Hugh Hammond– Life during WWII

By Hugh B. Hammond

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Box 1 Folder 9

Oral Interview conducted by Kara Teske

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Brigham Young University – Idaho
KT: Today is October 15, and I am Kara Teske and I’m doing an interview with Hugh Hammond in Ashton, Idaho. Just to start with, I just would like to know a little bit about your past. Where were you born at?

HH: I was born in Blackfoot, Groveland, Idaho.

KT: Blackfoot. And when did you move here?

HH: 1957.

KT: 1957. Is this where Jean is from?

HH: No, she is from Firth.

KT: Firth. What brought you up here?

HH: Well, a partner and I bought a business up here. We was working for First Street Plumbing, and we moved up here and (inaudible) so we could start a business.

KT: And then you were stuck.

HH: Yeah.

KT: That’s funny. So do you remember where you were at on December 7?

HH: I know exactly where I was at.

KT: 1941. Where were you?

HH: I was up in Fort Lewis, Washington, up in the headquarters company cleaning a room for a lieutenant colonel.

KT: How did you hear about it?

HH: On the radio, I always had the radio on when I was up there. And they come on and of course told about the bombing, and they also interrupted the program to tell all the soldiers that was on leave ‘cause it was the weekend, Sunday, that they was ordered back to their base immediately. And of course I went back to my company barracks, and they had the supply doors open issuing live ammunition for our guns, and that happened on December 7. I remember that on that day.

KT: So you were already in the military then? And what branch did you say you were in?

HH: In the army.
KT: In the army.

HH: I joined the National Guard when I was sixteen.

KT: Okay.

HH: And in September, or July of 1940, yeah, 1940, we went on our two week Encampment, ya know, and we went home in September they mobilized the National Guard and for a year, so then I went back up to Fort Lewis for a year. And before the year was over they extended that for six months. And before the six months was over why we was in war. And then of course you’re in for the duration.

KT: So you were in Fort Lewis then, where did you go after September 7…… December 7?

HH: Well, part of our company was deployed out on the beach over in Olympia and half of our company stayed in Fort Lewis. I was stayed in Fort Lewis. But they went up to set up perimeters in case the Japanese invading there. And the funny part about that was that we didn’t have any (inaudible) so they would knock one tree down and then they would cut another tree and set its stick out of over this one like this so it would look like an aerial force and that was their defense. Because we was really woefully unprepared. We used to drill the old spring tree rifles and some of us was wooden rifles and all of them new recruits, a lot of them had wooden rifles to train with. I had the old bold action hot six, you know. We had different guns depending on the place I was in. And I forgot when they come out with the new M1 but thing that was early in 1941 when they come out with that, and maybe the last of ’41, maybe, probably the last. And then in March of ’42, we went to San Francisco and boarded on a boat to Australia. And at the time they were bombing Darwin in Australia and all the Australian troops was over in North Africa fighting. And so really there was only really I think two divisions of Americans over in Australia at that time. That country is as big as this one. But we trained in Melbourne, or down around Melbourne for maybe six months—eight months I don’t remember for sure, and they loaded all of our equipment on the railroad, and we rode from Melbourne to Townsville and that city we had to change trains because the gage of the tracks are different. And then we changed again in Brisbon and then rode on up to Townsville. And I was riding on the flatcar of the trucks, you know, we had to cart our stuff on them all the way up and that was really beautiful sight to be able to see the country for what 22, 000 miles or something like that. And then we boarded a boat in Townsville, and we went to New Guinea to Fort Morsby and from there we camped there for I don’t know, a few days and then we walked around the, around the horn I guess you might say, through the jungle and up to a place called Rubiera, and that was probably five or six miles, half a day, a two or three hour walk maybe from there to Buda, where they had that really big battle there in New Guinea. And I don’t remember how long I was in New Guinea, then we went from there back to Australia. I remember when we left when we walked around that to where we was, it took us three days. And they put us on a C-47, and we flew over the Pogstad Range it took 45 minutes to get back. And they had us unloading ships’ supplies in the dock there in Fort Marsby for I don’t remember how long. But anyway
we left there and went back to Rock Hampton in Australia, and that’s the last I went up to New Guinea. I went to the hospital, and they shipped me through the VF hospital and the unit hospital and they shipped me down to Melbourne to the hospital.

KT: Why were you in the hospital?

HH: Well, I had that skin acne that was just absolutely horrible. I couldn’t pack a pack or anything, you know. And that’s what they sent me home with. And then when I come home thirty days after I quit taking (inaudible). I come down with the malaria.

KT: They sent you back to the states?

HH: Yeah. They didn’t have enough what do you call them, anyway skin doctors there. They sent me down in Fort Sam Houston. They had specialists down there.

KT: So you were still on duty when. . .

HH: Yeah, I was still on duty till I was discharged. But after I got out of the hospital there, they transferred me to Fort Douglas. I was there for a few days and then they transferred me down to Camp McQuaid in California. And I spent the rest of the war guarding prisoners. They were American prisoners AWLs and all that, and that’s what I did, stand in the tower or do patrol work inside the compound. And that was, I can’t remember when I was down there. I must have been there a year, a year and a half or so.

KT: You said they were American prisoners?

HH: Yeah, they had a compound there, right on the beach, and the towers around the fence and all that and the deserters and oh people who was criminals they locked them up in the Army same as they do in civilian life, you know. And we had, there was enough for a company there, there must have been 200 of them at least when I started. And they, after they got them rehabilitated and trained then they would put them out, back out in combat just as long as they could behave themselves. And they wipe all that off their record, you know.

KT: So they were all military prisoners?

HH: Just Americans, we didn’t have any Germans there. There was some Germans down in Fort Sam Houston, Texas when I was down there, but not in the Camp. They was all Americans.

KT: Did you come in contact with any Japanese?

HH: Just one. He was an interpreter in our outfit, just a little tiny guy. I remember we was going down the trail in the jungle when we was going to Rubiera, and we would sit on the side of the trail for a ten minute break, you know, they give you every hour, and these natives come along. When they travel, they travel a whole family at a time big one
next one, next one boys, and then they carry a stick and then come the women. The wife, she’s got a big basket on her head carrying the provisions. Next daughter a little smaller basket, clear down to the (inaudible) got a little basket. They always carry them, and the men always carry only a stick. They come along and these men see that Jap there and they went over and we thought they was going to eat him. We had to prevent them because he was an American. And he was interrupted as an interpreter. And oh, he was scared to death. That little Japanese was just terrified. Bit I never come in any contact with Japanese soldiers. I was in Headquarters Company. And the Generals was not noted for putting their tents on the frontlines.

KT: So how did you feel about the Japanese and the Germans?

HH: Well, they there was a much deeper feeling some of these people that thinks we were mean to them. And paying the Japanese for locking them up as I was in the Army. And they pay them 40,000 bucks that was on account of a Senator (inaudible) in Hawaii I know that got that through. And I felt real bad about that, and I felt bad about them paying reparations to Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the atomic bomb because that was no more inhumane than what they did to the United States soldiers, specifically at Baton on that death march. And they was much meaner to the American prisoners than American was to the Japanese prisoners. I have no sympathy for them at all. I still begrudge them apologizing for dropping a bomb on (inaudible), ya know if they would have had it first, we would have got it no question. And I feel the same way not about the German people, I kind of like the German people because they was fanatic, but they at least had some reason to them, they was just following the wrong leader. Very intelligent people and they committed a lot of atrocities but, and the Japanese today I don’t have any ill feelings against them. There’s a lot of good Japanese, and they had a hard feet to overcome in their industrious and they work, mind their own business. I’m really proud of the way that they handled that, you know. There’s a lot of them that’s already American citizens. Now there was some of them that was here wasn’t American citizens, and they went back to Japan and joined the Japanese army, like some Japanese from Newdale. Well, this is the reason they was put in internment, they wasn’t concentration camps they was internment camps, and they locked them up because they didn’t know which ones was patriotic and which ones wasn’t. They had no idea.

KT: So did you know any of the Japanese that were put into internment camps? Did you personally know any of them?

HH: No. I knew some Japanese in Blackfoot, the Shiasakis and the Endows. The Endows lived in Fort Hall, and their parents got killed in an automobile accident. A (inaudible) woman took care of them from the time they were little. All really good kids—three boys and one girl. And Mike and Hiro Shiasaki both served in the American army. And Hiro was active in the American Legion. I think he died. I don’t remember. He was as good an American as anybody so was, in fact Mike was the sheriff down in Bingham County for quite a few years.

KT: So were they put into a camp then?
HH: No.

KT: No. What happened to them?

HH: Well, they joined the Army.

KT: Did they?

HH: Yeah, they found for the American Army or Navy. I’m not sure which, whether it was the Army or Navy, but they were in the service.

KT: So how did the government, ‘cause you said that they put them into camps because they couldn’t tell who were with the Japanese and who were American citizens?

HH: That’s right.

KT: So then how did they fight in the Army like, were the Government, were they willing to accept them?

HH: They were on full division in Italy. They come out one of the most decorated divisions in the United States. And they had an American commander of that division, but they had a really rough go in Italy. And they was Americans, Japanese descent but they was all Americans. But there’s a lot of Japanese on the West coast, just a lot. And President Roosevelt did that for security reasons, same as they did with the Germans in WWI. They interred them because they didn’t know which one was loyal to the United States. And it’s harsh treatment, but when the security of your whole nation is at stake then look at it that way. Think they did right think because those people were treated good. They would work their little farms and gardens, and I don’t think they was any more confined than we was in the Army, not a bit.

KT: Do you know very much about what the camps were set up like?

HH: I don’t, I’ve never been inside of one of the camps. But they just had a fence around them, and they was not allow to go out. That’s all I know about that.

KT: Did they have normal houses?

HH: Normal for the time yeah. As good as the GIs had ‘em. They set up they called ‘em tarpaper shacks really, but they wasn’t really bad. The ones down at this prison camp, Camp McQuaid, that’s all we had was tarpaper shacks, but at least they was pretty good. You knew it wasn’t permanent.

KT: Do you think they had, the Japanese, had a hard time after the war ended, like were Americans harsh to them?
HH: Well, I wasn’t there on the occupation forces, but I would say no. This is probably
the only thing I give McArthur credit for ‘cause he done a good job with helping
rehabilitate that country. I didn’t like McArthur, but I thought he done a tremendous job
in Japan when he was general at the occupation force, and he didn’t try to belittle their
emperor or anything else, I think he was very fair.

KT: So we went in there and helped them?

HH: Oh yeah. We put a lot of money in rehabilitating that, that’s how come they can sell
cars cheaper—they had all new stuff. And I’m not saying it’s a hundred percent, but they
put a lot of money in that. Too bad I didn’t keep a journal of some of the things I would
want to remember, you know. But oh, I remember just some of the highlights. I had a
couple of buddies in our outfit that was killed up in New Guinea, and oh I guess you
could probably say my best friend was wounded up there. But he come back and went to
school on the GI bill, and he started to sell insurance. He married a girl that was anti-
Mormon, and she joined the church. Boy I tell you, she was Mormon from then on. And
he was bishop in one ward that he was in then he went to Texas, and he was Stake
President down there. And then he got transferred over to Kansas, Salina, Kansas, and he
was a regional representative for the church over there so. And Blanche really growed in
the Church after the war. But now, he doesn’t know anybody, bedridden with
Alzheimer’s. Hear from Blanche once a year, and that’s about it, he still don’t know
anybody. He never will I guess. Talked to his cousin the other night. He don’t have
Alzheimer’s, he’s like me he’s got sometimers.

KT: That’s funny. So were you in active, like did you ever actually fight ‘cause you said
you trained over there but, what else did you do in New Guinea?

HH: In, for my duties?

KT: Yeah.

HH: My duties was mostly guard and done a lot of kitchen duty, KP. Our headquarter
company was responsible for the security of the headquarters, company of the generals,
colonels, and all that and we furnished the drivers motor pool for all them and drivers for
‘em, and guard duty for them and just about everything that the officers required or even
think they require. I wasn’t, this buddy I talked to you about, both of them, they
transferred into the 163rd infantry and the 186th infantry. And that’s how come they was
up fighting the Japs, and they got shot and all that, you know.

KT: So you didn’t actually fight in combat?

HH: No. I was in this headquarters company, and like I say they don’t pitch their tents on
the frontline. They are always in that case four, five miles from the front. We had
occasional bombings trying to bomb the camp, and they got pretty close sometimes, but
that’s all. And there was, I saw quite a few dog fights the zeros and the P-40s and the P-
38s. Saw a P-38 shot down, but the guy got out. This Jap come down and tried to strape
him, but I don’t know, I never found out if he killed him or not. But they do that, strape
the parachutes. And those little zero fighters was a really good airplane. And that P-38
it’s the (inaudible). They could go up higher so they would get way up above them and
then when they would dive they could go 600 miles an hour, you know. And they was
tough on the zeros. P-40s and P-39s looked something like a zero, but they wasn’t as
maneuverable because they had armor plate around for the pilots and those zeros had
nothing to protect the pilot just all the weight would get off.

KT: So did you, tell me about your friends you were talking about a little bit before.
When were they transferred?

HH: What?

KT: Your friends that you were telling me about.

HH: Oh. When we was in Australia, well actually, before we went to Australia, this is
before; they split the company up because we had what, 150 men in our company all
from the hometown. Okay, they split these up in different outfits so that if something
happened to one company in wouldn’t be such a catastrophe for one hometown. That
was the reason for it. And so after they got through splitting up our company there was
maybe 20 left from the original what we had in that company that same company. And
that was the reason for it. Yeah, when that happened you think, well it’s never going to
be the same, but you get used to it. You have to make new friends. But, it’s harder to
find friends from New York City and Chicago and Detroit and Boston as it is from
Blackfoot or Idaho or from the mid-west, those are good people. North and South
Dakota, Texans is good, California is pretty good. Boy I tell you, that Detroit and
Chicago and New York and Boston, I didn’t care if I ever went to see those places. They
had so different values than what the people out here have. Steal you blind, lie, cheat,
steal. And I’m sure they’re not all like that, I think we just got the majority of them. But
I wasn’t impressed with those towns, wouldn’t have traded our little town for the whole
bunch.

KT: Where were you at when you heard about the German concentration camps? Do you
remember?

HH: German concentration camps?

KT: Yeah, where they had the Jews. Do you remember hearing about that at all?

HH: No, no I never seen any of that, the only thing I know about that is what I read in the
paper. And the Holocaust and all that it was I guess worse than the Baton Death March
as far as that goes because they just absolutely murdered them, you know. But I wasn’t
in on that, and I didn’t know anybody that was ever involved in that either.

KT: You mentioned the Baton Death March a couple times, what was that?
HH: The what?

KT: The Baton Death March.

HH: That was when General Wainwright surrendered right after the war and McArthur, they sent him to Australia. I think they made a mistake, they sent the wrong guy, but anyway, they let Wainwright do it, handle that and he finally had to surrender. And so all the garrison that was in the Philippines was captured and put in this concentration camp, and then they moved ‘em to another one, and they had to walk. And they didn’t give them anything to eat to speak of. It was just terrible. They finally liberated what was left of them. All you could see was just rib and bones and that. And then another thing that ticked me off was they wanted to give General Wainwright a medal for his service there and McArthur wouldn’t recommend it, for he should never have surrendered. He had no choice.

KT: Now Wainwright was an American right?

HH: Yes.

KT: Okay.

HH: Yeah, he was second in command in the Philippines under McArthur. And the funny part of that, General Eisenhower, I saw him, met him when he was Lieutenant Colonel down in the Army and so well we went to practice anyway and he was one of the observers from that but he went over to the Philippines. . . And anyway, the report that he the (inaudible) was incredible, you know. The report that Eisenhower wrote up said that it wouldn’t last two weeks, and it told him what would happen on it, and that is just exactly what happened. Of course at that time he that he had done something just incredible, you know. That was the difference between those two generals. One knew it all and then other was willing to learn. I shouldn’t talk about that because I just didn’t like McArthur. He was more interested in photo opportunities than he was in winning the war, in my opinion. In fact, I think if it hadn’t been for Nimitz and Palsy, the Navy commanders, I think we would have lost the war. Hat’s, that’s my opinion, and I wasn’t even in the Navy. I think they was more ahead of McArthur on tactics and there was no question about it. But not quite as good political pull. A lot of people say he wanted to be president. I don’t think so. I think he wanted to be king. I really do. Of course I was over there in the semi-tropics, and he called this inspection, full-dress inspection. I had to go put on my full-dress ties and everything, and I had that acne and I couldn’t pack hurt my back so bad I couldn’t stand up, and we had to dress up like that and here he comes traipsing across a little swamp that’s like this, shirt collar open, sloppy hat, and we had to get in full-dress uniform to watch that? Just a photo opportunity for him is all it was. And I guess that’s important, you know home town opinion up.

KT: Do you remember hearing about the, like where you were when you heard about the atomic bomb being dropped?
HH: I was at Camp McQuaid, California guarding prisoners, and I think I was sitting up in the tower when they said about that.

KT: What did you think about it when you heard?

HH: I thought ‘good, I hope they get the whole bunch,’ I really did. And I think that those two atomic bombs probably saved several millions lives because those Japanese were dedicated fighters, and they believed in their cause, and they would fight to the death. And the amount of Americans and British and Australians and whatever it would take to go in there and secure Japan, the ones that they killed and the ones that Japanese killed them I’ll bet you would have been running in the millions I think there was 75,000 killed in Nagasaki and a few more in, what was the name of the other one . . .

KT: Hiroshima.

HH: Hiroshima. I think there was more killed there than Nagasaki, and I think there was 75,000 killed in Nagasaki. But I think it was a drop in the bucket to what it would have killed, been killed in human lives if the invasion, if we would have had to go through with the invasions in Japan which they was all set to do they was poised on Okinawa already. They was poised to get the rest of it you know, the tough part and so in my opinion, Harry Truman was absolutely right. And you know we found out later the Germans was not far from having the atomic bomb and the Japanese was also working on it. And we happened to have it first; that was the difference.

KT: Do you think that most people agreed with him? What do you think the opinion was of the bomb being dropped?

HH: Who?

KT: American opinion.

HH: American people.

KT: Yeah.

HH: At the time I think that they were a hundred percent for it, no it’s never ever one hundred percent but I think the majority was in favor of that war getting over. You never get a hundred percent but, the main public opinion was that it was the thing to do. And it took a lot of soul searching on Harry Truman’s part to do that, and I think he done a lot of worrying. I was in his credential library back in Missouri and a quite a history and the things that he worried and wondered about, you know. But one thing about it, once he made a decision, he didn’t try to pass the buck. Same way when he canned McArthur. George Marshall said you should have canned him a long time ago. And there was the real genius behind World War II, was George Marshall. Man with a photographic memory and he ran, actually ran both campaigns, the Pacific and the European theater. He was Chief of Staff. And I think one of the most, if not the most, brilliant generals that
we ever had, and he was Secretary of State, and he had a lot to do with rehabilitating Japan also.

KT: What made him different? What did he do that was different that everybody else?

HH: Marshall?

KT: Yeah.

HH: He just knew what orders to give. He had a photographic memory, and he knew tactics. I think he served under Persing in World War I, I think. He would have been a young officer then I suppose. But in all the history that you write on him, he was just a good man, a smart man. I know he commanded respect from all his officers and men. He mastered a whole army, European, Pacific, total. All (inaudible) did too in the Pacific but not to the extent that Marshall did. And they was good men, too brilliant strategists. When it come to a naval battle or something, boy they went all out. You know, Hark Misseldine was in Pearl Harbor when they attacked Pearl Harbor, and they sunk his ship when he was in the water, and he got out and got on another ship and went down to the battle of the coral Sea and got dumped in the water again. Twice, Hark come out with his leg all mangled and shot up. That was the battle that was the turning point in the Pacific War.

KT: Which one?

HH: The turning point in the Pacific War because there was troop ships on those. The Japanese was going to land in Darwin, and they sunk those ships, and they lost ships too, but anyway it was our big victory on that because they didn’t get their troops in Australia, the Battle of the Coral Sea. And then there was another big battle, and I think of what they called it. Those two was really important. They was naval victories really.

KT: So after the atomic bomb was dropped, how much longer were you in active duty?

HH: Let’s see, I think that was dropped in August, I think. I can remember the celebrations and (inaudible) when the war was ended, you know. I got out in October, not September, I got out in September ‘cause I had enough points that I got out a little quicker than some of the others.

KT: And what did you do when you got out?

HH: Hitchhiked home and got drunk. I went to work in a poultry factory, I was killing turkeys. I had done that for about two or three years and then they had a metals shop there too and furnace department so during the time that I wasn’t killing turkeys, why I worked in the metals shop. And I done that until ’46 I think, then I decided I wanted to go start farming. So I bought a little tractor and run it through the ground and farmed for two years and then got married soon after I started farming. And then we bought us a little farm, a little 80 acre farm that was run down and not all that productive. And we
did that for I don’t know how many years. I would go to work every winter to pay the
gas bill, and finally I decided I ain’t going to do that anymore. I’m going to do one or the
other. So I sold the farm and started working for First Street Plumbing in the metals
shop.

KT: Here in Ashton?

HH: No, in Idaho Falls.

KT: In Idaho Falls, okay.

HH: Yeah, we lived there for a year or so.

KT: What was different about your life, or was anything different after you came back
from the war?

HH: Well, I suppose just because I was growed up then. Really not too much was all that
much different. The old friends that you had, they had also been in the Army and that
and they take up their own way and kind of drift away so you have new friends that what
you had before when you left. And outside of that, why there wasn’t I don’t think any
difference.

KT: Did you have any brothers or relatives at all that fought in the war?

HH: Yes. I had three brothers. One was in the Army in Italy, one was in the Army in
Okinawa, two of them was there in Okinawa about the time that we declared peace. They
went in oh, I don’t know, about three or four years after I was in there. They went in and
they’re both dead now. Norman’s almost dead. They put him in the hospital the other
night, so the two of us is all there is surviving out of eleven in the family.

KT: Did any of you get injured or anything happen?

HH: No.

KT: No.

HH: Nope. Murray had a tank shot out from under him. He didn’t get hurt. They shot
the track off of it. So then they went out the next night when it was dark and crawled
underneath the machine and put the track back on the tank and took off. He was in the
Marines in the tank division. Paul, that was my younger brother. He was in the finance
division, payroll division there in Italy with the troops there. Norman was first sergeant
in a company over in Okinawa. He said, “I don’t know how come they made me first
sergeant, they looked through the records and I was the only one with a high school
education.

KT: That’s all it took?
HH: Yes. I didn’t have any high school education. But I left to go in the Guard when I
would have been a Junior I think. But I got my diploma down here from, do you
remember when they give out the diplomas to all these veterans, I got one then.

KT: There you go. Were you able to keep in touch with your brothers while they were
fighting and you were?

HH: Yeah, we was actually a pretty close family. Always knew what was going on and I
got a few letters from all of them while I was in the service, but not every week, you
know, just enough to know how they was doing. I think Murray went in, in 1943 if I can
remember right. ‘Cause not long after I come back I got to leave and went down to san
Diego to that Marine training camp there and went over to see him. And we went uptown
for the weekend, and that was the last time I saw him before he went overseas. And
Norman was married when he went in. That’s the one that’s sick now it the hospital.
And my younger brother when he was a kid he got in a wreck, a head on wreck with a
car, on his bicycle and it broke him up something terrible. He got healed up from that
and his leg wouldn’t work just right and every month he was down to the recruiting office
trying to get in, and they wouldn’t take him. And finally why this one time I don’t know
if they got tired of him or what but anyway, they took him in. But he had a hard time
getting into the Army. He was in basic training with Gilbert Murdoch. That’s Della’s
brother, Della Perry’s brother.

KT: Oh, okay.

HH: Down in Texas, and anybody that goes to Texas and his basic training has got to go
through the war. That’s hot down there, hot and humid.

KT: What are some of your most vivid memories from the war?

HH: Yeah know, I can remember the bombers coming over when we was down in Fort
Marsby picking up supplies and they was coming (bombing) the ships in the harbor and
my buddy that was driving. He drove the Jeep down on the beach in the sand, and he
jumped out and he got behind the logs and I got behind the logs and there as chiggers
under my log. They are the ugliest things you ever seen. And I tell you before I got rid
of them, my ankles, clear from my ankles to my knees was bleeding from scratching, and,
what other. I knew it was different when we got up to New Guinea and had the Natives
sit there. We could hire them to build those shelters. They didn’t need nails or anything,
they just built them. They were good at it. They paid them with corned beef. That was
their money. The money’s no good to them. And they were short on protein, they really
needed the protein. Somebody was always trying, wanting me to shoot one of those
parrots. That’s no good. If you want to borrow my gun, no you can’t do that.
Sometimes they had these little pigs, they were only about that long (gestures with his
hands) and they have them and that’s really a feast for them. They are really short of
protein. They have all the vegetable and all that you could eat, ripe bananas all over, and
you could pick them off the tree, they are full of stuff, but they are not very high in
protein. They are only about this high (gestures with hands), fuzzy wuzzies we called them. And they are not wearing clothes, they just, g-string is all the clothing they have. Very primitive, and you know, I was talking to an architect from over in Australia and he said (inaudible) and he was up in New Guinea and he said it’s really changed. They are mining gold up there. I don’t know what his project was, but anyway they got their own legislature now and they are electing their own representatives and everything, and that there is an accomplishment from complete Aborigine to clothes wearing people that elect their own officers, you know, in fifty years. But he did have a comment that they hadn’t learned how to govern yet. And I don’t imagine they would, you know, perfect. It takes a long time to get something perfected. But anyway, they have really advanced since I was over there. The roads we had through swamp from Fort Marsby up to Rubiera was big swamp patches and then we had to cut trees and lay them down crossways to make corduroys roads and oh, them was rough riding but that’s the only way you could get through with a car. And there would be miles of trees like that cutting through the swamps. I tell you, the supply system of a division or Army determines on how much they are going to do. You know, they have to eat everyday and their clothes wear out, and their shoes wear out and need them all set up everyday and they have a few in the kitchen that’s has to be set up it’s really (inaudible) at that time there is 25,000 men in our division I think. And to move everything that they need into the trucks and to pack all this up and move it from one place to another it’s really a major project to move a division. And they got to where they, well in Germany when they was really on the offensive in there, they moved the equipment that I couldn’t believe, Patton’s army, you know, and they’d move a hundred miles in 24 hours or something. Morris Ty, he died here three years ago, he was in the Legion here, you probably know Babe, his widow, and he was in Battle of the Bulge over there. He was lead by Patton and the troops coming in there. That’s one where McCullough, McCullough, they want him to surrender, he told them nuts. And they was out of food and everything else, and they was really in battle down that Battle of the Bulge. Harp was telling me a little bit about it, and I’m sure it was just a little bit.

KT: So, how long were you in Australia?

HH: I was there 18 months.

KT: Was there, you said there was a little bit of combat fighting there?

HH: Not in Australia.

KT: Not in Australia?

HH: No. Nope, they was wanting to land, they was bombing Darwin just with the planes, but they hadn’t been any troops land there. The fighting was in New Guinea.

KT: Okay. So why, what was at Darwin, why were they bombing there?
HH: Well, that was the closet place to their base. That was the northern most city in Australia, and they want the foothold.

KT: That’s how New Guinea got their supplies, was from Australia?

HH: Yeah, I think all the supplies come from Australia. Come from the United States to Australia, then to New Guinea. A lot of them come from the United States because at the time Australia only had eight million people, and that’s not very many people for a country the size of the United States. I figured they was about twenty years behind us, that’s according to what cars and stuff they would drive. They would drive oh, a 28, 27, 28-29 cars when we was driving 38 and 40, some were 40 and some 41, but not many. But they had a petrol shortage, hard to get gas for ‘em, so they made charcoal burners, and they would pipe this charcoal and get the wood and put it in the burner, carry it right on the trucks and then funnel the fumes up, that’s what they burned. Bit it didn’t have much power. A bunch of us would be in one of them cabs with a charcoal burner on it, and we got to a hill and we’d have to get out and push.

KT: That’s not very good.

HH: No, but anyway, they was really innovative of getting around.

KT: Yeah, that’s creative. And then you went to New Guinea? How long were you over there?

HH: I think I was in New Guinea about six months, and about a year in Australia, or twelve months, fourteen months in Australia probably.

KT: And New Guinea is where the combat was going on. But you never got involved in that.

HH: Nope. No, I was not in the combat unit. We had the 186 and the 163 in our outfit that was the two infantry regiments. And there was some, what they called it, mechanized cavalry that was a kind of separate unit that saw some action too. But all mine was just regimental duties mostly, division duties, not regiment, I drove a lieutenant colonel around for a while, while I was in Australia in a little Jeep. I loved that except I couldn’t get used to driving on the left side of the road. That was hard to keep in your mind.

KT: I bet.

HH: Especially when you got the drivers, they was all on the left hand side, you know. And so you just have to remember when you’re driving there that they drive on the left. But it was fun. When they first went to Rock Hampton, we was left out on the fairgrounds there, pretty nice little place. The only aircraft gun we had was an old 50 caliber machine gun on a Jeep. And we’d take turns sitting on that 24 hours a day for our shifts. I never did get to shoot a zero.
KT: Were you just assigned to whatever regiment you were in?

HH: What?

KT: Well how did you get to be picked to. . . . ? Or did they put you wherever they wanted you?

HH: Oh yea, whatever you want, unless you put up for a transfer specifically, why they transfer you where they need you is what they do.

KT: But you didn’t get much of a choice at all?

HH: No, I stayed in the same company all the time I was over there. Yep, you have a lot of stuff to do that you do in the Army that you don’t think there is any rhyme or reason to it. Cleaning up and picking up cigarette butts and they do something to keep you busy all the time. Of course if they didn’t the camp would get so cluttered that you wouldn’t be able to live in it. And then when we (inaudible) they had the mess tents set up there and a big bag of water with chlorine tablets in it, and there was always an officer and before you went through the chow line, you took an (inaudible) tablet everyday. There was an officer there and he watched you swallow it. There was no putting it under your tongue that was for malaria protection. And when you come out of there, you’re yellow. But thirty days after I quit taking it, that’s when I got malaria.

KT: Why did you quit taking it?

HH: Well, I left Australia.

KT: And then you came back here and got it?

HH: And I think I was on the boat across the Pacific, twenty days or something when I come down with that malaria when I was in (Letterman) General Hospital in San Francisco. And that’s when they sent me down to Texas, Fort Sam Houston. And then when my fever left, I went in, and I’d always had a crew cut when I was overseas the whole time, and I said well I’m going to let it grow out, and it got to where I could comb it and part it and everything. And after I had the fever I went in and combed my hair and it all came out in the comb. I lost almost all my hair when I was 21 years old.

KT: Because of the malaria?

HH: Well, the genes would have taken it I think anyway. But to sit there and watch and see all your hair down the sink. But that wasn’t any worse than that one guy down there. His hair was completely white. And he wasn’t much older than me. And he says, I forget where he said he was, but he says that hair turned white overnight. And I heard of that before, but that’s the first one I ever seen. Went from black to just a pretty white. It was thick. And it didn’t fall out.
KT: That’s kind of weird, I’ve never heard of that.

HH: Yeah, it happens. Well there was a German prisoner down in that hospital too, come to think about it. And we’d show him the headlines of what they was doing to Hitler, you know, oh, that’s all propaganda. He wouldn’t believe it. He just would not believe it.

KT: Did you ever have to do anything with them, with the Germans?


KT: Do you wish you would have had the chance to?

HH: I would rather have served under him than under McArthur.

KT: And that’s who you were under.

HH: I didn’t like McArthur. He was a primadonna. And I suppose that he must have had some good attributes, but I never did find out what they was. (Both laugh) And there was quite a number of us that had the same opinion of him.

KT: Did he have any problems getting things done, like did his men not respect him so he couldn’t get them to do anything for him?

HH: I don’t think so because he had some generals under him that was really good that (inaudible) and our general, we liked him.

KT: Who was that?

HH: General Fulmar. General White was there when we first joined up but he was too old to go. I wish he had done. I really liked him. But Hiekelburger and I can’t think of some of the, the 23rd division’s general but they was good men and you tell what to do, and they done it and the men followed them, no problem. But McArthur, he was so intent on getting a good photo opportunity like wading ashore like he was on the first wave, that’s a bunch of crap. He always had a corncob pipe, and he come out with his head stretched back with that sloppy had on and a little (inaudible) flap coming on his pants.

KT: Well, I don’t really have anymore questions, is there any other stories you want to tell me?

HH: Well, I joined the Guard, I was two years underage, so I had to lie about my age and the man wouldn’t take me. He says, “What does your dad say?” I said, “Oh, it’s okay with him.” “Well, you let me talk to you dad.” So he went and talked and said, “Yeah, it’ll be okay,” he said ‘cause I had some friends that joined the guard too. And the big story was at the time if war comes, you don’t do anything, you just stay home and guard
the bridges and stuff. But I didn’t care if I was overseas or what. In fact, when I told them I was born in 1921 that made me what, from July to October younger than my oldest brother. I was older than my next brother, the one that was in the Marines.

KT: So when were you born?

HH: ’23, I told them ’21. Yep, according to Army records why I’m two years older than I am. But there was a bunch of them that was a lot younger than that and when they put them in for an extra year, they had a chance to get out if they wanted to, and they had Fisher, and there was one kid in there younger than me and that was Hudson and his dad was the cook, and he stayed in. And, there was three or four that opted to get out instead of stay for that permanent service, but the rest of us was underage, we just stayed it. You had your choice. And I was never sorry. A lot of good people there.

KT: Do you think you would have done anything different with your life had you not gone?

HH: Oh probably, but I don’t know what it would have been really.

KT: You didn’t have any plans before you went into the Army?

HH: No. I would have probably finished high school, but beyond that I don’t have any idea what I would, just get a job and go to work. That’s what you did. You could get a day labor job and that’s what most of the people got. The people that I knew, you know. But the wealth is kind of relevant. Making ten dollars and you get ten dollars friends and you don’t have any problems. But if you’re making ten dollars and you got hundred dollar friends, you have problems.

KT: That’s true.

HH: It’s a good thing or I’d never been happy.

KT: You did all right though.

HH: Yeah. I lucked out a lot. I lucked out when I got married. A lot of decisions I didn’t have any idea what I was getting into, I just got lucky. But I’m not disappointed. Some of the things I tried to do didn’t work out and some of them did. I enjoyed metal work very much, much more than I did plumbing. But, you just about have to have both of them in a little town in order to make it because I don’t think you could make it on just one. And when you have two, then you’re real busy. You know about that don’t you.

KT: Yep.