

Interview with Richard Oly

June 12, 1990

Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interviewed by David Overy

Overy ([00:00:08](#)):

It's June 12th, 1990. Tonight's interview is with Mr. Richard Oly. Mr. Oly, when and where were you born?

Oly ([00:00:20](#)):

St. Petersburg, Florida; April 27th, 1926.

Overy ([00:00:29](#)):

What were you doing when the war broke out?

Oly ([00:00:32](#)):

Going to high school.

Overy ([00:00:34](#)):

So, you were probably a couple of years away from the draft?

Oly ([00:00:39](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:00:41](#)):

Why did you choose the Marine Corps?

Oly ([00:00:46](#)):

My cousin chose the Marine Corps and I'd seen a lot of movies on it. And top outfit, and just joined it.

Overy ([00:00:57](#)):

Did you join with any of your friends?

Oly ([00:00:59](#)):

Well, my friends joined it and I joined it.

Overy ([00:01:01](#)):

Did you go through boot camp and everything together?

Oly ([00:01:04](#)):

No. I went-- No, I didn't know anybody when I went through bootcamp. All my friends went at different times.

Overy ([00:01:12](#)):

And so, you went into the Marine Corps then what? In, you said what month and year?

Oly ([00:01:16](#)):

Well, that was the summer of 1943, and I went down to San Diego. And at that time, the bootcamp was only eight weeks. And two weeks of that was firing at a rifle range called Camp Matthews, which is halfway between San Diego and Oceanside, California. It's defunct now. It's no more, but it was a very big rifle range then. And you'd spent two weeks there, one week of snapping in, and then one week of firing. You'd fire the Carbine and the M1. And when I went to boot camp, I can recall I was training with an O3 rifle for a couple of days-

Overy ([00:02:02](#)):

Springfield?

Oly ([00:02:02](#)):

Yeah, they didn't have enough M1s, so a couple of days I had a Springfield rifle there.

Overy ([00:02:07](#)):

A little bolt action with the--

Oly ([00:02:11](#)):

Bolt action. And then when we got the M1s and I fired expert in bootcamp, and then if you fired expert, you made PFC. But I was caught by the DI of pitching pennies one night, and that was a no-no, and I had to scrub down the barracks with a toothbrush and I didn't make PFC until about 18 months later.

Overy ([00:02:34](#)):

Describe your training will you? Can you do that for me?

Oly ([00:02:38](#)):

Very regimented, getting up very early in the morning. Calisthenics, running, yes, sir, no, sir. Always had your rifle with you and you said, "Yes, sir," to any enlisted man, until you graduated. You were a boot. It was, "Yes, sir, no, sir," to everyone. And I had no problems with the calisthenics, the swimming or anything like that. I was an excellent swimmer. I swam in high school, so I had no problem there. And then when you graduated from bootcamp, they wanted volunteers for two things, Marine paratroop battalion or Marine Raiders. Well, my cousin was in the paratroopers, Frankie. So I volunteered for the paratroopers and they said, "No--" I went into the room, "You're too tall. Go in the next room." Well, the next room was the Marine Raiders. I went into that training, which was really rough.

Overy ([00:03:39](#)):

Was your training ever so tough that you wished you hadn't joined the Marines? Times when you wondered, "What in the world am I doing?"

Oly ([00:03:46](#)):

Yeah. I wondered, "What am I doing on here, like 30 mile hikes." You only had liberty every two weeks, and then it was an 84 hour. I mean, you had a real long weekend, and in the Marine Raider training, you lived in little shacks, four men to a shack, and you ate outside. I didn't care if it was storming out, you ate outside in your mess gear. And you were down to the beach a lot, rubber boats, and you learned a lot about the hand-to-hand combat, bayonet fighting. And we had a lot of Marine Raiders that were instructing us too in hand-to-hand combat, and the art of killing people, and vivid descriptions of how to kill a person and what to do to a person.

Overy ([00:04:49](#)):

What kinds of things did they teach you in that regard?

Oly ([00:04:52](#)):

Well, cut their throat, grab them right in the balls, cut their nuts right off, that'll drop-- The minute you stab them there, they'll drop their weapons, and kill them right off the bat. A lot of unknown things, too. I can recall once in bootcamp, we were receiving a lecture on the Thompson submachine gun, and one fellow up in the rafters of the little grandstand there, he was kind of falling asleep. And the instructor said, "Hey, you only sleep if you know how to take this son of a bitch apart. You think you can?" And the guy just went up, without batting an eye, an older man got up, walked down, took the Thompson submachine gun apart, put it back together, not even looking at it. And then we found out later that he was an old gun runner during Prohibition, and he used to be able to take this Thompson submachine gun apart in the backseat

of a limousine. And I met a lot of rough kids from New York, Chicago, and some real rough ones from Chicago. At that time there were no colored people-- They were in the Marine Corps, but they were in ammunition companies only. And I can recall conversations with some of these New York boys where if they had a nigger that screwed up or something, they just dumped him in a river, and thought nothing of it. Some of the stories you'd hear you, you just don't tell them. People don't believe you. They think you're making it up.

Overy ([00:06:42](#)):

What did you think about these guys? Well, let me ask you, I'm sorry.

Oly ([00:06:46](#)):

They're good for their word.

Overy ([00:06:46](#)):

Good for their word.

Oly ([00:06:49](#)):

They're good for the word. That's a Marine Corps expression. That's a police expression. If the man's good for his word, hey, he's trustworthy. I don't care what color he is. The man's good for his word.

Overy ([00:07:04](#)):

Did they give any indication why they joined the Marine Corps?

Oly ([00:07:07](#)):

[crosstalk 00:07:07] A lot of them were drafted.

Overy ([00:07:10](#)):

Oh, they were drafted. I didn't know the Marine Corps drafted?

Oly ([00:07:11](#)):

Oh yeah. A lot of them were drafted.

Overy ([00:07:15](#)):

Because it seemed that they found the right branch of the service, which fit in right, with what they--

Oly ([00:07:19](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:07:21](#)):

What did you think about these fellows? I mean, as far as being from another part of the country? Had you been around people from various parts of the country before you went in?

Oly ([00:07:31](#)):

No, no. I'm half Dutch, half Polish, and being from a Polish extraction-- My father was Dutch, and he died when I was about nine. He was gassed in the First World War, and he died of, I think double pneumonia at the Veterans Hospital about 1935, something like that.

Overy ([00:07:58](#)):

His lungs weakened by the gas. Sure.

Oly ([00:08:01](#)):

And the other half of the family that I grew up with was Polish and very prejudice, very prejudice. From the old country. "Don't go there, he's Jewish." To this day, some of them are still that way. Some of my best friends are Jewish in Minneapolis, but I can recall this, "Oh, they're Jewish or that's a black. That's a nigger over there. Don't have anything to do with him." They'd never associated with them in Europe, and they all grew up in north Minneapolis, northeast. It's not called Northeast, Nordeast. And the church, it's a Polish church, Polish school they went to.

They learned Polish, and it was a whole new world learning to meet different people of different extractions and everything. Some real fine people; Indians, some fine Indians.

Overy ([00:09:07](#)):

And so, the Marine Corps was an education for you--

Oly ([00:09:08](#)):

Oh yes.

Overy ([00:09:09](#)):

--learning about all other kinds of-- Many different kinds of people.

Oly ([00:09:14](#)):

Yes. And went into the fifth Marine division, then we got sent over. And there was another friend of mine named Robert J. Vessel; Bobby. He wound up the vice president of Twin City Federal. He's retired now. He had the whole insurance department, and Bobby was in intelligence. And after the [EWAL 00:09:38] fracas, and I got wounded and was sent-- I got shot up in the finger and the hand. I can't move my fingers that way. I can't put them together, but I don't tell anybody about that though. And I was sent back to the hospital and then back to Hawaii and then back to the division. And Bobby says, "Why don't you come into intelligence? You're quite a draftsman. We need a draftsman." So I went into the intelligence division as the draftsperson. Well, intelligence in the Marine Corps was way back then. In fact, wigwag signals, you had to learn. Stuff like this; scales of maps. Usually they're working with a one to 50,000, one to 20,000, one to 5,000. Learned how to read latitude, longitude, the Mercator projection system, and the whole ball of wax, collection, dissemination of information near immediate front. I can recall, what is a map? A geographical representation of a portion of the Earth's surface. And what is intelligence? A collection and dissemination of information pertaining to

your immediate front, depending on what you're in, a battalion, regiment, division, and so forth. All the things they would drum into us and we'd have to learn. And then we were sent to Japan. Well, we thought we were going to invade Japan.

Overy ([00:11:14](#)):

Sure.

Oly ([00:11:15](#)):

And we thought we're going to lose a lot of men. And I recall we're playing poker. We always had big games right around payday and payday was \$50 a month. But if you're PFC, you'd make \$54 a month. And then you made, what, 10% more because you're overseas and stuff like that. And we went to Japan and I can recall Sasebo Harbor. I had to get all the Japanese maps and make scale American maps of Sasebo Harbor. And then we went into the Saga Prefecture, which is the same as a state. It was like Minnesota, Iowa, it was a Saga. Karumai Prefecture, Saga was the capital of the Karumai Prefecture, I think. This is a long time ago.

Overy ([00:12:06](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Oly ([00:12:07](#)):

And we set up shop there-- No, before that, I can recall sitting down at a poker game and we'd play a nickel ante pot limit, which they get pretty steep. And for us, that was quite a bit of money. And somebody came by with a newspaper, "They're dropping an atomic bomb." Oh, big deal. We paid no attention. We didn't know atomic bomb from a stick of dynamite. We could care less. And then, we realized the war was coming to an end. Well, we went over to Japan, went into Saga, and they formed different sections in intelligence then. They were called disposition sections. In other words, we got more men into the intelligence section and went out

with the interpreters, and we got a list of all the Japanese war goods, which was something MacArthur set up, which was outstanding. We supervised the destruction of two men submarines. I've got some old pictures of it even. They cut up the submarines and all the scrap is sold to the highest bidder. The money that the bidder pays to buy the scrap is given back to the Japanese government with the exception of things that the services needed. Like one day they went through our list, and they said, "Oh, condoms. Six million, five hundred thousand condoms. God, we can use them. Until some medical said, "They only fit your thumb." They're not big enough. I can recall that. But medical supplies, things like that, that we could use. Trucks, vehicles we could use. We didn't put in. We used them until we were done, and then they were sold for scrap or used, and the money went back to the central government. And another thing that MacArthur did too, when they made the Japanese constitution, I think he had it stipulated in there where their Army and Navy and Air Force could only be so big, and that's all. Hence, ours is big, theirs is small, everything went-- They made money. It didn't go into--

Overy ([00:14:22](#)):

Defense.

Oly ([00:14:23](#)):

Defense. Like that makes me think of the B2 bomber here. My son-in-law is a pilot, and he said the B2 bomber is the biggest pork barrel that was ever instigated on the American public. And this, he's telling me about this months ago. He says, "They go in after the war. They don't even go 800 miles an hour." He says, "It's a big joke." And with the cutback and the bombers, I think \$570 million per copy. It's a joke. It's a real joke instigated on the American public, by what Eisenhower said way back in '55--

Overy ([00:15:06](#)):

Industrial complex.

Oly ([00:15:09](#)):

That's right.

Overy ([00:15:09](#)):

Sure.

Oly ([00:15:09](#)):

That's right. Be careful of that. Well, anyway, back to Japan. I can recall going to the PX, cigarettes, 50 cents a carton. We'd buy up a few cartons, take them in to town, \$20 a carton. Send that money home. Had a lot of fun in Japan. And then got sent back to the United States and shipped over. I was ready to get out. I shipped over, and they said that you could choose any base-- If you lived on the east side of the Mississippi, you could choose any Marine base on the east side of the Mississippi. If you lived on the west side of the Mississippi, any Marine base on the west side. Well, everybody was telling me about Hingham, Massachusetts, a Naval ammunition depot, 11 square miles of ammunition depot, and real good duty, dress blues, everything. So I'm trying to figure out how in the hell I can do it. So I told the sergeant major, "I want to ship over." And he said, "What's your furlough address?" And I said, "The YMCA, St. Paul." I got it. As soon as I got to Minneapolis, I changed my furlough address. A few tricks you learn in the Marine Corps. And I was sent to Hingham, Massachusetts. And there, they had a Major [Bustard 00:16:37] in charge who was sharp, and he found out that I did not have a high school diploma because I quit school. And a bunch of us-- That's when they came out with the GEDs, and a bunch of us wanted our high school certificates. So we went to Hingham Massachusetts High School in the evenings, and took courses, and went up to Boston after three

months, and took our exam, and I received my certificate. And I was very happy with that. Met a lot of nice people there, learned a lot of things, and I was a Sergeant then, and it was a guard company. And then I got out and came back to Minneapolis, was still in the reserves, and to make a long story short, I attended the University of Minnesota, and I was there for a little over a year, and I was in the middle of the second summer session and--

Overy ([00:17:35](#)):

Korea.

Oly ([00:17:35](#)):

--I got called back to Korea. And that's when, Korea, got wounded again, and I got the Silver Star and went through Incheon, Chosin Reservoir, everything over there. And they wanted to send me to OCS, but I had to sign up for four years, and I said, "No, I want to go back to college." And I went back to college for another few months and then started working. My cousin, Frankie, was on the police department. And he told me, "You bone up on first aid and start going to the YMCA and working out," and he told me what exercise to take and everything. And I passed and got on the department in 1955, but I was working for the city waiting to get on the police department. They weren't hiring. And the day the list went out, I got hired, and I served 30 years with the Minneapolis Police Department and attained the rank of sergeant, detective sergeant, then retired. Received 15 commendations there. I went through 13 chiefs. The worst chief we had was this clown that they just had, Bouza?

Overy ([00:18:52](#)):

Bouza?

Oly ([00:18:53](#)):

Anthony Bouza from New York. I've talked to a lot of Marines from New York that are policemen and they don't call him Anthony Bouza, they call him Bonzo the Clown in New York. And the things that I can remember, what I said, "Well, we've got him as chief of police in Minneapolis." And they said, "You poor son of a bitch." I said, "Why? What about him?" He said, "Well, I only worked for him for a couple of days, but I can recall two incidents that he goofed on." I said, "What was that?" And he said, "I think it was in '73 when Eisenhower-- No, not Eisenhower. Nixon was coming through New York and Bonzo the Clown was in charge of the parade route, and he signed that every intersection was covered by officers." Well, the one intersection that wasn't covered, some drunk driver came through and hit the motorcade. I can recall that. And then I guess his troops rioted at Yankee Stadium or something, and he had a little trouble with the transit authority there or something. Don't get me wrong. He's no dummy. This man is a genius. He's a genius. He's so smart, he shouldn't be leading troops. He should be in a think tank. And the governor, Governor Goofy's got him in charge of--

Overy ([00:20:13](#)):

Of the lottery.

Oly ([00:20:14](#)):

The lottery. And the biggest blunder we can recall him making in Minneapolis is when we had a gang slaying in a park on 43rd and Nicollet-- And we knew it was a gang slaying because we had a lot of gangs in Minneapolis. And Bouza said, "We have no gangs in Minneapolis." A public statement to that effect. And the whole department just blew up. We just couldn't believe he'd say such a thing.

Overy ([00:20:43](#)):

I was wondering if I could come back sometime and talk to you about that. About the--

Oly ([00:20:49](#)):

--in the reserves, and intelligence was my specialty, and they were giving out commissions, but they had four squadrons out here in the wing. And all the intelligence personnel from each squadron would meet with one squadron. So I really didn't know what my parent organization was doing. And one of the officers said, "How come you're not putting in for the officer's program?" And I said, "What officer's program?" And they explained it to me, and I put in for it, and was chosen. Then they wanted to know, "Do you want to be what they call an LDO, limited duty officer." You go up through the ranks, or, "Do you want to become a war officer?" So, I made a phone call to Washington, DC, another friend of mine from Korea. And he says, "Don't go LDO. You'll make captain and they'll give you the ax and you'll go into the VTU, volunteer training unit. You'll get points, but no money. Go warrant." So I said, "I'd like to go warrant." And I'm glad I did. And I went warrant, and went to a school, and I became what they call a-- The MOS at that time, 0210 counter-intelligence, which it still is now; counter-intelligence officer. Then I went through an aerial photo interpreter school, became an aerial photo interpreter and did duties-- My two weeks, all the time, at Fleet Intelligence Center Pacific, Fleet Intelligence Center of Atlantic, and went through the FBI Academy through the Marine Corps for a few weeks, took advanced criminology, and I took over an MP company or a unit. Formed an MPU unit out here too, and enjoyed it immensely. But I can recall some of the incidents and things that happened. I can recall once I was down in the Fleet Intelligence Center, Norfolk-- See there was three fleet intelligence centers.

There was a FIC-LANT, FIC-Europe and FIC-PAC, Fleet Intelligence Center Pacific. FIC-LANT, at one time was in Hawaii, then it was in North Africa, and then it was Jacksonville, Florida. FIC-EUR was in Norfolk, and FIC-PAC was in Aiea Heights in Hawaii. Well, they combined FIC-PAC-- No, they combined FIC-EUR and FIC-LANT into Norfolk. And I would go there quite a bit of the time. And I worked with a Naval intelligence unit out here, and we were actually drawing things that would go into the computer, to the ships. And one thing I learned out in FIC-LANT-- They had computers. Everything was computer. All the ships are computers. McNamara was secretary of defense. This is the guy that gave us the Edsel. He also gave a different computer for each intelligence center. So if you transferred a ship from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the computers were incompatible. It took the Air Force five years to go around the whole world to make all computers compatible. McNamara costs the Pentagon billions, and they spent billions. And they had a controlled data computer down there, which was good. Gerber plotter down there, fantastic machine. But that's one of the mistakes I can recall that was made there by him, plus a lot of others.

Overy ([00:24:35](#)):

Well, let me go back to your Marine Corps training from the time that you were-- Well, your Marine Corps career, from the time that you were on the west coast. You talked about being trained in the Raiders, and then going from there to the Pacific. Looking back at your Marine Corps training, do you think it adequately prepared you for what you were going to face?

Oly ([00:25:01](#)):

Oh yes.

Overy ([00:25:01](#)):

Do think it was good training?

Oly ([00:25:02](#)):

Oh yes. Yes.

Overy ([00:25:05](#)):

In what way?

Oly ([00:25:06](#)):

Discipline. We were all-- Like in the Marine Raiders, we were trained by Marines that had been over in Guadalcanal, Bougainville. They knew what it was like by jungle training. Our jungle training in Hawaii, we were up in the rainforest there, and you're walking along with a gunnery sergeant and he says, "Can you see anything?" I said, "I see nothing but jungle." He says, "Get down on your fucking belly." And we'd get down on our belly, and here's a hole of bamboo and you can see a hundred yards."

Overy ([00:25:45](#)):

I'll be darned.

Oly ([00:25:47](#)):

He said, "Get down low. You can see everything." And sure enough, we got down right to ground level and God dammit, you could see a hundred yards in front of you. He said, "That's what the Japanese did." We learned all these little tricks.

Overy ([00:26:00](#)):

Was it pretty arduous training?

Oly ([00:26:02](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:26:05](#)):

Realistic and arduous.

Oly ([00:26:07](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:26:09](#)):

What kinds of other things did you pick up about jungle fighting from these people?

Oly ([00:26:16](#)):

Oh, a lot of booby traps; a lot of booby traps. Bamboo's very sharp, believe me. God. We spent several days in the rainforest up there on the northern end of Hawaii in the forest there. That's wild. That's really wild. We learn all kinds of little things. Like when you go on patrol, leave everything at camp. Leave your billfold. You want a watch, leave all your rings, jewelry, everything at camp, and don't talk, don't smoke. They can smell the smoke. They can see the smoke. Don't leave anything. Bury everything. If you're going to talk, write it out. Don't say a word. That's a trained unit. They found this out in Vietnam. The Japanese would see a unit going up and they'd hear them talking, smoking and everything. That's the unit they wanted to attack; no discipline. But they'll see a Marine unit going by, camouflaged, strict discipline, they want no part of that unit.

Overy ([00:27:42](#)):

Let me ask you, what did your instructors-- And once again, you're anticipating going into combat against the Japanese. What kinds of things did they tell you about the Japanese? Do you remember?

Oly ([00:27:53](#)):

--cave or something, and we wouldn't ask the interpreter anything. We'd just lob a satchel charge in there or grenade or smoke, anything. Or get the, "Come on up, burn them out."

Overy ([00:28:08](#)):

Was your training, both in the United States and in Hawaii, dangerous enough that you would lose people?

Oly ([00:28:17](#)):

Oh yeah.

Overy ([00:28:18](#)):

Did you lose quite a few people in the training?

Oly ([00:28:20](#)):

We lost a few people.

Overy ([00:28:21](#)):

What kinds of things happened that--

Oly ([00:28:22](#)):

I can recall one where a shell landed and blew off the guy's legs from the knees down.

Overy ([00:28:30](#)):

You mean a short?

Oly ([00:28:31](#)):

A short round landed. Yeah. But when we went out, it was all live ammunition. And as much as you wanted to fire. Now, how would you like to go out with a BAR and fire 1500 rounds? I mean, you wanted ammo, "Ammo," and your ammo boy comes up and, boy, your loading, and you're just firing at everything. That barrel's so hot, you couldn't touch it.

Overy ([00:28:56](#)):

What kinds of things were you firing at? Just laying down basis of fire and things of this kind?

Oly ([00:29:00](#)):

Yeah. Just moving forward. Moving forward.

Overy ([00:29:03](#)):

But nobody out there.

Oly ([00:29:04](#)):

No, nobody out there. We'd put up targets and stuff. Some blades of grass and--

Overy ([00:29:13](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Oly ([00:29:14](#)):

And then, 50 caliber machine guns, 30 caliber machine guns, water-cooled machine guns. At night, we'd put up what they call an FPL, a final protective line of fire, where everything's crossing, and every fifth round is a--

Overy ([00:29:28](#)):

Tracer?

Oly ([00:29:29](#)):

Tracer. And we were using, armor-piercing most of the time. Very seldom ball ammunition, most of the ammunition we were having is armor-piercing.

Overy ([00:29:45](#)):

Did you know you were going to Iwo

Oly ([00:29:47](#)):

No, no.

Overy ([00:29:49](#)):

So you were at Hawaii--

Oly ([00:29:49](#)):

The only time we knew we were going to Iwo, was when we left Guam on the LSTs, then we knew we were going to Iwo. And I can recall, we were in, what they call the second wave. We thought the beaches were going to be on fire, so we had flash burn on all our exposed parts. All our face was covered with a white flash burn. And when you see somebody on the beach in Iwo, and they didn't have this on, they weren't in the first three waves, believe me. And the first wave was supposed to be Amtracs going all the way in. But they had a storm the night before and the beaches were like this, and the Amtracs went here, and then everybody got out. And I can recall going in and we'd see these battleships firing point blank.

Overy ([00:30:44](#)):

In the Suribachi and elsewhere?

Oly ([00:30:45](#)):

Oh, my God, boom. And then you see the sailors rush out and they're all covered with gear and they got hoses and they're hosing down the barrels of the gun. And then, they rush back in and we'd say, "Standby." And at that time, earplugs were unheard of. And, even when I first got on the police department, they didn't use earplugs. Now everybody's using earplugs, and my hearing is very bad. I can recall standing next to a tank in Korea and that son of a bitch went off and, oh God, it's ear shattering, believe me. And there was some cold times in Korea too. I can recall 20, 25 below, and we're out there fighting. And we were surrounded by about 100,000. We were surrounded by eight divisions up there and we decimated eight divisions coming out too.

Overy ([00:31:43](#)):

You went from Hawaii then to Guam.

Oly ([00:31:46](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([00:31:46](#)):

Right?

Oly ([00:31:47](#)):

No, I think we went to the [Ilanutok 00:31:50] Islands.

Overy ([00:31:50](#)):

Okay.

Oly ([00:31:50](#)):

Chain of islands there, and just for more ships to gather. They didn't want all ships together.

They all went different routes, because you had three divisions that took the island.

Overy ([00:32:03](#)):

And so this must have been-

Oly ([00:32:04](#)):

Actually this island was supposed to be taken in 72 hours and we were supposed to be reserves for--

Overy ([00:32:11](#)):

Okinawa? [crosstalk 00:32:12]

Oly ([00:32:12](#)):

Right.

Overy ([00:32:15](#)):

When did you-- Was it at sea that you learned where you were going and got your briefing paper?

Oly ([00:32:20](#)):

Yeah. They broke out the models and the maps--

Overy ([00:32:22](#)):

What is a briefing like for an enlisted man? Do his officers do it? His immediate officers, or non-coms?

Oly ([00:32:28](#)):

Your commanding officer would do it.

Overy ([00:32:30](#)):

What did they tell you about Iwo Jima

Oly ([00:32:32](#)):

Oh, here's an island, Mount Suribachi Yama. I think I forgot the exact feet. Eight or 10 square miles, Mount Suribachi Yama, inactive volcano, we got Motoyama Airfield one, two and three under construction, a couple of them. And about 20,000 Japanese, civilian workers, very heavily fortified, expect the beaches to be on fire, expect air attacks. In fact, one night, some Japanese plane did come over and I think more people were hurt by the falling shrapnel, but I can recall being on the beach and some of our planes dive bombing, and shot down, and just going into one of our own barges coming in and just boom, everything went up.

Overy ([00:33:21](#)):

So that was your first real action, was at Iwo Jima? [crosstalk 00:33:25]

Oly ([00:33:25](#)):

I landed on the beach. I had my BAR.

Overy ([00:33:29](#)):

And you said you were out on the third, second-- [crosstalk 00:33:31]

Oly ([00:33:31](#)):

About the third wave, and we're sitting up like this, and Prat, I think his name was next to me. He said, "We better get down." And I started down like this, and you know how you hear whoop, like something going through the air? And I reached back like this and I cut my thumb. I said, "I'm hit." I could hardly breathe. And I took everything off and there wasn't a mark on me, but my pack, a piece of shrapnel went halfway through my pack and through two cans of sardines. Oh, gee, that scared the shit out of me.

Overy ([00:34:11](#)):

Were you up at that-- As I recall at Iwo Jima, there was this long-- There was kind of a little hill wasn't there, right along [crosstalk 00:34:19].

Oly ([00:34:19](#)):

Volcanic sand.

Overy ([00:34:20](#)):

Volcanic sand, yeah.

Oly ([00:34:20](#)):

Then we went on and we run-- All over the beach, they had 250 pound mines with these prongs on them. And you break the prong and it makes a contact and 250 pounds of pictric acid blows up and it smells like gas. And I can recall one I'm going up, somebody's, "Gas, gas, and everybody's putting on their mask." And somebody says, "No Dilly, that's pictric acid. That's a smell." And I remember I landed, "What the hell's? Sticking on me [inaudible 00:34:52] Goddamn prongs. I landed him on the Goddamn thing. And they were huge too. But they were all--

Overy ([00:34:20](#)):

They were just sitting there?

Oly ([00:34:59](#)):

No, they partially covered.

Overy ([00:35:00](#)):

Partially covered.

Oly ([00:35:00](#)):

Yeah. But they had been then this storm too the night before,

Overy ([00:35:05](#)):

What was the beach like when you landed on as part of the third wave, what did you see?

Oly ([00:35:11](#)):

It's tracers all over, dead Marines all over, move forward, set up.

Overy ([00:35:11](#)):

And you were still a BAR man?

Oly ([00:35:17](#)):

Still a BAR, yeah. then we set up on the-- We crossed the island and we're looking down the beach and we set up and, that night we did a little firing and a few Japanese tried to infiltrate up to us and we killed all of them. And then we've crossed the island. And I recall these holes and caves we're dropping grenades and everything. And then I see these big shells, 16 inch shells as big as the table. Don't shoot them. They fail to go off. They ricocheted across the island there. And then we all turned. So we're taking the biggest part of the island. And then the 28th Marines were taking Mount Suribachi--

Overy ([00:36:03](#)):

So you turn to the left?

Oly ([00:36:04](#)):

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:36:05] My cousin is one of the first pictures up on Mount Suribachi because that flag raising that wasn't taken until later. I mean, the Marines had already taken-- They'd already raised a flag. In fact, I've got pictures of my cousin up on top with the first flag up there.

Overy ([00:36:23](#)):

What was the action like? And you said you were wounded on the third day?

Oly ([00:36:27](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([00:36:27](#)):

What was, what was your action generally like during those three days? No, now by the time you got there, you could move inland already. Right? The other, other Marines had managed to get off the beaches.

Oly ([00:36:37](#)):

Yeah. We were up, we were just attacking across the beach and we could see them, the Japanese firing and then moving back and we're shooting at them and they're shooting at us and then moving. And then we were-- They said, "Take that next fox hole." "Okay." I started running and I'm running and boom, boom. One went through my finger here and another one went in here and come out here. And then I fell and a Goddamn piece of shrapnel, tore my leg here. And I broke ribs here.

Overy ([00:37:11](#)):

Was this shell fragments that hit you in the hand or bullets?

Oly ([00:37:14](#)):

Bullets. They were firing. You could hear them. Boom, boom, boom. One went right through here. I'm running like this. I got my BAR and I'm running. And one went right through the finger there and went through here and I'm looking through my finger. Oh, shit, hurt. Oh. And at that time I had to borrow somebody else's-- The one that came out here, one in here and here shot up the ulnar nerve. I bandaged this one tight, real tight, and then borrowed another one and bandaged it here and then used some of the [elb00:00:37:47] here. And then when I got on board ship, they covered-- At that time they were using, did the sulfur all over. We had to take sulfur pills. We took sulfur pills with water in your mouth, it's all white.

Overy ([00:37:58](#)):

Is this before you even go into combat, you take the sulfur pills or once your wounded.

Oly ([00:38:03](#)):

Only once you're wounded.

Overy ([00:38:03](#)):

Okay

Oly ([00:38:05](#)):

And I can recall, when they fixed the hand up, they put sulfur all over. Then they put a piece of Vaseline gauze. They had buckets of Vaseline, hot and the gauze in, and then cut a piece of gauze and lay it here and then lay it here and then wrap a piece around here. And then they put a roll a bandage here and put the fingers here and then wrap the whole Goddamn thing up.

Overy ([00:38:33](#)):

And this was at the--

Oly ([00:38:34](#)):

A few weeks later It started to stink too.

Overy:

Yeah. So this is when you got back on board ship at the hospital?

Oly:

And I didn't go on board ship for two days.

Overy ([00:38:42](#)):

So you were-

Oly ([00:38:42](#)):

I'm down at the beach and you're dug in at the beach and you're in pain too. And you got dying all around you, but they'd bring in supply and okay. We can take something back to the ship and then out to the ship, we'd go and laying off the ship and you'd see what the hospital ship. No, it wasn't a hospital ship. It was a troop transport. They were doing the operations on troop transports and on hospitals-

Overy ([00:39:08](#)):

So you were actually on the island five days and wounded on the third day, then 48 hours before you-- What kinds of things go through your mind, when you're waiting there for-

Oly ([00:39:17](#)):

Well, You're hoping you're going to live or you pray to God. Jesus Christ. You know, I'm wounded and I'm in Goddamn hole with two other guys. And there's my BAR. I didn't know where my BAR was. I got hit and I dropped it and I jumped into a hole or more or less fell into a hole. And I'm cut up all over and bleeding all over and fucking bullets. There was a big piece of wood and one of the Marines held up a helmet and boy, the fucking bullets tore through that

stump of wood that was up and he brought his helmet down. He said, "Don't move." And then he, he would yell back and he would say, "In front of me, there's heavy, automatic weapon fire." And they'd try to figure out where it's coming from. And they'd ask for 60 millimeter mortars and you'd hear the mortars and then they'd go up. And then they said, "farther out, farther out." Then we'd say, well, we'll get the 81s and they'd start the 81s going up. And that evening, then we'd start crawling back.

Overy ([00:40:18](#)):

Did you have assistance from a corpsman almost immediately? Or did you lay there--

Oly ([00:40:21](#)):

No.

Overy ([00:40:23](#)):

Your corpsman wasn't anywhere around You guys.

Oly ([00:40:25](#)):

No, he couldn't do anything. Anyway. He just borrow another page. Each man had these little first aid packs, to get them up and bandage it up. Eventually the bleeding stopped and you know, you got your shot a couple of times and, fucking ribs hurt here. And you've got a gash in your knee. And, and the other, I was wounded in, I think it was it was March 3rd, 1951, in Korea, I got it through the leg here. And then my whole knee is dead. Killed all the nerves when it went through here. But that was a whole new experience in Korea.

Overy ([00:41:01](#)):

What did you do? Where did you go from when you left Iwo Jima? Must've been in the hospital ship for a while?

Oly ([00:41:08](#)):

What? Wasn't on a hospital shift. It was a troop transport. [crosstalk 00:41:12] And they took all the wounded. It's filled up with wounded. And then we went to Guam and the doctors are telling you onboard and bandaging up and I'm on Guam for a couple of weeks and it was hot. They didn't have a-- They had a cold, a hot shower and everything was hot. I mean, the whole island was hot, you're sweating. And then they put us on another transport and then back to Hawaii and then the IEA Heights hospital there, and then everything's healed and you get the little liberty and swim at the beach and so forth. And they said, your Ulnar nervous is, nothing to do about it. And the hand was about half as big as this because it was bandaged so long without any use and then still small.

Overy ([00:42:04](#)):

But there wasn't any chance that this was the end of your combat then? [crosstalk 00:42:08].

Oly ([00:42:08](#)):

Oh no [crosstalk 00:42:08].

Overy ([00:42:08](#)):

The wound wasn't that considered that serious? Wasn't a million-dollar wound then?

Oly ([00:42:14](#)):

No, no. Uh-uh (negative) Mm-mm (negative)

Overy ([00:42:19](#)):

So you were in recuperation, rest and recovery for how long? A couple of weeks. A couple months.

Oly ([00:42:28](#)):

Few weeks then back to the main island of Hawaii and up to Parker's ranch, Fifth Marine division and reformed retraining. And I can recall when we were training for Iwo, we'd go-- We kind of crossed the island and then turn right. We'd go over this way and that way. So we knew what our we're going to go it has to be some island where we're going to go this way. And this way we didn't know whether it was, crossing an island and forming up. And from then on, it was just straight in. So we figured that's got to be Japan. We're just going straight in. And they expected 1,000,000, casualties, so. 1,000,000 casualties. But I can recall some interesting experiences in Korea. Like, we were at Wonsan Harbor and I can recall the Japanese nor the North Koreans would say, you bombed a fertilizer plant. It was a fertilizer plant they with made so many chemicals and all these chemicals are used in the production of the atomic bomb. And I can recall up at the chosen reservoir, all of the-- I think they had umpteen hydroelectric stations and all this power was being sent way up into northern Russia and was all low grade uranium in North Korea. And on our maps would say gold mine, gold mines, well, gold mines that are lined with concrete and then flooded. And when we got to the, the Chosin reservoir, in fact, I've got the flag from the Chosin reservoir here. That'll be in it.

Overy ([00:44:18](#)):

Now you said that after recuperating, then you were pretty much prepared-- Preparing yourselves to go into Japan.

Oly ([00:44:30](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:44:31](#)):

All right. You were with the Fifth Marines, right?

Oly ([00:44:34](#)):

Fifth Marine division second battalion, 27th Marines, Fifth Marine division.

Overy ([00:44:42](#)):

Where were you? Were you training or just preparing, in reading maps and things of this kind

?[crosstalk 00:44:48]

Oly:

We're training going out into the field.

Overy:

And this was [crosstalk 00:44:53] in Hawaii. Okay.

Oly ([00:44:55](#)):

The island of Hawaii, not the big island, way up on the top. Parker ranch.

Overy ([00:45:00](#)):

Was your training there? Pretty much the way it had been before, Pretty much repeated what you'd done in--

Oly ([00:45:07](#)):

They try to give us all the information they could on Japanese forces, such as things like this, any blurps, what's happening, how many planes they have left, are there kamikaze pilots? You know, how they would for-- The Emperor. And I can recall incidents of Marines officers and enlisted men that had been in Bougainville. And Guadalcanal telling about these Japanese getting hyped up and just charging into a camp with a sword and cutting an officer, a Marine just about in half by here and half a body left and they'd have to gun him down, they'd just fanatic. And they figured the whole population of Japan would be this way. But when we got to Japan, friendliest people in the world.

Overy ([00:46:06](#)):

Yeah, tell me about that experience of being part of the occupation there.

Oly ([00:46:14](#)):

Friendly, just friendly people. Being in intelligence, we knew where every cat house was. We had mapped and being in the disposition part of the intelligence section, that knew this new section that was formed to destroy all the goods. And we had an interpreter with us and a Japanese instructor with us that would interpret with our interpreter of all these lists of Japanese goods from airplanes that had to be carved up to two-man submarines and we'd stay in the best hotel. And the mayor and the chief of police would come in and just greet us. And they would send the women in. Everybody got laid just about every night. And I can recall. For a cigarette for pack of cigarettes, you could get laid a couple of times a night. I mean, it was just fantastic. The rate of exchange was 360 to one at that time, they didn't have much. Cigarettes, we'd buy stuff for them. Toothpaste, shaving cream, razors, little things like this. We'd send home and have, other Marines that say have SIRS robot catalogs and stuff sent to them and, give these to these Japanese people. And they were so gracious.

Overy ([00:47:43](#)):

Now, when you were preparing to be part of the occupation force, what did they tell you what to expect? Did they have an idea of what to expect when you were going to go on those, into those home islands? Did they--

Oly ([00:47:59](#)):

Well, you mean for the invasion?

Overy ([00:48:00](#)):

Well, yeah. When, you went in-

Oly ([00:48:02](#)):

If they thought we were going to invade, they weren't going to attack and everything, but the peace was in the process and we just went in and everybody greeted you with open arms.

Overy ([00:48:11](#)):

But had you been expecting that? Be greeted with open arms?

Oly ([00:48:14](#)):

We had no idea.

Overy ([00:48:14](#)):

Had no idea.

Oly ([00:48:15](#)):

No idea, but everyone knew. We'd have to learn—They had little books. I wish I would have kept that little interpreter book, [Japanese 00:48:25] you'd have to bow and learn all these little phrases, [Japanese 00:48:32].

Overy ([00:48:32](#)):

That must've been-

Oly ([00:48:36](#)):

And then you go in to eat in their restaurants and little pieces of steak and all the food they'd serve you and the rice and everything. And you treat them with respect and they'd give you respect too a whole new culture.

Overy ([00:48:53](#)):

Was this kind of difficult for you? Because obviously in your training as a Marine, up to this point, training for combat.

Oly ([00:49:01](#)):

Well, I can recall going in, I can recall one Marine Raider that had a skull, he had a Japanese skull and he had it on a cane. He'd put it on a cane. This was on a truck in front of us and a bunch of Japanese were there and he'd wave the skull "He's your fucking brother what do you think of that?" Everybody had laughed. We know he's kidding, but, the way it felt.

Overy:

I was going to say, it must be kind of a switch. Isn't it? When you're, when you're encouraged to hate the Japanese, to fear them, you know, and all of a sudden have to go into a situation where they're friendly was this quite-

Oly ([00:49:47](#)):

I can recall, we run across a warehouse full of their clothing, the flight suits, where their pilots, rabbit fur, and you just pick it apart. It was just cheap. Everything was cheaply made. We run across tool sets, Abercrombie and Fitch, good tool sets. They'd import a lot of stuff that they needed.

Overy:

So this was when you were in intelligence, right?

Oly ([00:50:22](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([00:50:23](#)):

And you had, you had been training for this and in Hawaii. Was your unit the same when you went into Japan and where in Japan did you go? Initially?

Oly ([00:50:34](#)):

Sasebo Harbor.

Overy:

Sasebo Harbor, okay.

Oly:

And then inland to Saga, the Krumrie Prefecture, and then off to different places. So many places we'd go to work. When we've destroyed all the two-man submarines here, and another units taking over all the scrap. And this'll be bid upon by Japanese businessmen. And the money will go to the central intergovernmental was good.

Overy ([00:50:58](#)):

But you were living high on the hog pretty--

Oly ([00:51:00](#)):

Oh, yeah we were in the best hotels free. Didn't cost us anything. We had our own food, rations and everything, but usually in some of these little hotels, everybody would be cooking for you. And we can recall the honey dippers, on the third floor and you'd shit down, everybody railing but it's hard to explain, like you're on a third floor and this is the crapper, there's a door and this is all hollow. And it goes down about three floors and everybody had just and and it's put into a big top with water. And every day the honey dipper goes by and takes all this, takes it out of fields and puts it into the field as Federalist fertilizer. Recall that. The smell, oh, God. And magnum bottles of sake oh, I can recall something we did in Japan. We had guard duty, every night and being an enlisted man, then the officers had liquor. Enlisted men had nothing, not even beer. So the shack was about eight foot square built of two by four stacked on top of one another and a flat roof and a door. And there was a guard always by it. And that's where all the good booze, Canadian Club and everything was kept. And there were several officers going to be transferred. We knew that they were going to be shipped back and we're trying to figure how the

fuck can we get in to get some of that real good booze? So we notice the same kind of lock and we notice the same routine. And we've got a BC scope that you can see umpteen miles with, And we're beamed in on this. And we noticed the officer when he would take inventory, he'd unlock it and then leave the lock hanging there. So one night the guard would take that lock and exchange it and keep it unlocked in his pocket. And the officer would lock it and go a couple hours later, we would unlock it, go and take a couple of bottles and put his lock back on. And then we're into the fields. Oh, we did a lot of-- We played a lot of tricks. Dawson never knew the difference. Some wild times over there, Sake, oh, magnum bottles of sake, hot Sacchi and everybody was so polite. No, it's just marvelous. Just a marvelous time. Really enjoyed it, marvelous culture. And I never got to one, but one of the Marines said he went into a bigger town and they had sex shops, with dildos and everything. They've had sex shops here for 3000 years. And this kind of makes me think of this-- The Alexander brothers in Minneapolis were just convicted of pornography. You got worse stories in Playboy and Penthouse and the screw magazine and stuff like that, that you can get through the mails. And you can go down to these video stores and get pornos, but here's the government wanted them and they got them

Overy ([00:54:34](#)):

They had it in for him for a long time.

Oly ([00:54:38](#)):

Oh, God, and being on a police department, I've known him for over 30 years. They're Lebanese speak Arabic fluently and Ferris. I knew I could talk to him now and then, but his brother, Eddie, real sharp. He went every time, I'd see Eddie we'd have coffee together. And Eddie would tell me about the times the government agents would like to set them up. He talked to his brother in Arabic and they'd know their big up and they'd send them on a wild goose chases. He said the

government wants us in the worst Goddamn way. And they started out on a news-stand on east Hennepin on the east side and just selling what people wanted, dirty magazines. And it makes me think of this, Cool Luke or something. These rap artists down in Florida that got arrested for some federal judge deemed their album--

Overy ([00:55:40](#)):

Obscene.

Oly ([00:55:40](#)):

Obscene. So the poor clerk in the store that sells, they arrest him. You know, it makes me think of McCarthyism again. I don't like it makes me think of all-- How can I put it this way as a police officer, we don't trust the federal government never, have never will. You cannot trust the federal government. I've known so many stories from intelligence where the government has opened our mails overseas mails, eavesdropped on our phone conversation and everything else, all under the guise of national defense. And I don't like it. I hate it. We've had police officers that, and I won't name any names, but when federal agents want to talk to them, they'll say, "Just give me a list of the questions you're going to ask me. And I'll ask my attorney, show them to me". "We can't do that." And he said, "Well, let that's your problem, I'll cooperate fully. Give me a list of the questions you're going to ask me." The FBI will never do that. never do it. I've just seen so many things in my travels over overseas and all over the United States and things that have gone on in the Marine Corps and what I've known from intelligence and things I've read. I just cannot trust the government. I can't, gotten way out of hand. And I'm just up here trying to enjoy life with some Korea, There was some very interesting things happen in Korea. There. One interesting thing I can recall, was all the houses that we lived in, in Korea. They all were slate floors and the doors and everything, a couple of rooms here, but then over here was the kitchen.

The kitchen is always lower and it's always wood stoves and all of the smoke and flames go under the floor. And up this side to the chimney, you're cooking, you're heating your floors. I can always recall that. You're heating your floors. I can always recall that. And they've been doing that for thousands of years.

Overy ([00:58:06](#)):

Well, let's go to Korea then. So you came back and you went to school, right? After World War II, and remained in the Marine Corps Reserve, right? When were you called up for Korea?

Oly ([00:58:21](#)):

August 19th, 1950, left Minneapolis.

Overy ([00:58:26](#)):

Very soon.

Oly ([00:58:27](#)):

Landed at Incheon, Korea, September 19th, 1950, 30 days. We were training men on the fantail of the ship on how to fire a .30 caliber machine gun.

Overy ([00:58:38](#)):

Did you have any training in the interim? Or did you just go straight from civilian life to train other people?

Oly ([00:58:46](#)):

We all got on a train in Minneapolis, they didn't fly you then. And three days later we wound up San Diego, they bused us up to Camp Pendleton, and went through two Quonset huts. They had your record books there, and they looked at your record books. If you'd been in combat in the Second, they put a big CR on the top of it. Combat ready, Intelligence, 2nd battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, Intelligence Section. Had the experience, put right in right away.

Overy ([00:59:20](#)):

Now, were they making up units then? [crosstalk 00:59:22] They were forming units?

Oly ([00:59:22](#)):

Yeah, they were forming the division. They had a brigade holding off in Southern Korea, that was part of the division too. And then they took them out and we all landed at Incheon.

Overy ([00:59:33](#)):

Now, did they take other members of your Reserve at the same time, here in Minneapolis?

Oly ([00:59:38](#)):

Yes, but a lot them weren't stamped CR.

Overy ([00:59:41](#)):

I see.

Oly ([00:59:42](#)):

They were in to retrain, but we had a lot of guys that needed training. We were teaching fellows how to throw grenades, teaching them about what was three quarters of an ounce of black powder, this is serrated, you've got five seconds. Once you let that mother go, you better get rid of it. And it's not like you see in the movies, all the big volume of flame, it's just boom, black powder going off, no flame.

Overy ([01:00:06](#)):

And these were Marines?

Oly ([01:00:08](#)):

Marines we were training that had never thrown a grenade, and they're in the Reserves.

Overy ([01:00:14](#)):

How in the world could that be?

Oly ([01:00:16](#)):

They needed them over there in a hurry.

Overy ([01:00:18](#)):

They had never been in bootcamp or anything else?

Oly ([01:00:20](#)):

That's right. A lot of them had never went through bootcamp, they sent them through bootcamp though, but a lot of them had been in the Reserves for quite a while, and took them into combat with us. And from then, we were there for about three or four days and then put on board a ship in San Diego. And then to Hawaii, a couple of days liberty. And then went to Sasebo Harbor. Or - No, can't think of the harbor we went to in Japan, and had three more days liberty. Everybody had to be back on the ship in 24 hours, but I knew we had three days and we stayed at a hotel and just had a ball.

Overy ([01:01:15](#)):

You were a sergeant, when this is?

Oly ([01:01:18](#)):

Yeah, and in Intelligence, and I knew the ship wasn't taking off in 24 hours, I knew the itinerary and everything. And the officer, he said, "Spend three days. You've got to be back by this time on such and such." And I said, "Okay." Well, we just had a ball, we lived at the hotel there and just had a ball. Then we landed at Incheon and went into the capital.

Overy ([01:01:44](#)):

You weren't at Wolmido then? Wolmido had already been taken?

Oly ([01:01:48](#)):

It's already been taken.

Overy ([01:01:49](#)):

Okay.

Oly ([01:01:49](#)):

Already been taken. And going in, we could see all the Russian T-34 tanks that had been blown up. Rounds went right through them. I was talking to a couple of tankers and they said, "We didn't even use HE, we just used ordinary--" They would blow them up.

Overy ([01:02:11](#)):

God, the T-34 was supposed to be a good [crosstalk 01:02:13] tank, too.

Oly ([01:02:13](#)):

Not the side, front. They hit them on the side.

Overy ([01:02:16](#)):

I see.

Oly ([01:02:17](#)):

They hit them on the side. In fact, there's the story of the Marines that knocked off T-34 tanks with rifle fire. On the back on each side of the motor was this big cylinder full of gas, and they'd use armor-piercing and shoot through the gasoline tanks, and the gas would go on the motor and cause a fire. And then they'd wait. They'd know there's three in the tank, and they'd wait until all three are out, and then they'd shoot all three of them. And they'd knocked out a whole tank, with rifle fire. There were a lot of tricks the Marines used on them.

Overy ([01:02:54](#)):

Was Incheon secured by the time you got in there?

Oly ([01:02:58](#)):

No, there was still fighting on the outskirts, and we stayed in the big capital. We had to be out of there in the morning because MacArthur came in with Syngman Rhee, I think it was, the President at that time. And then we were sent up north of the capital to Uijeongbu, about 25 miles north, fierce fighting there. I had a tank battle-- I'm in a foxhole and there's a tank battle going on in front of me, I mean overhead. And I'm praying to God, "What the fuck am I doing here?" And there's rounds going off like mad. And then we got out of there and went back to the harbor, and the army got real uptight then. We left 1500 vehicles and they weren't ours, they belonged to every-- Navy, Army, everything. We stole a vehicle though, I can recall-- Well, one time-- [crosstalk 01:03:55]

Overy ([01:03:55](#)):

Excuse me, you were in Intelligence Section then?

Oly ([01:03:56](#)):

Intelligence. And then we went all the way around the island, at one side, and then up to Hamhung and Hungnam by car, and then started up the pass to the reservoir. But I can-- Some funny incidents. I can recall after all of that, we were way down a southern part of the island, regrouping after the reservoir. And we noticed in the camp, we said, "Jesus, Goddamn Navy Jeep there." Somebody stole a Navy Jeep, and it's there. And the Goddamn supply officer, "Where's that Jeep?" We said, "Right over there." "Put a tent over that son of a bitch? Put a pyramid tent over it." And mechanics stripped it. We needed the parts, we needed the parts. We got a bulldozer, dug a hole and put the chassis in there, and we took all the parts. These are things we just automatically do in the Marine Corps.

I can recall coming out of the trap, and it's cold, and on the side of the road is a Goddamn cow. We hadn't had fresh meat in so Goddamn long, "Hey, Cookie!" They took that cow up by the ankle, slit it's throat, and I'd say within 20 minutes they had that thing stripped. I never saw butchers work so hard, they had blood all over them. These guys knew what they were doing, they had that thing cut up in so many pieces. I'll never eat liver again as long as I live. I lived on liver, frozen liver, had to cut it with a hacksaw to cook it. Never eat liver again in my life, hate it. I was swimming at the university when I got called, swimming team. I weighed in at 213 pounds, that's exactly what I weigh-- No, I weigh 212 today. And we're back out of the reservoir and one day I woke up, I knew I was losing weight, and I couldn't talk, my tongue had swollen up. I went to the medic, he sent me over to another regiment where they had a specialist, and he looked at my chart and got me on a scale, I was 171 pounds. He said, "You have a severe vitamin deficiency." I could go into the mess hall anytime I wanted for two weeks, juices, eat anything I wanted to, a lot of juices. Since then I've been taking vitamins every day.

Overy ([01:06:17](#)):

From the time you landed at Incheon, then all the way up to the Chosin Reservoir, what was your specific, what did you do day by day? What kinds of things comprised your day? Your particular responsibilities, duties? What you accomplished day by day.

Oly ([01:06:40](#)):

Well, Intelligence were usually assigned if there's a patrol, we would go out with the patrol. Like when we were up at the reservoir, after I got the flag and everything, and we were sending out patrols all over, they'd send an intelligence personnel with every patrol that went out.

Overy ([01:06:54](#)):

That sounds like dangerous duty.

Oly ([01:06:57](#)):

Well, these were usually company size patrol- [crosstalk 01:07:01].

Overy ([01:06:57](#)):

Company size patrol?

Oly ([01:07:00](#)):

There would always be somebody from battalion intelligence going out, and it'd be reinforced patrols. And we'd go out and we'd discover foxholes being dug all over, and tracks and everything. I never got fired upon. But then when they did attack, they attacked in such numbers that in the morning, in order to count the dead, we'd figure, "Well, there's 150 right there, so--" We'd figure if there's 150 there, 150, 150, 150, 150, 150-- That's the only way we could count them. [crosstalk 01:07:39].

Overy ([01:07:40](#)):

So many per square yard- [crosstalk 01:07:41].

Oly ([01:07:44](#)):

We'd move our tanks up at night, and then they'd start attacking and the tanks would open up with canister shots, .50 calibers. It was like a shooting gallery. And they're attacking with Thompson submachine guns, heavy parkas, and tennis shoes. Freeze their Goddamn feet off. And bags of millet for food. But all Thompson submachine guns, lend-lease equipment that we gave the Chinese during the Second World War. Then the reservoir, I can recall going down when we were coming out of the trap, finally got out and going down the reservoir, we run across these hydroelectric station, where the water would make the electricity. And outside of the stations were huge transformers, the Chinese transformers and Russian, because they were upgrading it, they wanted more electricity up into the northern parts of Russia, for the

manufacture of plutonium and so forth. And this we knew, because when we run across it in the prefecture, in the Chosin Reservoir there, where I got the flag off, are all these jars. And we called up the division geologist, who came up with some machines and he said, "It's all low grade uranium." At that time we never knew what it was, but it was a Geiger counter, and this was all low grade uranium. This is one of the reasons the Russians and Chinese didn't want us to go into North Korea, but it's not publicly known. Maybe it is, I don't know. I've never really read about it, but this is what--

Overy ([01:09:23](#)):

So when you were going accompanying these-- [crosstalk 01:09:24].

Oly ([01:09:25](#)):

Oh, and going back down, what I was-- Train of thought-- We radioed ahead to division, and division said, "Standby. Do not touch hydroelectric stations, do not touch." We wanted to blow up every one. Well, what happened, a year later our B-29s blew them all up. This was strategic intelligence at that time. In other words, let them pour millions of dollars into upgrading. And once they're upgraded, they could tell by aerial photograph, then bomb them. But what they didn't know, we left thermite grenades on top of every one of their transformers, we just burned them right out. But we couldn't tell anybody because we had orders not to blow up. We didn't blow up anything, we just left thermite grenades on top of all the copper transformers. Had a lot of fun.

Overy ([01:10:20](#)):

The thermite grenades exploded, or they didn't- [crosstalk 01:10:22].

Oly ([01:10:22](#)):

No, that burns 3000 degrees, just--

Overy ([01:10:26](#)):

But I mean, they did burn out the damn things.

Oly ([01:10:28](#)):

Oh, yes, burned straight through. Yeah.

Overy ([01:10:30](#)):

I know they use thermite grenades to disable artillery pieces, things like that.

Oly ([01:10:34](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([01:10:36](#)):

Well, you were then in combat intelligence, actually?

Oly ([01:10:36](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([01:10:39](#)):

Okay. Now you were saying that as you were going north, you found tracks and foxholes and all the rest. Were you aware, or had you been possibly warned, that there were large numbers of Chinese in the area?

Oly ([01:10:54](#)):

Yes, going up to the reservoir, we were the first unit to capture a Chinese. And MacArthur's G2 chief of staff, I think it was General Willoughby, said, "These are scattered, volunteer Chinese battalions." Our intelligence officer, our regimental commander, blew up. I never heard such language in all my-- "That rotten son of a bitch!" And they're swearing at him. And I can't say anything, I just keep my mouth shut. "He underestimated their fucking strength." These full colonels blowing up, "That rotten son of a bitch!"

'Volunteer battalion'. Battalions don't work alone, they work in regiments. Regiments don't work alone, they work in divisions. Divisions work in corps. And what came across was three field armies, we couldn't believe it. You know, the American public was told scattered volunteer-- I don't believe the government in a lot of things. We were screwed over there. It was a no-win war. We could not bomb the bridges, we could not bomb the supply bases. We couldn't do that in Vietnam. I would read these reports when I was in Naval intelligence, aerial photo in Naval intelligence, we'd read these CIA report-- Now I can talk about it because it's umpteen years later-- Thousands they're killing every week, and we tried to figure this out. And they said, "They don't have the manpower. Where the hell are they getting the figures?" And they wouldn't let the Americans bomb the dikes in North Vietnam, they wouldn't let them mine the harbors, they wouldn't let them bomb the cities or anything. We figured, "This is a no-win war. What the hell is going on?" But we couldn't say anything. You still can't see anything. These are the-- You just get uptight. And I can recall stories from Fleet Intelligence Centers, when Jimmy Carter sent his troops over to Iran, that was a fiasco. That was a-- It was directed by Washington DC. I believed heavily in what the Israelis did. When they went down south to get their men back, the general that was in charge went along with them. But the general who's in charge of the so-called, phony raid to get the prisoners from Iran, is in Washington DC. And some of the stories that were told by Marines in the know on how screwed up this was-- It's mind boggling at times. It's all propaganda, just for the American public.

Overy ([01:13:51](#)):

So you were on the ground in Korea, you were worried about the presence of the Chinese. In other words there was all this evidence that they were there.

Oly ([01:14:00](#)):

We knew they were there, we were fighting. Every night they attacked, they finally surrounded us. I'll tell you a little story that'll mind boggle you. There was only a couple of us left. We had one company that was surrounded by a regiment, Fox Company, Captain Barber. He got the Congressional Medal of Honor. And Barber's surrounded and he's, "I figure I've got a regiment around me." And we're listening to him by radio. Commanding officer, the intelligence officer, radio officer and myself are in this tent, and we're listening to this. And Barber's pleading with the commanding officer to be flown out so he could give a face-to-face report. He wanted to get out of there. Commanding officer said, "You stay." And he looked around, and we just looked down like we didn't hear anything. Our commanding officer went on to become a general. Barber retired a full colonel and was a captain at that time. And he got the congressional medal of honor for being up there, but he wanted to get out. He wanted to get out. Maybe I kept my mouth shut and that helped me out in the Marine Corps all these years too.

Overy ([01:15:22](#)):

Now, what did he want to get out of? Did he actually want to get out the- [crosstalk 01:15:25]?

Oly ([01:15:24](#)):

He wanted to get out.

Overy ([01:15:26](#)):

Just to get out?

Oly ([01:15:27](#)):

Just to get out, come back.

Overy ([01:15:29](#)):

To save his skin, yeah.

Oly ([01:15:30](#)):

And we knew this, but you just don't say it. You couldn't say anything.

Overy ([01:15:36](#)):

That would really blemish his record and everything.

Oly ([01:15:39](#)):

Yes, definitely. But he made a hero out of himself up there finally, but he wanted to come out.

Overy ([01:15:45](#)):

But he had to, he was forced to.

Oly ([01:15:50](#)):

Well, nobody could get to him. Finally, everybody got to him. We couldn't even get out of our trap. Finally got the rest of the division back, we were all separated by regiments. Finally got back and fought our way out, 12 miles going down to the pass. Then the pass was blown, the main bridge. We had to fly in parts to put a bridge together so we could get out, and walking out of that trap, but- [crosstalk 01:16:17].

Overy ([01:16:17](#)):

Then they had a long way to go, too.

Oly ([01:16:20](#)):

Yeah, all the way to Hamhung.

Overy ([01:16:25](#)):

Were you actually in combat most of the time from Chosin until you got out, was it pretty much steady combat?

Oly ([01:16:38](#)):

Well, quite a bit of the time I was on patrol. Yeah. It makes me think of-- We had a battalion of Royal Marines with us. And the interesting thing about Royal Marines, we had little entrenching tools, they didn't have little-- They had a real pick. I mean, a real big pick or a real big shovel. Oh, they fought, they fought. We could watch them through field glasses on top of a mountain, hand to hand combat with the Goddamn Chinese trying to get to them.

Overy ([01:17:10](#)):

You're talking about the British Royal Marines?

Oly ([01:17:10](#)):

British Royal Marines, yes. The Chinese did not like the Turks, Turks had extra-long bayonets. And they did some beautiful things with the Chinese. Hooee!

Overy ([01:17:27](#)):

Tell me about your contact with troops from other countries, and what you thought about them, as you've been doing here. You probably had not had any chance in World War II, really, to be around troops from other countries.

Oly ([01:17:43](#)):

No, we barely met them. You know, just enough to sit down and have a cup of coffee with them, and smoke a cigarette or something like that. But just real nice people, real nice guys, young guys. A few years ago they formed an organization called The Chosin Few, and I became the president of the Midwest chapter. And then the Korean DLI was presented a plaque by the governor representing. And then I'm also the past commander of my Navy Marine post in Minneapolis, too. But I stopped everything now, I'll go to a few meetings and that's about it. I'm retired, let me put it that way. No obligations, no nothing, just completely retired. I don't want to

be involved in organizations, doing this and that. I'm trying to enjoy life now. I go to the spa every day, have a hell of a good workout. Take care of my house, have fun with my kids.

Overy ([01:18:54](#)):

What did you think about the Chinese when you were--? Did you respect them or did you-

[crosstalk 01:18:55]

Oly ([01:18:57](#)):

Oh, I can recall a lot of prisoners. We took prisoners to movies.

Overy ([01:19:00](#)):

Hmm. Talk about your-- [crosstalk 01:19:02].

Oly ([01:19:02](#)):

They'd come in with prisoners, Chinese. And the Chinese would look around and show you their cross, they'd have Catholic beads on. And the interpreter said, "They're Catholic and they're happy there's somebody they can talk to now." And they'd go to church, too. And we'd take them to movies at night.

Overy ([01:19:24](#)):

Where was this now?

Oly ([01:19:26](#)):

Oh, outside of Taegu in central Korea. Taegu was known for its apples all over the world, the Taegu apples. And they'd come in with prisoners and we'd say, "Well, are you're going to guard them?" "Yeah, we'll take them to a movie, let's go to a movie." And we'd see a religious movie, The Robe or-- Not The Robe, but one of these Charlton Heston, one of these--

Overy ([01:19:56](#)):

Moses?

Oly ([01:19:57](#)):

Moses or something like that. And the Chinese, "Ooh, yeah, he's talking in Chinese." Thought that was great. And then we saw a lot of Chinese, their feet were just completely-- They had to be amputated because they were frozen solid.

Overy ([01:20:08](#)):

Tennis shoes in that kind of weather.

Oly ([01:20:10](#)):

Yeah. Best food they had is when we fed them.

Overy ([01:20:15](#)):

Hmm. So you can understand why a lot of them didn't want to go back.

Oly ([01:20:19](#)):

Oh God, no, they wanted no part of that, no, no part of that. And it's too bad-- Right now they're still having a hard time over there in China, just bad. No freedom of speech, none whatsoever. No freedom of association. Getting better, but it's still rough.

Overy ([01:20:44](#)):

What kinds of things that you experienced in Korea really stuck with you? Really caused such an impression that you really can't forget them?

Oly ([01:21:07](#)):

Well, having a Chinese run right at you with a Goddamn rifle, and screaming. And you're under attack, and you're shooting at the son of a bitch, and then everybody opens up on him, and they're attacking all over. I can recall operating a Goddamn 60 mm mortar without a sight, just dead reckoning that one night. Flares, here it's 1950, I'm firing 1943 flares, 1946 flares. Fuckers didn't go off. I'd use all increments on a 60 mortar, set it up, and the things would go off on the ground.

And it had a little package slip there, "Send in if something's wrong." And then we had Melvin, he was another sergeant in intelligence, and he'd get pissed off at the C-Rations there. The round disc that the jelly came in would only be half full. So he had a girlfriend that worked in the company, Teegarden or something in California, that made this. And he wrote a Goddamn letter, and you know what they sent him? A five gallon can of the jam, with a big, long explanation as to quality control and the settlement, and why the jelly had jelled, and it didn't fill the whole container. A lot of funny incidents. But I can recall a lot of sex shops over there in Korea too. And interpreters said, "They've had sex shops here for 3000 years." I said, "They're unheard of in Minneapolis." And he said, "Well, you've got to go to Europe, or you've got to go to the Far East, and it's common." Little things you'd learn, like you'd be eating with a group of Chinese, or Koreans, and they'd belch. Big, long belch, and, "Oh, real good." You belch over here and they look at-- "How rude are you?"

Overy ([01:21:07](#)):

That's right.

Oly ([01:23:07](#)):

And over there it's a big compliment, compliment to the cook. Different things like that.

Overy ([01:23:12](#)):

I've not heard about that kind of contact between Chinese prisoners of war and GIs before.

Oly ([01:23:18](#)):

Yeah, we took them right to the movie with us, thought nothing of it.

Overy ([01:23:23](#)):

Were they in compounds--?

Oly ([01:23:25](#)):

This is frontline combat, there is no compounds.

Overy ([01:23:29](#)):

But you had movies on the frontlines?

Oly ([01:23:31](#)):

Well, sure. We had Bob Hope come over there, we had-- Yeah, this is the regiment, you know, and we're in Reserve now.

Overy ([01:23:38](#)):

Oh, I see, okay.

Oly ([01:23:39](#)):

The frontlines are up and we're in Reserve. And they're bringing back the prisoners, and take them over, and they'd send them back. But you're not going to send them back at night, you've got to guard them all night. So there's a movie playing, take them to the movie. They'd never forget this, and then they'd show you their little cross. And some of them have their beads, and they'd bow to you and very happy, and give them candy and stuff like that. And I thought that was real great. Treat them like human beings, that's what they are. Majority of people don't realize that we're on a living planet and there's a lot of human beings on it. We're all human beings on this one planet, and why the hell they all can't get along--? Generals don't make war. Politicians make war. And it's too bad, some of the useless wars that have--

Overy ([01:24:38](#)):

What was combat like for you in Korea then? Can you describe it?

Oly ([01:24:44](#)):

Hectic. You don't know when you're going to get it, and finally you get to the point-- You ever get dirty and you don't care how much dirtier you get? That's what you get-- I recall when I was-- I got up one morning, we're on top of a hill and we're going to move out, and-- Got long underwear on and everything, the boots, the whole-- You get up in the morning, you get a canteen, you brush your teeth a little bit, and kind of wipe your face. And, "Who's got some coffee, instant coffee?" And that's about it. And I was going to fart. Well, I felt like I shit my pants. And here you are, it's about 20 below and you can't take everything off. So you take your pants down, you take your knife and you cut your Goddamn long johns off, wipe your ass, and that's it. You're going around without long johns then because they're all shitty. Instead of farting you shit, and it's one of those things. I can recall the incident vividly.

Overy ([01:25:45](#)):

From the Chosin Reservoir onward, that bitterly cold weather, and indeed most of the time then after the Chinese counterattack, you must've been swearing at somebody, because here you were exposed-- [crosstalk 01:26:05]

Oly ([01:26:04](#)):

Well, I've got boots, the long underwear, green wool pants, then these things on, then the parkas, and a vest under that. And this is a warm day so I didn't have my ears covered. But it was cold, damn cold.

Overy ([01:26:26](#)):

Did you feel that you'd really been abandoned, from the time those counter attacks came until you finally got out? Did you feel that people were doing the best they could for you?

Oly ([01:26:37](#)):

Yeah, we felt that. But after you did get out and you realized the big picture, and the headlines and everything, of why the President would not let MacArthur bomb across the Yellow River, you knew you were let down. You knew you were let down. And I've talked to Marines over in Vietnam that knew they were let down, too, and used and they're pissed and then get lied to. Nixon, "Oh, we're not in Cambodia". And then I can recall talking to a lot of Marines in intelligence and oh, I was offered a lot of jobs, good jobs. And they said, "Oh, all you have to do is contact Colonel [Fruitness 01:27:34] in the state department and they need intelligence personnel, especially a police officer". And I said, "What for?" And he said, "They send them over to foreign countries. You work with the police departments, actually you're an intelligence source of the state department. You are getting it from a lower level. The ambassadors are getting it from a higher level and they want it from both levels." And Air America. Oh, God, I could have went with Air America too with the CIA. One of the head interpreters for the Korean forces. He was-- Can't think of his name. He lives up in Frisco, he's a private investigator, he's half Jewish, half Chinese, born and raised in China speaks Mandarin Chinese fluently. Used to go on Liberty in LA with him. We'd go into a Chinese restaurant, sit down and-- New Orleans because of the Mardi Gras. And it's so many ships there and foreign ships and strictly in that one mile square area. And we'd work with the police department and we'd have MPs out on ships and I was in charge and there would be somebody from the Navy in charge also. And we'd catch a service man drunk or something, we'd sober him up and then take him back to his ship. No charges. He doesn't go on Liberty again and no charges whatsoever, all the people we arrested. And the people the police down there would arrest that are in the service they would turn over to us and we'd handle, but no arrest, none whatsoever. It's Mardi Gras time. And I met a Sergeant

down there and he said, "Come on, we'll go out and eat". And we'd go into the best restaurants, walk right through, right through the kitchen into a nice little room off the kitchen. "Police department? Oh, free". Oh, we ate like kings. These are some of the things you don't talk about.

Overy ([01:29:54](#)):

Tell me about the occasion that you won the Silver Star. Tell me about that.

Oly ([01:30:01](#)):

So we're going up to the reservoir, headquarters battalion. I mean, this was our battalion, there was a little house there and there was a little river going through up from the reservoir, this river going through and we're in the valley and there's a little railroad tunnel going through it too. And the Chinese attacked at night and they're coming. And I just woke up and started firing and formed a defense line and moved everybody up on the lines. And our 4.2 mortars were in front of us and they were overrun and some Marine got wounded and I didn't believe it was a Marine. I said, "Okay, you fucking asshole who won the World Series?" And he said, "The fucking Yankees". And I said, "I'm coming". And I went out and there was the Chinese coming across the little river and I threw a bunch of grenades at them. I killed them, shot a couple up on a hill and grabbed the fucking Marine by the back and dragged him all the way back. And they still attack and we're still firing. And then another Marine yells out there. So I talk [Westerar 01:31:17] come with me. And he's another sergeant. We both went out and started firing and got that one back. And we made so much noise the Chinese would not attack anymore, but way in back of us, there was engineers. And we knew that these Chinese, we could hear them up on a hill. We figured we're going to tell the engineers "Lay low, get ready with your"--

Overy ([01:31:43](#)):

You could hear them talking, or--?

Oly ([01:31:45](#)):

We could make out and we figured they're going to try and come around the rear. And the engineers were back here and we had a little radio and the commanding officer told the engineers what was up and the Chinese started running up the road. The engineers opened up with .50 caliber machine guns, killed about 200 of them, just laid them out all over. Then I can recall another time where we're going up the road and some Chinese rushes up and a tanker on top of the tank, he kills him with a .30 caliber, Chinese running down the road, the tanks coming around and kills him. And then the tank goes over the Chinese. Several tanks went over the Chinese and it's below zero. So you know what a gingerbread man's like? I mean, they're like this and they're wide--

Overy ([01:32:42](#)):

And flat.

Oly ([01:32:43](#)):

This guy was wide and flat. And the head was this round and everything was frozen solid. And we pried him up, set him against the wall. I can recall that too, the gingerbread man, but you think nothing of it. But then I can recall right after we did invade at Inchon and one night we're coming back and we had to cross the river and they had set up for the morgue on the other side. And this is the first time I had ever come across a series of dead, our dead and death has its own smell. And it's like you're in another world. Everything's silent and death has its own smell. And that same smell, I could remember it on the police department too. I can recall when I was first walking a beat down on Marquette and Wash down the old skid row before they-- This was in '55 and 425 South Wash, "They walked down there". We didn't have walkie talkie-- You had Gamewells, you report it in the Gamewell and say "Oh, they go down 425 South Wash, they got

something going on down there". "Okay." So at 425 and a half South Wash has a business downstairs and then it was a hotel second and third floor, and go up to the room first on the second floor. So I walk up and I'm just about to the second floor and I knew what I was being called for. I got up the second floor and he says, " We haven't heard from him up in room such and such for about a week". I went, "Okay. Got a chair?". "Yeah". Doors locked. Stood on the chair, looked through the cracks and here was this guy sitting in a chair, black. Now you didn't know if he was white, Eurasian or a Negro. You had no idea. The body was black, completely black, and bigger than this table around him were white maggots all over him. And this was really ripe. And the door was bolted and everything. So I said, "Better get the fire department and the coroner and have him bring the bonds". I damn near gagged on this. The only thing I'll gag on is something like that but blood, guts, doesn't bother me. I recall we got one-- Kruger, he's retired. He works for the county attorney now, criminal investigator for county attorney. He's a criminal investigator and head of the public defender's office. And Kruger couldn't stand anything like this. He had a weak stomach. He was a Marine too. And were on the North side and we had a homicide where a guy put a shotgun here and we've got a pattern all around the wall, both barrels. And we call homicide, "301 Kruger, we think we have a homicide here. Do you want to come up?" "Oh, I'll be right up". Charges into the room, "[Cullen 01:36:04], you son of a bitch, he's dead" and then walks out. We couldn't resist getting Kruger in on that. But fresh like that, no smell. But you know death is there, you know death is there definitely. It has its own distinct odor.

Overy ([01:36:22](#)):

Can you describe it at all?

Oly ([01:36:23](#)):

No, no. Pungent.

Overy ([01:36:28](#)):

It's not necessarily decaying flesh, it's just death itself?

Oly ([01:36:31](#)):

Yeah. But all of these Marines and they were in a big barge, hundreds of them, all dead, all covered over and you were like in another world right there. I've got to ask a priest sometimes, "We have a body, we have a head, we have a skull, we have a brain and we have something in the brain called the mind". And somebody said, "How do you describe death?" "Death is a permanent conclusion, period. You're dead. Everything cease to exist with the exception I'd like to ask the priest about two things, the spirit and the soul. I'm not too up to that." "God said the spirits will all come back up to heaven". So that means we're in hell down here as far as I'm concerned. I'm getting a little philosophical here.

Overy ([01:37:43](#)):

You were describing going after these two men, for example, and bringing them back, bringing them--

Oly ([01:37:51](#)):

They're Marines, they were Marines.

Overy ([01:37:53](#)):

What compels you to do that? Can you explain that? I mean, are you scared? Are you desperate?

Oly ([01:38:04](#)):

The Marines that needed help, nobody else was going to go out and help them. Nobody.

Overy ([01:38:11](#)):

Are you scared at the time when you're doing it or are you just impelled by--

Oly ([01:38:16](#)):

Something I had to do.

Overy ([01:38:16](#)):

Something you had to do.

Oly ([01:38:16](#)):

And the second one, "Come on Westerar, get the fuck up here with me". Westerar just came right along with me. Westerar retired from the Marine Corps as a master sergeant and he worked for 20 years with some intelligence agency in Washington, DC. He's retired. He's living in Maryland. I talked to him about a year ago because he's a member of the Chosen Few too. But we had another staff sergeant there that went on to become a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps. And I bumped into him in about '72 down at Norfolk, FMF Atlantic. He was the intelligence officer. Montgomery, Montgomery. He said, "Yeah, we keeping track. We keep track of you in Washington, DC". I was a warrant officer then. He said, "Great". So I had a few guys that were looking out after me there.

Overy ([01:39:16](#)):

Was the march out of the Chosin reservoir-- Did you have enough to eat? I mean, did you have supplies? Did you have anything?

Oly ([01:39:24](#)):

I went from 213 pounds to 171. You had no hot chub. None. Wild nettles, lifesavers, Tootsie Roll, big Tootsie Rolls. Not the little ones, but the big ones, those big Tootsie Rolls, lived on them and pieces of liver. And when you did set up a tent, you had a stove in the middle, an oil

run and a little grate on it. But you had this round area here where you could fry something. But when we did butcher that cow, we had steak, that's about all. No juices.

Overy ([01:40:06](#)):

Could you sleep at all?

Oly ([01:40:08](#)):

Oh, you'd sleep. Yeah.

Overy ([01:40:10](#)):

And so you had sleeping bags?

Oly ([01:40:12](#)):

You'd have sleeping bags, but you didn't take your boots off. You'd make sure all of the snow is off and then you'd get them on because a lot of Marines were killed in their sleeping bags too.

We had a lot of Marines killed where the Chinese would come up and bayonet them to death and then sneak off.

Overy ([01:40:31](#)):

That was like what you said about the Japanese.

Oly ([01:40:34](#)):

And when you'd piss, you'd zip it down and turn on your side and piss and then zip it up again.

It's cold, damn cold.

Overy ([01:40:45](#)):

But you did have enough decent clothing to keep you fairly warm?

Oly ([01:40:49](#)):

Oh, yeah. Oh, hang on a minute.

Overy ([01:40:59](#)):

Were you in Korea then until the end of the war? Until the end of the Korean War?

Oly ([01:41:02](#)):

11 months in Korea.

Overy ([01:41:04](#)):

11 months.

Oly ([01:41:05](#)):

11 months.

Overy ([01:41:07](#)):

You were wounded again in Korea, weren't you?

Oly ([01:41:09](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([01:41:09](#)):

Would you describe that for me?

Oly ([01:41:13](#)):

I got shot through the leg and went back to the field hospital.

Overy ([01:41:20](#)):

Where was this now? Was this on the way back from the reservoir or was this--?

Oly ([01:41:24](#)):

Oh, no, after the reservoir. We're reformed after the reservoir way down South and then going up outside of Taegu or some damn thing. I got shot through the leg and I'm in this hospital and they send me back way down south to our reserve area where they had their records and stuff like that. And I was there for a few weeks and they, "Oh, there's your second wound. Only we can

send you back to the United States", but they didn't have it in my record book. So I healed up and went back up north. Then it finally came through. But then by that time they changed it. So many had two wounds. They made it three wounds before you could come back. And they could only hold the reserves for a year, but I was over there 11 months and then when I got back, I was shipped to San Francisco and they thought I was regular. They had my orders cut for Norfolk, Virginia, FMF intelligence. And I got back there and he said, "Oh, don't unpack. We're sending you over to England". And I'm a reservist. And he starts-- "Yeah. God damn it, they goofed up in Washington, DC". So it was four weeks in Norfolk before they realized that and they sent me out again.

Overy ([01:42:59](#)):

In looking at your experience in the Marine Corps, what kinds of things that you can think about would typically be very frustrating for you? What kinds of things frustrated you or made you angry? Are there certain kinds of things that did that or certain kinds of incidents that did that?

Oly ([01:43:19](#)):

Incompetent officers.

Overy ([01:43:21](#)):

Okay. I was going to ask you about that. Yes. Go ahead with that please.

Oly ([01:43:24](#)):

Yeah, we run across some incompetent officers. I can recall in Korea, we had an incompetent officer, Lieutenant Colonel that had never had a command and he was put in charge. And the only thing he was worried about his hunting rifles and his photography equipment and it was just frustrating.

Overy ([01:43:46](#)):

Was he a reservist, you think?

Oly ([01:43:47](#)):

No, he was a regular, he had to have the combat experience in order to get promoted. You got to remember that. And it was just complete incompetence. You could talk to other enlisted men about it, but you very seldom ever said anything except—Chandler, that's my officer, intelligence, you could talk to him on the QT. He said, "We realize that, we're trying to do something now". And finally he did get relieved of his command or something.

Overy ([01:44:21](#)):

Was this pretty untypical?

Oly ([01:44:23](#)):

Yes. Yes. Usually it was very competent, very competent. But a lot of Marine officers that already went through Annapolis and then decided to go into Marine Corps and those were really sharp, really sharp. They went through hell in training for four years at Annapolis. Incompetent officers, that was frustrating.

Overy ([01:44:52](#)):

Looking at your career, both in the Pacific and during World War II and Korea, did you feel well taken care of by the government? Well supplied, well fed, well looked after?

Oly ([01:45:08](#)):

Up to a point. Marine Corps always got the shitty end of the stick from the Defense Department. You have to realize that. Like in Korea, the 82nd Airborne passed through once. We were outside of Inchon or something, outside of the capital and they had carbines with the .30 round clips. And we didn't, we had the little ones, but by the time they pass through, we had a lot of .30

round clips. The equipment, things like this, why do they have it? We're really up in front, why the hell don't we have stuff like that? And this was a little frustrating too.

Overy ([01:45:51](#)):

What kinds of things did you find funny? I mean, there must've been some humorous times.

Oly ([01:45:54](#)):

A lot of humorous times, yeah. We had a lot of tricks we played.

Overy ([01:46:04](#)):

On each other?

Oly ([01:46:08](#)):

Incompetent officers, we'd play tricks on them too. And tricks on each other. I'd have to think about quite a few of them. It's been so long.

Overy ([01:46:20](#)):

Sure. Sure.

Oly ([01:46:22](#)):

But we looked out after each other. We always made sure we had enough.

Overy ([01:46:30](#)):

Were you proud of being a Marine at the time?

Oly ([01:46:33](#)):

Oh, definitely. Yes.

Overy ([01:46:35](#)):

Where do you think that came from? From your training or-- How did they create that [inaudible 01:46:42]?

Oly ([01:46:41](#)):

Training, spirit, and decor. In other words, taking an order, following it through to the best of your ability, try to do a little more than they ask you to do, always a little more than they ask you to do. And I realized this a long time ago in the Marine Corps, the more you learn, the more you earn. And this is finally getting through to some people now. The more you learn, the more you earn. And that's one reason I figured I've got to get some college. I have to get a couple of years of college and that helped me to get a commission too. And I wish that I would've completed college really. I have a son now that he went through two years, received associate of arts degree. And his profession was as a sheet metal worker, installing furnaces, air conditioners. He installed an electronic air cleaner for me here. And he would ride along with me a few times when I was detective. And finally, the last time he rode along with me a couple of years before I retired, he said, "Well, I made up my mind, Dad, I want to be a policeman". I said, "You finally did?" And he said, "Yes". I said, "Remember all the courses I told you to take on criminal justice studies?" He said, "I did it take quite enough". So he went back to college nights, passed high on the exam. He said, "Only dummies go in the Minneapolis department," and he didn't mean it that way but he said, "The chief you've got, and the mayor you have, and the low pay, nobody wants to go in Minneapolis". So, he went out to Plymouth and he is 11 credit shy of a four year degree now. And his wife will be graduating in six or eight months. She's majoring in biology but she's not going to be a teacher. She is going into private industry. And then when she gets her degree and he's going to finish his because he realizes I want to go up the ladder in the police department. And they've sent him to through several schools now. He went through one school in Wisconsin-- Oh, no it was Springfield, Illinois, I think to be a DARE instructor for narcotics. And then last weekend, he spent last Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, went up to some instructors

course in Alexandria to be some platonic instructors course. He said, "I'm doing everything you told me to do, Dad, all the schools I could go" and I gave him my bullet proof vest and all my equipment and everything and he's doing just great. The more you learn, the more you earn. When you go up for the review board and when you say you have a degree and you have your master's degree, great, get up there. Because that's what I had when I went out of the department and that one Marine warrant officer said to me, "You can't make it on one, make it on several". Boy, he's right and I'm enjoying life now.

Overy ([01:50:03](#)):

Looking back, do you have any regrets about your military service? Ever wish you hadn't done it or--? Any anger, regrets, or resentment about your World War II and Korean War experience?

Oly ([01:50:27](#)):

I don't know. I've never really given it much thought.

Overy ([01:50:27](#)):

Never thought about it?

Oly ([01:50:30](#)):

No.

Overy ([01:50:31](#)):

Then you probably don't.

Oly ([01:50:31](#)):

No. It's one of those experiences.

Overy ([01:50:40](#)):

Did you have a hard time adjusting to civilian life?

Oly ([01:50:46](#)):

Oh, I had the time of my life when I was stationed at Hingham, Massachusetts for two years, '46 or '47, '48. I got out in December of '48, something like that. Enjoyed it up there. 18 miles from Boston and the Navy yard in Boston would send out tickets to Hingham. All the first run plays would play in Boston before they'd play in New York. And I would get to see them up there, A Streetcar Named Desire and so forth. First run movies. It was a port of entry and met a lot of interesting people up there. Just great, just great. Really enjoyed it.

Overy ([01:51:32](#)):

Did you suffer any adverse effects from combat?

Oly ([01:51:37](#)):

Yeah, my left knee is dead. I can't--

Overy ([01:51:40](#)):

No, no. I don't mean physically. I mean emotionally.

Oly ([01:51:44](#)):

Oh, no, no, no. Some people, what they call it stress--

Overy ([01:51:49](#)):

Yeah. Did you ever have nightmares?

Oly ([01:51:52](#)):

Oh, I've had some interesting dreams, yes, but I don't make sure to wake up. I have enough sense to realize this is pretty rough combat dreams.

Overy ([01:52:03](#)):

Was it traumatic for you? Combat? Looking back at it, did it affect you adversely?

Oly ([01:52:10](#)):

In Heiwajima, I became very religious. I'm really praying to God. I mean, really praying. And when those tanks were battling over me in Korea, I was really praying to God too, believe me. "What the hell am I doing here in the middle of Uijeongbu with tanks battling over me? I hope I live" and I did.

Overy ([01:52:37](#)):

What was your--

Oly ([01:52:38](#)):

Traumatic experience? Standing on a deck heaving. I mean, when a ship is in a real storm--

Overy ([01:52:48](#)):

What effect do you think that World War II and Korea had upon you as a person? How did those experiences affect you deeply?

Oly ([01:53:01](#)):

I don't trust government, no way. I've read too much. I had top secret clearances. I read all CIA reports, no way. Too much politics involved and money, big money, big money.

Overy ([01:53:29](#)):

What did you think in the 1960s and early '70s during Vietnam when a lot of young men were refusing to join military service, burn their draft cards, going to Canada? What were you thinking about?

Oly ([01:53:49](#)):

Didn't think much of them but right now I figured they did the right thing.

Overy ([01:53:53](#)):

Is that right?

Oly ([01:53:54](#)):

Yeah, they did the right thing. We had no business being over there whatsoever. Domino theory sounded good then, sounded very good.

Overy ([01:54:03](#)):

What did you think about then, yourself having been wounded in two wars? Were you angry?

Oly ([01:54:10](#)):

They asked me-- They never called us up, but as an officer, we were all called in to volunteer. And I said, "I can't, I've got a job in the police department. If you call me up, fine. Then my times counts on the police department, but volunteering, it stops" and they fully realize this too.

Overy ([01:54:40](#)):

So at the time of Vietnam and the desertions and so forth, you really didn't blame them too much?

Oly ([01:54:47](#)):

No, but the kid I grew up with that went in the Marine Corps in the second World War and Korea. He stayed in the Marine Corps. He got shot up. He stayed in the Marine Corps and he came back from Vietnam. He was a warrant officer too. He retired. And he telling me about the experiences in Vietnam and how he was blown out of his tent and a few other things, and he felt the same way I did.