

MEMORIES OF AN OLD MARINE - WWII

By Orvid Harju

I, Orvid I. Harju, am an old Marine. I was born in the small town of Wakefield in Michigan's Upper Peninsula on April 21, 1924, the fourth in a family of five children. My father, Alfred, started work in an iron mine when he was fifteen years old because his father needed a larger income to raise his family. My mother was the oldest of four girls in a family of orphans. Both her parents died when she was twelve and as the oldest girl, she stayed home and took care of the house. Her oldest brother left the sisters and went off on his own. The other brother was a year older than my mother and he stayed and helped where he could. They lived on some sort of government subsistence with the guidance of a court appointed supervisor who, we later learned, kept some of the money for his own use. My parents were married in September of 1913. My father was twenty-one, my mother was seventeen.

Father died at age forty-five of a strangulated hernia when I was eleven years old. Mother was a strong person who had survived much sadness in her life. For all that she did for me, I am forever thankful. It was during the school year of 1941-42 that World War II began. I was a senior in high school and it seemed to the boys in our senior class that we would be involved in the war by going into military service. We didn't talk about it but it was understood. Since my mother was a widow and the three older siblings in our family were gone, either married or working elsewhere, I decided to stay home as long as possible with a goal of being home for the Christmas season of 1942. I decided to join the Marine Corps after the New Year. I received my draft notice and was told to report for induction into the armed service on February 7, 1942. I felt that I had no choice but to do as I was told and I reported to the courthouse in Bessemer, the county seat. There I was loaded on a bus and taken to Marquette, Michigan, about a hundred and fifty miles away. In Marquette I underwent physical exams and was given a choice of which branch of the service I wanted. Of course I and about eight others asked for the Marines. We all boarded a train and were taken to Milwaukee where the Marine recruiting office was. After further exams, we were able to go home for a week and report back the following Monday.

Being home for a week allowed some time to say the proper goodbyes to friends and family. One particular goodbye was to my grandfather, my father's father. It would be my last visit with him. Grandfather died In May of 1945 two weeks before his eighty-fifth birthday seven months before I was home from my service with the Marines. The Greyhound bus came through Wakefield about 5:00 a.m. so I was up

early to get ready the day I was to leave. Mother was preparing a breakfast. She went about her business not saying anything and when the time to leave came, I picked up my suitcase and went to the door. Mother then came and put her arms around me and cried. It was very difficult but I knew it was time so I set out walking to catch the bus to downtown Wakefield about a mile away. The weather that February morning was very cold. I didn't want to wear long underwear as I was going to California and wouldn't need it there, so walking to the bus was cold but I endured and made the bus and was on my way to the Marines.

Aboard the bus I met a Marine recruit from Bessemer by the name of Bob Blaha who was a part of the group who joined in Milwaukee. On arrival in Milwaukee we had hotel rooms reserved for the group. The evening was free time and I remember Bob and I went to hear the *Moderniers*, a popular singing group of the day. The next morning we went to the Marine recruiting office and were met by the officers. As the group convened we were given instructions and were taken to the railroad station where we caught a train to Chicago. In Chicago we changed trains and were on our way to California.

The train ride to California took several days. We had a sleeper car and ate our meals in the dining car of the train. As we proceeded to the west coast we picked up more Marine recruits along the way. By the time we arrived, there were quite a number of us. In Los Angeles we changed trains and went to San Diego. Upon arrival at the San Diego train station we were met by Marine NCO's and boarded buses and were taken to the recruit depot. There we were taken to our barracks and were issued our military clothing: skivvies, dungarees and green marine uniforms. We were required to send our civilian clothes home. The next day we were given further physical exams and intelligence tests, then on to training with a lot of close order drill. Close order drill is a form of marching to a cadence barked out by the DI (drill instructor). Every morning after reveille there were physical exercises then we marched to breakfast chow and had to sit by the same people for every meal. The guy on my right side was left-handed which caused me to be more crowded. After chow we marched back to the barracks to make the bunks according to regulations, then to the washstand where everyone had to wash a pair of skivvies (underwear) and hang them out to dry. After the bunkhouse was swabbed out and the bunks were made, we had to "fall out" with our rifles and in uniforms that were dungarees. We would march to the parade field and practice the many drills and then we would go to classes and learn about the rifles we carried. We learned to "field strip" the rifle, clean it and reassemble it until we could do it blindfolded.

Boot camp lasted eight weeks with the last two weeks at the rifle range. To begin with, the days were used to "snap-in" meaning we learned how to hold the rifle in four positions. Off hand was standing, prone was lying on the ground and then

there were sitting and kneeling. After learning the basics, we went to the firing range and fired at targets at different distances. After several practice rounds we had to fire for qualification. There were three levels of qualifications. The first was Expert, then Sharpshooter and the third was Marksman. I think I qualified as the Marksman. The DI yelled at those who didn't qualify. We were told if the entire platoon qualified we would get a week furlough. That didn't happen very often and it didn't happen that time.

After graduation from boot camp, we were assigned to different places according to our abilities. I was assigned to telephone school which was located on the other end of the Marine Base in San Diego. No one else from my boot camp platoon was assigned there which meant I had to make all new friends. We were settled in bunk rooms on the base waiting to be assigned to a class, but in the meantime, we were assigned to "mess duty" which meant serving food to the others and cleaning the mess hall after all the men were fed. It also meant getting up early in the morning to ready the area for breakfast. After about two weeks of mess duty I was enrolled in a class. I was impressed with the knowledge and the ability of the instructors. The class was to be eight weeks in length and we learned a multitude of subjects including basic electricity and theory, splicing the wires, connecting phones and switchboards, climbing poles using gaffs and much more. For one week of class we were taken to an old CCC camp east of San Diego for field training. When we finished the telephone class, my score was 84, not the best, I guess, but it was passing.

After the school was over, we were assigned to other posts. I really didn't know what was going on because I was assigned to go to Camp Elliot, which no longer exists. While there we did nothing but fall out for roll call. What I remember about being there was that it was the first time I saw the movie *Gone With The Wind*. After a short time, we were transferred to Camp Pendleton to a field telephone school. Shortly after arriving I was assigned to mess duty again. What I remember about the mess duty assignment was that the actor Glenn Ford was a regular diner at the mess hall. On one of the weekends while on mess duty I was given a weekend pass and decided to go to Los Angeles. While I was walking to the bus stop a car with several men stopped and asked if I would like a ride. They were working on a movie that was being filmed at the camp and were going home. I accepted and had a free ride to Los Angeles. As a result I arrived in LA early on a Friday. Not knowing what to do, I went to see a movie and afterwards went to the bus station. It was a large terminal and buses were coming and going from all the neighborhoods. I saw a girl waiting for a bus and began talking to her. She was very friendly and we had a long conversation. When her bus arrived I asked her if she would mind if I saw her home as I had nothing to do. We boarded the bus and rode toward her home. When we arrived I walked her to the door and after a short

time we said our goodbyes. I walked back to the bus stop and waited for a bus back to town. While I was standing there I saw another Marine get off with a girl and I was surprised when the Marine turned out to be Bob Blaha, the guy from Bessemer. He asked if I would wait for him and said he would be back soon. When he returned, the busses had stopped running for the night so we decided to try hitchhiking back to town. A man picked us up and gave us a ride as far as he was going, which was not the entire way back. We found a park nearby and some old cardboard pieces that we made into a bed and slept until morning when the buses began running again. We caught a bus back to Los Angeles but found that the hotels were crowded and it was impossible to get a room so we went to a railroad station to use the bathroom and wash up. In the afternoon we caught a bus to Hollywood and went to the Hollywood Canteen which was the entertainment center for servicemen. I remember listening to Deanna Durbin, who was very well known then, sing. I remember seeing other famous people there too. Bob became involved with a girl so I went off on my own. Eventually I made my way back to the railroad station to catch a train back to Oceanside where Camp Pendleton was located. The train was crowded and the seats were full so I stood most of the way back.

After mess duty was over, I was ready to go back to the field telephone school and was looking forward to more experiences with wire communications, but that Monday morning we were ordered to fall out. The sergeant stood facing the ranks and read a list of names, including mine. We were told to gather all our personal belongings in our sea bag and be ready in an hour. We were loaded on a bus and taken back to the Marine Base in San Diego. There we were told we would be going overseas. The next days we were subjected to physical exams and several injections for protection against conditions we might be exposed to. We were also checked for our swimming ability. After boarding a troop transport in the San Diego harbor, we set out to sea and were then told our destination was Pearl Harbor. After arriving we were housed in Marine barracks and during those first few days we didn't have much to do but we were moved to different barracks several times.

Next I was transferred to a place called Camp Catlin which was between Pearl Harbor and Honolulu. When I arrived I was assigned to the camp's main switchboard with about five other men. Since I was a newcomer I was assigned to the late night shift manning the switchboard. There wasn't much else to do except sleep and go to the mess hall to get some food. Soon after arriving at the camp, I was transferred to Battery D of the 15th Defense Battalion which was stationed at the camp and was training for assignment. There I met Sargent Jack Vizard from Grand Rapids, Michigan, who was the wire chief of the Battery which contained four 90-millimeter anti-aircraft guns. Also on the wire crew of the battery was Ed Ryan

from Oyster Bay, New York who became the corporal. Dominic De Masi from the Boston area and George Singer from Perth Amboy, New Jersey were also part of the crew and were responsible for all the wire communications in the battery. When we were on a field problem on maneuvers, we posted a phone at each gun to the commanding officer, the executive officer, the height finder and the central locator. They were all connected to a switchboard along with wires from Battalion headquarters and someone had to man the switchboard at all times.

Just before Christmas of 1943 we began loading all of the equipment aboard an LST anchored in Pearl Harbor. The day after Christmas we boarded the ship. A day or so later we sailed out of the harbor and into the Pacific Ocean. When we were out to sea we were told that we were going to be part of the invasion of the Marshall Islands. Specifically we were bound for the islands of Roi and Namur on the northern part of the Kwajalein Atoll which was the largest atoll in the Marshalls. An atoll is a ring of islands with a coral reef surrounding it. It was located about 2,000 miles southwest of Hawaii. We sailed in a convoy of many ships and the trip took several weeks. The LST's could not go fast and we had to be aware of Japanese submarines so we used a route that was jagged.

It was probably toward the end of January when the invasion began. The assault troops from the 4th Marine Division landed on the beaches of Roi and Namur with a regimental combat team on each island. The battle lasted about two days until the islands were secured. Our LST landed on the beach on the third day and we began unloading the equipment and moving it to our designated location which was on the eastern shore of the island. We had landed on the western side. There were trails thru the jungle until we got to the shore of our determined location. The guns were placed in position and we began the work of setting up the battery. Since we were the wire communications, we had to locate the communication center and set up the switchboard then run wires and connect the telephones to each gun, to the detecting device, to the altitude finder, the Battery CEO and the Battalion Headquarters. Digging and filling sand bags was a daily routine until the position was completed. In the beginning we had no fresh water for bathing and had to use salty brackish water. I could get soap to foam but it didn't rinse off very well so I always felt itchy. Our drinking water was in the center of the position in a lister bag and used a system to keep it cool by evaporation. Later a large tank was installed on the top of an old Japanese blockhouse and filled with fresh water. The sun warmed the water and the tank had several nozzles with chains attached. To shower we stood under the nozzle, pulled on the chain and got wet. When we released the chain, the water stopped so we could use soap and then a pull on the chain released the water to rinse off. It worked well and was a welcome relief after the weeks of having to use the brackish water. As the months went by, the work on our positions was completed so we were often assigned work on other tasks

around the island. Some of the jobs seemed to be wasted effort that didn't accomplish much.

Our entertainment was a movie where we had to sit on sand bags. Later this was improved when benches were installed at a new location but they were outdoors. On occasion we were treated to a show put on by a traveling group of entertainers. One of the more notable was a visit by Jack Benny and a group of movie stars. I remember the joke Jack Benny told at the beginning of his show. It went as follows: "During WWI, I joined the Navy with two other men. I was impressed with the Navy as they tried to place men close to what they did in civilian life. The first man was a street sweeper so they put him on a mine sweeper. The second man tore down buildings so he was assigned to a destroyer. How I got assigned to a ferry boat, I'll never know." Another form of entertainment was something called a "Smoker". It involved pairing a couple of guys who wanted to box. They set up a boxing ring and chose some people according to their size and weight and paired them to box. Those who wanted could go watch the bouts and smokes were handed out free depending on what you wanted, either cigars or cigarettes. You could sit, watch the fights and smoke. There were not any drugs available, at least I had never heard of any. You could watch without smoking also. As the months went by, things got a little easier. We were well established in our positions and there was a movie facility nearby so we would often watch movies in the evening. It was somewhere around September or early October when a replacement battalion was brought to the island. They were black Marines. In those days the blacks were segregated and in their own units. They took over our positions and we were loaded on troop ships and brought back to Oahu and placed in a transit center near Pearl Harbor. While there we learned the 15th Defense Battalion was being disbanded and we would be assigned elsewhere.

Around late November, I was assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines in the 4th Marine Division. I went to the island of Maui where they were stationed and training for a combat operation. We were going on long marches and field problems. Since I had not been doing much on the latter days in the Marshals, I was not in good physical condition so I had to work hard to keep up with the troops. Around Christmas the training was becoming more intense and we made a practice landing on the beaches of Maui. The day after Christmas we went aboard an LST docked in the Kahului harbor and made some practice landings for the ship. We then were transferred to larger troop transports and sailed to the Honolulu harbor and docked across from the Aloha tower. The line companies boarded the LST's and when all was ready we set sail for Saipan on January 2nd. While at Honolulu harbor I was able to get an overnight liberty because I had the address of my uncle, Andy Hood who was working at Pearl Harbor. A guy named Frank Radinovic arranged it because he worked at the message center. We visited my

uncle and also met a distant relative from Marquette, Michigan by the name of John Osterberg who was a nephew of my grandfather John Harju. After having some food, Frank and I left and got a room in a hotel in Honolulu and stayed overnight. The next morning we had breakfast in a restaurant and headed back to the ship.

On January 2nd the convoy set sail for Saipan. We were briefed on Iwo Jima, and shown maps of the place we were going to land during the invasion. We also were required to participate in exercises. When we arrived at Saipan the plan was for us to transfer back to the LST but the seas were very rough that morning so the transfer was delayed until the afternoon. When afternoon came, the seas did not calm down much but the schedule required that we transfer anyway. To transfer we had to climb down a rope net into a small landing boat and I remember being on the rope net and looking down and seeing the boat very near me. After a couple more steps I looked down again and the boat was very far down. The men in the boat were yelling for me to wait till it came back up and after a few more steps down, the boat was up again and the men were yelling for us to get off the net. After our boat was loaded, we circled around the ship waiting for the rest of the troops to load in other boats. I remember that when waiting for the others to load, there were times in between waves that I could not see the ship. After all the boats were loaded, we went to where the LST's were anchored and went aboard the one to which we were assigned. All of the better places to sleep were taken so I had to make do where I could find a place. Each of the LST's had a smaller LSM (Landing Ship Medium) mounted on the top deck. I found a place under the LSM to pitch a cot to sleep on. We made another practice landing going to but not landing on an abandoned island near Saipan with the destroyers and cruisers firing shells over us. I guess it was to help us get used to all the gunfire. The trip from Saipan to Iwo Jima took several days. I remember the day before we landed was a Sunday and the clergy were busy conducting religious services on the many LST's. There seemed to be a nervous tension and talk among the guys in my unit and it was probably wide spread. A guy named Calhoun from Florida said that I looked scared and Kesner from Ohio, who had made other landings, said I shouldn't let that bother me because he was probably as scared as anyone. Ted Hubler kiddingly said he was so big they couldn't miss him and so it went that day. D-Day on Iwo Jima was early morning on the 19th of February 1945. We arrived at the island about dawn and we saw the battleships shelling the island. The shells were red hot and left a trail as they shot out of the guns. Some guys had stayed up all night playing poker and were just sitting around. I don't remember how much sleep I was able to get but with all that going on I didn't have time to think about it. Our breakfast was very good with all sorts of goodies. It was probably one of the best breakfasts I had while in the Marine Corps. The time came for us to go down to the tank deck and get into the Gators (the amphibious tractors we would land in). The tractor I was in had a lot of the wire communication gear we needed, telephones,

switchboards and wire reels. Al Kromhaus and I oversaw the equipment. Al was more attuned to this than I was because he had made landings on Saipan and Tinian. There were several others from the wire platoon in the tractor including the Battalion Doctor and some Corpsmen (Medics). The doors on the tank deck opened and the tractors began going into the water. When we first went out it looked to me like we might sink but the tractors floated. Once in the water we began circling around. We were doing this to get organized into a wave. After we circled and were in line, we were waved in at the line of departure by a couple of destroyer escorts with a person on the back waving flags.

Earlier as we were approaching Iwo Jima, there was an announcement on the P.A. that the Japanese were seen burying barrels along the coast where we were to land. The speculation was that they were filled with a flammable liquid and would be ignited when we were landing. The solution to this was to put a couple extra ponchos in each landing vehicle and as we approached the shore we were to wet them and put them over the troop carriers and the tractor would pass thru the flames. As we approached the shore I saw the Medics getting the ponchos wet and wondered if there were flames on the shore. From where I was sitting I could not see the shoreline but it didn't happen and thankfully so because it certainly would have complicated matters. After we were waved into the line of departure we began heading for the beach. I was sitting close to the front end of the troop compartment with Al Kromhaus with all the wire communication equipment. They asked for two volunteers to man the machine guns mounted behind steel shields on the front. Two guys immediately got up, Barlow from San Francisco and the other was Freudenberg from Iowa. As we neared the shore I could hear Japanese bullets hitting the steel shields. It was then that I began to realize that war was about killing. When our tractor reached the shore the ramp on the back of the tractor went down and the troops began running out to get on the beach. Kromhaus told me he would go out and for me to hand the equipment to him over the side. I would hand an item and he would run with it and put it on the sand and then come back for another. I was alone in the tractor and the driver began to get anxious for me to get out so he could leave the beach as the firing was quite heavy. I finally got all the gear out and ran to the shore next to where Kromhaus was. He told me a guy for our outfit named Richard Sturm was killed right on the beach. As I lay there I was looking up at the sky and saw one of our spotter planes explode in the air. There were no parachutes so I assumed the two men were both killed in the explosion. Kromhaus then said we had to get off the beach because it was so hot with all the shooting. He was concerned about our equipment so I suggested we leave it there, find more of our men and come back for it. He thought that would work so we took off running in the volcanic ash that was on the shore. There were terrace like arrangements so we would run a short distance and then have a bank. Running up the bank was difficult because our feet would slip back on the sand. We

ran three or four of the banks before we found some of the men from our outfit. Ted Hubler was on my right and Cullen and Collins were to my right but higher on the bank. The objective of our regiment was to take the first air strip and that was the direction we were headed. I don't know how long we were laying on the side of that bank, but Hubler said he wanted a cigarette but didn't have any matches. I didn't want to try to get the matches out of my backpack so when I saw a Marine thirty yards away I yelled at him for some and he told me he was wounded and couldn't move. I crawled over to him, got his matches, crawled back and lit up a cigarette for Hubler and myself. Shortly after the Japanese mortar shells began coming in. I saw the first one land in the sand behind us and saw a piece of shrapnel go into the back of Kromhaus's neck. His head went down immediately and I assumed he was dead. When I looked at Hubler I saw him pushing himself up with his arms, coughing and then suddenly collapsing on the sand. I realized that I needed to improve my cover so I began digging myself deeper in the sand with a canteen I found that had been blown open so I could work it like a scoop. I was kicking sand with my feet wondering what I should do next when another mortar shell landed with a blast and I felt a hot piece of shrapnel go thru my arm and felt the warm blood running down it.

I knew I needed to do something about the wound in my arm. I took off running toward the beach to find a Corpsman and after a short distance I recognized one by the insignia on his garb. I asked him to bandage my wound which he did after he cleaned it. He gave me a small bottle of brandy that Corpsman carried and asked me if I could see a landing craft coming to the shore. He told me that when it came in I should get in it. When I protested, he said I would not be able to use my arm for a while and I needed more treatment. I ran to it as soon as they unloaded their cargo and just as I got in an explosion on the side of the craft tipped it to one side. The next thing I knew I was rolling on the bottom. The craft righted itself after the explosion and the boatswain managed to get it off the beach and headed back to the ships. After we arrived, I was taken on the ship and tended to by some seamen. I was taken to a hold which was a lower deck where other wounded Marines were bunked. They put me on a bunk and made me as comfortable as possible. The following morning there was some excitement aboard ship as our ship was rammed broadside by another ship. Our first thought was we were hit by a torpedo but when we found out we were rammed by one of our own, our fears were allayed. Then some medics came to our hold to treat our wounds. I got in line and waited for my turn for treatment but I fainted while standing there and fell on the deck. I was immediately attended to and was put on a stretcher and brought up to the room where they were doing surgeries. The doctor treated my wound and then looked for more. I told him I didn't have any other wounds and didn't know why I fainted. They took me back to the hold where I was bunked for several days.

One day there was an announcement on the ship's P.A. system that Mount Surbachi had been taken and the flag was flying on top of it. After several more days, the ship was loaded with wounded and we left for the island of Guam. Upon arrival we were all placed in a hospital and given cots to sleep on. We were tended by medics and had daily examinations. About a week after arrival I was discharged and taken to a transit center where I was assigned to a tent and a place to sleep. As I walked into the tent I saw Sargent Fink, the wire chief of our unit. We immediately began discussing the people in our unit and shared our observations. When I told him about Al Kromhaus, he told me that Al had been evacuated but died aboard a hospital ship. I immediately began to feel bad for leaving him. If you asked me why I felt bad, I could not answer. I only knew that I felt inadequate and that I hadn't fulfilled my responsibilities. I would think about the situation and wonder what I could have done to change the outcome. In reality, nothing would have changed it, but I could not get rid of the bad feeling for a long time.

On the way to the transit center I saw a sign indicating an Army unit was located there. The name of the unit sounded very familiar to me because it was part of the address of a childhood friend from Wakefield who I was communicating with. I decided to see if I could get there to check it out while I was at the transit center. One day I walked to the gate and asked the sentry if I could just walk out to the road. He said he could not let me out but pointed to a field that was not guarded and said if I walked out there no one would stop me. I walked across a field and once on the road I began hitchhiking. A couple guys in a jeep stopped and gave me a ride. When I saw the sign denoting the Army unit I asked to be let off and I walked into the area of the unit. I found the Sargent Major's tent and asked the person behind the desk if a soldier named Jean Nurmi was a member of the unit. The man looked and told me Jean was in tent number three and told me where it was. I found the tent and walked in and saw him lying on a cot. He was excited to see me. After we talked and the excitement wore off, he took me to the mess hall and we shared some good food. The time came for me to get back to the transit center. My friend "Chinky" (his childhood nickname) decided to come back with me. We got a ride with no problem but when I walked to the gate the sentry would not allow me to enter but mentioned the unguarded field. After saying good bye, I went back and Chinky went back to his post.

It wasn't long after that incident that we boarded ship and sailed back to Oahu to another transit center. The trip took about a week or so and I remember that the food was not very good aboard the ship. I had a bout of nervous tension which affected my ability to sleep. It began when I was thinking about the incidents I experienced on Iwo Jima. I was particularly bothered about leaving Al Kromhaus there thinking he was dead and then discovering that he had been evacuated only to die aboard a hospital ship. I wondered if I could have done something that would

have allowed him to survive. It took me a long time to get through that feeling. When we arrived at the transit center on Oahu, I went to the sick bay and told the attendant that I couldn't sleep. He arranged for me to go there each evening for a week and take a pill to put me to sleep. I don't know what it was, but it knocked me out and it was the only time in my Marine experience that I missed breakfast chow.

It wasn't long before I boarded a small inter island boat and after an overnight trip arrived back to Kahului, the main port on the island of Maui. I boarded a truck and returned to the 4th Marine Division camp and to the unit in which I served. As I recall there were only about six Marines in the wire communications unit that landed on Iwo Jima. Of those, one was a corporal and the rest were PFC's. The corporal was Jim Nabors from Alabama and one PFC was Ray Graves from Massachusetts. Soon, other guys returned after recovering from their wounds. One was Corporal Wellons from the Carolina's and the wire chief, Sargent Fink returned. John Hovis, a radio operator, returned as well along with others from the radio group. There were quite a few who never returned. A Marine named Rayner from New York was on the same hospital ship as me. He had a small thumb sized piece of shrapnel in his leg just above his knee. A Marine named Collins returned. I saw him get hit with a serious wound and crawl back to the beach. I have often wondered about their lives and what they were like after the war.

We began getting replacements from the States to build us up to combat strength. The training began with light work and the intensity began increasing by the end of July of 1945. We were scheduled to leave Maui for the Philippines the third week of August as that was going to be the staging area for the invasion of Japan. There were rumors as to when the invasion would take place. One was in early November and another was that we would land on the main island near Tokyo in the early spring of 1946. Thankfully none of this came to fruition with the advent of the Atom Bomb.

After the war ended they kept us busy with outings of various types. Then we had the point system. We got one point for every month we served, another point for each month overseas and a number of points for each combat mission served. Those who didn't have enough points to qualify to go home were separated and put into units to prepare for occupation. Those who did qualify, of which I was one, boarded a small aircraft carrier for the trip back to the States. This was early in October of 1945. After we arrived in San Diego, we were taken to Camp Pendleton near Oceanside, California. We were kept there without any leave for two weeks. During this time we underwent physical exams, psychological tests, etc. Then those of us from the Midwest boarded a train for the Great Lakes Naval Training station near Chicago. We stopped in railroad stations on route and people greeted us with goodies of various kinds. After a five day cross country train ride we arrived in

Chicago and the naval station. After we arrived we had physical exams and were asked questions about our health. I was fine and was prepared for discharge.

I was discharged on November 3, 1945 after roughly thirty-three months in the Marine Corps. I had a railroad ticket to Ironwood, Michigan and was dropped off at the North Shore Railroad Station where I caught the next train to Milwaukee. I arrived in Milwaukee about 11:00 am. The train to Ironwood did not leave until 6:00 pm. I didn't know anyone so I wasn't sure how to spend the time. I went for a walk in downtown Milwaukee and passed a burlesque theater. The show was just beginning so I made a spur of the moment decision, paid the admission and went to the show. The shows then were much more sophisticated than the strip shows are now. They had big production numbers, comics, as well as the stripper who never took everything off. After the show I went back to the railroad station and there I met a man from Ramsey. I didn't know him well but I knew his younger brother. We talked and he suggested going to have a beer in a local bar. He was just getting out of the Army and going home. We had several hours before the train left but time goes fast when sitting and talking so when we returned to the station we had to hurry to catch the train. We arrived in Ironwood the next morning. There was a little snow on the ground. I had not seen any snow since I left Wakefield. With my sea bag on my shoulder I walked three or four blocks to the bus station. The bus left shortly after I arrived and I was on my way home. The bus driver's name was Morrison and he lived in Wakefield and was impressed that he was bringing me home so he made a special stop for me so I didn't have as long a walk. As I walked over the small hill near our house my mother, sister Lillian, and kid sister Norma greeted me. Lillian was home and had given birth to her son Ray eleven months earlier. Her husband was in the Army Air corps and wasn't home yet. It was a wonderful experience being home again and I was anxious to see the town and the people there. As I met people they would ask me about going to college. I didn't know how to answer because we hadn't talked about college overseas. Eventually I did go to college and was thankful for the opportunity.