

INTERVIEW

**Carl M. Mackey**

YEAR

**2006**

**GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**NAME:** Carl Mackey

**DATE:** March 6, 2006

**PLACE:** Dodge City, Kansas

**INTERVIEWER:** Joyce Suellentrop

**PROJECT SERIES:** **Veterans Oral History Project for Gray County**

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**

While working in California, Carl Mackey entered the army in 1944 and trained in California. After training, he was sent to the Pacific where, against his wishes, he was made a machine gunner. He served on Saipan and fought fiercely for thirteen days in Okinawa while they were clearing the area of Japanese. He had many close calls there and had many horrifying experiences watching as many of the Japanese soldiers committed suicide rather than be taken prisoner. He served in the occupation troops in Japan and was sent home and discharged from service in California in 1946. Carl returned to the Montezuma area and farmed for many years there.

**SUBJECTS DISCUSSED:** Entering the service and training and life as a part of an army unit in the Pacific Islands. Occupation forces in Japan and return to the United States and a storm at sea were discussed.

**COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:**

**SOUND RECORDINGS:** 2- 60 minute tapes

**LENGTH OF INTERVIEW:** 1 1/2 hours

**RESTRICTIONS ON USE:** none

**TRANSCRIPT:** 19 pages

**ORAL HISTORY**  
**Mackey, Carl M.**  
**Interview Date: March 6, 2006**

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Carl Mackey (CM)**

**Tape 1 of 2**

**Side A**

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**JS** - The first question that we ask is: World War Two started in 1939 and we entered in 1941. Do you have any memory of the war, Pearl Harbor, where you were and what people or you thought?

**CM** - Yes, I remember December 7, 1941, and I was just a teenager then, working at a lumber mill in Missouri. I was cutting logs in the lumber mill and one of the guys had a friend close by and he had heard it on the radio. He came out to the lumber mill and told everybody that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and that we would probably be in the war right away.

**JS** - Did you think that you might be going to war?

**CM** - I thought about it, but everyone assured me that it would not last that long. I wouldn't have to go to war, but I did.

**JS** - You would have been how old?

**CM** - I didn't go to the war until 1944.

**JS** - Near the end. Do you remember what people's attitude was toward the war? Was everyone in favor of us going in?

**CM** - Yes, the war was brought on us. There was nothing we could do about it, but go and defend ourselves. Some of the people that I knew said they would have to go to war and some said they weren't going to go. The government came out with needing metal so they wanted all the old cars that weren't in running shape. They wanted them to be turned in to the government so they could melt them down to make armor for the military. I remember one of my friends said, "I can't keep them from taking me and they can have my car too if they want me." He gave his car and he went to war, too.

**JS** - You were registered in Missouri?

**CM** - No, by that time I had come to Kansas for harvest and I stayed out here. I was registered out here in Gray County.

**JS** - You were around Cimarron, then?

**CM** - Montezuma.

**JS** - You came out to work harvest for relatives or friends?

**CM** - I worked for V. D. Thomas down at Montezuma. I did have a friend that worked for him and he told me that I could work also if I came out so I came out and worked for him. I stayed out here and have been out here in Kansas ever since.

**JS** - You worked for him up until the time you were drafted?

**CM** - Yes.

**JS** - You were drafted in '44?

**CM** - Yes, in the army.

**JS** - Where did you take your physical and where were you inducted?

**CM** - I took my physical at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I went down on the train to take my physical and came back. I was back a short time. It was probably a couple of weeks until they called me and said that I needed to report to Fort Leavenworth. That is when I went down to stay.

**JS** - Were you married then?

**CM** - I wasn't married, but I was engaged.

**JS** - Where did you go to basic training?

**CM** - I went to Fort Hood, Texas. At that time it was Camp Hood, Texas, but they have changed it to Fort Hood, Texas, now. I stayed in Fort Leavenworth for a week or so and then we went on troop trains to Fort Hood, Texas.

**JS** - Was there anyone that you knew in that group?

**CM** - Lester Voran, who farmed north of Cimarron. I knew him and he went right along with me.

**JS** - Can you describe basic training?

**CM** - Basic training was kind of tough, I thought. You would go out in all kinds of weather. It didn't make any difference what the weather was. It was cold. It got wintertime and was cold down there. I was used to a dry climate and down there, the humidity was high. It was really cold for me so I would put on all the

clothes that I could. I took my training with an attack company, the 105 and the 155.

**JS** - What did you learn then?

**CM** - I learned all kinds of combat with them. We had to take our rifles apart and clean them and learn first aid, also. We crawled under barbed wire with guns shooting over us and they would tell us if you rise up you are liable to get shot. At the time I didn't know it, but they had bars that made those machine guns so they could only shoot so low. You didn't dare raise your head up; you just crawled along in that mud. I took it real seriously because I thought it may save my life someday. I was right.

**JS** - Was it hard physical work?

**CM** - Yes, it was hard work. I had done a lot of work, but I had never done strenuous work like that was. It was pretty rough.

**JS** - Was it difficult to live in a barracks with other young men? Were the men from all over the United States?

**CM** - It wasn't so bad for me. We had some Japanese in our barracks with us. They were American Japanese that came from California and trained with us. They spoke a broken language that I had trouble understanding, but it wasn't difficult for me. I grew up in a community where everybody was friends. If we weren't friends, we made friends so it was easy for me to associate with people in our barracks. Where they had the advantage over me was that I was a country boy and they always wanted to go to town. I had no need to go to town and I didn't want to go to town. I stayed at the camp most of the time. I would go to the PX and that is about what I would do all during my training.

**JS** - How long was basic training?

**CM** - Basic training was thirteen weeks.

**JS** - Was it hard to take orders?

**CM** - It wasn't for me, but I know of some that were there that it was tough for them to take orders. For me it wasn't, I didn't mind it one bit.

**JS** - What was the food like? What was it like being away from home?

**CM** - It wasn't too bad. Being away from home wasn't bad at all. The food was OK, but it just seemed like I couldn't get enough of it. I was physically working and it seemed like I was hungry most of the time. Every time I would go to the

PX, I would buy some candy bars or cookies or something and I would bring them back and put them in my footlocker.

**JS** - Were you getting paid?

**CM** - Yes, I was getting paid. I got paid \$52.50 every month.

**JS** - You really didn't have anything that you had to buy? The army furnished you with clothes and food.

**CM** - Yes, nothing that I really had to buy. You had to buy shaving cream, tonic and hair oil and a few personal items like that. The army furnished about everything else.

**JS** - Did you have to take care of your own clothes?

**CM** - Yes, we did take care of our own clothes.

**JS** - The washing?

**CM** - Yes, they had a washroom where you could go wash your clothes and dry them. You would bring them back. They were easy to press. You would just stretch them out before they were completely dry and they would dry stiff. Our clothes stayed pretty nice most of the time.

**JS** - Is there any particular person or any particular story from basic training?

**CM** - From basic training, Lester Voran was the only person that I really knew. He wasn't in the same outfit that I was in. Fort Hood, Texas is a big place so at that time they had North Fort Hood and South Fort Hood. There isn't anybody that I can remember in training at all.

**JS** - Were you able to come back to Kansas during that thirteen weeks?

**CM** - No, after the training was over I had a delay in route for ten days before I went to Fort Ord, California. I got to come back to Kansas and I went back to Missouri to see my folks and I came back here and left from here to Fort Ord, California.

**JS** - Were you were in Fort Ord?

**CM** - I was in Fort Ord for a short time. They issued us our overseas clothes that we were going to take overseas. They gave us some training there. They wanted to know if you could swim. They took us out to the end of a swimming pool. If you could swim you jumped in and if you couldn't swim, they pushed you off.

**JS** - So you learned to swim?

**CM** - After they went under about three times they would pull them out, but they were making sure they couldn't swim and just not saying they couldn't swim. If you could swim, you swam the length of the swimming pool. That went on your record that you could swim.

**JS** - Could you swim?

**CM** - I could swim, but I wasn't a good swimmer. I could stay afloat and could get that far.

**JS** - Why did they do that?

**CM** - If the ship goes down, you have to be able to swim far enough away from that ship for a lifeboat to get you. They dropped those lifeboats down and you jump off to the lifeboats off of those big ships. You would swim to the lifeboats because they would start floating out. If you are not far enough away from a ship that sinks, it will pull you right down under. There is no way you could come up after that.

**JS** - When you were in Fort Ord, you knew that you were going to the Pacific?

**CM** - I knew I was going to the Pacific.

**JS** - Did you know what you would be doing?

**CM** - No, I didn't know what I would be doing; I just knew I would be going overseas. We went to Vancouver, Washington, and stayed there until there were enough for a ship load; must have been 2000 of them that went over. We loaded out of Portland, Oregon. They marched us from Vancouver, Washington, to Portland, Oregon.

**JS** - How far is that?

**CM** - It is only about three miles. It is just kind of from one side of the Columbia River to the other across the bridge. We left there and went down the Columbia River. Some of the boys got sea sick going down the river.

**JS** - Were you on the ship at that point?

**CM** - Yes, we were on the ship.

**JS** - What was the name of the ship?

**CM** - I do not know what the name was. One mistake that I made was not keeping good records of the names of ships that I was on. I have wished that I had done that, but I didn't. We went from there to Hawaii. We spent twenty-one days in Hawaii. They taught us how to live off the jungle; how to survive, what we could drink and what we could eat. They also taught us how to use hand grenades there. There were places you could just drop them down. You had to learn or you might freeze up and the grenade would go off in your hand. You can't let go of that lever after you pull the pin so we would just drop them off the cliff there where the hand grenade would not hurt anybody. We did take that training there.

**JS** - Do you remember any specifics about drinking the water or what you could eat?

**CM** - You could drink from coconuts and get fluid from that. We could use our poncho and our helmets to catch water if we had to in case it would rain and use that for drinking water. I never could comprehend all the things you could eat. There were a lot of roots and things that you could eat to survive. They showed us some that were poison and I was always scared that I would get those. I never had to use it and I was sure glad I didn't have to. We left there after twenty-one days. While I was there, my cousin who had been in the army for quite a while was there and I got to meet with him.

**JS** - Did you know he was there?

**CM** - Yes, I knew he was there, but I didn't think about getting to meet him. I was there such a short time and they kept us real busy. We didn't have time to go to the beach or any of that. I went to the barbershop to get a haircut and he was a barber in the barber shop so he cut my hair.

**JS** - Where did you go after Hawaii?

**CM** - I went to Saipan. We got to Saipan and they had just finished the war there and we stayed a few days and loaded back on a ship. They said there wasn't anything for us to do there so we went from there to Okinawa. That is where I put my military training into use.

**JS** - There was fighting in Okinawa?

**CM** - Yes, there was fighting there.

**JS** - Could you talk a little bit about that? They unloaded you and.....?

**CM** - They unloaded us and we went to a camp. We put up our tents and spent the night there. The next day, the company commander that needed the men, said he wanted fifty men and another company commander said he wanted so

many men for his company. Somebody else would want forty or fifty or whatever the case was and we would split off with them. This company commander said he wanted me to be a machine gunner. I said I didn't know anything about machine guns and I didn't want to be one. He asked me why and I said I heard that Japanese were rough on machine gunners and those gunners didn't last very long. He said I had to be a machine gunner and there was nothing I could do, but be a machine gunner. He said, "If you live three days, you have got a good chance." That kind of stuck in my mind whether I would live three days or not. That day we went up past the artillery line. We stayed between the front line and the artillery and we slept overnight, there. If you have those guns shooting over your head all night long you don't get any sleep. That was quite an experience, but I guess it didn't make any difference because we were ready the next morning. We got up to go on the line to fight the next day.

**JS** - What were you thinking as you moved up?

**CM** - It was all kind of a dream to me when I think back now and back then I thought I wasn't in this alone. I have these guys with me. I guess it is the right thing to do because everybody is doing the same thing. We were in there to protect one another and they gave us some advice then. They said, "No one leaves the front line. Once you get up there, nobody leaves. You don't run back. If you go back, you may get shot and it may be by your own people because you are deserting them, you see." I got my machine gun and we went up and we got up there in time that we dug in the first night. That was a terrible experience for me because I didn't know what to do with my machine gun. I was sitting by the side of the road and this guy comes over and says, "Don't let anyone come down that road. Let no one after dark can come down that road, whatever you do." I was sitting there on one side of the road and some other guys were on the other side of the road, but they were kind of behind a bank and I was where I could see right down the road. There were two of us. I was the machine gunner and my assistant machine gunner was with me and we had what we called three ammunition bearers. They carried ammunition to my machine gun. My assistant machine gunner would take over whenever I got tired or whatever. We were sitting there getting ready for dark to come and it began to sprinkle a little bit of rain and it was pretty dark. Every once in a while they would shoot flares up that would come down on parachutes. They put out a bright light and kept the enemy so we could see them. They attacked us at night and we would attack them in daytime. That is the way we fought over there. They had just shot off a flare or two and I was on guard. I had told him, "I will take from now till midnight and you can take from twelve to daylight." I don't know what time it was, must have been about eleven o'clock. There were three Japanese coming right down that road. I had my machine gun set up for the side view and not in their direction so I couldn't shoot my machine gun, but I had a carbine that shoots fifteen rounds. First thing I knew they were pretty close and I raised up my carbine and I just froze. I just froze on that thing and fifteen rounds went out before I could even release the trigger. I guess I was scared and didn't want to have to shoot

somebody, you know. I knew I better not let them get by me because I would be in trouble if I did that. I shot off fifteen rounds, but I didn't kill anybody, but I wounded one and he dropped his rifle and they drug him back into a cave there. That was a frightening experience for me. We went back and dug in at a different angle the next day. We would dig our foxholes and stay there. We would go up and do some fighting and come back to those foxholes. The longer we stayed in those foxholes the deeper they got. It was quite an experience.

**JS** - Did you think at the time that you were poorly trained?

**CM** - No, I never thought that I was poorly trained at all.

**JS** - I mean, with the machine gun?

**CM** - After I shot that carbine, I thought I didn't want that. I traded my carbine for an M-1 rifle and that was my weapon that I used. The only time I used the machine gun was whenever a bunch attacked me. That M-1 rifle was my best deal. I had that machine gun set up the very next day and we moved out. Whenever I would be on a hill we set the machine gun up and we were getting Japanese out of caves so I was shooting at them with my machine gun. They located me with that machine gun and they were after the machine guns. It didn't make any difference how many they would lose to get the machine gunner. I knew that before I even went up there. I was pinned down in a hole for a long time there and a terrible thought came through my mind then. I was kind of left alone because they were beginning to move back. It was getting late in the afternoon and if you don't get back to your foxhole before dark, you just don't get back. You just don't move after dark because you would get shot anytime you did move after dark. I was pinned down in this shell hole and didn't know what to do. Every time I would raise my head up they would shoot at me. Being a young kid, I was nervous and I cried quite a bit you know. After a while, I said, "This is not going to work." I don't remember as a kid ever being in a position where I had to pray to the Good Lord for anything, but I prayed and promised the Lord that if he would get me out of this place I would try to change my life. I slept there for awhile and something just told me to get up and run. I was leery, but I took my machine gun and ran. I had to run about 150 yards before I could drop off behind a bank. I never heard a shot fired. Some of our guys were already there behind that bank where I went. I asked them if anybody was shooting at me when I was running down there and they said they didn't hear anybody shooting at me. I never told them anything about how I felt.

**JS** - Why didn't they come and help you?

**CM** - We were all trying to get back. A machine gunner is supposed to cover while those guys get back. Then I didn't have anybody to cover for me. I was the last one back and I was covering for the wounded guys. They had to bring a half-track up and they loaded the wounded and dead guys on that. You couldn't

tell whether they were dead or wounded. They loaded twelve to fifteen on that half-track. I could see them down below there and then they would come up and pick up a few more. After I got back behind that bank, one of the guys, I don't know his name, but he was from Nebraska. There always has to be a clown in every bunch. He said, "There goes so-and-so. He must have gotten wounded or killed." We didn't know. He said, "I'm going back because I got a round trip ticket before I left." We went on back to where we had our foxholes dug in. He was standing up in his foxhole, pulling his pack off, and they shot him right through both lungs. That was a terrible thing. I knew him and that really shook me up.

**JS** - You had to grow up fast.

**CM** - That was the second day and I thought, "Well, I have one more day to live."

**JS** - When you said that you had heard that the Japanese were hard on machine gunners, did you hear that from soldiers that had been there?

**CM** - Yes, my cousin in Hawaii that cut my hair. The soldiers that came back from there told him that they were. He told me not to be a machine gunner because the Japanese really go after them. That's the reason that I didn't want to be one.

**JS** - You evidently survived the third day.

**CM** - Yeah, I survived the third day.

**JS** - How long were you there then?

**CM** - I fought for thirteen days. I have to admit that I had some close calls, but I was a good shot. I was an expert rifleman in my training. I grew up shooting squirrels back in Missouri when I was a kid and that is what saved my life.

**JS** - At the end of the thirteen days had you cleared out what you intended?

**CM** - Yes, the last two days up there the marines were coming up the other side and we were coming up this side. There were caves on both sides. We were going up and I was covering in those caves with my machine gun and my outfit went up. I decided that after they all got up there, I was supposed to move up. There was nobody behind me to cover for me. I was always the cover guy. My tripod and rifle I could carry.

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Carl Mackey (CM)**

**Tape 1 of 2, Side B**

**CM** - My assistant machine gunner got hit and I patched him up with my pack which they had said, "Whatever you do, never use your first aid pack on anyone else. You will need it someday and you won't have one." He didn't have one so, I used my first aid pack on him and he went on back then to the medics. I was shooting at those caves to keep the Japanese from coming back at us. First thing I realized all of a sudden here I am all by myself, again. I had to go up past those caves to get on that ridge where we were supposed to be. I finally decided to tie my gun with an empty machine gun belt. I tied it around that and swung it to my hip. I could just fire at those caves. I got up there and it was getting late already by that time and we didn't have a foxhole dug because my assistant was wounded and had to come back. I didn't have anybody to dig my foxhole for me so one of the ammunition guys said he would help me dig a foxhole. He helped me dig one and we both could stay in that foxhole. We started digging there and the Japanese spotted us there and they sent in some artillery and he got wounded in the back of the leg. We just fell down together almost on top of one another. He got the shrapnel in his leg. It should have been me, but it wasn't. Anyway, when the medics came they took him back right quick because they had to get him back before dark. I started digging and when I was down about two feet I ran into a rock. I started digging length ways thinking, I could find the end of that rock. I didn't, but I finally got out there long enough that I could lie down in that foxhole. It was getting dark so there was nothing else I could do so I just pulled my machine gun in there and pulled my poncho over the top of me. It rained that night and the water ran into that hole and I had about a foot of water in there with me. I survived the night so that was all that was necessary. I was sure glad to see the next day come because I just didn't sleep any at all. I was there with no company. Later on they sent in some more artillery. I was wondering, no deeper than that hole was, if I could survive that. But I did survive that. I uncovered and the artillery just looked like fireworks, but there wasn't a thing I could do. I just laid there. I got very little sleep that whole thirteen days. I recalled when I got up the marines were coming up the other side to meet me and we started walking down that ridge. The demolition guys came up and blew those caves up. I don't recall what happened after that. I remember walking down the ridge. It was next to the bay and there were ships out there in the ocean. I don't recall what happened next, but I know I got on a ship and went to the Philippines.

**JS** - Was fighting still going on in the Philippines?

**CM** - No, not really, the Japanese had left and run up in the hills. They were still guarding the cities to keep any of them coming down and taking over the cities. We were getting rested up before we went on to Japan. I don't remember getting on the boat, but before we got to the Philippines I came to. I remember how beautiful the water looked. We stayed on the boat that night and waded in the next day after the tide came up. That is where I got my Bronze Star. I volunteered to go up into the mountains and help take in prisoners. Before I did

that, I got transferred out of the rifle company into motor pool. I drove a truck so I hauled prisoners down out of the hills.

**JS** - Why did you volunteer?

**CM** - It was dangerous and they said that nobody has to go. They said it could be life threatening to you. That was after they dropped the bombs over in Japan. They had surrendered, but a lot of the Japanese up in the hills didn't know that. They had been told to come down and a lot of the Japanese committed Hara Kari. They jumped off those cliffs and everything to keep from surrendering. It was tough for them to surrender. You were risking your life, but it was a job that had to be done. I knew I was a good shot if I had to.

**JS** - They were in the mountains and you would have to drive up to where they were?

**CM** - They had a road going up the mountain. It was pretty steep there in the Philippines. We went to Sebu. They had a building up there that they met in. As they came down we would hold them at a prison camp until we got a load. When we got a truck load I would haul them down to a bigger prison camp that we had set up there. As they would come in, I would stop them off about fifty yards or so from me and make them strip down.

**JS** - How did you communicate to them?

**CM** - We had an interpreter. He wasn't with us all the time. Part of the time I would just motion to them that they were to stop right there and drop everything. We would have to examine their clothes and watch that they were not booby trapped.

**JS** - Was that the most traumatic and that affected you the most?

**CM** - No, that thirteen days fighting was what affected me the most. People told me I was stupid to go up there because there were guys that had never fought that could go up there. They needed some experienced guys up there too, and they knew it.

**JS** - How many prisoners would there be in a group as they came down the mountain, four or five or more?

**CM** - Yes, and sometimes there would only be two. I think some of them would stay back to see what was going to happen to those before they surrendered too. Then some more would come down and when we got them loaded on the truck we would go down. They didn't know what was going to happen to them, but they would find out that we weren't going to shoot them right on the spot. There would be more that surrendered then.

**JS** - What did you think about that?

**CM** - I was glad to get it over with. I wanted to get out of there so I could go home. The time came when we had to leave there and we went into Japan as occupation duty. We went into Okaido. There was a shipyard there and we went there and took rifles and all the weapons that they had and they turned them all in and we were in charge of all that.

**JS** - Where were you when you heard about the bomb being dropped?

**CM** - I was in the hospital in the Philippines. I had a wisdom tooth that was bothering me. I went to the dentist which was a short distance away there. It was kind of wedged in there against the other tooth and wasn't coming through so he said he would just take it out. We didn't have any electricity. We had a treadle sewing machine that powered a drill. He couldn't get it out and finally had to drill a hole in it. It was gruesome. He stuck a punch in that hole and tried to pull it out with that and a root had gone around my jaw bone. He still couldn't get it out so he busted it in two and took it out. My neck swelled up clear down to my shoulder. It was black and blue so the next morning they sent me to the hospital down in Sebo about twenty miles away. I was in there when they dropped the bomb. They gave me penicillin to take care of infection and I got over that. There was a lot of malaria there on that island because the mosquitoes were bad. We had to sleep under mosquito nets all the time. I realized I had better take the tablets to prevent malaria. If you stood in line to eat and you didn't take the tablet you couldn't eat. When I was in the hospital, I saw that malaria and I knew that I was going to take my Atabrine tablets because I didn't want that.

**JS** - When you heard that the bomb was dropped, did you think you would be going home soon then or did you think about that?

**CM** - Our general said we had fought all the way over there and he was going to take us into Japan. I'll let you see what you have been fighting for. He took us into Japan and we gathered up all the weapons that they had over there. I don't know what they did with them. They probably put them on a ship and took them out and dumped them in the ocean.

**JS** - How did you gather them up, just go around the city?

**CM** - They turned them in at certain places and we would gather them up by truck and took them and dumped them on ships. I hauled supplies from the ship to GI's camps for food and blankets and things like that. It was cold up there. It snowed up there from the time we went in there in September or October and I never saw the ground by the time I left there in the spring. It snowed so deep that the streetcars couldn't run anymore. I left there while there was snow on the ground and went down to Tokyo and spent about six months or so down there. I

hailed supplies out of Yokohama too and I liked the driving because I got to see a lot of country. I even hauled supplies up to Mount Fuji. They had a camp up there where the big brass could rest.

**JS** - It was a little nicer for them?

**CM** - Oh yeah, it was quite a little bit nicer.

**JS** - Did you have much contact with the Japanese people?

**CM** - Yes, I was contacting them all the time. The Japanese hauled our garbage off and I had a Japanese boy that would shine my shoes and wash my clothes and bring them back clean. I would pay him some money for doing that and I was good to him. He was about a fourteen or fifteen year old boy. He would do whatever you asked him to do and help you with whatever you wanted him to. If I needed him to go to town to help me buy a camera or watch or anything, he knew his way around and he would help you do things.

**JS** - Did you buy some souvenirs to bring home?

**CM** - I didn't buy very many souvenirs, but when I took in those prisoners I took in a lot of souvenirs.

**JS** - What kind of souvenirs would that have been, like knives etc?

**CM** - I have a picture of them in my book. I will let you look at this book. I took in a long saber and I took in a Hara-Kari knife. I took a pair of binoculars and a twenty-two caliber pistol from the Japanese. I kept some of the money that they had for souvenirs and a few things like that.

**JS** - Were you allowed to bring those things home?

**CM** - Yes, I was allowed to bring those things home.

**JS** - Describe the Hara-Kari knife to me.

**CM** - It is a long knife. This is a picture of it right there. Officers would even kill other soldiers before they would surrender or they would kill themselves. They would stick that knife in them and shove them over a cliff.

**JS** - Everyone was issued a knife like that?

**CM** - No, just the officers were issued the knives.

**JS** - Japanese officers?

**CM** - Yes, I can't recall the cliff name, but they turned the ocean red from the blood where they had sent men over the edge by stabbing them and shoving them over the side to commit suicide.

**JS** - Rather than surrender to the United States.

**CM** - Yeah, that was on Okinawa.

**JS** - What did you think about that?

**CM** - It was terrible, but you know they had those guys brainwashed to make them think they were going someplace where they would have all kinds of things to eat, women and anything that they wanted. That was true of even the suicide planes. My uncle went down on a ship that was sunk by a suicide plane and there were only fifteen of them that got off of there. The rest of them went down with that ship because it sank so quickly. That was between Saipan and Okinawa. A lot of ships were damaged and in fact, I saw one come down and hit a ship when I was on Saipan. Those guys wouldn't surrender from anything. We knew that and we had to just do what we could to keep from getting killed. I took that knife off of an officer I took in. I don't remember how big an officer he was, but he surrendered there in the Philippines. I turned them in while I was in camp because they didn't want anyone to use them there. We turned them in to supply company and whenever we got ready to leave, we got them out and put them in our duffle bag.

**JS** - No longer do they let you do that, do they?

**CM** - I don't think so. My grandson took those to show-and-tell at school once.

**JS** - You can't do that anymore.

**CM** - No, you can't.

**JS** - You have your records well organized.

**CM** - That is the real book and that is a short version of it. My wife did a lot of the book, but I did write my personal story in there. I am going to give you a copy of that. It took me a long time to write it. I would break down and I couldn't write. I would go off and come back and write some more.

**JS** - This is the saber? It is long.

**CM** - We are giving the knives to our grandsons. I have a grandson that was in the Marines and one that is in the highway patrol in Wichita. Our grandson is now in Iraq and we hope he is coming home the last of this month. He is a Marine MP with a dog.

**JS** - Where is he in Iraq?

**CM** - He is in Ramada, right close to Bagdad. He said that they have a ten thousand dollar bounty on the dog guys that are there.

**JS** - Did you have a tradition of service in the family?

**CM** - Not my father or grandfather, but I was in the Pacific and my brother was in Germany during World War Two. I had a brother that was younger that went to Vietnam during that war. My uncle who was a few years older than I was went to the Pacific, too. He was in the navy and went down on the ship. My son was in the army and went to the Panama conflict and my grandson was in the marines for years, but was not in conflict. He was a firewall, computer specialist. They flew him around to program the government computers so the hackers couldn't hack into them. They flew him all over the country. After he served eight years in that, he got out of the marines and now he does the same things under a private contractor. His brother is the MP that is over there now and they had brother that was in Iraq for a year and got a Purple Heart there. He had a two inch gash in his forehead and he got shot in the back, but his flack jacket stopped that. He got wounded twice over there and he came home and has a wife and three kids. He signed up for another term and is at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He signed while he was in Iraq. I have another grandson that is in Fort Sill, Lawton, Oklahoma. He is a lieutenant now and will probably make a career out of that.

**JS** - You were in occupied Japan. When did you get to come home and get out of the army?

**CM** - I came home on a ship to Oakland, California. It was in San Francisco Bay and I went to Camp Beal, California. They gave me my discharge there and put me on a troop train to send me home. I got back to Kansas on November 22, 1946.

**JS** - Did you know what you were going to do when you came home?

**CM** - No, I had always heard that if you went to war that the government would guarantee you a job when you came back. I didn't have a job because I had worked for a farmer. I went to work for Marvin Layman in Meade as a mechanic in appliances and tractors and got married shortly after that. I got transferred to Cimarron and then went to work for a farmer at Montezuma. I started farming for myself and did that for about twenty-nine years.

**JS** - I have some questions. When you left the United States on the ship, what did you think?

**CM** - I am not much of a person for water and you get out there and can't see land or anything else. I thought, "What if that ship sunk out there?" We had a torpedo alert out in the ocean. We were all up on deck and had the lifeboats up there. We had a station we were assigned to. I was there, but I think everybody else was there too, the way it looked. There were not enough lifeboats for everybody there so I could see we were going to have to fight for our lives right there. They turned out all the lights and shut down all the engines and had patrol boats that were circling our ship and rolling off big charges to break up that submarine down there. They would go off and shoot water about fifty foot up in the air and nobody could smoke and all we could see was that water coming up from the patrol boats. We had these May West Life Jackets and they said if the boat got hit we had to get off right away before it sinks. You have to hold your hands a certain way because you are jumping down about twenty-five or thirty feet to the water. If you don't, the water will come up under the jacket and break your neck. If I make it I will have to fight for a lifeboat and if I break my neck I won't have to worry about it.

**JS** - The torpedo did not hit?

**CM** - Nope, after a while they gave us the clear signal and started up the electricity and engines and we had lights and went on.

**JS** - Were you in a convoy of ships?

**CM** - There were other ships.

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Carl Mackey (CM)**

**Tape 2 of 2**

**Side A**

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**JS** - Did you encounter bad weather?

**CM** - Yes, when I was coming home, I thought I had survived everything over there and coming home we had to run into a bad storm. I was toward the back of the ship. I always tried to get a top berth because when the water gets rough those guys get seasick and they would vomit. I wanted to be up above that. We were about five high and I was up on top. We would go up and the propeller would come out of the water and we could hear it slap every once in a while. It was a terrible storm. Everybody had to be below deck because the waves would just come up and wash you overboard if you were up top. I never heard so much popping and cracking in a big bunch of steel like that was. I just thought if we made it through we would be lucky in all that. They shut the engine to idle to head it into the storm and we were way off course by the time the storm was over. I was really scared then.

**JS** - I can imagine. You were scared many times, I can imagine.

**CM** - That was one time I was really scared. I didn't think we would ever make it through that storm.

**JS** - You're from Kansas, what do you know about water?

**CM** - I don't know about water, but they said they needed to head the ship into the storm. They slowed the engine to idle, just enough to hold it into that storm till it went by.

**JS** - Did it seem to last a long time?

**CM** - I think it lasted all day and half the night or better, a long time.

**JS** - When you were over there, you were able to write home and your parents wrote to you. Did you receive mail and would they send you things?

**CM** - They sent me packages and they sent me letters once in a while, but they never could catch up with me. I am not a writer so I didn't write home very often either. I wrote to my mother, but they cut that up until she couldn't tell what I said. They censored all the mail that we sent home. It was the same old thing every time. There was no way we could ever make a telephone call. My mother was pretty stressed out having a son in Germany and me over there, too.

**JS** - So you never received news about your brother?

**CM** - No, I heard nothing at all. Like I was, he wasn't much of a writer.

**JS** - You were concerned about other things like saving your life and being safe. Is there a particular person that you remember or a particular happening that was funny or sad that you think would be important?

**CM** - One thing that was real bad was when we were walking up there to the front, the Japanese would get killed. There were women and children also. We were walking up in a straight line, so far apart. I noticed that the smell began to get bad and I vomited. Everybody would be vomiting because the smell of the corpses was bad. You would just walk along, hold your head off to the side and keep on going. That was all you could do. That was a terrible thing there. One of the guys got battle fatigue. He pulled his clothes off and ran. He was screaming and hollering and was just out of his mind. He couldn't take it any longer.

**JS** - What would happen to a person like that?

**CM** - They would take them back to camp and give them medication and probably sent him home the first time they could get a ship going that way. They might catch a supply ship that was coming through to load up supplies.

**JS** - When you came home from the war did you talk about the war?

**CM** - No, I wanted to forget it. I didn't talk about the war. Over the years I got to thinking if I don't tell it, nobody is going to know what it was like. War nowadays is different than what it was back then. Once I got it all written out, I just felt so good.

**JS** - How did that experience change you? What did you learn? You were a young man leaving the United States for the first time, what do you think that taught you?

**CM** - I think I was more determined. I was not going to let anything that I could do get in my way. I was determined to do what I could do. That might be one of my downfalls. I thought I fought for the freedom of this country and I am going to live by the freedom of this country. I am going to do what I want to do. I respect the country. I respect the flag. It bothers me no end to see somebody burn the flag. It is just one of those things that I just don't like. Sometimes I think maybe I could do more to stop things like that and other times I think I should leave good enough alone.

**JS** - Certainly, everything has changed so much. I was thinking as you were telling your war experiences, if people heard those experiences, maybe we would think twice before we went to war. War is not good for anyone.

**CM** - There is nobody who wins in a war. We do win our freedom, but somebody has got to lose to pay for that. Probably more people died in World War Two than in any other war and there were a lot in Korea and 57,000 in Viet Nam. War is a terrible thing. World War Two was a war that we fought for our freedom because it was brought upon us, not by us bringing it on them. I believe the Viet Nam War was a political war and should have never happened. We can look back and see things probably differently, now. There have always been wars and probably always be wars. There will be more wars.

**JS** - I have always thought the people who decide on the wars are never the ones that fight in them.

**CM** - I have always thought if they had wars for fifty-year-olds and older that might eliminate some of the wars.

**JS** - Is there anything else about the war experience and how it changed you, what you learned or how it has affected your life?

**CM** - I don't think the people honored those who came back after World War Two. I came back broke and when you get fifty-two dollars and fifty cents a month you don't save much.

**JS** - We were still trying to recover from the dust bowl days out here.

**CM** - You still couldn't get tires and lots of things and it was a bad deal. My wife worked for the war department back in Washington, D.C., during World War Two and she knows some of the things that they had to put up with back there. They had blackouts and things and air raids and things like that, too.

**JS** - I think there is a plan to interview women after they get through with the veterans' interviews because some people were married while they were in the service. Can you think of anything else that might be important?

**CM** - I have talked about pretty much everything I can think of now.

**JS** - When you came home there were other young men coming home at the same time in the community?

**CM** - The only person that I remember came home at the same time was Verne Markel, north of Ingalls. I met him on Saipan and I met Don Glaze on Saipan.

**JS** - What was it like meeting someone from here?

**CM** - I didn't know him before I went in, but he jumped up on his bunk and said, "Is anybody here from Kansas?" I said I was from Dodge City and he said he was from near there at Cimarron. I told him I was really from Montezuma. He said he was from Ingalls. Buford Rohrbaugh left at the same time we did, too. He got killed.

**JS** - Did you know any women that were in the WACS or the WAVES?

**CM** - No, I didn't know any. My wife's sister was in the Marines. Her uncle was killed in World War One.

**JS** - Is there anything else?

**CM** - You can have a copy of my records.

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Carl Mackey (CM)**

**END**

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