

Willis G. Pehl

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Question: First thing I'd like to do just so I can get it on videotape is to get your name and the correct spelling of your last name.

Answer: ok. Willis G. P-e-h-l

Question: And pronounced Pale.

Answer: Pale, mmm, hmmm.

Question: Now did you have a nickname?

Answer: Will, yeah. That's what 95% of them call me is Will.

Question: Where were you born? Were you born in North Dakota?

Answer: I was born in Arena, North Dakota.

Question: Arena. Now that's one I haven't been to.

Answer: Well, it's probably not there anymore. It was a little town, but it was a booming little place when they came there, which was back in, well, let's see. They came over in the early 1900's. In 1903, I guess my father landed there. My oldest brother was, he was 3 years old when they came over on the ship, and my second younger brother at that time was born ON the ship, so that's how they landed. They were that anxious, you know, to get over to this country, so even though they had a birth coming up, they got on that ship and left.

Question: And they came from where?

Answer: Both my mother and father came from West Russia, but they were both of German descent, and my father lived in the Polish area near Poland near the Vistula? River, and my mother lived in part of Russia at that time, but they're, as I say, both of German descent. They were not married, and she was married to a Merkel and my father, of course, had his wife Paulina, and they came over and then they settled in Arena, 'cause they heard about the opportunities that were there. They came into the proper place, you know, and intended to be naturalized as they did in those days, and then they took a train from New York and came to North Dakota, got off there, settled in on the farm, so to speak. So that's where it all began.

Question: So would that have been like a homestead farm, or?

Answer: Yes, they got the 160 acres, which they could farm you know. And they were very happy with the opportunities, and they had a number of good years there until the drought, you know, and the depression, and then in 19, early 1930's, then things started to go downhill, and things weren't so good anymore, because the grasshoppers and the drought, and poor economic conditions made farming a difficult way to make a living, either by planting crops, or by raising beef cattle, that sort of thing. And then my mother's first husband died in the North Dakota, in the Arena area of North Dakota, and then my father lost his wife about the same time, and then they got married, and there were a total of 16 of those two families, and then they got married had 5 of us. And so, I'm one of those 5.

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Question: How far down the rank are you? Are you youngest or up a ways?

Answer: I'm the youngest boy. Yes, and I have 3 sisters still alive, one of them younger than I and two are older.

Question: Boy, you guys never had to go to parties, 'cause you had the whole party all in one family.

Answer: Yes, we have our family reunions.

Question: So growing up, 'cause nowadays, 18 kids are headed hither and yon and all that, being a farming family, were a lot of the kids still there as you were growing up?

Answer: Well, most of them went on to other things, you know, after they got out of school, and I mean, by getting out of school, getting through the 8th grade was the big hurdle in those days. I don't know of anybody in our family who went beyond the 8th grade, except one or two sisters. One of them happened to be my grade school teacher, and she taught the first 8 years of school in grade school in Arena, North Dakota, and I was one of those, and it was all in one room. And Wanda taught my first 3 years, and then she moved on and came out West, out here, so she just passed away this past year. She was 94. She lived a good life, and she was always proud of the job she did on me.

Question: so what are your earliest recollections, I mean, do you remember the depression?

Answer: Well, not in the same way that they would because, you know, we were always provided for. The kids came first, you know. They took care of us, but I do remember when the decision was made to leave North Dakota and to move and, and then they had sort of a neighborhood friend who had a truck with a box on it, you know. Just a short truck, not a semi, and but before that they made the decision and they put the land up and the house and the out buildings for sale, and they put it up for bid, and the low bidder was one of my older brothers who wanted to stay in there. He was a mail carrier part time, so he had a little income, you know, and a pension eventually. So he was the low bidder, and the banker accepted it, and we loaded everything onto the truck, and my Dad had an old Lafayette. We followed the truck out to the Raymond area. That's where most all of the kids had gone to, and so we settled there. Our first, my first year there we lived with family members. You know, we had a family of 5 plus our parents, so I could milk cows, you see, which was a benefit. I had a plus, so I lived with my sister and a brother-in-law down in Willapa Valley for about a year. Then another older brother, the one who was born on the ship coming out from Europe, he and his wife and family built a newer house and they abandoned the old house. It was a two-story, wood frame house, so we moved into that, then all of our family could live together, which was a great move. But it wasn't very adequate as far as housing is concerned, and so eventually we moved into a farm building and a nice house, but we didn't own it. We just farmed it for the owner, took care of the cows, milked them, and did all the chores, but it was a beautiful home, but the emphasis was, you don't own it. Just take care of it.

Question: so it sounds like everybody was working then.

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Answer: Yes, oh, yeah.

Question: And how old were about at this time?

Answer: Well, when I came into that area I was, I started the 6th grade in that Raymond/Willapa Valley area, and then I went to high school at Willapa Valley High School, which was a small school but had very good mentors. They gave me very good advice, looking back. Encouraged me eventually to go on to high education, but in I think it was August of 1941, my parents went back to North Dakota to let them know how nice it was out here and to let our old neighbors back there how nice it was living in North Dakota, in the state of Washington, because we had all this fruit, you know falling off the trees, and plenty of food and the grass turned green, you know, in the summertime, and low and behold after two weeks, we got a telegram, or whatever they call it in those days, that my mother was critically ill. And the drought was still on back there, and apparently she had picked up encephalitis from either mosquitoes or grasshoppers, and within I think about a week or 10 days, she died back there in '41. In August, so one of the older brothers loaded us up into a car and took us back for the funeral, and then we came back and settled back into the routine. And, of course, you know what happened a few months later, Pearl Harbor, in '41. December 7. We knew all of our lives would change then.

Question: so you were high school then?

Answer: Yes, when this happened I was going into my junior year ,so I had two more years to finish up high school, 'cause I graduated in 1943.

Question: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Answer: Exactly. I was in the barn milking cows, and my younger sister, who is two years younger than I am, came out and she said, Will, we just got word that mother died, and just buried my head in the side of the cow and let it all hang out, you know, and then we had to make the best of it and went on from there, so

Question: There's a certain aspect of it. They always think about kids growing up fast today, but different reasons. I think, listening to the experiences that you faced, you grew up quicker in different ways because of the responsibility that you had. Everybody had to pull together just to survive with the family. Then to have World War II come into it right after the depression, you know, here comes another thing that's going to change your life and force you to grow up pretty quick.

Answer: Yeah. We knew it was going to change, and change rapidly, but I still had the long-term goal of wanting to further my education after high school. And the administrators at the high school, at Willapa Valley, thought I was a good enough student that I should go on to college. In fact, they tried to direct me to Naval Training, go into the B-12 program, where you could get an education, equivalent I guess to a couple of years of college, but I waited too long to do that, 'cause I turned 18, and my blood pressure was elevated a little bit on the last test. I'd passed everything except the Wassermann test, I guess they called it, in those days. It was a little high, and he said, I know if we can wait another day, we can get it down. 'cause I think we might have had a few beers the night before. Will Pehl's going into the Naval Training, and there wasn't another day to wait. So I was dismissed with

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regrets, and from there, which was in Seattle, downtown Seattle, I ran from there up to, I think it was, up on 6th on Marion, that's where the Marine Corps recruiting office was. It was 4:30 and I rushed in there 'cause I wanted to beat the draft rap, you know, but it was April 23 coming up, and I didn't graduate till May, another month away, so there wasn't time, and he just says, We just processed our last group. He said, When you get your draft notice, just let them know you want the Marine Corps and they'll bring you up here. And that's what happened on July 13. I and 12 other guys were sworn in in Seattle to the Marine Corps.

Question: 12 from Raymond or 12 from all...

Answer: From the general area. South Bend, Raymond, and also from the Seattle area, too.

Question: So was Don one of those guys.

Answer: No, no Don didn't turn 18 until, I think it was December, so he had 6 more months to make his decision, and he had no trouble completing high school.

Question: So at 18 you're standing in Seattle, raising your right hand and ...

Answer: Right, right, along with 12 others. And then, I think it was two more weeks later, the 27th of July I believe, in 1943, then we were on our way to San Diego to Boot Camp, and then things got a little more exciting.

Question: Can you, you know, I know it's always hard to get your mind back in that perspective. As an 18 year old kid, did you have the faintest idea what you were going into?

Answer: Yes, I did. I read a book when I was in high school to make a report on. I read Guadalcanal Diary, and it was written by, I think, Richard Tregaskis And it was a documentary on the Battle of Guadalcanal. Then that kind of directed my focus to the Marine Corps. I knew I was going to go into the military, and I wanted to do it, but it was the Marine Corps for me. And that helped me make the decision. So, and then San Diego, went through Boot Camp without any problems, and then after Boot Camp, I went to radio school, learned communications, able, baker, charlie, you know, and then after I became a radio man in communications, then went out to Camp Elliot, which is where the tank battalions trained, and the idea was to be a radio man for the tank battalion, and of course, we had to learn how to drive the, and operate the tanks, 'cause you never know what's going to happen to the one that's operating it, so, and that was kind of leisurely compared to Boot Camp, because we actually had some time off, you know. You didn't have to fall out at a certain hour and so on. So that was a good basic training in that particular field, and then after that they started to form the 5th Division out at Camp Pendleton. It was a new division, the spearhead division, and while we were out there training I was a radioman in the 2nd Battalion of the 27th Marines for Jack Loomis, who you might have heard of. Jack Loomis won the Medal of Honor on Iwo Jima and he was a Texan, he'd gone to Baylor, I believe and played for the New York Giants, but he went into the Marine Corps from pro football, and Jack lost his life, even though he won the Medal of Honor on Iwo. And then after that training in Pendleton, then our radio maintenance guy, Harold Butterman, from Minnesota, I believe it was, he had to be moved up to radio repairs, so they needed to have a new section chief for the radio people, so I was nominated for that and got another stripe. I became a Buck

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Sergeant then. And then after that, after numerous, many, many operations out in the Pacific, doing practice landings, you know, going over the side of a transport into LCV's or LST's, we practice that. None of us knew why we were doing this, you know. I used to sing that song to myself, Going down, I wonder why I spend these lonely nights, you know, going up and down these ropes, just trying to maintain my sanity. But it worked.

Question: They just kept drilling you, but they would just say it was a drill and there was no real explanation of why you were drilling.

Answer: Oh, no, we didn't know what the motive was, but we just thought it was for a type of, the abandon ship drill, you know, which it probably would be if you're on a transport and you've got time to throw the ropes out, well, instead of diving in you climb down the ropes, but we found out later on what that was all about. So then after much training and the dedication of the 5th Division by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who came out to Oceanside with one of his sons, I think it was James Roosevelt that came out, and they formally dedicated the 5th Division, and then we were all set for larger assignments. Then we went from there, that would be in November of '44, we got on our transport and went out to the islands, the Hawaiian Islands, and we went to Camp Wela? on the Big Island. There's a place there called Camp Tarawa, named after the Battle of Tarawa, and that's where we did more intensive training, and endurance walks and that sort of thing, trying to weed out people who, you know, couldn't do that.

Question: What's the attitude like of the people? I mean, is this something that everybody's, you know, you're being told what to do and you really don't know, but you're just gung-ho, or is some, oh, man we gotta go do another over the side, or...

Answer: No, there wasn't any time for that. I don't recall anybody who appeared that way. They knew it was coming. We were going into combat, we knew that. We just didn't know where, and they knew it was in our best interest to do what they wanted us to do. And work hard and stay in good shape, and there was no place to get into trouble, you know. We were limited to our tents. We had 6 people to a tent, you know, and, at Camp Tarawa, and, oh, the entertainment would come out there, you know, Bob Hope or someone like that would come out and we'd have an entertainment night. I think we had that once while we were there, which we appreciated, 'cause I always enjoyed music and played in a dance band when I was in high school as well as the marching band when it wasn't marching. And so that was a benefit, 'cause when it's lonely you can at least hum a song to yourself, you know, and helps you to retain your sanity, so to speak. Then from there, uh, we went to Pearl Harbor, and joined the rest of the fleet that was assigned to that to us was an unknown target, and we had our last liberty at Pearl Harbor then.

Question: do you remember what you did for your liberty?

Answer: Oh....

Question: Can you repeat what you did?

Answer: I could. Nothing spectacular, because there was a bunch of sailors and marines that were out you know (laughs),but we had a chance to relax a little bit. And then got back on the ship and...

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Question: Was Pearl, had it pretty well been put back, or when you came in was there still enough that you. I mean, like Mt. St. Helens, I saw pictures forever, but until I flew over and really saw what happened, it wasn't reality. Was Pearl Harbor that way, I mean, was there still...

Answer: No, we didn't remember it, you know, with all the damaged ships and stuff like that. No, I didn't recall seeing that. We apparently docked in a place where it was rebuilt, you know, so, no everything looked fine as far as that goes. And we were only going to be there temporarily and we moved on and then after we got away from Pearl Harbor a ways and our destination then was Saipan that we shipped our sea bags from Pearl Harbor to Guam. And that's where we were going to go after the operation, which we didn't know what it would be at that point. But then once we were out of Pearl Harbor far enough, then we started having meetings, and they brought out the map. This was it. This was Iwo Jima, the pork chop, you know. And then we started to find out just where we were going to go and what our role was going to be. Whether we were going to land on green beach or red beach. Our beach was going to be red 28th on the left and we were 27th Marines on the right. And the objective, I think, was already known then that the 28th would turn left and take Suribachi And we were to go across and cut off the island and then turn right and head north. And that's the easy description of what we did. But it wasn't all that easy.

Question: 'cause originally didn't they think that, they thought, what a day or something like that? I mean, they figured in and out.

Answer: Yeah, right. I'm glad you mentioned that. They thought it would be sort of like Tarawa, maybe a 3-day, maybe a little longer, you know, somewhere around 3 days, because that's why our sea bags went to Guam, and they felt that, well, from there we'd probably go to Okinawa, and that might be the next operation before we came back to the states, or to our rest camp.

Question: So what's in your sea bags that you're shipping ahead?

Answer: Oh, just clothing, you know, your dungarees and your greens, your uniform, and any personal things you might have had.

Question: So not stuff that you would need for military action. This is...

Answer: No, we had our packs and our rifles and ammunition, and then our Kabar, all the essentials, and really that's all we needed when we landed. They brought the food and the K-rations and the C-rations, and that's all we had the time to eat anyway. You know, there were no mess hall to go in and eat somewhere else. It was hit and run. Then unfortunately, when we did land.. We landed in amphibious tractors. I think the first six waves landed in amphibious tractors. Either the first 5th or 6th, and I was in either the 4th or 5th wave. And we were in the LST. That's where we went from, I think I jumped ahead one notch on you. At the, at Saipan, we got out of the transport and there we had to climb down the rig and drop into an LST, and this happened to be a stormy day when we climbed down the side and it wasn't easy to drop in. You had to kind of time your drop, had to wait for the LST to bob up, you know, and then drop so you didn't have so far to fall, but we made the transition and then went on from there to Iwo, where we got ready for the invasion.

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Question: So I can put perspective on this. Once you got into the LST, how long are you now traveling in that. I'm.. so I can put closeness. Are you quite a ways away, still, from...

Answer: Well, we were, I can't tell you exactly on that, John, I think it was, I think we were still a couple of days away, because I know on the second night we were there, that's when we had our meeting, once we were close to Iwo. In other words, the day before D-Day. That would have been February 18. Then we had our meeting down in the LST and we were told specifically again what our role was and we had a chance to discuss things rather openly with our platoon sergeant, and the bottom of the LST was loaded with ammunition, and we slept on the ammunition on our, what do you call it, a pad of some kind. I guess it was our bedding, whatever that was. And I recall Bob Sherry, who was our platoon leader, who had been on Guadalcanal, and one other operation, and he said that this will be his third combat, and but he said for most of you it's going to be your first. He said, you should be very optimistic about surviving, 'cause the odds are with you, they're not with me. And that turned out to be prophetic, 'cause on the way in, I, a Japanese artillery shell hit his amphibious tractor and Bob Sherry and Ted Supanski, and many others died before they could even hit the beach, and I'll always remember him for what he told us, and his experience really paid off, 'cause we kept going, and the idea of the LST was, or I should say the amphibious tractor, was to get up and onto the beach, because Iwo was just a bunch of volcanic ash, but and, they thought well, these things will climb right up there and get you on top so you can get low, and dig in if you have to, but the amphibious tractors were having trouble getting up there, so we got close to the beach, then the coxswain said, This is as far as we go, and so it was over the side. We jumped over the side, and you just waded in from there. So we were quite vulnerable to fire there, and then once we got on, it was pretty much a mess because there were a lot of troops that were hit, that were having problems, and then what really helped us to move a little further was we got some support, some, air support. Corsairs' I remember those guys. The Corsair fighter planes, 'cause they flew low and they came in so close we could see the pilot's face, and when they were firing, the Japanese quit shooting. They went underground, and that gave us a chance to move up. You could run for, if you could call running through that sand, we ran for as far as we could, and then when the shooting had stopped, then we would get down, 'cause they would start shooting then and we could hear the bullets coming over the top, so we just stayed low, and then gradually just going a little bit by little bit like that and waiting for the next wave of Course Airs?, we gradually got up on the higher grounds and started to move, and we pretty well got across the island on the first day, you know, using that procedure, but it was hit or miss, and we were, most of were lucky and didn't get hit, but you had to use that procedure, had to stay low. Meanwhile, the 28th on our left were making progress going up Mt. Suribachi and then we turned right as we got to the opposite side of the island, started moving up north, and then on the 4th day, D+4, somebody yelled at me, Will! Look! And there was the American flag up on Mt. Suribachi and we figured, Hey, this is going to be a short operation, because we've got the flag up there on the high ground. We always felt getting the high ground meant that, you know, you were going to be shooting down at the enemy, but on Iwo it wasn't that way, 'cause the enemy was down below us. I don't know if you've trapped any moles or not, but it was like moles, 'cause they would pop up. You'd think the enemy was always in front of you, and that wasn't always the case. The enemy could pop up behind you, and I'll just give you a couple examples if you'd like on how that happens. I was changing a battery for one of my radiomen and I was bending over and putting a new battery in the SCR300, and bang! They shot the

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radio out from between by legs. Couldn't figure out how that could happen, but the Japanese popped up from their hole and, I don't know whether they aimed it at me or the battery, but they got the battery fortunately, and we moved on. And there are other examples of it once we got onto the fact that they weren't always in front of us. They could be in back, but another one was when I was taking a radio man up to the company commander from the battalion headquarters to give a guy who'd been up there some rest, and I was taking Ray Mays up to a new company commander, and we got up there quite a ways and apparently I went too far, but I noticed this beautiful pile of canned goods sitting out there on the, I don't know, on the rocks, whatever it was, and I said Ray, stay here. I think I see something to eat. We're getting a little tired of the C-rations, so I went out there and Del Monte peaches, a popular brand of peaches. I think it was Del Monte. I came back and took my K-bar, opened it up and boy, we enjoyed those peaches I said, Ray, I think I'll go out there and get one more. So I went out there to get another one and just in the process of getting it, I did get a hold of it and then they started to fire, and it was right at that area where the peaches were. That was the bait, but when you're hungry and naive, those things can happen. So Ray finally said, Sarge, don't you think we've had enough peaches? Yes, I agreed. And the firing was getting heavier and heavier, so we went back to the battalion headquarters because we were getting a lot of shelling then, and that particular night another buddy of mine who was in my section and I spent the night in a Japanese pill box 'cause there wasn't time to dig in. It was dark and we just peeked in there and we didn't see any action so we went into the Japanese pillbox. Well, there were two Japanese in there, but they happened to be dead, and so we stayed there overnight, and then the next day the battalion got better organized and then we started our move back up north again, but...

Question: Was it, 'cause again, movies make things look one way, which I know are not close to the reality. I just always look at these things and think of all these people trying to work together to do something, and how you communicate and don't end up just in chaos with having to change your plans as you adjust. Did it have a chaotic feeling to you, or were you so well trained that you felt all your communications...you all knew what you were doing kinda?

Answer: Well, I think confusion reigned at a time, but we knew what the ultimate goal was and we were moving toward it. Nothing goes perfectly in combat, and if that doesn't work you gotta try something else, and one of the things that was tried and I'm glad you brought up that subject. We had never used the TBX radio. We always used the SCR's because the telephone conversation or telephone wiring got knocked out immediately. You couldn't use telephones, so we used the SCR300's, which a guy can strap to his back, you know, and they're not so big you can dig a foxhole a little bigger and still get somewhat concealed.

Question: Is it wireless? Or you're still having to string

Answer: No, it's wireless. But you have a short antenna, but there's another radio, which gives you a little broader coverage and that is the TBX, which has to be set up. It's got legs on it set up and it's got a tall antenna, and I was given the orders to set it up in a shell hole, because you want to conceal the antenna if you can. But we set it up, and it didn't have a chance to work. It was set up and uh. Bob Platzer, who was a good friend of mine, and uhm.. but I was responsible for him, and Junior McGinnis were operating it. They were just getting it set up and started to operate it, and I was startin' to dig my foxhole close by and I'd taken off my cartridge belt, laid my rifle down, and my backpack, and I had it about that deep,

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and suddenly they started to walk in mortar shells, and they made a direct hit on that radio, and both Platzter and McGinnis died right there.. right next to me, and so I got a hold of our communications leader, Lt. Moore, and let him know, and then, of course, got a hold of the Andy Anderson, the corpsman, and he came up just to verify that they were dead, and took them off, and then we moved on from there, but that was one of, also one of my very close calls, because my backpack was all ripped up from shrapnel. I just happened to hit that low spot in time to avoid, you know, getting the final blow there. And same thing with my cartridge belt. And I wish today that I had saved them. I wore them all the rest of the operation. I brought them home, put them in the sea bag, but these things aren't going to do me any good, so I ended up throwing them away. But any rate, getting back to the loss of McGinnis and Platzter, and this is more of a personal thing, Bob Platzter served on Midway as a marine guard when we had reoccupied Midway, and his job was just to maintain a surveillance. Walk the beach, to make sure that the Japanese would not be coming back. And he was married before he went into the Marine Corps, and he wanted to, well he came back for the 30-day leave, and then joined us at Camp Pendleton as a PFC and eventually a corporal. But he was very disturbed every time he came back to my bunk there at Pendleton, he would come back and finally I asked him, Robert, what's the problem? And he told me the story then about his wife had left him, and he was, had a boy named Jackie and.. but he wanted to go out and have combat, I mean, he wanted to be part of a combat operation. He would have had the choice to be a bellhop, as he called it, on a ship, you know, and send the flag up and bring it down at night, that type of thing, but he didn't want that. He wanted to go out and, 'cause he was so sick and tired of walking around Midway Island and not, seemed like to him he wasn't accomplishing anything, you see. No action. So he chose, he chose to be where he was, and we had a little pact which we made in the bottom of the LST that whichever one of us would survive we would name our first son after the other, and I was the lucky guy that was able to do that. My son, Robert, our only son, was named after Robert Platzter, so that is the story on what can happen when things get going. Tough, you know.

Question: Does, 'cause you said Robert's wife had left him, is that right? But he had a son already?

Answer: Yes, he had a son named Jackie.

Question: Has your son every met...

Answer: No, but I did do this. After I retired in 1985 from my career job, then I was doing some consulting for code people, and I had an assignment down in Biloxi Mississippi. This was after a hurricane down there, which did a lot of damage to some buildings, and I was qualified to judge the siding on it, since I'd been in the siding business in my business year, so my wife and I went along with me, because, you know, it wasn't something that was as demanding as being in the office, you know, and you only testified when you were called upon. So we had a weekend off, and on that weekend off, she said, Why don't we go up to Vicksburg, 'cause she knew what had been bothering me. I'd been emotionally upset for years over that, 'cause the old question, Why was it them and not me, you know. And we went up to Vicksburg and thought we'd try to find his, well, his wife or his ex-wife and we couldn't find her, so we went to a number of funeral homes and it was on a weekend, so we finally found one dedicated friendly mortician. He said, Well, where are you at? We gave him our number at the hotel, and he called back and said, I think I can help you. So he took us out to the cemetery where Robert Platzter was

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buried, and the date that he was born and the date that he died on Iwo Jima, which was D+8, and I got a picture of that which I can show you later here if you like. And, but I went back and I guess the survivor's guilt was somewhat diminished after that, after that visit you know. I was able to keep my promise, I would name our first son after him and he, in turned would name his son Bob, after him, too, so. But he was a brave man. He didn't have to be out there, but he wanted to be.

Question: 50-some years later, does it diminish at all, though, I mean, 'cause you're interesting, because a lot of people I've talked to, they won't talk about names of people.

Answer: Oh.

Question: They separate people that they lost, they've separated it, it seems. I only know from an hour or two-hour conversation with them. But you talked about names and friends and people that you knew. Again, a lot of people you said, We were told not to make friends, but this was a friend that you made in the service?

Answer: Oh, yes, because he was having troubles and I wanted to help him, and I never want to forget those who pay the ultimate price. I won't ever forget them. So, I tried to for about 20 years. My policy was hear no evil, see no evil, and speak no evil, but you know, it would be a shame to quit and just not listen and forget the ultimate price that people have paid because, well, even more so today, you know, we have a lot of problems today in American with what's happened on 9/11, so we certainly can't forget those who paid the ultimate price. That's where I stand on that.

Question: Are they still kids in your eyes? I mean, do you still see them as 19, 20, 22-year-olds?

Answer: Yes, you still see them the way they were, you know when we were having fun, you know, and, but I've contacted and have stayed in touch with as many of the survivors that I can, and we're at the point now where I think the last reunion was held this year, which is one we didn't go to 'cause we had other things planned, but we went to the one last year in Tucson, and, but when you get together with them, we don't talk about the things that you and I have just talked about. We talk about our families and what we're doing, and then they go to the memorial service and that's where the tears come, you know. That's when you remember.

Question: Have you ever had a, 'cause the interesting thing is, your life is this long, and World War II was, on the time line, this small part, but yet so many veterans I've talked to have never ever experienced anything like that since then. I mean, the bonds that they built, the friendships that they built that have lasted 50 years, 50-some years, you know, where they're still in contact and watch their kids grow up. Is that the feelings you have? I mean, whereas people that you've never had a relationship like since then?

Answer: Yeah, it certainly bonds you, because you know you all experienced the same thing, and you can't share that with anybody else, because others don't understand you know.... why, why do you keep, you know, in touch, but we do, we communicate mainly now by writing letters, reunions. I'm computer ignorant, so it has to be by that. I get emails through the grandkids, so, yes, we do stay in touch. I have a fellow down in Georgia who stayed in the service after Iwo. He signed up in

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the Reserves, and he spent time on Vietnam. And we stay in touch because we were in the same tent at Boot Camp in San Diego. So, even though he became an officer in the Army, he still hangs onto his Marine Corps buddies, you know, so, but it's a great feeling, 'cause nobody knows better than somebody who's been there how they might feel, you know.

Question: I've heard some say that when they came back, that was the hard thing about their marriage was that even though they loved their wives dearly, their wives oftentimes just didn't understand. And a couple vets I talked to were lucky enough, and ones that had saved his life, he flew out of England and he married a woman who had worked on the air force base there, a Brit, but she kinda understood, more so that a lot of people.

Answer: mmm,hmmm. Yeah, I think what you're saying is true. A lot of them don't understand. My wife particularly, Nadine, she does understand what I went through, because she gone to these reunions with me, and she knows what these Gyrenes are all about.

Question: Do you ever, 'cause I've seen one dead person in my life and that was my Mom. That's it. Now you're 19, 20 years old, and you're out on Iwo, and I've seen footage of Iwo, and you're talking about being in this pillbox with the two Japanese soldiers. Is that something that your perspective during war changes on life and death, people, bodies. I mean, how do you mentally stay sane?

Answer: Oh, no I don't think that's changed my perspective on life or death, whether you're military or not. I, no, I've been to a couple funerals this year of a brother-in-law and a sister, and I become maudlin because of the loss, whether they're military or civilian. That doesn't matter, but there is a bond that you build when you've shared the same experiences, you know. But as far as my wife is concerned, she is the one who has encouraged me to save the things that I brought in to you. She says, Why don't you save, you know we built this house, a new house 5 years ago, two bedrooms and a den. It's a nice home, and the limitation was two bedrooms at that time, well we converted the third one into a den. Well, so then she had the idea, get all this stuff up, you know, so the kids and the grand kids will know what you've been through, and what better place to save them, you know. So, that's why there's frame. I didn't frame them to bring them here. They were there, and they've been there for years, you know.

Question: I think that's valuable, 'cause especially like you said, the kids, the grandkids, to know what...

Answer: Yeah, and they're anxious to learn. I've gone to high schools and grade school, you know, programs, prior to Veterans Day and that sort of thing and, no, they're eager to learn what happened years ago. It's all a part of history, and I know my grandchildren, we have 6 of them, and they still show a great interest in what it was all about.

Question: 'Cause your son has to be pretty honored, I mean, to carry that name.

Answer: mmm, hmmm.

Question: Do his, does he have children.

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Answer: Yes, my son, Bob, has one child, and his name is Robert, yeah.

Question: Does he know the history behind his father's name?

Answer: I think he does, because I gave every member of our family, in other words, our two daughters, and our son, Bob, a copy of a brief life story that I wrote about a year ago, I guess, just in case, you know, I'm a high mileage guy. If something doesn't work out, at least they'll have something in writing as to what happened and what we did and what it was all about, and, but as far as patting grandpa on the knee, you know, Tell us another war story. No, they don't do that, no. They've got that summation, which is a life story with brevity, and they will see all these documents when they come in the house, you know, and they ask about those, so, but no, it's not there to hammer anything in particular home. It's just, and that's why I'm here, really. I appreciate what those people did who paid the ultimate price, and there were a lot of them. And Iwo Jima was just one of them.

Question: Now you had, if I understand right, kind of interesting experience, 'cause did you know Don Newbold before you went over. I mean, did you know him from...

Answer: oh, yes. I'm glad you mentioned that. Don Newbold and I were in the same grade starting from the 6th on. I think it was 6th grade on. And went to high school together. We, well, before we graduated, to make a few extra bucks we played in a dance band, a jazz band, and of course, Kaiser Shipyard and Buckler Construction down at Vancouver. Buckler built a lot of housing for the shipyard workers and Kaiser produced the ships and so we worked there. Buckler, I worked as a hod carrier, and then in the shipyards, the chipper, you had to crawl up in the bow and chip off the excess off the welding on the seams. In order to get that first job, I must confess that I lied about my age to get the job, but they needed help. That's my justification for it, and there were no questions asked. No ID asked for, 'cause they needed help, so, they found out later that I'd done that. I actually forgot about it, but I applied for Social Security. I said I was 62. No, we've got you down as 64. And she said, Did you lie about your age. She said, Well, a lot of them did.

Question: For the good of the country.

Answer: At that time, it seemed like the right thing to do. And ironically, speak of Kaiser Shipyard, I was probably the lowliest employee they had in those days, then Kaiser later on went into the building materials business, Kaiser gypsum board, insulation board, and that sort of thing, and they had a plant, I think it was First and Shelton down at Longview area, and when I was manager of Shakertown Corporation, insulation board was one of our principle raw materials, so we did a lot of business with Kaiser, and this was when, this was about 1960. I was invited, with my wife, down there for a little vacation, down there at the, oh, they had a lake down there by the Reno area, up in the hills, I forget the name of it.

Question: By Tahoe?

Answer: Yeah, Tahoe Lakes, yeah. Up there. Beautiful place, and that's where we learned to water ski, so it's a small world.

Question: so did you ever, when you were over in Iwo, 'cause Newbold ended up on Iwo, you ended up on Iwo. Could you find each other over there ever? I mean,

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Answer: No, Don was in the 5th JASCO, and they provided naval gunfire, and I think Don helped direct that, you know, by communicating. And, uh, I looked for him, and when people would walk by, you know, when people were coming back in the Reserve and somebody else going forward, I'd ask, Have you see Don Newbold? No, they hadn't seen Don Newbold, and I never did see him, even though I walked out to the Iwo cemetery. After 34 days on Iwo, we had the last two days just getting ready to get back onto a ship, and so I went to the Iwo Jima cemetery and I looked and I couldn't find him there, which was good news. And so then on the final day there, we got onto the, onto our LST's, and I was, got on, and of course we were all tired, and I just flopped, took off my pack, and watching these poor, tired Marines coming on board, and here come one that looked quite familiar. Don Newbold! From Valley High School. We had a class of only 23 people, and here 10 percent of us were on the same LST going back, but that was great news. We had a lot of things to talk about. We went from there to a transport, and we had a lot of visiting to do. Great reunion.

Question: It's amazing how small the world gets sometimes, you know, and the two of you could cross paths out there like that again.

Answer: Yeah. It is amazing, with all the people that were out there that he would come on that same LST that I was on. So from there then we got our sea bags back from Guam and went on back to Pearl Harbor, and as we pulled into Pearl Harbor, then we got the news over the loudspeaker system that President Roosevelt had died, which was another blow to us. He was our President. And then after spending a little time in Pearl Harbor, then we went back to our training area, which was one the Big Island, Kamuela. Then I think I mentioned earlier what happened from there. I got the opportunity to go on to OCS, but before that, a 30-day leave. And that was great, except when I came back, older brother, he belonged to the Kiwanis and the Rotary and everything. He always wanted me to go with him and talk about it, and I didn't want to talk about it. I just wasn't ready for that. Wasn't time. I just wanted to forget. But then getting back to Quantico, that was, it was a good move, 'cause even though I was getting ready for more responsibilities, it, I met some very nice people there from other divisions who were on other operations that also came back for the same purpose, to lead a platoon on the big invasion of Japan. And we had a chance for liberty in Washington, D.C. There wasn't much doing in Quantico, but we would go to D.C.. And then, of course, the great news when we found out the war had ended because of the dropping of the bombs. So then it was getting home from there, and one of the people who lived in California bought a used car, and since I was going to the West Coast, and somebody was being dropped off in Texas and one intermediately, we all shared expenses, and made those stops, then he and I went on to LA, and I saw a friend there that I hadn't seen in a long time, and then I took the, I think it was the Greyhound bus to, back home.

Question: And home at that time would have been back there at Raymond.

Answer: It would have been Chehalis. Yeah, while I was gone on, out in the Central Pacific, my father moved up to Chehalis, where some of my other relatives lived. He bought a small home on 9th Street there in Chehalis. So when I came home, that was also my home, and I helped to support him by working locally at jobs and then also worked as a dishwasher, and a few other things when I went to college, drove a truck for West Coast Grocery for awhile, and the guy was really

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great there. He said, I said, What will I do when I go back to school? He said, Well, whenever you come back on vacation, he said, you've always got a job here. Just come in and work, either in the warehouse or driving a truck, so, that's what happened to me there. I had a lot of help from people who, I suppose, wanted to help me because I was a serviceman and needed help, so, I had a lot of cooperation from a lot of people.

Question: When, and we're starting to see some move back to it finally, but when you see the American flag in a parade, on a flag pole, what does that mean to you?

Answer: Well, it means everything to me. I, we have one and we put it up every day. But, just to hear the patriotic songs. It means a lot, because we do live in a great country, and a lot of people take it for granted, frankly, that this is the way it always was, and a lot of people work hard to make it what it is, and we should never lose sight of the fact that a lot of people lost their lives to make sure that it is still a great country to live in. And with today's problems, it warms my heart to see that a lot of people are volunteering and wanting to make some good things happen to protect freedom. Not just here but in other parts of the world.

Question: Well, thank you very much.

Answer: I appreciate it. I appreciate it. If there's anything else that comes to your mind that I haven't touched upon, I may have another comment or two, but I think we've covered the most of it.