he got killed, but I never did get it made. He was in the pup tent with me, you know? I was going to tell his folks how he got killed, but I never got out there. God, he was a swell kid. He wouldn't say "Shit," if he got a mouth full of it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, he was a swell kid. Farm boy.

Brooke Tapp: Do you remember who his parents were?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Did you know his parents?

Gaylord Tapp: No. Never saw them; just him is all I ever saw. But that's when I found out they were -- where he lived, you know, and want to get out there and told them. Years kept going by and I never made it.

1:19:45.6 Memories and reunions surrounding the war

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Are there other people you've been in touch with since the war, like the North Dakota boy's parents wishing you'd gone out.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp:and talked to them? Did you talk to anybody else's parents or.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp:relatives?

Erene Tapp: They have a reunion every year.

Brooke Tapp: So you keep in touch with the Army buddies?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Every year, we have a reunion.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Still have them, but there's only one that comes; that's me. (Laughter) I've got to keep in touch with myself! (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah! Okay. So what do you think about Attu Island and Kiska becoming a memorial? And being preserved as a historic lands -- you know how like Gettysburg is.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:now a historic landscape and those kind of war -- those battlefields. What do you think about Attu and Kiska?

Gaylord Tapp: I suppose it would be all right, but nobody would go over to see it, would they? They might -- yes, people go there really though, don't they?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. They're way out there.

Gaylord Tapp: Yes.

Erene Tapp: There's other people that are to remember it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. They are hard to get to.

Gaylord Tapp: I guess all the stuff that they guys drove up over there, after we left, you know? Like the other three companies? I guess they are all rotten down now and not much left of them.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Would you ever want to go back and see them?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't think so. I never left nothing there, so. (Laughs) I can shut my eyes and see it. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah? Can you still see it pretty vividly?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah. I can shut my eyes and see it. Those mountains.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Along the beach, where we landed. I can shut my eyes and visit it, you know?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I ain't never forget it. And the biggest job is getting off the ship to get on those barges, you know, that take -- there's the ship go up and the barge would go down. Ship go up -- lot of guys never made it. They'd miss the boat. I never -- I never turn loose of that net until I was sure the boat was under me. You climbed down the

cargo nets on the side of the ship to get in your landing craft. They never set still, always bouncing.

Brooke Tapp: So some people would die just.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Miss the boat and get squashed between the ship and the landing barge. I made sure that thing was under me before I turned loose of that net, so I hung on for a long time. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Did -- did it ever -- did death start seeming normal?

Gaylord Tapp: What's that?

Brooke Tapp: Did it seem normal for people to die?

Gaylord Tapp: I tell you, you never thought much about it, really. I mean, you just -- that was it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: That's the way it's supposed to be, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: Because it did seem like -- just a lot of people just died all the time.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Get used to it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Just hoping it wasn't you. Could be you next. That's what you was wondering about -- were you going to be next?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Did you pray a lot?

Gaylord Tapp: You betcha.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: You betcha. (Laughter) If I hadn't, I don't think I wouldn't have been here, I don't think. Yeah. No, it's.....

Brooke Tapp: Did troops get together and pray a lot, or was it all silent?

Gaylord Tapp: All silent, I think. No, nobody got together. Yeah, quite an experience.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. What do you think about the wars now?

1:24:04.6 *His thoughts on today's wars and today's military*

Gaylord Tapp: Shoot, they don't know who they're fighting! Everybody carries a gun. There's no front line or nothing. Who're they fighting? Everybody. We had front lines. They don't have no front line. Just a mess. They don't know who they're fighting. Makes you think it's -- Huh?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Everybody's carrying a gun.

Brooke Tapp: So have you -- you know, it seems like in my lifetime, that a lot more has been happening about World War II. Like the government is recognizing it more and things like that.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

1:24:53.2 *Recognition for his participation in World War II*

Brooke Tapp: And -- how -- so when did that start? You know, for you? When did you start receiving recognition for your time in the war?

Gaylord Tapp: When did that start, do you remember, Mom? When did I start getting stuff? Oh. '42.

Erene Tapp: November 10th in 2003.

Brooke Tapp: 2003.

Erene Tapp: He got a recognition from the post office, the United States Post Office. And this one came in.....

Gaylord Tapp: Probably no date on that.

Erene Tapp: Yeah. November 6, 2005. You got a letter from the Governor of Alaska and they.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right.

Erene Tapp:sent him a big certificate. That was the first thing.....

Gaylord Tapp: First.

Erene Tapp:we ever got.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, that's about the first I got.

Erene Tapp: They had been too long.

Gaylord Tapp: I was the only one that got that.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, your other.....

Gaylord Tapp: They never got it.

Brooke Tapp:members of the company?

Gaylord Tapp: I took it to the reunion.

Erene Tapp: And they all said, "Where'd you get that? How'd you rate?" We didn't ask for it.

Gaylord Tapp: I didn't send for it.

Brooke Tapp: And it says, "Aleutian campaign, State of Alaska salutes....."

Erene Tapp: (Reads) "On behalf of all Alaskans, we appreciate your service to your country and Alaska during World War II. Our nation could never fully repay you for the price of freedom which you have been -- bravely fought."

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: '45, 1945.

Gaylord Tapp: I was the only one that got that.

Brooke Tapp: Well, it's from Frank H. Murkowski, the Governor of Alaska.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: At that time.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I was the only one in the whole outfit that got it. I can't figure that out.

Erene Tapp: They probably couldn't find them.

Gaylord Tapp: (Laughs) They had their address too, I guess. Yeah. That's when it was, I guess. What gets me is those boys over there maybe six months or a year, come home and can't get used to civilian life.

1:27:01.5 Comparison of soldiers and their treatment then and now

Brooke Tapp: They can't what?

Gaylord Tapp: Get used to civilian life and been gone just a year.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Something wrong, ain't there?

Brooke Tapp: Why our veterans today are -- they -- they're not staying three years?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: You know, like guys of your age did?

Gaylord Tapp: Just a year. Come home and think their mind's warped.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Something's wrong.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, when you left the military, did they do any training afterward? Of like, decommissioning you or.....

Gaylord Tapp: Never did, never.

Brooke Tapp: No, they just kind of sent you home and.....

Gaylord Tapp: I come home and got to work.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: We all did. All but -- I can't figure out what's going on now. Those guys come home. And heck, you can see them on TV all the time. They're over there and they can see family at home, talk to them. Shoot, we couldn't even talk. We couldn't even write anything home. (Laughs) There's no talking to them on TV; there wasn't no such a thing as a TV or -- no, I know, it's a different ball game now.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Yeah, that's -- it's an interesting thing to think about. Of why -- you know, either the rules of war have changed.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Man.

Erene Tapp: I think it's because so many people go for help. The ones that come back. I don't know if it's because of their mental state and why they get that mental state, I don't know. There are so many of them wanting help from the vets, so they finally decided they had to do something. So. And they probably need it, I don't know.

Gaylord Tapp: There wasn't too many guys in that was married when I went to service. A few guys was married. One guy from Fairmont had to come home and get married. Fairmont -- Harold John, [*Note from Gaylord Tapp: We called him Harold John. His real name is Harold Johnson*] he come -- he was -- you know, in Oregon, he had to come home and get married. Had her pregnant -- had to come home and get married.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Wasn't too many that was married when I was in the service.

Brooke Tapp: And you were twenty when you went into the service?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: When you got drafted?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Twenty?

Gaylord Tapp: Twenty. Yep.

1:29:20.9 Honors, maps, and mementos from the war

Brooke Tapp: So what were things that you came home with? So you came home with your shellback certificate?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: What were some other things you came home with?

Gaylord Tapp: Uniform.

Brooke Tapp: A uniform? (Laughter)

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. I had a duffle bag and a lot of pictures and they stopped in Frisco and searched it and I never got nothing. I had some film in the toe of my shoes. They kept those. Never sent me the pictures.

Brooke Tapp: Hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know why, but they didn't. I never got much home. I got my uniform, and that's about it. That's down in Adams Museum. *[In Adams, MN.]*

Brooke Tapp: Oh, yeah, you put it in the.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:the Adams Museum down there.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: We got a lot of stuff down there now. Man.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And were the maps that you had? Of Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: They're over here. They're in the bedroom, ain't they?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, and they -- did you -- were those from when you were in the service, or did you find them later?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Or were those given to you?

Erene Tapp: Some guy in the service brought them to the thing *[reunion]*. He had gotten them. He was on a ship and he brought, I don't know, twenty, twenty-five maps of all that over there. And he gave us three of them. And then -- we could have took them all, if we wanted to, but he didn't want to be a hog to take them all.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: So we just got three of them.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: So from another guy in the service that.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:had them from then.

Erene Tapp: He brought them because nobody wanted the stuff in his family.

Gaylord Tapp: Well, now how come he got them? Where he got them, I don't know. I wonder where he got them.

Erene Tapp: Well, he was on a ship or something over there. And he got them from the captain.

Gaylord Tapp: Oh.

Erene Tapp: It was their trails and he brought them home and none of his boys were interested in it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Or one of his boys got killed. And he just kind of.....that's it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. What does "shore party work" mean?

Gaylord Tapp: Shore party work?

Erene Tapp: I framed them because they were getting older. He had them all folded this size when he brought them. And that's the whole thing. *[Note: looking at maps]*

Brooke Tapp: You're not. And that is of Attu.

Erene Tapp: All the islands. Attu Islands. All of the islands.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: I thought that was the most important ones.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: It's too big. I wish I could get a frame big enough for it. I guess it's no use now.

Brooke Tapp: Printed in March, 1943.

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: From the U.S. Naval Surveys in 1933 and 1934.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, he was in the Navy.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Erene Tapp: That's -- that's a good map to have. I bet it's a lot of work and a lot of money.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, because Massacre Bay -- this is where you landed, right?

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Massacre Bay. And maybe that's -- I'm trying to see if they show where Engineer Hill is on.

Gaylord Tapp: I was looking for it, too.

Brooke Tapp: But maybe it's not labeled. But would it have been -- you know, you came in here.

Gaylord Tapp: It'd be up in there someplace.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So did you walk around the whole island?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, no.

Brooke Tapp: Or did you.....

Gaylord Tapp: We just.....

Brooke Tapp:just walk up and down a mountain.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Here's Holtz Bay, right up here.

Brooke Tapp: Holtz Bay.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: I think something's up here. That'd be -- I think we dropped some off in there, too.

Erene Tapp: That's the latitude and longitude. Right here.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: That's the reason I took this one, because I figured he had them -- maps of each one separate -- but I figured if I got the map, the whole thing would be worth.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: I don't suppose you'd have to keep them all, but we've had them for -- about 10 to 12 years now.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp:he brought them.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.



Erene Tapp: I framed two of them because I could buy frames for them - - or you know, just get picture frames.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Okay. So the Philippines and then Kiska.

Erene Tapp: Yes.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: I don't know what it says underneath this one. Maps are worth a lot of money these days. Somebody must have been in there, eating.

Gaylord Tapp: Not me.

Erene Tapp: Not you? (Laughter) I got to have a place to put them.

Brooke Tapp: And so what medals have you received?

Gaylord Tapp: Purple Heart -- Oak Leaf Cluster and Philippine ribbon and a good conduct medal and -- they're all up there. Four Bronze Stars and one arrow -- arrowhead.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Are you glad you went into the service?

Gaylord Tapp: Now I am. (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: Come out alive! (Laughs)

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.



Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, that's good experience. Every kid ought to go for six months or a year. Soon as he gets out of high school or a little older. Yeah, do them good, I think.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, but their training today isn't like what you had.

Gaylord Tapp: It's a lot different, I think.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Well, and you were trained to go to war.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp: You know, when you went in.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Erene Tapp: The war was on already.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

1:35:49 End of interview, Part 1

Interview, Part 2

(Dictation begins with conversation as the Tapps review a book about the campaigns Gaylord Tapp was involved in)

0:00:00.1 The Tapps review a book about the company he served with

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah?

Erene Tapp: DeWitt?

Gaylord Tapp: I thought Harris was our first one in Attu. Captain Harris. *[Full name is Capt. John F. Harris]*

Erene Tapp: It's got them all listed.

Gaylord Tapp: Short, stocky guy.

Erene Tapp: That was the staff of your -- it just -- this book just about tells it all.

Brooke Tapp: That's a pretty good book?

Erene Tapp: You bet.

Brooke Tapp: And who put it together?

Erene Tapp: The -- after the guys all got home, the company commander or -- what was it? Major something.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: He put it together and sent one to certain ones.....

Gaylord Tapp: Kings.

Erene Tapp:in the thing, and then Kermit Twito got one, so then he made us one.

Brooke Tapp: Oh!

Gaylord Tapp: It's great.

Erene Tapp: So that's right from his company. We're all -- they're.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: B -- A, B, C and D; all of them.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp:got together and did that.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Because you all kept traveling together.

Gaylord Tapp: Right. We all.....

Erene Tapp: Right. We all traveled together.

Gaylord Tapp:together.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we all took basic together.....all through the whole thing..... together. Guess we.....

Erene Tapp: What was one that died not too long ago?

Gaylord Tapp: Tirgrath. *[Full name is 1st. Lt. Howard Tirgrath]*

Erene Tapp: Tirgrath, yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: He was a tall guy.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: He'd come all the time. See, here's your old Buddy.

0:01:13.9 Destination changes from Africa to Attu while aboard the ship

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so, you did say that you went -- you were training to go to Africa.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So after -- would it be considered after your initial training -- you thought you were training to go fight in Africa.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:World War 2 in Africa.

Erene Tapp: Well, they were getting ready to ship to Africa.....

Gaylord Tapp: They switched us on.....

Erene Tapp:when the orders changed.....

Gaylord Tapp:they -- on the ship.....

Erene Tapp:and they shipped to Alaska.

Gaylord Tapp: They switched us on the ship, I guess. We was on the ocean when it switched.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So you thought you were going to Africa.....

Erene Tapp: Yeah, he thought.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp:so it was kind of like you knew.....

Gaylord Tapp: We had summer clothes.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Hot there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: That's why they didn't have no clothes up there.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: But they weren't the only one; all the outfits were that way.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it was all of us.

Brooke Tapp: Up in Attu, all the.....

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Yes.

Brooke Tapp: Everybody.....

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:wasn't outfitted.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, because the war changed. You know, the plan changed and then they went to -- and switched out in the middle of the ocean and went to Alaska.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: They weren't ready to go there.

Brooke Tapp: So what was the fighting that was going on in Africa that you knew about?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know.

Brooke Tapp: Okay. But it was part of World War II?

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Something was happening.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right. Close to.....

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, right. I'm glad that the thing changed to go to Alaska. I mean, that's why I imagine I made it.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. So you're glad it switched?

Gaylord Tapp: I think so

Brooke Tapp: Looking back?

Gaylord Tapp: I think so, ain't I? (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. Well, yeah! It kind of -- thus far, it's worked out okay.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: You never know.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

0:02:42.1 Local boys were drafted together but were split up

Erene Tapp: But see, when they -- when they got drafted, everybody -- when you turned twenty, you had to register. You got a number. Whenever that number came up -- you didn't go by name, you went by number. When that number came up, then it was your turn.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. To go.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: So did a lot of your buddies leave before you did?

Erene Tapp: Nope, they all left at the same time.

Gaylord Tapp: We went together.

Brooke Tapp: From this area?

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp: Kind of.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:were assigned numbers by area.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Wayne Schnerring from Waltham, here. Cecil Andersen from Waltham and a bunch from Dexter and.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: They were all gone.

Erene Tapp: They were all from this area.

Gaylord Tapp: They all died since they got home.

Erene Tapp: But then when they got down to -- what was it -- Camp -- in Camp White Oregon, that they switched you to different -- put you in different bunches? Or was that.....

Gaylord Tapp: We.....Got to Fort Dodge. We didn't know.....

Erene Tapp: Oh, Dod -- Fort Dodge. Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: A lot of us went different directions.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Because he went down with Wilbert Kraft. They thought they were going to be in the same place. Got down there and then they separated them.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: They went to Germany.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, he went to Germany.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Yeah, do you ever share wartime stories between different people? Like they went to Germany, so they talk about kind of what it was like in Germany?

Gaylord Tapp: Never do that. Never did do that.

Brooke Tapp: No? You don't huh?

Erene Tapp: The only time they share stories is when they.....[are at reunion].

Gaylord Tapp: We -- well.....

Erene Tapp:each go to his own reunion.

0:04:03.5 Other family members in the military during and after the war

Gaylord Tapp: Never been close to anybody who went to Germany, really.

Erene Tapp: No. Well, my brothers were all in Germany.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. They didn't.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:see no action, did they?

Erene Tapp: Well, I don't know if they seen action or not.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Erene Tapp:but Mike was there and.....

Gaylord Tapp: Those were after the war.

Erene Tapp: Art.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Mike and Art and Burt.

Brooke Tapp: Did any of your brothers go during the war?

Erene Tapp: Well, it had -- it was -- was it during World War II or afterwards?

Gaylord Tapp: Afterwards.

Erene Tapp: Afterwards.

Gaylord Tapp: Floyd [*enlisted*] was in during World War II, I guess.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, Floyd was in the Navy in World War II.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: But the rest of them went in afterwards.

Erene Tapp: Yep.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: But they still had to go because their names come up.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp:and their numbers come up; they had to go.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Because my mother died when Floyd was in -- he was out on -- on the coast of Florida someplace. But he got to come home.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Then he didn't want to go back. That was the bad part.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: You know, it's.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Well, even your stepbrother, Raymond.....

Gaylord Tapp: He got to come home on leave.

Erene Tapp: He come home on leave and then they.....

Gaylord Tapp: They had to shove him on the train to get him to go back.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: He didn't want to go.

Erene Tapp: That's the bad part about coming home. It's going to go.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they asked me.....

Erene Tapp:back.

Gaylord Tapp:down at Fort Dodge, Iowa. I said, "You want to go home?" I said, "No, we just left. Get a furlough later." [*Note from Gaylord Tapp: Never got one.*]

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Never got one.

Gaylord Tapp: Never did get one. (Laughs)

Erene Tapp: Earl came home, though. Christine's husband, he came home on leave. [*Note: Christine is Erene's sister*]

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: He said, "They offered me a leave; I took it."

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So you were offered to go home before?

Erene Tapp: Before he [Earl] went to Camp Blake.

Gaylord Tapp: I'd just got down there.

Brooke Tapp: Oh.

Gaylord Tapp: Come home. I was inducted into service. Got my clothes and.....

Erene Tapp: Needed -- yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: They said, "You want to go home?" I said, "No, we just left"

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Take a furlough later. It was real late.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Three years. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, but if you hadn't have, you wouldn't have been with the guys you were and you got -- you had a nice bunch of guys.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Couldn't have been any better.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Pretty much all farm boys.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: Some were from the cities; Chicago.....

Erene Tapp: One was from New York, one -- two from Chicago.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Three from Chicago. Harry Enderle, Walter Rapacz

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. They were replacements.

Erene Tapp: Oh, they were replacements?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Oh, they didn't go when you went.

Gaylord Tapp: No, no.

Erene Tapp: They were replacements. Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: They were replacements.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, Bruce Henderson was a replacement, too.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they was replacements.

0:06:28.3 The significance of the Battle of Attu

Brooke Tapp: So how important do you think the Battle of Attu was to World War II?

Erene Tapp: Oh, if they hadn't went there, they'd have got us.

Gaylord Tapp: They would have sent -- been over here to get us.

Erene Tapp: They were sneaking in. They were down on the southern part of the United States.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp:and they were sneaking in and somebody interacted on their messengers and found out they were headed -- going up through Alaska and would come in.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp:through the United States.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: That's how come.....

Erene Tapp:theirs got switched right away.

Gaylord Tapp: That's how come they sent us there.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

0:06:58.0 Communication then and now

Erene Tapp: You know, today they got too much communication. They know too much. Then, they didn't have.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: When something was happening, they knew they'd better go.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: And I said the news media's what's making it bad now.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: They tell everything! There's no secrets!

Brooke Tapp: Did you -- being at home -- did you hear anything on the news about the Japanese being.....

Erene Tapp: Never.

Brooke Tapp:in the Aleutian Islands?

Erene Tapp: Never heard.....

Brooke Tapp: Or in Alaska?

Erene Tapp:of nothing. They never forecasted any of it. You didn't even know where they were at. If you wanted -- if something happened, and you wanted to know where he was at, you had to go to the Red Cross and then they went through the Army. You couldn't even get in connection with them.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Nowadays, shoot, they come on the TV all the time.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. But -- so you didn't know, like, where troops really were?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Like maybe you knew somewhere in Germany, because that's seemed.....

Erene Tapp: Well, they'd say either they were over the Pacific Ocean or.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp:in -- no, you didn't know what troops were any -- you didn't even know which troops they were.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: But you knew there were men there fighting.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: But was there much broadcast about fighting in Alaska?

Erene Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Never heard a thing.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Yeah. But then, there wasn't all the communication. Most all you had was a radio. And most of the time, all we'd listen to was the markets and the news and that was it. You didn't.....

Brooke Tapp: Right.

Erene Tapp: You didn't have everything like we got today. Today we got too much.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: People don't appreciate it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: But that's the way life is.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. So when you -- when you were on the ship and you knew that -- so now you were being switched to Alaska.....

Gaylord Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Brooke Tapp:and knowing that that was American soil.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:and then you were going there, did you think anything, then? Kind of like, we're going to Alaska and the Japanese are there?

Erene Tapp: I don't think they even knew it.

Gaylord Tapp: Not until we were just ready to land, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: No, they didn't -- kept it pretty much a secret.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So did you -- once you would -- did land and you, you know, figured it out, that.....

Gaylord Tapp: What the hell am I doing here?

Brooke Tapp: Yeah. (Laughter) Africa looks different! Yeah! Did you -- you know, once you found you were on American soil, you were on Attu Island, did you think about how -- did you think about the battle and kind of how -- the big picture of World War II?

Gaylord Tapp: Just wanted to know where it was going to take place, really. Didn't have time to think about nothing.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:really.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: You just went with the flow.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: You didn't have time to think. They'd tell you what to do.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what did it feel like to win the battle on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: That felt good. And they quit bombing us and -- strafing us. That felt good.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Pretty quiet then.

0:09:51.1 *Dealing with the enemy*

Erene Tapp: But you know, the Japs were so sneaky. Some of the places didn't have trees, but the Japs -- and their life meant nothing. A lot of them -- they would have a funeral before they even went up in the plane.....

Gaylord Tapp: Before they'd leave.

Erene Tapp:because they knew they weren't coming back. And these Japs would crawl in the trees and they'd hide in trees, waiting for you to go.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp:walking underneath. They were sneakier than all get out.

Gaylord Tapp: Snipers.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: We caught one in our chow line. He had an American soldier's uniform on.

Erene Tapp: He killed one and then took his uniform.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. He got -- he was in the chow line. They caught him in the chow line.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: But his looks gave him away. (Laughs)

Gaylord Tapp: Took him as a prisoner.

Brooke Tapp: Wow. Did you recognize then that they were pretty courageous soldiers, then?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: Yeah, they didn't back down.

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: There was no backing down for them. Unless they knew they were going to lose and they were going to get up to.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, they.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: They kept track of them.

Gaylord Tapp: Found a lot of that in the Philippines, in the trees.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And so when you won battles, like Attu, did -- how did you celebrate? Like, what was it like, kind of, the moments or the hours after?

Gaylord Tapp: It was pretty silent. Everybody was just relieved.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. So almost kind of a quiet.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:rather than a hooting and hollering?

Gaylord Tapp: They'd rather relax, you betcha.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Just relax. It's.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: After Engineer Hill, it was pretty calm.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And did you spend time cleaning up the bodies, though?

Gaylord Tapp: We didn't. We left and went to Kiska. I suppose the other..... companies, they probably did.

Erene Tapp:dug a trench and just put them in it.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, so -- so you kind of.....

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we left.

0:11:45.1 *The logistics of an amphibious landing*

Brooke Tapp:you picked what you needed as your gear.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right. Yeah.

Brooke Tapp:and you were picked up by.....

Gaylord Tapp: We got a -- got a.....

Brooke Tapp:a ship.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Picked up our equipment and moved on.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And would -- did your ship stay in port the whole time, or did you get dropped off and the ships would leave?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: Or did they stay in Massacre Bay, on shore?

Gaylord Tapp: I don't know where they went.

Brooke Tapp: Okay.

Gaylord Tapp: We couldn't see nothing out in the ocean. All fog.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: It was foggy. Terrible. Just foggy all the time. You couldn't see one ship next to you.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: They had to wait quite awhile. We circled out in the -- so you could halfway see the shore, where we was going.

Brooke Tapp: Oh, when you were going to land?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, we circled a long time before it would get a little bit light. Always land in dark, you know.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: And we couldn't -- they couldn't even find the shore.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Circled out there in those landing crafts for quite awhile, before they could get the right bearing and see where they was going. Fog would kind of lift a little bit, you know?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: And they'd beat her in there. Wade in water up to your waist. Couldn't get any closer to the land than that.

Brooke Tapp: So you had to haul all the gear.....

Gaylord Tapp: Right.

Brooke Tapp:off. Like how many trips did you make from shore to the boat?

Gaylord Tapp: Just one. You had your gun and your backpack on you.

Brooke Tapp: And then how did you get all the other gear off? Or did other people do that?

Gaylord Tapp: They brought that in later, I guess.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Like our bag -- like our duffle bags and stuff?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: And clothes. Yeah. I think they brought that on later.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. And what about all the ammunition and the supplies?

Gaylord Tapp: That kept coming all night along.

Brooke Tapp: Okay, but you didn't ever have to go back on the boat.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp:to unload the boat?

Gaylord Tapp: No, no. We were done.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Then we did -- they'd come to the shore and we'd have to unload it on -
- we had something like storm boats? Load the ammunition on there and little Cats
pulled it. I drove a Cat for a while on there, dragging ammunition.....

Erene Tapp: You couldn't go clear to shore.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Erene Tapp: The boats wouldn't let them. Then the rest you had a wade -- wade your
way.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Run into coral.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah, what's coral like?

Gaylord Tapp: That's that hard stuff I made that.....

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp:blacktop out of?

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Yeah. So a lot of coral?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it's hard.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm. Did you ever do any fishing?

Gaylord Tapp: What? (Laughter) What was that? No, didn't have time to fish!

Erene Tapp: No, I betcha the soldiers today don't take days off and go fishing and.....

Brooke Tapp: Oh, may.....

Gaylord Tapp: Been nice to have went fishing!

Brooke Tapp: Yeah! Did you ever get sick of a certain food?

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Brooke Tapp: No? The food.....

Gaylord Tapp: Got seasick, though.

Brooke Tapp: Yeah?

Gaylord Tapp: Oh, yeah. I got seasick.

Brooke Tapp: How many times?

Gaylord Tapp: Several.

Brooke Tapp: Several. (Laughs)

Gaylord Tapp: Spent in that Bering Sea. God, that thing was rough.

Brooke Tapp: So before you landed on Attu?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Brooke Tapp: On that trip.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. Two nights I had to stay in the bed bunk. Had rails on the side. You'd better lock it up or it would throw you out.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: We had equipment tied down below and it was so rough, it busted the chains on stuff and they got loose down there. Just so rough.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Captain even got sick.

Brooke Tapp: Wow.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah. The sailors even got seasick.

Brooke Tapp: And how was the sail from Attu to Kiska?

Gaylord Tapp: You know, I don't remember.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: It's been up to two years ago. (Laughter)

Brooke Tapp: Yeah! Maybe you slept the whole time.

Gaylord Tapp: Could have. Resting.

Erene Tapp: I think they had time to think. They'd just -- you know, they knew -- they just moved when they were moving on to another place, they never thought nothing of it.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, I could have jumped overboard, I guess.

Erene Tapp: Would have been nice to have a cell phone and called home once in awhile. (Laughter) Could have told us something. Of course, they wouldn't have allowed it. I mean.....

Gaylord Tapp: No.

Erene Tapp: Because everything was so secret, then.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah, it was a pretty good secret, years ago.

Erene Tapp: Yeah.

Gaylord Tapp: World War II was on.

0:15:56.6 World War II recognition and museums

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: But like I told them, they took all this time before they recognized World War II ones. And they're the ones that saved our country.

Brooke Tapp: Mm-hmm.

Erene Tapp: But -- and there's lots of them.

Gaylord Tapp: They're dying off every day.

Erene Tapp: Yeah. Where was that we went to that big museum? Oh, that was in North Dakota.

Gaylord Tapp: I think there's something down in Missouri, there?

Erene Tapp: Missouri? Yeah, we went to one down in Missouri, too. Kingsberry?

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: Kingston, or something. Missouri. There's a great big one down there, too.

Gaylord Tapp: Yeah.

Erene Tapp: There's a lot of stuff down in that. I suppose I'd better donate those maps to the museum. (Laughter)

Gaylord Tapp: You could.

Brooke Tapp: Maybe they could frame them.

Erene Tapp: Oh, they probably would.

Gaylord Tapp: Probably would.

Erene Tapp: Because they want them.

Gaylord Tapp: Put them on the walls someplace maybe, eh?

Erene Tapp: Yeah. But they're going to have to build that -- next building next door, because they are getting a lot of stuff down there.

End of interview at 0:17:14.9



Gaylord and Erene Tapp



Gaylord and Brooke Tapp, April 5, 2014



Tapp family photo, August 2011 including Gaylord and Erene Tapp's kids and their families. Since this photo was taken, the family has increased by three babies and a spouse. Missing from the photo are son-in-law Harry VanBuskirk and grandson Jason VanBuskirk and his family (pictured left). Jason's oldest son, Michael, was enlisted in the Air Force stationed in Alaska. His leave was two weeks after the family photo above was taken.

HISTORY OF THE 50th ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

The 50th Engineer Combat Battalion was originally the 1st Battalion of the 50th Engineer Combat Regiment. The regiment was activated at Camp White, Oregon on September 4, 1942. The original cadre of seven (7) officers and one hundred and six (106) enlisted men was furnished by the 39th Engineers. Fillers were practically all draftees chiefly from the Middle West, a few from Texas and a few from California.

The regiment remained at Camp White, undergoing basic training, until about 10 January 1943 when the 1st Battalion was sent to Southern California while the 2nd Battalion went to Fort Ord, California. The regiment was brought together again in March 1943, and attached to the Seventh Infantry Division. A program of intensive amphibious training was begun, and preparations made for an overseas movement.

On April 24, 1943 the Seventh Infantry Division and attached troops sailed for the Attu Operation. The 1st Battalion was attached to the 17th Infantry to perform shore party work. Companies "A" and "C" landed with the Infantry at Massacre Bay, Attu, on "D" Day, May 11, 1943. Company "B" landed at the same time on Red Beach by Holtz Bay. The 2nd Battalion landed on D plus 1 day and aided in shore party work. Following the shore party phase 1st Battalion troops were engaged in the forward movement of supplies to the Infantry. This work consisted chiefly of handpacking ammunition and rations to otherwise inaccessible positions.

The regiment was caught in the break-through about 0500 29 May 1943 and was responsible for breaking to the "Banzai" attack and preventing it from carrying through to the beachhead. Approximately three hundred and fifty (350) enemy were killed by members of the regiment, and the unit was highly complimented for the work. Losses were about twenty men killed and about thirty five wounded.

Following the combat phase the regiment was engaged in construction work until July 10, 1943 when the 1st Battalion embarked for Adak and preparation for the Kiska operation. Regimental Headquarters and the 2nd Battalion remained on Attu. The landing on Kiska took place on August 15, 1943. The Battalion engaged in shore party work and road maintenance and construction until it sailed for Oahu, Hawaii on September 25, 1943.

On November 29, 1943 the 1st Battalion was reorganized and redesignated 50th Engineer Combat Battalion. While at Oahu work was done on the preparation and building of camp-sites. The Battalion was again attached to the Seventh Division about December 10, 1943 and training in amphibious landings, jungle tactics and Infantry tactics was carried on.

On January 21, 1944 the Battalion attached to the 17th Infantry, sailed for Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands, to participate in the Mandated Islands Campaign. Following the shore party phase, the organization performed construction work until June 24, 1944 when embarkation was begun for a return to the Island of Oahu. No battle casualties were suffered.

After a very brief rehabilitation period, the Battalion was assigned to the 1140th Engineer Combat Group, and attached to the Seventh Infantry Division for shore party work. Following a practice training cruise to the Island of Maui, Hawaii, the XXIV Corps, consisting of the 7th and 96th Divisions, sailed for the Phillipine operation. The landing was made on "A" Day October 20,

HISTORY OF THE 50th ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

1944 at Dulag, Leyte, Phillipine Islands and work immediatly started on unloading ships. The Battalion suffered heavy casualties during enemy bombing on the night of October 25, 1944. Some trucks and heavy equipment were lost. Since being relieved of shore party operations the battalion has been engaged in bridge and road construction and maintenance.

OFFICERS OF THE BATTALION ARE AS FOLLOWS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Commanding Officer	Major William E, Wilhelm
Executive Officer	Major George S. Baumgartnor
Adjutant	1st Lt. Harold R, Fitch
Operations Officer	Capt. John F. Harris
Ass't Operations Officer	1st Lt. William E, Rasmussen
Supply Officer	Capt. Russel B. Lamb
Ass't Supply Officer	WOJG James J. McCov
Bn Motor Officer	1st Lt. Aloysius M. Sorg
Personnel Officer	WOJG Robert R. Jones
Ass't Div. Engr.	Capt. Fred G. Schurman

HEADQUARTERS & SERVICE COMPANY

Commanding Officer	Capt. Allen Rose
1st Sgt.	Dan E. Edgington

COMPANY "A"

Commanding Office	1st Lt. Winston F. Bott
Company Officers	1st Lt. Ernest B. Baker
	1st Lt. Vernon Skidmore
	2nd Lt. Ed Adams Jr.
	2nd Lt. Ben D. Flick
1st Sgt.	Clyde V. Garver

COMPANY "B"

Commanding Officer	Capt. Harry J. Bunchman
Company Officers	1st Lt. James N. Carter
	1st Lt. Howard L. Tirgrath
1st Sgt.	Charles M. Hadley

HISTORY OF THE 50th ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

COMPANY "C"

Commanding Officer
Company Officers

Capt. Paul E. Neff
1st Lt. Francis M. Beattie
2nd Lt. Peter V. Davies
2nd Lt. Duncan C. Weatherall
George T. Riley

1st Sgt.

Our Veterans' Memories, Austin Daily Herald, June 29, 2001 11

Grandpa knew he was going to war

When my grandpa, Gaylord Tapp, was 20-years old, he heard on the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. He was already signed up for the draft, so he knew he was going to war.

All the men going to war enjoyed a supper cooked at the Fox Hotel, now Northwestern Bank. They all boarded a train that took them to Fort Dodge, Iowa, where they registered for the Army. They took on basic training at Camp White in Oregon with the bad weather like rain, cold and fog.

They were then shipped to Camp Applegate to learn engineering to get ready for Alaska. The first combat mission in early April 1943 was in an unknown land, "A" and "B" company landed on Mascar Beach to pass supplies from the shore and then transported them by truck to the front lines.

My grandpa was part of the first platoon of the Aleutian Islands, Kwajalein of Marshal, Leyte of the Philippines and Okinawa of Ryukyus, that was close to the Japanese homeland.

They also went to Korea, but my grand-

pa had enough points to return home for 45 days to rest.

By the time he was ready to go back, the war had ended.

My grandpa was trained to build roads and bridges and supplied the front lines, where the soldiers were fighting, with ammunition, food and anything else needed. He was also trained to fight, but his main job was to construct everything so that it would move more smoothly. If needed, they would fight.

Life was mainly just different and you did what was told. Everything was kept secret from the soldiers and you never found anything until it happened. When you wrote letters home, the captains would censor everything so it would say "Dear someone" or "Love someone." The main purpose they sent the letters is to let everyone at home know you were alive. All in all, it was a hectic three years.

People knew that the war had to take place to keep Japanese out of America. They mainly didn't like seeing all the young men go to war.

Personally, my grandpa didn't have a tough time getting back to normal. He had

a few recurring dreams of air raids and mortar explosions. He also got married to my grandma and went right back to farming like he'd never been gone.

My grandpa received a lot of medals during his time in war. He received four Overseas bars, four Discharge emblems, a Purple Heart with an oakleaf cluster and a Good Conduct medal. He also received a Philippines Liberation with two bronze stars and a ribbon, an Assectic Pacific campaign medal with an oakleaf cluster and four bronze stars, Corporal TS Distinguished Unit Emblem, Philippines Presidential Unit Citation badge and a WWII Victory medal.

From these, he received rest time where you can go home, which he despised doing, to rest for 45 days if you earned up to 85 points. He earned some of these by being buried alive when a mortar round went off close to his foxhole and being injured when his truck blew up while he was taking supplies to the front lines.

He still attends Army Reunion for the 50th Combat Engineers.



— Written by granddaughter Brooke Tapp

Brownsdale vet served from North to South Pacific

By Marceil Skifter

Editor's note: This is the fourth, and final, story in a series of veterans' interviews that began on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. It seems an appropriate time to conclude—just a few days before the anniversary of our country's involvement in WWII (Dec. 7, 1941).

Like many other military veterans, Gaylord Tapp of rural Brownsdale never talked about his wartime experiences with friends or family. Even his wife and children had no idea what he saw and lived through in the war. It was his granddaughter, Brooke, who got him to open up to her while she was writing an essay. Later, the story was published with other veterans' memories in the Austin Daily Herald (June, 2001), and he recently agreed to tell his story for this series.

Tapp was born in Alden, Minnesota, but when he was very young, his family moved to rural Brownsdale,

where he attended country school through the eighth grade. As was common many years ago, he didn't go on to high school; there was too much work to be done on the family farm.

When he was drafted into the Army in 1942, it was to serve as long as he was needed—"Duration Plus," as it was called. On September 12, he was sworn in at Ft. Dodge, Iowa, where he received his uniform and was sent to Camp White, Oregon to get training for the Army Corp of Engineers.

Tapp noted there were 20 others who joined at the same time. They all went to Oregon together for training and stuck together throughout all their training and until the war was over. He said they were "just like brothers."

At Camp White, they were assigned to the 50th Engineer Combat Battalion and learned the skills they would use to build roads, airstrips, barracks, bridges and more once they were deployed.

The men also learned to



Erene and Gaylord Tapp, Brownsdale, stand in front of Gaylord's WWII medals and photos, which are displayed on the mantle of their rural Brownsdale home.

lay down and take up land mines. Their main duty was construction, but they learned to defend themselves if needed.

One of the most valuable things Tapp learned at Camp White was to never volunteer for anything. The men were asked if any of them came from a farm, so he thought he might get to drive a truck or have another special duty; instead, he was given a wheelbarrow to push around. Among other things, he moved rock, which was used to make sidewalks. He said everyone was put to work anyway, but he learned right then not to volunteer for it!

When asked if he had any other memories of Camp White and Oregon, Tapp said, "It rained every day we were there!"

Tapp and the other new enlistees went on to the Applegate River, located on the Oregon-California border, where they built a bridge out of timber; then to Ft. Ord, at Monterey, in Northern California, where they would practice amphibious landings and "shore party" operations (off-loading supplies on the beach).

His regiment was gaining

valuable experience, which would be needed as they took part in the Aleutian and Pacific Campaigns. Both areas were prime spots for the enemy to gain a foothold and attack the United States, either through Alaska and on down the continent, or by taking over the Pacific Islands—a convenient location for the Japanese to base their operations from which to launch their attacks.

It would be their company's job to land on the beachheads of islands occupied by the Japanese and build whatever would be needed to get to the enemy—bridges, roads, airstrips and more. Their first job was often to erect tents to sleep in, or to build barracks. Once the islands had been invaded by the US military, the Company also took ammunition to the front lines.

When the term D-Day is heard, a lot of people think of D-Day at Normandy, France, in June of 1944; but "there were several D-Days," Tapp pointed out—depending in which campaign or what part of the world you were fighting in.

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Brownsdale vet served from North to South

Continued from Page 1

"D-Day" was the day of the operation—when the battalion would make a landing on a beachhead, so while Tapp was with the 50th Battalion, he took part in five D-Days.

The engineers were brought in by big ships which stayed off the coastline. The men climbed over the sides of the ships, down the nets and dropped into landing craft. Tapp said this was always done when it was dark, and sometimes it was foggy. The lights were out on the ships so they wouldn't be seen by the enemy. The problem was, it was so dark, they couldn't see anything either.

Unfortunately, men would sometimes miss the landing craft and fall into the water. They couldn't be rescued, as it was too dark to find them and the water was too cold for them to survive.

The Company's first mission would be to Attu, in the Aleutian Islands—about 1200 miles from Alaska. The problem was, the men had packed to go to Africa. The plans were changed at the last minute, so they weren't dressed for the weather that awaited them.

D-Day was May 11, 1943, and upon landing on the beach at Attu, Tapp's first impression was, "It was colder than the Dickens." And being from Minnesota, he knew what cold was. There was snow in the mountains, as well as on some places on the lower land, he said, and because they didn't have the proper winter clothing, many of the soldiers, especially those in the infantry, lost their feet and toes due to frostbite. They would wade into the water from the landing craft to the shore, and there was no place to dry off.

Getting the supplies and equipment ashore wasn't a problem, but moving it inland to the front lines would prove more challenging, because of the thick and marshy beds of tundra, which completely covered the island. They used tractors and track-driven trailers, but were "greatly hindered," according to records of the mission. The men, along with a Caterpillar, would finally break through.

Being that far north, it was light most of the day, and Tapp said the enemy was "dug in" the hills, where they



This photo of Brownsdale resident Gaylord Tapp was taken in Nov. of 1943.

could keep a watch on Tapp's company. They were waiting for the opportune time to attack.

On May 30, the first time in 14 days the men let down their guard a little and took off their clothes to climb into their warm sleeping bags, the Japanese attacked. While everyone was sleeping, the enemy took advantage of the few dark hours of the night, and, using bayonets, they circled the tents, stabbing randomly from the outside.

"I don't know how they missed me," Tapp stated. The soldier lying next to him wasn't so fortunate. Tapp said from the time they left Ft. Dodge and throughout their training, the young man who died had commented over and over, "I don't think I'll be going home." He was the same age as Tapp and was from North Dakota.

That night, "we lost quite a few," said Tapp, referring to his fellow soldiers. They took the wounded soldiers to a hospital ship.

In the end, they won the battle. "We killed them all, not very long before daylight," he said.

Records show about 20 US soldiers were killed and 35 were wounded. They killed 350 Japanese.

They learned a valuable lesson in staying vigilant and protecting themselves, Tapp commented.

The company of engineers did more than their share to win the Battle of Attu, and for this reason, the site was named Engineer Hill. A monument marks the spot to this day. This is also known as the first time US troops would fight the enemy on US soil. (Alaska was a territory during WWII.)

When they got to Kiska, another island in the Aleutians, they expected to find 10,000 Japanese on the is-

land, but were pleasantly surprised to find there were none. They were thankful the enemy had already fled. While they were there, however, the engineers built some needed roads.

Their next stop would be Hawaii, where they got a three-day pass before departing for the Marshall Islands. This is the only place they had liberty the whole time they were deployed, Tapp recalled. The engineers also received more training while in Honolulu.

When they went ashore by landing craft on Kwajalein, in the Marshall Islands, they found the island had already been bombed, clearing the way for the engineers. The bare trees that remained looked like big sticks poking out of the soil, Tapp said.

Their first job was to build barracks to stay in. When they left the island, the barracks weren't lived in again, because the war was over. He speculates the natives put them to some use in the following years.

Tapp said they landed on Leyte with the infantry, and while there, he and his company did some construction. They built a pontoon (floating) bridge, using coconut logs. They used caribou to pull them into place, and Tapp said, "We did most of the dirty work at night." The engineers completed a lot of other construction, including a pier.

According to historical accounts, the Battle of Leyte was fought at sea by the Navy and on land by the US Army and Filipino soldiers during October of 1943. They were fighting to take back the Philippine Islands, which had been occupied by the Japanese for approximately three years. Leyte was the largest amphibious operation mounted by American and Allied forces in the Pacific theater.

While Tapp was operating a "Cat" to drag sleds of drinking water and ammo for the front lines, the Japanese were bombing and strafing the US and Filipino troops. They were also bombing ships and ammo dumps using kamikaze pilots. In fact, the Battle of Leyte has been reported to be the first battle in which Japanese aircraft carried out organized kamikaze (suicide) attacks.

"We were on our guard all the time," he said.

If they thought they would be safer when the sun went down, they soon learned they were mistaken. The Japanese aircraft would use searchlights so they could attack the US troops at night.

The engineers suffered their biggest loss of men at Leyte when the enemy bombed a nearby ammo dump. The impact left a crater as deep as a two-story building. When the men heard the planes coming, they jumped into their foxholes for cover, but, "the dirt followed us in," Tapp said. As the dirt that was displaced by the bomb filled the foxholes, the men who had taken cover were buried alive.

Tapp and the soldier sharing his foxhole had to be dug out by their fellow soldiers, who mostly used their bare hands, but they both survived. "We were running out of air," Tapp said. Fortunately, his helmet had slipped down over his face, providing an air pocket, which undoubtedly saved his life.

They were the only two to come out of the foxholes alive; their other buddies who had been buried were not as fortunate. One soldier, who had apparently been washing up for chow time, was found still holding the bar of soap in his hand.

The concussion of the bomb ripped the buttons off Tapp's jacket, blowing it wide open. It also ripped the watch off his wrist, and the laces that held his boots closed were "all busted" to shreds, he stated.

Weeks later Tapp would find out in a letter from home that his stepbrother was killed in the same bombing. Because of the slow mail, he hadn't even heard his stepbrother was stationed on the same island.

Telling more about the mail delivery, Tapp would later find out all the letters he had written home had been censored—so much so, that about all that remained was "Dear _____" and his signature. The military wasn't taking any chances. Apparently, "loose lips sink ships" was more than just a popular WWII adage.

As to why they allowed the letters go through at all if almost the entire message was blacked out, Tapp speculated it was because at least the families would know their sons were alive.

Pacific December 2, 2009

Following Leyte, the Company invaded Okinawa on April 1, 1945, Easter Sunday. They would begin construction and fight the enemy, but Tapp wouldn't be around to see it. Soon after they arrived, Tapp was advised he had accrued enough points to earn a 45-day leave. He asked if he could stay with his company and return with them to the US, but was told he had to take his leave.

He returned to the family farm in Brownsdale for what he thought would be 45 days, after which he planned to return to his group; in fact, "I looked forward to it," he said.

It was while he was helping with the threshing that his dad heard on the radio that the Japanese had surrendered. "We shut the threshing machine down and went to town."

In Austin, "people were almost dancing in the street," he said. Someone had made up a "dummy" to represent the enemy, and they tied it to the back of a car and dragged it down the street to celebrate.

Tapp was soon notified he had enough points to get out of the service, so he never returned to the military. He reported to Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin, where he was discharged, and his folks picked him up to bring him home.

After being home awhile, Gaylord married Erene in 1948. She lived across the road from his brother and the two would see each other coming and going. They raised three children and have five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. They have been married more than 61 years!

During his three years of service, Tapp said he "saw the worst" while overseas.

Besides being injured when he was buried alive, he was also injured while driving a truck back to the front lines at night. "They blew us all to pieces," he said. After his truck was blown out from under him, he was still holding the steering wheel in his hands.

Although he was wounded twice (earning him a Purple Heart with an oak leaf cluster—which equals two Purple Hearts), he was never hospitalized. They just cleaned him up, patched him up and he returned to his job, so he didn't miss any days of

duty due to injuries.

He had a hard time sleeping the first month he was home. He thought he heard bombers coming while he was sleeping and would wake up in a sweat.

That only lasted about a month, "but I got busy farming," he stated. He said he hasn't had any problems since then with post-traumatic stress symptoms.

After returning home, he didn't talk to anyone about his experiences, and Tapp said his parents and siblings never asked. He didn't even talk about it to other vets. He and other vets interviewed for this series who served in combat made similar comments as to why they never talked about their experiences. They thought "no one would believe it."

He still carries some reminders of the war with him at all times, in the form of shrapnel buried throughout his body. One piece surfaced under his eye a few years ago, so the doctor removed it. The shrapnel shows up in his X-rays, and going through the security check at the airport is quite an ordeal. When scanned by security, the sensor won't quit buzzing, so he has to step into a private room and remove most of his clothing!

The medals Tapp was awarded are proudly displayed in a case. They are:

- Asiatic-Pacific Theater Service medal
- Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two Bronze Stars
- Four Overseas Service bars
- No Time Lost lapel button
- Four Discharge Emblems
- Good Conduct medal
- Purple Heart with an oak leaf cluster (equals two purple hearts) for wartime injuries

In 2005, Tapp was surprised to receive an award from the State of Alaska to acknowledge his part in the Aleutian Campaign.

Editor's note: In concluding this series of Veterans interviews, I want to thank Jim Hecimovich, Harold Partridge, Curtis Haukom and Gaylord Tapp for opening up to me about their military experiences, and a special thanks to Don Peterson for arranging the Brownsdale interviews.

Timeline

Gaylord Tapp



- September 21, 1942: Sworn in the US Army at Camp Dodge, Iowa
October 5, 1942: Left for the Army service
October 12, 1942: Arrived at Camp White Oregon, near Medford, Oregon, at 11:30 p.m. We were assigned to Company "A" 50th Engineer (Combat) Battalion. Other Camps we trained or stayed at in the states: Camp Applegate On the border of Oregon and California; Foster Park near Ventura, California, Camp Ojai near Ventura, CA; Camp Lockett, CA, on the Border of CA and Mexico; Fort Ord, CA, near the cities of Salinas and Monterey, CA.
- April 24, 1943: Holy Saturday – Left the states for Attu on U.S.S. Zelin
May 11, 1943: Landed on Attu
May 30, 1943: The Japanese attacked our area on Attu this morning. The hill is now called Engineer Hill.
June 1, 1943: The Japanese us again not far from Engineer Hill, Attu
July 11, 1943: Let Attu on the USS Flaval, a Liberty ship, for Adak. Don't know the Date the first time we left Adak on the USSS Filmore to attack Kiska. No Japanese on Kiska so we came back to Adak harbor and transferred on an LST. Then went back to Kiska.
- September 4, 1943: Landed on Kiska
September 25, 1943: Left Kiska for Oahu, Hawaiian Islands, on the USS Monroe
October 2, 1943: Landed in Honolulu. We also had water maneuvers to the island of Maui, Hawaiian Islands. While on Oahu we camped in Tent City and Schofield Barracks.
January 21, 1944: Left Oahu, Hawaiian Islands, to attack the Marshall Islands. We went on the USS Zelin
February 1, 1944: Landed on Carlos Island, one of the Islands in the Marshall group. We were there a week, and then we landed on Kwajalein Island, also one of the islands of the Marshall group.
June 24, 1944: Left Kwajalein Island for Honolulu on the Aircraft Carriers, Thetis Bay.
July 5, 1944: Arrived in Honolulu
August 25, 1944: Left Honolulu for Leyte, Philippine Islands on the USS Custer. On this trip we went down under the equator.
September 20, 1944: Arrived Nanus Islands in the Admiralty Group.
October 15, 1944: Left the Nanus Islands to attack Leyte Island.
October 20, 1944: Landed at Dulag, Leyte Island.
October 25, 1944: Was bombed on Dular beach. Here is where many of our boys in our motor pool were killed. Some buried alive in their foxholes.
November 25, 1944: Were bombed again in another area. This is the area Leineweber was killed.
March 12, 1945: Left Abuyor, Leyte for Okinawa, on the USS Freestone.
April 1, 1945: Easter Sunday morning we landed on Okinawa.

Have been on the Bearing Sea, China Sea, North Pacific, South Pacific, Central Pacific, and East Pacific Ocean,

2

Gaylord Harding Tapp

Born Oct. 28 - 1921

Gaylord had three brothers + 1 sister.

Howard born 1914 - Wayne born 1916

Gaylord born 1921 - Glenn born 1923

Sister Maxine born Oct 1 - 1926

His mother Myrtle died on Oct 1 - 1926 child

birth. + on Dec. 22 - 1929. Harvey (his dad)

married Julia (Fressel Dunn) + she had Delbert

+ boy. Raymond + Donald + 1 girl Jean Dunn.

+ Harvey + Julia had 2 sons. Leslie + Delmar

Leslie born 1931 - Delmar 1932.

Gaylord was the first of his family to be

1942

1944

Drafted. then Raymond + he went down on the

U. S. S. Seicomb Bay. Aircraft carrier sank on

November 25th - 1944. Then Brother Glenn. 1948

Army. Then Leslie + Greg + Delmar in 1954 +

he stayed in States. Army. Jean his step

sister was married to a Army boy + they had 2

small children when got kill in a car accident
on way back camp. after being home on leave.

He was Sister in Army.

His 3 older Brothers Howard + Wayne are now

gone on. as well as his sister. his set Brothers

Raymond + Delmar will ship in U. S. S. Seicomb Bay

Donald down in a horse Tank as a young

child.

(As Gaylord had 3 Brothers + 1 sister

+ then 2 brother set brother + a set sister.

+ then 2 half Brothers.