

Paul McGilvra Oral History Interview

- Johnson: Today is June 13th 1990. I am speaking with Paul McGillvra. Mc-G-i-l-l-v-r-a-y. No . . .
- McGilvra: G-i-l-v-r
- Johnson: G-i-l . . .
- McGilvra: . . . v-r-a.
- Johnson: v-r-a-y.
- McGilvra: No.
- Johnson: v-r-a.
- McGilvra: v-r-a.
- Johnson: Okay. Of Lufkin. Uh, the interview is taking place, uh, uh, at his sister-in-law's home here. And the time is uh, 10 AM roughly. And the subject will be, uh, Mr. McGilvra's experience in World War II. Uh, interviewer Bobby H. Johnson. Paul I wish you would tell me a little bit about here at the first about your background. Uh, I know it would repeat of what you told me last year but let's kind of put it on this tape.
- McGilvra: Um hum.
- Johnson: When you were born, where . . .
- McGilvra: Um hum.
- Johnson: . . . and some about your early life.
- McGilvra: Well I was born in 1924 on the farm out here at west of Lufkin. And what was known as the Peaveswitch Community. I grew up just a regular old farm boy, and, uh, the war came along in December 7, 194-
- Johnson: One.
- McGilvra: One.
- Johnson: Before you get to that, where did you go to school?
- McGilvra: Oh, I, Hudson school.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: And you went all the way thorough Hudson school?

McGilvra: Well, uh, went to Hudson school elementary and up finished high school there.

Johnson: When did you graduate from high school?

McGilvra: In, uh, May of 1943.

Johnson: Okay, so, we were, uh, uh the United States had course gone to war in late 1941. So, uh, I guess you, did you have any idea you was going to be going off to a war?

McGilvra: Well, I, I, realized that, uh, uh, when I was, uh, when I was seventeen.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: 'Bout seventeen years old.

Johnson: It dawned on you, huh?

McGilvra: Yeah, it really, bout a week or two after the Pearl Harbor well it dawned on me. You know.

Johnson: Well, were you very much aware of what was happening?

McGilvra: Yeah I was aware of it. Yeah. I kept up with it, I've, I was, uh, I was interested in, uh, Europe and history and geography and so it kindly, uh, just come to me, you know.

Johnson: You, uh, you knew then that, uh,--well were you on Pearl Harbor day? You remember that?

McGilvra: Yeah, I remember very well. I was out here on hundred and three west visiting my friend.

Johnson: Yeah. And on a Sunday.

McGilvra: It was on a Sunday and we had been to church and we had got back, uh, and, uh, we had eat lunch and we had went out to play ball. And then I remember his father come, come out and says they just bombed Pearl Harbor.

Johnson: You were sixteen or seventeen years old.

McGilvra: Yeah, I was, I was sixteen I think.

Johnson: Uh huh. Uh huh.

McGilvra: Sixteen or seventeen.

Johnson: Well did, uh, uh, dawn on you then that you might be having a little war experience?

McGilvra: Uh, yeah, I, uh, I realized it then. Course they was, I was teasing my friend, he was a year older than I was and so he, they were fixing to take him I the army after meeting him.

Johnson: Well, did he go?

McGilvra: Well, he did in about eight months after that he did.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: Sure did. Yeah he went to the Air Force. [unclear word]

Johnson: Well you had graduated from Hudson high school . . .

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: . . . in the spring of 1943. Then what happened?

McGilvra: Uh, a day or two after that I graduated well they took me to, uh, Tyler and, uh, they examined me. And then we came back to Lufkin . . .

Johnson: That soon after you had graduated? The next day?

McGilvra: Uh, about, uh, well we graduated; no it was about a week.

Johnson: Uh huh. But you were being drafted, was that right?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. They, they drafted us right on in.

Johnson: You were eighteen?

McGilvra: Well I was eighteen, what happened back then, you, if you were eighteen years old and still going to school, you, uh, you got a, uh, delay, you got a deferment. Until the day, when school was out well you was eligible for the draft and that was what they did, they already had that thing set up

and, uh, they drafted you went immediately right on for ex-, physical examination.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And, uh, and, uh, we taken that examination in Tyler that was all the boys in this area around hear.

Johnson: That was in Tyler. How did you go up there on a bus?

McGilvra: Yeah, they, they chartered a bus and, uh back [Johnson and McGilvra talk over each other] then they had two or three buses loads of us.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: Tell me about that trip. What do you remember about being examined?

McGilvra: Well they run, I didn't, I didn't think that it was very much examination you know.

Johnson: [Johnson chuckles] You were alive, huh?

McGilvra: You alive, all he did was just take the urine test and looked at you a little bit and run you on through.

Johnson: That was it?

McGilvra: Yeah. They asked you, uh, the only question they asked you was, uh, what, uh, uh, what type of service you want to go into. You want the Air Force, the navy, the army. I told them I wanted the Air Force.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But it didn't turn out that way.

Johnson: Well, uh, what was the mood of the new guys on that bus going up there and back?

McGilvra: Oh, it was real, uh, everybody was real happy and joyful.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Everybody seemed like they wanted to, uh, uh, to get away from the farm. You know.

Johnson: And get in out of . . .

McGilvra: Get out; they knew they was going to make seventy-five dollars a month. Cause that was big, that was big money for, for a eighteen year old you know.

Johnson: Um hum. Um hum. And so there was no [unclear word] and that type of thing.

McGilvra: Oh no it was, everybody knew they was going go up there and get examined and they was come back and stay twelve days home.

Johnson: Yeah. Isn't that what they did?

McGilvra: Yeah that was what I did. They came back and then they, and, uh, they told you up there were you were going to go.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: When you left Tyler that day.

Johnson: Well what did they tell you?

McGilvra: Uh, they told me that I go to Camp Walters, Texas.

Johnson: I see. Camp Walter.

McGilvra: And that was the reception center and, uh, where, uh . . .

Johnson: You had your training.

McGilvra: Well they had basic training, infantry training, and I believe small tank training there but, uh, basically it was a, uh, a reception center. You know. That was there they distributed them out.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Processed you, and sent you to tanks and Air Force and infantry and so forth.

Johnson: Well how did you get out there?

McGilvra: Well we rode a bus.

Johnson: Did you go with a bunch of guys from Lufkin?

McGilvra: Yeah it was a lot of the guys that I was in the, I was in high school with and . . .

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And, uh, a lot of 'em from Lufkin High School.

Johnson: They still, uh, they still pretty high in spirits?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. Uh . . .

Johnson: This is an adventure I guess, huh?

McGilvra: Oh, yeah, it was, it was an adventure. I never will forget we got up there around Ft. Worth and we had lunch. You know we stopped and they let us have lunch and go to the bathroom. We go into this restaurant and, I never will forget the name of it. It was Youngblood's Chickens.

Johnson: It is, I have been in there.

McGilvra: All we gonna have a big chicken lunch you know. Course I wasn't fond of chickens, I was raised on chickens. You know [Johnson chuckles] hogs and so forth.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And, uh, they get in there and they give us a two legs a piece, That's what we had and one piece of bread.

Johnson: And that was it?

McGilvra: Well they give us maybe a, a, we had a choice of drank, a coke or R.C. or something like that.

Johnson: It wasn't much lunch.

McGilvra: No, it wasn't very much lunch [Johnson chuckles].

Johnson: Youngblood's Chicken. I remember, I remember those.

McGilvra: Yeah. In Ft. Worth, Texas. Yeah

Johnson: They had several of them all over Texas.

McGilvra: Yeah. That's right.

Johnson: Well I'll be. Well then you went on out to, uh, Mineral Wells.

McGilvra: Well before we got to Mineral Wells though, this guy, after we had our, had our lunch and everything. And the first thing he said, you know they appointed a sergeant.

Johnson: From among the group?

McGilvra: For the group. Each bus. He was kind of like a squad leader, you know. He told us, said now, "I tell you, you want, uh, uh, you'll have your serial number before you. It's on this, in all this, uh, uh, in this paper and stuff here. Said you have your serial number," and he said, "You gonna have to, you gone have to memorize that now." He said, "You don't wait until you get up there because when you file out of this bus you will be under there control." He kind a scary. He said, "If you don't know your serial number, if they ask you your serial number you may go right on to P, uh, KP [kitchen patrol] right now. Are you maybe shining shoes or, they may make you run a mile."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: You know he kind of scared us up. So every . . .

Johnson: You learned it, huh?

McGilvra: Yeah. Everybody knew, had to know that serial number.

Johnson: Do you still remember it?

McGilvra: Yeah. I, I can remember that serial number.

Johnson: What was it?

McGilvra: Oh. 38478391.

Johnson: And that went with you throughout the military career.

McGilvra: Yeah. I . . .

Johnson: That was on your dog tag. [way of keeping track of soldiers]

McGilvra: That was on my dog tag. I still have my dog tags.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Yep.

Johnson: Yeah. Well, you, uh, what did you think about that country west of Ft. Worth, that was kind of different from East Texas wasn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah when you hit, uh, when you hit Ft. Worth, that, I will always, I knew that was West Texas you know.

Johnson: Um hum. Um hum.

McGilvra: Dry and hot and rocky and rolling hills kind of you know.

Johnson: And you were going to [Johnson and McGilvra talk over each other] . . .

McGilvra: Around Mineral Wells.

Johnson: . . . in the early summer.

McGilvra: Yeah, uh, uh, . . .

Johnson: In may or June?

McGilvra: I would say that, uh, at Mineral Wells, uh, June, about the June 20th, somewhere around there.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Well what did you think of Mineral Wells?

Johnson: Oh, Mineral Wells was a little o' small, soldier town. Wasn't nothing there you know. Maybe about the only interesting [thing] it had was a Blackstone Hotel and a brick company probably. Reliance Brick Company that's about it you know. [McGilvra chuckles] And a skating ring or something like that. And that was it.

Johnson: But there was thousands of soldiers there.

McGilvra: Oh yeah there is thousands of 'em.

Johnson: Where was it, outside the town? Was the camp outside. . .

McGilvra: Yeah, it was, before you get into Mineral Wells on the right there, bout, oh, I guess about five or six miles best I can remember.

Johnson: And that was Camp Walters?

McGilvra: That was Camp Walters.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: They had, uh, they had a infantry training, uh, training camp there.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: But in this reception camp, I stayed there for two weeks. And I was, uh, uh, uh, they would, they would call you up every morning they would call your name every morning, hundreds of soldiers there. They say well, uh, this group here is going to Ft. Knox, Kentucky. This other group here they going to take these down to the Air Force in San Antonio. And another would be at somewhere else. Chenault Field up in Wis-, up in Illinois something like that.

Johnson: Um hum. Um hum.

McGilvra: But they never did call my name. And I ask them after about a week. They said well you are a, you are a substitute. And that, that uh, that if somebody gets sick or can't go, well you'll, we'll you fill you in, see.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Well, that went on for about two weeks. Everyday, seven days a week I would go out there and you know, and I, I'd be looking to call my name and they wouldn't call my name. Finally, one morning, uh, the sergeant said, "Well, uh, McGilvra, Private McGilvra," he says, "uh, we gonna send you way off if you wanna go. I said, "I'm about ready."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: He said, "Where do you wanna go?" I said, "Ft. Knox Kentucky. In the tank outfit. Or the Air Force. And he said, " Well I'll tell you I have a surprise for you." He said, "We gonna march you and soldier and every soldier lined up this morning over here at Camp Walters and put you in the infantry training." [Johnson chuckles] There were seventy-five of us and it was two miles over there.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And, uh, that was where he marched us.

Johnson: You literally marched over there?

McGilvra: We literally marched over there with our, with our duffle bags.

Johnson: What did you spend your time doing in that two week period that you were not, you were kind a in limbo weren't you? [Johnson and McGilvra talk over each other]

McGilvra: Well we, uh, we kept the bath cleaned up. We fell in for KP [Johnson chuckles] and police the area up.

Johnson: So you did some KP huh?

McGilvra: Yeah, and we shined the officers' shoes.

Johnson: Are you serious?

McGilvra: That's right. We sh-, shined the, in the . . .

Johnson: All those things that guy told they was going to make you do.

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: They did it, huh?

McGilvra: Yeah. And we, uh, we'd, they was, uh, kindly teach us how to march and how to line up and, uh . . .

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And uh, basically the army rules and so forth [unclear word]

Johnson: How was the food Paul?

McGilvra: It was good.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Yeah, I, I thought it was good.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Course I was an old farm boy and I could eat anything you know but they had . . .

Johnson: Did they have a big mess hall?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. It, it uh, the mess hall where we would eat it would probably take care of about, uh, three hundred men.

Johnson: Um hum. Well, uh, did you have, uh, vegetables, meat, or what?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. We'd have, uh like meatloaf and we'd have chicken and we have steaks and we'd have, uh, uh, bread, regular old light bread you know. I was, I was used to cornbread mostly you know a biscuit, they didn't have cornbread and biscuits.

Johnson: Had sliced bread huh?

McGilvra: Had sliced bread and milk, had, uh, whole milk. You know, uh, chocolate milk. Had orange juice and, uh, it was basically a balanced diet.

Johnson: Uh huh. Uh, you got all you wanted to eat?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. You just sit down family style you know. We had table waiters. They'd come there fill the bowls full of cream potatoes or black-eyed peas or squash.

Johnson: Course they were keeping you pretty busy I guess after awhile weren't they to make you use that energy, no?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. They'd, we'd get up every morning at 4:30 and 5 o'clock.

Johnson: Now this was after you after you get into your infantry training, right?

McGilvra: Yeah. You get up every morning at 4:30.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And you had, you had ten minutes to put your clothes on or the clothing that they wanted you to wear that day. But you, you was supposed to have a full-field pack. You'd have your full, you'd have your full-field pack ready and you put that on that, that included washing your face, shaving.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And putting all your, uh equipment on.

Johnson: Were they pretty, uh, pretty, uh, strict, Paul, about people keeping their personal cleanliness up, shaving and bathing.

McGilvra: Yeah. That was, uh, . . .

Johnson: Were there rules?

McGilvra: Personal hygiene. Yeah they had strict rules on that.

Johnson: Really? You had to take a bath everyday?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. You didn't take a bath well, uh, the GIs would throw you in there and they would scrub you down with a GI brush, you know.

Johnson: I see. Did that happen to soldiers?

McGilvra: Oh yeah that happened. A lot of times. But it taken about three or four weeks and that was all over with 'cause the guys . . .

Johnson: Got in a routine.

McGilvra: Yeah they got a rou-, they knowed that they, they, if they'd taken a bath they wouldn't get roughed up.

Johnson: Um hum. [McGilvra chuckles] Well was there much, uh, friction between the boys?

McGilvra: Well, they, uh, they was at first you know. But, uh, all that was ironed out. They could take care of that. If you had each uh, each uh, building had a sergeant. You had a sergeant and you had a corporal and then you had a squad leader. . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . .you know over each group.

Johnson: Barracks building?

McGilvra: Barracks. You had a downstairs and upstairs.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And, uh, lucky I was downstairs and I didn't have to go up and do-

Johnson: You slept in a big room though with bunks.

McGilvra: Oh yeah it would be maybe, it was a regular o' GI bunk.

Johnson: All of them lower bunks?

McGilvra: Yeah. No, it was just . . .

Johnson: Regular . . .

McGilvra: Just regular bunks.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: And, uh, did boys get in fights though?

McGilvra: Uh, in basic training they did at first. That first three or four weeks. They'd get in fights, its, hot weather, its hot there.

Johnson: No air conditioning.

McGilvra: No air conditioning and I think they might have had a fan in the rear in the of building or something that pulled a little air in but it was hot air.

Johnson: Um hum. [Johnson says something unclear]

McGilvra: Yeah and tempers little, you know, tempers get a little hot when, uh . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . when they work hard and sweaty and come in and they have to do a lot work and they just, they, they can't lay down on the bunk they have to take a bath and have to keep their clothes clean, their rifle clean.

Johnson: Did you send your clothes to the clean, uh, to a laundry or . . .

McGilvra: Yeah we had to, uh, twice a week we sent our stuff out. But our, old, if you run out of clean clothes you had to wash your own clothes.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And hang 'em out in the after-, in the evening, late at evening.

Johnson: Did they furnish all your clothes Paul?

McGilvra: They furnished all your clothing.

Johnson: Underwear, socks?

McGilvra: Yeah. And your name was on every piece of, uh, clothing. And, uh, and you was responsible for that clothing to.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And if it, if you tore one you could take it over and get it patched or they would replace it or so forth.

Johnson: So you had a sergeant who was kind of like your mother huh?

McGilvra: Yeah. But he was a rough sergeant though.

Johnson: Really? [Johnson chuckles]

McGilvra: Yeah. He would kick your butt.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: That's right he would . . .

Johnson: Literally?

McGilvra: . . . he would, he would literally, not with end of his sh-, his uh, his . . .

Johnson: Side of his foot huh.

McGilvra: Yeah it was the side of his foot.

Johnson: [Johnson chuckles] Did you see, did you ever get kicked?

McGilvra: No I never did kick cause I was, I was always o-, [McGilvra chuckles] obeyed his orders you know.

Johnson: But you mean literally would push people around huh?

McGilvra: Oh yeah he sure would. Especially in training.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: If you didn't, you know he'd, he'd call your name and if you didn't jump up and say yes sir and salute the officer and so forth. [Johnson chuckles] He'd pull you out to the side and give you a good talking and maybe shake you a little bit and kick you as you left. [Johnson chuckles] Next time he called your name . . .

Johnson: You shaped up huh?

McGilvra: You shaped up.

Johnson: Well did you uh, did you like the guy or not?

McGilvra: Well yeah I really did. You know I did.

Johnson: What was his name do you remember?

McGilvra: Uh, not off hand, uh, I it's uh . . .

Johnson: Maybe it will come back.

McGilvra: Oh it will probably come back to me in a minute. I, I [Johnson says something that is unclear] He was a Frenchmen I, I can remember that from New Orleans, Louisiana.

Johnson: Uh huh. Had he been in the war, his self?

McGilvra: Uh, he'd uh, no. But he'd been in, uh, the service for about three or four years you know. He was an old army sergeant you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And all he, all he ever did in the army was train soldiers.

Johnson: Um hum. Well, uh, you, you saying your routine was pretty steady there you, you got up at 4:30 and, and got ready and what, went off to mess hall and then what?

McGilvra: That's, you lined up outside, that's the first thing. And, uh, and then uh, then from there you would, he would, you would march to the mess hall. And you line up. There wouldn't be very much noise either. You was supposed to be quiet you know. They wouldn't, you could talk but, uh, wouldn't be no hollering and screaming and this stuff. A few cat calls every once in awhile. But, and, and when you got in there well you put your hands under the table and, and you'd better not eat like a hog either.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: That's right. [Johnson says something unclear] You had manners, I mean, they had a, uh, a commissioned officer walking the floor there watching you. And those, uh, what they called hogs, [Johnson chuckles] you know a lot of 'em eat just like a hog and fast as they could.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Well, uh, they'd uh, single you out. And uh, then after everybody got through eating well they'd let you eat, but they'd put in a bowl and you couldn't eat with a, you couldn't eat with silverware or with your hands. You have to eat out of that bowl like a hog.

Johnson: Are you serious?

McGilvra: That's right.

Johnson: And they made them do it in front of others?

McGilvra: No. They'd keep them over and let 'em, they'd always have ten or twelve or fifteen, the same ones.

Johnson: But the purpose was to humiliate them I guess.

McGilvra: Yes and uh, course after about four or five weeks, uh, that number was cut down to zero.

Johnson: Very few hogs.

McGilvra: Yeah. Then they would turn around and put 'em on KP. And, and you had to get up at three o'clock in the morning. And, and be on KP those guys would.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: To, and then, uh, and they'd, and they'd keep the uh, uh, keep all the buildings clean and so forth like that.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And then they'd stay there for supper.

Johnson: Keep all the what, the buildings?

McGilvra: No, the, uh, they'd keep all the, they'd wash the plates and uh . . .

Johnson: Oh.

McGilvra: . . . and do all the, uh, the cleanup .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh . . .

Johnson: So they learned not to be hogs?

McGilvra: They learned not to be hogs. And they had to got to make-up school that night. What we did during that day they had to go that night and they wouldn't get until eleven or twelve o'clock at night or one. Then the next morning they had to get up at 3:30 and go back to KP again.

Johnson: Well did that type of discipline work with most guys?

McGilvra: It worked. Honestly it worked.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: I think it, I think it was about the best thing that you know, I, I probably, I, I can look back and I'd say well that is pretty harsh you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But they didn't physically you know beat 'em or anything like that.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But they'd work the ham fool out of you, you know. And they, they'd teach 'em discipline. You know a lot of, a lot of boys they, uh, they didn't have discipline you know.

Johnson: That's what wrong today.

McGilvra: I think that's what's wrong today.

Johnson: That would do every young man in this country good wouldn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah. And, uh . . .

Johnson: And girls.

McGilvra: Yeah, and, what I like about it and, uh you know you talk about cleanness, they were clean. This officer would, after you'd cleaned the tables. I'd done to KP myself you know. Every six weeks you'd, that was automatically. Your name would go up on the board. For one week. And you'd have to go through the same routine everyday. But they would walk in there and those wooden tables and there was loose boards on 'em. They'd come in after, you'd take all those boards off, take a scrub brush and GI soap and you scrub every meal. You'd get down on your hands and knees and scrub that floor, you'd scrub the benches, you'd scrub the tables and all those, it was just like a table like we are sitting right here. Just, only they were loose.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And you'd scrub the top and bottom. And he'd come around, he'd fine any water or kind of food or anything on his hand. You had to do that whole bench over and maybe the whole, uh, kitchen again. Whole dining room.

Johnson: Um hum. So you learned to get the job right.

McGilvra: You, when you went in there and scrubbed the bench, you scrubbed the bench. You made sure it was done right.

Johnson: Okay, then, uh, after you, you left, uh, your breakfast you went off and did what?

McGilvra: We did, we did our basic training there. [Johnson says something unclear] They'd train us in uh, old infield rifles at first.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: You had to uh, uh, you had to, uh, keep your weapons clean to. That's another thing.

Johnson: Learned how to tear it down.

McGilvra: You learned, that's another thing. You had to, uh, you had to tear it down and put it back together blindfolded.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: That's how well you had to know your weapon.

Johnson: Were these the weapons that you would have used, that you used later, the same weapons?

McGilvra: No. The infield O-3, Infield rifle that was the ones they used in World War I. They'd use that in training because they had a new gun coming out but they didn't have enough to go around to all the soldiers so they started us out on that. And we, we uh, trained under the, uh, with O-field rifle for about six weeks. Then they come in with a M-1.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And then we started, had to learn with those you know.

Johnson: Then you had to learn it. [M-1 Rifle]

McGilvra: Yeah, they . . .

Johnson: Was it a superior weapon?

McGilvra: It was, was a superior weapon. It was a semi-automatic. And . . .

Johnson: It was the basic infantry rifle.

McGilvra: Yeah it was a good rifle you know. And . . .

Johnson: Well . . .

McGilvra: ... in some respects. O-field rifle had it over it in a lot of re . . .

Johnson: It was a bolt action?

McGilvra: It was a bolt action you know. And it would fire when it was real dirty. But a M-1 wouldn't fire dirty. Not too dirty.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: You get a lot of, of grit and water in it, well it would jam up on you.

Johnson: Um hum. Well you did, uh, rifle practice and then what else? Marching?

McGilvra: Uh, yeah. Uh, we had, uh, two heavy weapons there that we trained under and fight three.

Johnson: What was that?

McGilvra: One of 'em was fifty-caliber machine gun. . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . that we mounted on jeeps. We trained that was for low-flying planes you know. And the other, and uh, heavy weapons company you had to use a, use uh, a thirty-caliber, uh, machine gun. Water-cooled machine gun. And uh, also, you had uh, a thirty-caliber, uh, uh . . .

Johnson: Browning automatic?

McGilvra: Thirty-caliber automatic, but it was air-cooled. Use that in the line troops you know, infantry where you using line company. We, uh, also had a mortar, 81mm mortar we trained to. And I was, uh trained for heavy weapons company and uh, was going into combat I used 81mm mortar. I, I wouldn't in the uh, I didn't have to use the thirty-caliber, uh, water-cooled and uh . . .

Johnson: You didn't have a Browning automatic rifle?

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: In your unit?

McGilvra: . . . we had a, we didn't use a Bar. [Browning automatic rifle]

Johnson: So that is a little light machine gun isn't it?

McGilvra: No. Yeah it is pretty light. But it has a little tripod on it you know.

Johnson: But you didn't use it?

McGilvra: No I didn't, uh, we trained under those two [O-field rifle and M-1 rifle] that Bar. But that was what you called an infantry line company, and uh, like an A company and then, uh , it's uh, I was in the H Company.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: That was what you, you can use a mortar for that. We were behind the line, the infantry line there and we foreign, that was a high angle foreign weapon you know.

Johnson: Uh hum.

McGilvra: We'd fall, support the infantry with that.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But when you get in combat well you could pick up anything that you wanted if you th-, if you was man enough to carry it you know. I carried a Bar for a long time.

Johnson: Automatic?

McGilvra: Automatic yeah.

Johnson: Yeah. Well you, uh, uh, did you get first-aid training?

McGilvra: Yeah we had a little but uh , we had first-aid people with us all the time. And they trained them. We had very little first-aid training. I don't know why, I never did understand that. Why don't they teach how to stop blood from bleeding, you know, put on some pressure and tourniquet and stuff like that. Stuff like that. Basically . . .

Johnson: They did or did not learn that?

McGilvra: We did learn that.

Johnson: Uh huh. Well, uh, how long did your basic training last?

McGilvra: Well, uh, it was supposed to last six, let's see, sixteen weeks.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Sixteen to eighteen weeks. And I spent eighteen weeks there, but uh, we, when we got through taking that basic training in March they marched us about two miles to a train and we got over there at daylight that morning. We was waiting for the train to take us to uh, our homes you know. The land route up to Baltimore and Ohio.

Johnson: But we got there at about uh five o'clock that morning and we sit there till about six that afternoon and that train never did show up.

Johnson: All day.

McGilvra: All day and they told us . . .

Johnson: Several hundred of you?

McGilvra: Yeah they was about uh, three-thousand of us.

Johnson: Hum.

McGilvra: And this train was supposed to come from Ft. Worth but uh, some reason or another it never did show up. And so, that was a big downfall.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And they marched us back and then the next morning they told us before we went to chow that we'd take another week of training because they didn't have any room to put us up in Baltimore.

Johnson: I see.

McGilvra: And the training, didn't show up and I guess . . .

Johnson: Well did you get to make it, this was . . .

McGilvra: We s-

Johnson: . . . this was early September I guess.

McGilvra: No this was in uh, let's see . . .

Johnson: You went there in June and you had three months' training.

McGilvra: Yeah I guess it was, I guess uh was about October somewhere along in there.

Johnson: Had it tuned cooler?

McGilvra: A little bit. It started turning cooler up there. At nights. Especially, you know. But we stayed there twenty-two weeks. They kept telling us every week we'd, we'd leave. Then even, uh, give us, uh, uh our clothes we'd dress up every morning there for two or three mornings and get ready to leave you know. We had those caps on and our full field, you know our dress clothes. And we'd get ready to leave and they'd tell us no, go pull 'em off we got to take another week's training. So finally after twenty-two weeks of training they marched us over there and we got on this train. And, uh, I rode it to Longview and I got off there and I hitch-hiked from there to Lufkin.

Johnson: Oh I see.

McGilvra: Had eight days delayed route.

Johnson: I see. So you hitch-hiked home from Longview to Lufkin.

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: Have any trouble finding a ride?

McGilvra: Didn't, the first guy that came along picked me and my buddy up and brought us to Nacogdoches, then a guy from Nacogdoches, uh, picked us up and brought us on to our home. He just volunteered some farmer up there.

Johnson: The uniform did a lot didn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah a farmer, some farmer picked us up in a pickup and carried him to, carried him out here east of Lufkin. Then carried me to Peaveswitch. See.

Johnson: Yeah. Well you had a few days at home.

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: And that was the last time you were home before you went over seas?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: I see.

McGilvra: Yeah I caught a, I caught a bus here in Lufkin I, I, and I caught a train in, uh, Longview.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: They give you a ticket you know.

Johnson: Well were the, uh, were the trains crowded Paul?

McGilvra: Oh they were crowded. With GIs and a few civilians.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Some old people you know that had a emergency and this and that. But I sit up on this train for Longview, Texas to Little Rock, Arkansas.

Johnson: Um hum. And then you . . .

McGilvra: No seat.

Johnson: . . . went on to Baltimore?

McGilvra: Then from there I went to uh, uh, Baltimore.

Johnson: Okay. What, were . . .

McGilvra: Fort Mead.

Johnson: Fort Mead?

McGilvra: Fort Mead.

Johnson: What were you going to do there?

McGilvra: Well that was just uh . . .

Johnson: More training?

McGilvra: . . .uh, uh, that was just a reception, another reception delaying route. Delay you there for a few weeks. We stayed there I guess ten days and then they told us that, everyday there they told us we'd leave the next morning you know.

Johnson: Were you already in a unit?

McGilvra: No.

Johnson: You had not been assigned.

McGilvra: No we hadn't been assigned. We, when we, when we uh, got there well we still in a group. Basically, some of the guys went other places but the most of 'em that trained there at that particular time, that twenty-two weeks . . .

Johnson: Were with you.

McGilvra: Were with us.

Johnson: So you knew the people.

McGilvra: Yeah. I knew most of 'em.

Johnson: Did you meet any good friends by this time?

McGilvra: Oh yeah I made a lot of new friends. Uh, at, they were mostly boys from West Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, and Arkansas, and Louisiana you know.

Johnson: Guys that you went on, uh, overseas with.

McGilvra: Yeah, well we didn't leave from there to go overseas. We left there and they, they shipped us up, what they, another reception center, uh, at Camp Shanks. That is up in, uh, Orangeburg. Right across the river, Hudson Bay. Right across the river from New York City.

Johnson: I see. Uh huh.

McGilvra: And some of the guys there, that I knew are good friends was taken basic, they held them up or shipped them out a day or two early to other outfits to Europe or, or south Pacific.

Johnson: Um hum. Did you have any idea where you were going?

McGilvra: No, I didn't have any idea.

Johnson: They wouldn't tell you?

McGilvra: No. The only way we could tell where we going, we thought we were going, they would give us ODs.

Side Two

Johnson: This is a continuation of the interview with Paul McGilvra. Well you were telling me about, uh, your experiences, uh, there just before you were

shipped out of the country. I think you said you got to New York City or across from New York City. And you thought you were going to Europe huh?

McGilvra: Yeah. They, in fact they issued us all a wool clothing and everything.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And socks and shoes and OD warm wool clothing.

Johnson: This is the fall of 1943?

McGilvra: Uh, yeah this was, uh, December the, in Orangeburg, New Jersey this was around the, uh, fifteenth of December.

Johnson: Um hum. '43?

McGilvra: Of '43.

Johnson: Um hum. Did you spend Christmas there?

McGilvra: No I didn't spend Christmas, I spent that on the boat.

Johnson: Oh I see. So you . . .

McGilvra: They shipped us out and we, we didn't know where we was going until about the second day and, and some of us went up on deck and we asked, uh, uh, some of those, uh, uh, sailors, we could see it looked like a, the land you know, a city out there. And he said, "Oh that's Virginia.." Virginia Beach I believe it was.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Best I . . .

Johnson: You were coming down the coast.

McGilvra: Yeah we was going parallel to the coast. And what the heck we doing this? He said, "Don't ask me. I don't even, all I know, you know." Na he wasn't a U.S. sailor, he was a merchant marine sailor.

Johnson: I see you were just on a merchant ship.

McGilvra: Yeah. They was a few sailors and uh . . .

Johnson: You remember the name of the ship?

McGilvra: No I don't. All I know that it was repaired in, in Galveston in 1938.

Johnson: I see. [Johnson chuckles]

McGilvra: I sat on there . . .

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: . . . on the side.

Johnson: Uh huh. Was it a big ship?

McGilvra: No, it just held about seventeen hundred, uh, soldiers. It was small.

Johnson: Were you packed in?

McGilvra: Just like sardines. We'd had uh, maybe four bunks or five. That stacked.

Johnson: Did you get seasick?

McGilvra: Oh, the worst. I am telling you I was, uh [Johnson chuckles] I was easy to get seasick.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: You know even before I went to the service I couldn't hardly ride in a airplane or, or get in the back of a car. I, I was easy to get seasick in the air.

Johnson: And it bothered you huh.

McGilvra: Oh! It, definitely. It just, I was sick.

Johnson: Did you get used to it?

McGilvra: No I never did. You know, and we went up, went from there on down to Cuba you know.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And that, you get into the Atlantic there, ocean you know and that was, waves was thirty and forty feet high it seemed like. It was rough storm, stormy.

Johnson: You couldn't eat.

McGilvra: You couldn't eat. And between Cuba, we spent four days in Cuba. Three or four days in Cuba. We went up into the harbor of Cuba.

Johnson: At, at uh, San Diégo or where? Not San Diégo . . .

McGilvra: I tell you the truth . . .

Johnson: . . . Havana?

McGilvra: Havana. I believe it was. Yeah. They had a, they had a blimp ba-, uh, base there.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And uh, those . . .

Johnson: Submarine coves.

McGilvra: Yeah. And that's was what they, that's the reason we went up there, but they, wasn't but one available to escort us down to, down to Panama.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: I learned later.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But we had a blimp that, that flew over us day and night to, and then we had two ships escorting us.

Johnson: Naval ships huh?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: Is that right? Were you, just your one ship? Is that a . . .

McGilvra: That was all in the convoy.

Johnson: And so you ended up, uh, headed on down to Panama.

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: So you were not going to Europe?

McGilvra: No we, we, when we hit uh, Panama, we decided we wouldn't going. [Johnson chuckles] Well in fact on our way down there they issued us sun pants. Cause it was getting warm weather.

Johnson: That was your warm weather uniform.

McGilvra: Our khakis, yeah. Um hum. An we spent a couple of days or three in Cuba. Not in, yeah in Cuba but we spent about two days or three in Panama.

Johnson: Did you go through the canal?

McGilvra: Yeah we went through the canal.

Johnson: Was that an experience for guy from Lufkin, Texas?

McGilvra: That was a , yeah that was a really a experience. And we started through there at late in the, uh the afternoon.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And it was dark about the time we went through 'cause I couldn't see too much.

Johnson: Um hum. How long did it take to get through?

McGilvra: Seem like to me it'd taken about eight hours.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Approximately. I'm not, I'm not, six to eight hours.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: It just depended upon how the, how well everything was working. I think they was having a lot of trouble with their equipment and stuff. During the war they didn't have time to work on it. They was so many troops going through a ship.

Johnson: Lot of a ships coming through.

McGilvra: Lot of ships coming through there. But it was a real experience. You could almost reach out with your hand and touch the bank you know.

Johnson: Yeah. Well, uh, then you got into the Pacific huh?

McGilvra: Yeah, You know I don't know there is very people that know it, after you go through the Panama Canal going out into the Pacific, you, there is a stretch of, uh, uh, fresh water there. It's a lake, in fact. And what they do to all GIs that goes through there during the war, they strip you off naked and they make, they turn a big hose on, they put three hundred of us out there on top of that deck.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And throw that GI soap out there and you have to soap down. And they, you have to take a bath cause that's the last fresh water you going to get.

Johnson: I see.

McGilvra: Until you get to your landing.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: 'Cause, uh . . .

Johnson: It's all salt water huh?

McGilvra: Its all salt water and they save that water. For drinking and cooking. See it is just a small amount of water that they can make each day on that ship and ocean water see.

Johnson: They actually made it huh?

McGilvra: They actually made it.

Johnson: Well, uh, you did not put into a port after you left Panama Canal unit you got to what, where you were going?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: And where was that?

McGilvra: Forty-three days from New York City until we landed in New Caledonia.

Johnson: Now that is in, uh, in the uh, south Pacific?

McGilvra: That's south Pacific.

Johnson: What, what island?

McGilvra: Well, that was French owned.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: At that time.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: I think that it is independent now. They got the independence from France about four or five years ago.

Johnson: And . . .

McGilvra: But that was French owned then. And course that was uh, was uh, occupied by the Americans there. We landed over there in, in uh, in about the first of February somewhere along in there.

Johnson: Um hum. In 1944.

McGilvra: 1944 there.

Johnson: Were you, uh, close to fighting at that time?

McGilvra: No. That was, uh, midways from fighting.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Then. But we were a thousand, about a thousand miles from New Zealand.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And about two thousand or fifteen hundred from Australia. If you look on the map, you . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But we'd taken training there.

Johnson: What kind of training?

McGilvra: Uh, just regular basic like we, basic training in guns in uh, in uh, chemical warfare and . . .

Johnson: Did you do any training of getting off in small boats and type of thing?

McGilvra: No we didn't do any of that there.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: Did you get some of that training later?

McGilvra: Uh, no. Actually, the only, the only training that I got in that is when we made landing in New Guinea.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: That's right. That was my first experience. Getting . . .

Johnson: Was that your first, uh, introduction to battle to?

McGilvra: In New Guinea?

Johnson: And when was this?

McGilvra: Well, we left New Caledonia. We stayed there for about four weeks and taken training.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, then from there we went to New Zealand. On a boat, taking three days and three nights.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh . . .

Johnson: Which town do you go to, do you remember?

McGilvra: Yeah we went to Auckland.

Johnson: Was that a big city?

McGilvra: Yeah that's, that was a large, large city to me.

Johnson: Did you get to visit the city any?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. We visited the city. I stayed in Auckland there for about a week and . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . and uh, temporarily outfit and then they shipped us on out in the countryside to our regular outfits.

Johnson: Did you have any occasion of meeting any of the people?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. While I gotten leave, I stayed there for three months.

Johnson: How did they receive you?

McGilvra: Uh good.

Johnson: Friendly?

McGilvra: Friendly people. In fact, that's uh, most friendliest people that I have ever been around in my life you know.

Johnson: Did you meet some girls?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. A lot of girls. Pretty girls. Real intelligent. Most of 'em is educated too.

Johnson: Did you have dances and things like that?

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: Clubs to go to?

McGilvra: No. Where I was at we didn't. But they would give you a weekend pass.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: I, I had taken a couple of weekend passes and, and went to Auckland.

Johnson: Did they have service clubs there?

McGilvra: Yeah they had service clubs and we'd visit uh, resort places you know and, and uh, we, we wouldn't go to a hotel. We'd just go out in a suburbs, catch a trolley out there and get off and walk around the neighborhoods and people would let us stay all night with them.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: They'd ask us.

Johnson: Just put you up?

McGilvra: Yeah they'd put us up. They'd ask us. They'd . . .

Johnson: They didn't charge you nothing?

McGilvra: They charged us nothing.

Johnson: Did you give them anything?

McGilvra: You, they wouldn't accept anything.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: That's the kind of people, I say, New Zealand people great.

Johnson: Well I'll be.

McGilvra: Great. I really have . . .

Johnson: Would you eat with them?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. They would feed you, they would feed you in breakfast in bed they wouldn't let you uh . . .

Johnson: Well you were, uh, were uh, helping to save 'em I guess huh?

McGilvra: Oh yeah we, we was, uh, we was there to save the people in Aus-. In Australia and New Zealand . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . you know. They was proud to see us you know. 'Cause the Japanese were just a, uh, a few thousand miles from there you know.

Johnson: Right.

McGilvra: In fact they, they controlled the sea there for many, many months you know.

Johnson: Well uh . . .

McGilvra: They thought they'd going to get invaded anyway you know.

Johnson: Then where did you go after you left New Zealand?

McGilvra: We left Auckland and they told us that we were going to land in Atiptia New Guinea.

Johnson: How do you spell that?

McGilvra: Let's see. Atiptia?

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: A-t-i-p-t-i-a I believe that it is what it is. It don't . . .

Johnson: It's in New Guinea though.

McGilvra: Yeah it's a, it was, its right up from Dutch New Guinea which is Indonesia I think owns it.

Johnson: Part of it.

McGilvra: Yeah part of New Guinea. And Australia, uh, owns the other half of it. I'm, I'm sure . . .

Johnson: Was it a island group? A group of islands?

McGilvra: Uh, no this New Guinea was, back then was what you call we were in, I believe we were in what they called uh, Dutch New Guinea. Half of it belonged to Australia and half of it belonged to the Dutch over in Holland.

Johnson: And there was fighting had taken place there?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. We, uh we destroyed over uh thirty-two thousand Japanese there in about six weeks.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Not our div-, I was in the 43rd Infantry Division. I don't think I have ever mentioned that.

Johnson: No, you hadn't.

McGilvra: I was in the 43rd Infantry Division.

Johnson: What was your unit number do you remember?

McGilvra: It was 103rd Infantry, Company H, 43rd Infantry Division. I was in the heavy weapons.

Johnson: Well tell me about your first introduction to battle.

McGilvra: Uh, first introduction to battle was up on Epo-, I mean on uh, on the river out of Atpitia about twenty or thirty miles from a jungle. We were relieved I believe, it was either , the thirty-second or the twenty-fifth division I don't remember. Seems like it was the thirty-second division. And they had killed thousands and thousands of Japanese on this river. They had uh,

emplacements there. And we gradually relieved them over a week period of time there. And uh, and they were bodies by the hundreds—Japanese laying on the banks and in this river. [Johnson says something unclear] Oh it was terrible. They were already swelled and busted and actually I didn't see it, but the ones we relieved there said that two weeks, before the river was running of blood. It was right next to the ocean and the tide would come in and it would push that blood up and it would push it back they said, you know the tide would in that river.

Johnson: Were our losses very great?

McGilvra: Our loss wasn't too great there. I think they was about three hundred men killed. That was a lot of people, but compared to what they, they had set up there and uh, along that river for miles and miles. They had bunkers in there but those Japanese come in there and they come through that jungle.

Johnson: Almost a suicide?

McGilvra: Yeah that was what it was. By the hundreds. And they set, and they would burn machine guns up and they had artillery that was liked to killed a lot of 'em. Was that air burst. The artillery. They'd come, they had that gun, the Americans had that artillery set up and they just slaughtered 'em. Well the Japanese were desperate. They didn't have anywhere to go. If they went the other way, went the other way, it was so far to, they couldn't hit Fort Marsby that was up there six or seven hundred miles and uh, and the only way, we had 'em cut off from the sea and the only thing they had to eat was what the jungle or what little gardens they were raising. And they were tearing out of there trying to get, they didn't know where they was going but they didn't want, uh, they was trying to get to food you know. And come on down the coast.

Johnson: Do you remember your first actual encounter in battle?

McGilvra: Yeah we relieved them there in those bunkers. We, we found those stragglers that come through there. We killed maybe thirty or forty a day. And after we were there for about a week, well they started, they sent us out on patrols. They'd send us into what they called water buffaloes. And we'd go up that coast and those, we'd be in that water buffalo and those Japs would, would uh, fire rifles at us.

Johnson: What was the water buffalo?

McGilvra: It was kind of at tank type . . .

Johnson: A vehicle?

McGilvra: . . . thing. Yeah. If it got so hot we could get out in the ocean out there maybe two or three hundred yards and get in that water you know, it would paddle itself. Wouldn't sink. We'd have ten or . . .

Johnson: It'd go on land and water.

McGilvra: Land and water, that's what we would call it a water buffalo. We'd cross over those rivers and go on up in there twenty or thirty miles.

Johnson: How many people would you haul in one of 'em?

McGilvra: Uh, from eight to ten.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And we'd have fifteen or twenty of 'em.

Johnson: Um hum. You was just on the excursion over there.

McGilvra: Yeah we'd made be four or five hundred yards apart.

Johnson: Looking for Japanese.

McGilvra: But those, yeah we'd go up in the edge of those jungles on the beach and they would follow us all the time. And we would run into a bunch of 'em we'd have to, they'd let the back of that tank down and we'd run out there and try to kill 'em.

Johnson: Uh huh. Do you, do you recall the first time you actually saw Japanese?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: How far were you from him?

McGilvra: Uh, the first time was bout uh, about a hundred yards.

Johnson: Um hum. Were they shooting at you?

McGilvra: No. We had, well, we had went up this beach and we had encountered fire for ten or twelve miles up it you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Sniper fire.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, we come to this hut. And we, throw, set up a mortar out there. And we threw a phosphorous shell in it.

Johnson: Set on fire?

McGilvra: We set on the fire, when we did those Japanese started piling out of it and when they did they came out with there hands. We run up there and they had their hands up.

Johnson: So you took prisoners?

McGilvra: And, yeah. We took uh, five prisoners. And uh, they didn't have any clothes on. They were starved to death. I, I don't guess they weighed over fifty to sixty pounds. And they, they, there, they didn't even have any control over their bowels. They were starving and their stomach was swelled you know.

Johnson: Did you have any compassion for them?

McGilvra: Well, we wanted to, some of the soldiers wanted to kill 'em but our lieutenant wouldn't let 'em. And he said, "We ought to kill the whole bunch because they starved to death you know." And but, he wouldn't let us do it. And uh, we didn't want to take 'em back. They stunk and they had mess all over 'em and everything. So we had some old blankets there and we put it in a, in this little ole, uh, tank. We put two or three in there and we'd divide them up with the other guys you know, one or two. And I think during the day we had about fifteen in all by the time we got back.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And we took 'em back and treated 'em.

Johnson: What were, what, what happened to those people?

McGilvra: Well, we, we kept them for two or three weeks and we, uh, we had uh, uh, our intelligence come up and interviewed 'em.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And we fed 'em up. And we kept 'em. The group, we had two and we kept them for three, for about six weeks.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And we, we doctored 'em, and uh, fed 'em real good and in uh, six weeks they had already gained ten, twelve, fifteen pounds. They were really

coming out of it real good and they'd got where they talking to us. Every time a plane would come over they would go under the bunks. But they wasn't, we had guards around them twenty four hours a day. But they, they wouldn't hurt you.

Johnson: But they ended up as prisoners of war right . . .

McGilvra: They ended up prisoner . . .

Johnson: . . .did they come back to this country you think?

McGilvra: I doubt it. They'd put them in a pool you know where they'd captured the rest of 'em. But they didn't have very many prisoners over there, they didn't take too many.

Johnson: They didn't surrender too much did they?

McGilvra: No they didn't surrender. They wouldn't surrendered then if they hadn't been starved to death.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And that was the first encounter.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Then later on, in, in New Guinea we was under fire every day there for about three or four weeks.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Until we cleaned, cleaned all that mess out there in . . .

Johnson: Well Paul did it bother you shooting at people knowing that you were maybe killing people.

McGilvra: No it really didn't bother me that much. Honest it didn't. I guess I was just uh . . .

Johnson: Trained well.

McGilvra: I was trained that way and programmed to uh, where I, I just didn't give a darn, you know.

Johnson: has it ever bothered you since?

McGilvra: Well, later on after I got out I think it did for awhile you know. Seemed like, I don't know whether it was all that combat that bothered me or—seemed like when I got home I wasn't home. I wanted, I wanted to go here. I wasn't satisfied. I'd go to Houston to see my sister. I'd go to Port Arthur. I'd get there and I wouldn't be there thirty minutes and I wanted to . . .

Johnson: Couldn't calm down.

McGilvra: No, I couldn't calm down you know.

Johnson: How long did it take?

McGilvra: Oh I say I, I guess that way for about a year.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: Did you have dreams?

McGilvra: No.

Johnson: Not night dreams.

McGilvra: Not, not night dreams about it. Not too much.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But uh, it was something else I, I'll tell you that hurt me worse in that war anything and that was that malaria fever.

Johnson: You got that.

McGilvra: And jungle rot.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And I had malaria fever from 1944 up until 55.

Johnson: Is that right? Just recurred huh?

McGilvra: Yeah, I still, I still think I . . .

Johnson: It sapped your strength.

McGilvra: Yeah. It, it you know, it hurt, it hurt my health a lot.

Johnson: Uh huh. And the jungle rot, what was that?

McGilvra: Uh that was were it . . .

Johnson: Fungus?

McGilvra: Fungus and stuff and they couldn't cure it and . . .

Johnson: On your feet.

McGilvra: Yeah and I still have it. In fact I will show you when, in a few minutes what I'm talking about.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: I want you to see that.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: But anyway, it's a . . .

Johnson: So you still carry that forty-five years later?

McGilvra: Forty-five years later. And I stayed in the hospital over in uh, in uh, Philippines. You know we landed there after we left New Guinea. Let's see, we landed in uh, in New Guinea and I stayed there for um, I guess almost a year.

Johnson: In that area.

McGilvra: In that area there. Cleaned those Japs out. We was on patrol every day. We had the fence put up you know around the river.

Johnson: Did you lose any Americans?

McGilvra: Yeah we'd loose some every once and a while.

Johnson: Snipers and . . .

McGilvra: Snipers that was what, that's what I dreaded. I dread, I uh dreaded, I dreaded disease more than I did the snipers though.

Johnson: Did you say that you eventually ended up in the hospital?

McGilvra: I uh, I ended up in the, no I wasn't in the hospital in New Guinea but a lot of my friends were with Typhus fever.

Johnson: Um hum. A lot of 'em died and I had to help bury them. That was another thing that I . . .

Johnson: You lost close friends?

McGilvra: I had, I lost, uh, five close friends there in three weeks to Typhus fever.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: They just couldn't control it.

McGilvra: They couldn't control it and they done everything they knowed to do. I left there in, in uh, in December the 15th . . .

Johnson: Of 44.

McGilvra: Of 44 going to, I, I spent the boat. I spent Christmas on the boat.

Johnson: Two years running on the boat.

McGilvra: Every year I was in the army, I spent Christmas on the boat.

Johnson: And where were you going now?

McGilvra: I was going to uh, uh, Linguaying Gulf in the Philippines.

Johnson: Linguay [unclear word]

McGilvra: Linguay. I don't know off hand. I don't. I . . .

Johnson: Well had the Philippines been retaken yet?

McGilvra: No, that was the first landing. That's . . .

Johnson: I see.

McGilvra: . . . yeah.

Johnson: So you went in . . .

McGilvra: That's where . . .

Johnson: . . .Macarthur went in?

McGilvra: Macarthur came in later. A few days later.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But they had already taken, uh, they had taken Quada Canal, they had taken Munda, they had taken New Guinea.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, and uh, they had taken the Marshall Islands.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, uh, there is some more islands, lot more islands they had taken. But that was a stepping stone . . .

Johnson: Towards the Philipines.

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: Towards Japan really.

McGilvra: Japan that's what we are talking about.

Johnson: Well you were involved then in the invasion of, of the Philippines?

McGilvra: Oh, yeah in, in the Philippines, uh, on January the fourth or fifth I believe it was. I land, I landed there and went in on those landing ships.

Johnson: And, and were you being shot at, at the time?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. They would, they bombarded us and we bombarded them. We had over a thousand ships that bombarded that Linguay Gulf, I mean San Fabian, a little town of San Fabian.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, and we went on inland from there. And still they was fir-, giv-, throwing artillery and, and automatic weapons at us.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And bunkers. They was in bunkers. We had to go in there and take flame throwers the infantry did and chase them out of there and kill 'em.

Johnson: You were around some of those flame throwers.

McGilvra: Yeah. That was the only way you could get 'em.

Johnson: That was a terrible kind of warfare wasn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah it was and they built those bunkers out of coconut logs. And that was like, you couldn't, it'd take a naval gun to turn one of 'em bottom sides upwards.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Bout it. Just a automatic weapon wouldn't go through it. You'd shoot all day long.

Johnson: Um hum. And they wouldn't give up?

McGilvra: They wouldn't give up. You had to go in there with hand grenades and smoke grenades and, and white phosphor grenades and flame throwers and bulldozers. That's the way they'd do it. They'd, they'd put that white phosphorous in 'em, run up there and throw 'em in there if they could. Then come up there with a bulldozer and cover it up.

Johnson: They'd just burn.

McGilvra: Burn 'em up. That bulldozer had flame throwers on it too.

Johnson: Hum.

McGilvra: You know, huge things. You know like you, like you had, like you see out here on the, on the highways.

Johnson: Um hum. Bulldozers.

McGilvra: Bulldozers were a GI up there to guide it. He had to be, he'd bring that blade up real high as he could you know, to keep . . .

Johnson: To protect himself.

McGilvra: To protect himself from small arm fire. Then they would have GIs a crawling right beside it.

Johnson: Almost like a tank huh?

McGilvra: Yeah that was what it was just a big ole tank you know. And we went inland. I never will forget there, they throwed a, I was in one of those what

you call water buffalos. They had them, uh, to haul the ammunition up, you know, those little ole narrow roads there in the Philippines. Nothing but trails you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Like country roads around here.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: That, in uh, this Japanese uh, group had a tank up there. And around the bin, and he fired point blank at us. But, he fired three rounds. They must have been mighty nervous. The first two went right over our heads. I know it wasn't over a . . .

Johnson: What was he firing?

McGilvra: He was firing a cannon. Some like a twenty caliber or I mean a twenty millimeter.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Or something like that. Or like a artillery shell.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Bigger. They had two types of guns on . . .

Johnson: You heard them go over huh?

McGilvra: Yeah we hear, yeah we hear them go over. It, boom, bang, like that. Oh I guess we was about a thousand yards from it. And he missed two of 'em and one of 'em went off about thirty foot from me and it , and he didn't hit the tank. When the first two went off we jumped out and I had a mortar base plate that weighed about fifty-five pounds on my back and I had full-field pack. And I had a carbine and a forty-five on my hip.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And they was a rice patty out there and that shell had, about the time I got off and I started to, started to fall and hit the ground cause I heard that thing go off, when it landed out there in front where I could see it. And it steamed up the bullet did. I meant the shell did. And didn't go off.

Johnson: Did not go off.

McGilvra: Did not go off. That rice patty was so, uh, uh, saturated in water that I guess it hit that patty and didn't go off so . . .

Johnson: It could have killed you couldn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah it could have killed me. I remember my gun and all of it, the butt, and my elbows and my shoulders and all that were in mud you know.

Johnson: That could have been the end of you.

McGilvra: That could have been the end of me. And it could have been the end of all of us if he would have hit us with that tank.

Johnson: And you saw that shell.

McGilvra: Yeah. It was, it really, I, I didn't actually see the shell but I seen the steam come up from up I knew it hit in the mu-, and the mud flew all in my face you know about the time I hit. And the mud hit the tank. But the tank in front of us was knocked out and it killed five of our friends up there, my friends.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: Killed five of them boys. Exploded. The shells exploded.

Johnson: Well Paul how do you feel in a, in a midst of a battle like that when you know that your liable to get killed?

McGilvra: Scared. I don't say, I don't care, uh, it's a funny, colds chills you know. You can uh; you can feel death you know. That's the way I felt.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: I wasn't shaking but I, you know.

Johnson: You were not . . .

McGilvra: But I don't, I don't say . . .

Johnson: . . . too scared to function. You could function.

McGilvra: Oh yeah I could function all right you had to you know. But you know you would say to yourself well, gosh you may not see the sun come up tomorrow you know but we got to protect each other and we got to hang in here.

Johnson: That makes men close doesn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah that makes a man close. That's one thing, don't never give up you know.

Johnson: Well were you religious then Paul?

McGilvra: Well, yeah I had always went to church you know and everything. I think, I think everybody prayed you know, if he was a, I don't care if he was a wasn't too religion you know. Everybody prayed you know.

Johnson: There is something to that . . . [McGilvra talks over Johnson]

McGilvra: Oh yes sir, you know. We believe in almighty God you know.

Johnson: Yeah. Did you attend services in the . . . [McGilvra talks over Johnson]

McGilvra: Service uh, oh yeah.

Johnson: Did they have a service?

McGilvra: They had service there. They had 'em on ships. [Johnson and McGilvra talking over each other]

Johnson: In battle?

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: I mean early . . .

McGilvra: Yeah they, they, they even had uh, uh, not every, not every day but about once every two weeks when they could to get up there. Course men was so scattered see. Like my company may-be scattered over an area where he might get to one group this week and maybe a month before, it may not be a Protestant it may be a Catholic.

Johnson: But you would go.

McGilvra: We would go.

Johnson: Yeah. Everybody went.

McGilvra: Everybody. Well he would come to us up on the front lines you know. But, uh, you know my mother died in May of 1945.

Johnson: Oh while you . . .

McGilvra: While I was, uh, in the Philippines. When, in fact I was a, in fact we was own, we was own this, uh, uh, road there and we, and we were just captured a sawmill there. And we had set up our mortar sh-, our mortar gun there. And a, and somebody went out there to cut some stakes to fire this mortar at night, we had set it up where we was going to fire at night. And uh, it still activity around this sawmill and we was going to get those Japs at night. When they would come out, if they would.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And we went out there, my friend went out there, I was a gunner. At that time. And, and my helper he went out to cut the stakes. You know and those stakes about four foot high, you put 'em out in front of your gun and sight 'em off every fifty yards out there. We still, we could shoot, we come on back. "Hey Mac," said, "There is two Japs out there. They laying down." And said, "They got, one of 'em's got a gun on him and both of 'em's got a pack on." I said, "Where?" And he pointed to it to me. And I held that, my friend, my other buddy, he had a Bar, I mean a Thompson sub-machine gun."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Just a short barrel you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And I told him right where it was at and he started firing and I started firing. It was eight of us there and we fired and we don't know who killed them but we kill, we went out there and, me and this boy that had that BAR. I said, "Uh, you go with me." And uh, and the squad leader, I don't know where he was at, but he never did, he never did go. But, I don't, I just kindly taken control. I don't know why uh . . .

Johnson: You got those two Japs huh?

McGilvra: But, yeah we went out there and both of 'em was dead.

Johnson: Were they coming for you?

McGilvra: Well, what they were doing, they was waiting at night and they was going to attacked us see.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: They had hand grenades on 'em and they had a uh, a satial of dynamite.

Johnson: Suicide.

McGilvra: They had been blowing up bridges for a, two weeks in front of us. Every bridge blowed up. We'd have to go around, or ford a river or a creek, a branch where that was. And we got the map off 'em and it, and it verified that was what he was doing.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: He would, his orders, they claim was not to, not to contact people except, if he had too. You know. He was, he was on a secret mission more or less. And I doubt if he'd attacked us that night, what he was going to do was go back to his outfit and tell 'em right where we was at and they'd throw artillery on us see.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But I got, I got his watch.

Johnson: Oh you did.

McGilvra: I got his watch and I got his, uh, officers, he had a uh, he had uh, what do you call . . . [end of tape one]

Tape Two

Johnson: Okay this tape two of the interview with Paul McGilvra. Uh we were talking about your experience there in the, in the invasion of the Philippines. And, uh . . .

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: . . . that was some pretty intense fighting wasn't it? Did you see any, did the Japanese have any airplanes?

McGilvra: Yeah they had airplanes. I seen, well in fact, when we uh, had taken Clark field, our, our company, our division kept, followed . . .

Johnson: Is that in Manila?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: Um hum. You were involved . . .

McGilvra: No not in Manila. That's about a hundred miles up from uh, from Manila. Clark field is the first, that's uh, one of the major airfields, uh, in uh, in uh, Louison Islands in the Philippines.

Johnson: You were involved in that.

McGilvra: Yeah we, we, our outfit helped take that.

Johnson: And had they been using that as a . . .

McGilvra: Oh yeah the Japanese use, used that from, from there . . .

Johnson: And they had some planes in the air while you were involved there, they . . .

McGilvra: Oh yeah they bombed us that, that night after we took that thing. They came down from Baggio. You know that's a resort city.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: In uh, Philippines. In Louisno Island. And uh, when we landed there in uh, in uh, Languaying Gulf those Zeroes tried to come in and attack those planes and fight the troops as we was landing.

Johnson: But we had air superiority didn't we?

McGilvra: We had air and naval superiority in the, Hell Cats and P-38, well there wasn't no P-38s. It was mostly Hell Cats.

Johnson: Uh huh. Off the ships?

McGilvra: Yeah but the second bay we had uh, P-38s, the army, the air force came in.

Johnson: They had those two fuselage planes, two engines.

McGilvra: Yeah uh, a P-38 it was.

Johnson: Bug airplanes aren't they?

McGilvra: Well yeah. They were, they were pretty large.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, the P-51 was actually faster, I think, in the skies.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But they were superior, our latest models, you know, planes.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And the Hell Cats were a heck of a good plane to. But I, I seen a, the Hell Cats shoot down, uh, several Japanese planes. In fact, I seen it shoot down, uh, three Zeroes one morning.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: In formation. Three Zeroes in formation. They were, actually going out to attack the war planes. I meant the ships in the, in the ocean. You know the in the bay there. In Linguaying Gulf.

Johnson: Uh Paul, how long where you involved there in fighting in the Philippines?

McGilvra: Well it was from forty-five and I believe it was in January the 4th or 5th in 45 up until May.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: In 45.

Johnson: And then they, they were defeated.

McGilvra: They were defeated. You know the 1st Calvary division took uh, they landed there in uh, Luzon too.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Well in fact there was several divisions. They was the 25th and the Americal I believe and uh, and uh the 43rd and a lot of . . .

Johnson: Americal?

McGilvra: I believe it was the Americal.

Johnson: What was that? How was that spelled?

McGilvra: It is like America. American. Americal. C-a-l on the end.

Johnson: Americal huh?

McGilvra: Division.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And the 1st Calvary Division.

Johnson: Is that what it was?

McGilvra: They land, no Americal wasn't. That's a, that was a division they organized during the war. I believe.

Johnson: Uh huh. So uh, you were there in that whole Philippine campaign?

McGilvra: Yeah. The 1st Calvary Division land, uh landed in Languaying Gulf. That's uh, uh, around Samfabian in there. And they went from there right straight to uh, Manila.

Johnson: But that was not the group that you were with.

McGilvra: That's not the group that you were with. Now I was in the 1st Calvary Division but after I got in Tokyo. When my division come home I was in the 1st Calvary.

Johnson: Your division was what?

McGilvra: 43rd Infantry Division.

Johnson: Okay. Just regular army.

McGilvra: Yeah just regular old infantry. In the army, um hum.

Johnson: Well what did you do after uh, the Philippines campaign was over?

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: The war was moving towards the end isn't it?

McGilvra: Yeah. We, uh, we were down in Cambodia One. That's where our base was. That's where; they had a lot of prisoners of war. The ranger, the Ranger Division captured those uh, prisoners of war that was in there. Americans . . .

Johnson: Uh huh. Did you see any of those guys?

McGilvra: Uh yeah I seen some of those guys.

Johnson: Were they in bad shape?

McGilvra: They were in bad shape. Some of 'em looked, uh, pretty good. But most of 'em had malaria and, and uh, they, they didn't have the proper diet and they were way under weight and . . .

Johnson: Had they been there since they were captured in the war?

McGilvra: They had moved 'em around different places. Some of 'em was up in, I understand was in different places you know. But this, uh, Cambada One, that was uh, uh, an American base before the war there.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, they was the Japanese when they came in there they had taken it over. And uh, that's where our base was, and, and we were in a training up at Subic Bay overlooking Subic Bay when the war was over.

Johnson: Training for the invasion for Japan.

McGilvra: Japan. That's right. We were taken . . .

Johnson: And you were aware that was going to be your next encounter?

McGilvra: That was going to be our next assignment and we had about two weeks of tough training there. Taken uh, using radar and airbursts with mortars.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: See we didn't use airbursts, uh, in our other operations. But there we were using radar and also using airbursts where we could adjust 'em the shells to burst ten foot or thirty above the ground.

Johnson: For maximum kill huh?

McGilvra: That's right. [Johnson chuckles] But we were, we was there and about a week I guess of training, we had about another week. And we was out there playing volleyball. We, in the afternoon after, in the evening, when we got through training that day and uh, we had just uh, we just had got through playing volleyball was fixing to clean up and go to chow and uh, somebody came out there, an officer come out and he said, "Well I think the war is over boys." Something like that effect. And somebody said, "Hell, don't start anymore rumors we, we hear enough of 'em." We'd been hearing it for a week or two, all kind of stuff you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: We had all kinds of rumors started you know. You know how it is in the army.

Johnson: Um hum. We were getting those rumors here too.

McGilvra: Yeah. And so, this uh, uh, lieutenant was telling us about all this stuff you know. And all at once we heard ships' horns blowing. We were about two miles or three up in the mountains.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And you could hear those ships down there, Woo! Woo! All they were blowing you know. And uh, then they, a loud speaker came over, had a, every once awhile they would give us a little news or tell us, give us information on a PA system you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: We was out, and uh said, "The war was winding down and that was true. Said, "You hear all those ships horns blowing?" Said, "The war is over."

Johnson: What was your feelings?

McGilvra: Oh man! I could tell you. My feet was light. [Johnson laughs] And I was, I could, I would jump and hollered, you know the first thing that I could think of you know, was going back home.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, and every day after that, I will never forget it. I was real particular, they did not have to tell me. I was real particular, I didn't, I didn't go out of my way to try to hunt for souvenirs or go to town or anything like hardly. I stayed right in my bunk or right in training. 'Cause I was afraid I would get hurt. You know get killed or get wounded or something you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: I wanted to get back safe. I aid the war is over with and I went through all this just about, and that was the first thing they did when we got back to our base camp.

Johnson: What's that?

Johnson:

McGilvra: Now you can't, you can't go to town. If you go to town be real careful. Somebody might shoot you, or, you already went through the war and

your safe. We are trying to get all of these troops back safe. But says, “We going,” says in about the third day. “We going to Japan. Tokyo.” Tokyo! Boy that thrilled us too.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: And sure enough they, in about two weeks they out us on a boat and transported us by, those transport . . .

Johnson: Ships?

McGilvra: No, uh trucks. All through those roads up through there. All bridges where they had been bombed out. Where 1st Calvary had took all them little old towns.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: It was a, it was a, something to really see you know really.

Johnson: Where were you headed to?

McGilvra: Manila.

Johnson: I see.

McGilvra: We had Manila Bay. To get on a boat. And that’s where we got on that boat and we spent four or five days, and we’s in Tokyo Bay.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: We landed there one afternoon and the next morning by ten o’clock we pulled to a big dock and they unloaded us.

Johnson: What, when was this? In September or October?

McGilvra: Uh, let’s see that uh must have been uh, September, about September the 10th or 8th, somewhere along in there.

Johnson: Right after the war?

McGilvra: Right after the war. We were some of the first, after we were, we were some of the first troops that went through uh, down-town Tokyo.

Johnson: Well how was it?

McGilvra: Oh, it was tore up. Yokohoma, we landed at Yokohoma.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Yokohoma was flat. Wasn't nothing but smokestacks.

Johnson: [chuckles] Is that right?

McGilvra: You didn't see nothing but smokestacks and tin.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And electrical wires laying on the road sparking.

Johnson: Tore it up huh?

McGilvra: Oh it tore it up. Oh just tore it up. Oh you never seen.

Johnson: Did you see any people?

McGilvra: Yeah we seen little ole kids squatting around, you know waving at you. And you see in the distance, all the, on the main road from Tokyo to uh, I mean a, I mean the main road from Yokohoma to Tokyo it was, it was just all the buildings were tore off, I mean burn up or tore down for blocks and blocks.

Johnson: Bombing.

McGilvra: Bombing. It was just flat you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Every once in awhile you'd see one. And uh, I don't know how they did it but uh, you know, in Tokyo there, they'd, they'd bomb right up to that palace. All the back of the palace you know.

Johnson: Um hum. But it was not destroyed?

McGilvra: No it was not destroyed. And all those ole temples and churches downtown Tokyo, they left that.

Johnson: It was not destroyed.

McGilvra: They wasn't destroyed.

Johnson: They pin-pointed bombing didn't they?

McGilvra: Yeah they bombed right up the . . .

Johnson: To the back fence?

McGilvra: Yeah. And they, they left that naval base there on the river there in Tokyo.

Johnson: 'Cause they knew that they'd need it.

McGilvra: Yeah that's where I moved to.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: But you know we'd go maybe a block or two out of the way and then we'd get back on the main road. And went down through Tokyo and those people I would, they took all our ammunition away from us.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: Yeah they took . . .

Johnson: You had [unclear word]

McGilvra: They thought they did by golly. [Johnson chuckles] But I had some in my pocket and everybody else did to.

Johnson: Yeah. You had your weapon though.

McGilvra: Yeah I had my .45 . . .

Johnson: But supposedly no ammunition.

McGilvra: I didn't have any ammunition in it. The clip that was, was in the gun but it was empty. .45. I carried a .45.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But I had a, here and in my . . .

Johnson: Well what was their reasoning?

McGilvra: . . .pocket. Well they thought maybe that uh, a Japanese might, somebody might shoot at us or something and it would be a breakout, boy they might just kill a bunch of civilians.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And accident amongst GIs. A horse-playing and all that on in, uh, trucks and things.

Johnson: Well did you, did you see some of the people up close too?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. Some of 'em was depressed, just solemn. Defeat.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Just, kind of like a boxer setting in his corner with his nose bloody I'd say.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But a lot of 'em was happy. Seem like the kids were more happier than the, say the, middle a-, the older people.

Johnson: Did you give them candy and gum?

McGilvra: No we didn't have anything to give them then. We didn't have a thing except our, uh, our food we had you know o' dried rice and so forth.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, they had little o' American flags lot of 'em. Lot of flags, them old big department stores over there, they all had the American flag hanging out of 'em. They had trees growing on top of the buildings. You know that was, to protect them you know during the, camouflage you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Japanese. And uh, it was uh, we went on through Tokyo and went up about twenty miles and got in a, uh, air base there. And we disarmed all those, uh, Japanese, uh, Zero weapons and bombers. And uh, disarmed 'em. They had 'em all hid in a . . .

Johnson: Oh really? You . . .

McGilvra: Yeah. They had 'em all hid in a underground. They had like Q. huts. Like a Q. hut at the front.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But you'd go in and they'd, way back up in there they'd have maybe thirty or forty planes underground. They'd pull 'em out on that air field and take off with them see. That's the way they did.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: They had everything camouflaged. They was ready for us. They had embankment all kinds of defense [unclear word]

Johnson: Do you think that it would have been to invaded Japan?

McGilvra: It wouldn't been, I don't think that I been here today.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Japan was well fortified.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And what, what you were fighting there would have been something like Vietnam. You'd been fighting women, kids, you didn't know your . . .

Johnson: Enemy.

McGilvra: Enemy. You might be talking to a little kid, or see a bunch of kids out there and one ten years old would, would uh, raise up with uh, an automatic weapon and kill you.

Johnson: Well, Paul have you ever thought much about the decision that President Truman had to make when he dropped those bombs?

McGilvra: I thought that was the greatest thing. You know, before we left to go to Japan, I'd say about six weeks, we had a lieutenant in our out fit and he had finished West Point. He had just come in there. And he, he didn't go through our combat or anything.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: He had just come in there and he finished a, the uh school at the, I believe it was, you can tell me where I am wrong or not, but best I can remember he told us he finished the University of Chicago.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Are there a college there?

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Huh?

Johnson: Um hum, um hum.

McGilvra: And he said that they had made a, they had experimented with a weapon there. [Johnson says something unclear] I'll never forget it. He says, "An atomic bomb and people," he says, "Ya'll just don't know what I know about it." He said, "It would kill everybody on the Philippine Islands if they dropped one of them things."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: That's the way he described it. And a lot of guys said, "All say here," after it was over with said, "Here we got another guy, a wise guy coming in here. A fly by night lieutenant."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And he talked to us two or three days on this. And I took it in and I believed him because before I left to go to the service I had read the, in the Reader's Digest about this bomb. A secret bomb. I'll never forget it because I read it to my Ag teacher.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: He wanted to, we were driving down the highway and he said, "I want you to read that to me while we are going to Lufkin." But anyway, this lieutenant described all that and you know, and, uh, they had already, they hadn't dropped the bomb then. That was before we took this training went up to Subic Bay.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And that, when the first thing came through my mind in all our people up there, this lieutenant, and he was telling us the truth. Boy, it killed people in Japan by the hundreds of thousands.

Johnson: Did you happen to get to either of those cities?

McGilvra: No I didn't, they wouldn't let us go over there.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But I, uh, I seen lot of . . .

Johnson: It was a good thing . . .

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: . . .because you might have gotten radiation over there.

McGilvra: I wanted to. I asked about you know. Oh no they wouldn't let you. And you know uh, you know I had cancer about 1974. And uh, we were right close to that, all around that stuff and everything. And sometime I believe maybe that radiation you know . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . .from that radiation there might have caused that. I had gall bladder cancer.

Johnson: But they got it?

McGilvra: But lucky, they took my gall bladder out and everything. It has been 1974 and thank God I am still living.

Johnson: Well, uh, you spent how long in Japan?

McGilvra: I spent from September the 5th of nineteen and forty-five until uh, December 22nd of 1945.

Johnson: And then you got on a boat. Then I got on the boat again, and I spent another Christmas on a boat. [Johnson chuckles] I spent a Christmas going over there on a boat, and uh, I spent a Christmas uh, over in the Philippines, I mean uh, uh, in uh, New Guinea right off the coast of New guinea on a boat.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And I spent another Christmas coming home on a boat right out of Tokyo, bout two days out of Tokyo.

Johnson: But that was a good Christmas huh?

McGilvra: That was a good Christmas.

Johnson: Did they try to have things for ya'll on the boat at Christmas time?

McGilvra: Not especially there. No,

Johnson: No special food or anything?

McGilvra: No spec-, they just had Turkey. They always overseas, if you was on a boat, or even if you could, if your outfit could get to you, you always had turkey and dressing and something like that.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: They had, if they could get to you, if they couldn't get to you on it, you just had the regular o' soup and o' dried food out of your can and stuff.

Johnson: I didn't ask you, but, um, was the food pretty bad while you were in a war area?

McGilvra: Yeah. You know, uh . . .

Johnson: Did you eat the K rations?

McGilvra: You eat the K rations. Kenning one ration we call it.

Johnson: Kenning one?

McGilvra: You had one box its about the size of this equipment that you have here.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And it had uh, one box in it, it, it fed ten soldiers.

Johnson: Um hum. What was it?

McGilvra: It was biscuits, dried biscuits. It had, uh, uh, powdered coffee, first powdered coffee that I had ever drank in my life. It had a little can of bacon. Little bitty can they had . . .

Johnson: Had it cooked?

McGilvra: Well, you had a, you had a little cooker there with you with gas and stuff you get out of jeeps and stuff. You'd fire it up, you could. But, we'd usually eat it raw.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Yeah. Because you was always a situation . . .

Johnson: But it had been cooked some I guess hadn't it?

McGilvra: Uh, not very much.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: I never did eat bacon when I was at home or sausage much or chicken, anything like that too much.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But I'd eat it. Then you'd have uh, you'd have beef and potatoes canned in it. A little can that maybe. But all of it was mostly, then you would have a chocolate bar.

Johnson: Was it, was it edible?

McGilvra: Yeah. You could . . .

Johnson: Wasn't bad?

McGilvra: It wasn't too bad, you know you was hungry. You'd have a can of, of uh, of uh, pork and beans and little weenies in there.

Johnson: No fruit?

McGilvra: No fruit. But you'd have a little chocolate. You'd have a, five or six chocolate bars, you'd divide that with the next guy maybe. You could eat, you could eat one of those half a bar of chocolate and live off it for two or three days.

Johnson: It was fortified wasn't it?

McGilvra: It was fortified. It was strong!

Johnson: Um hum. Now you are talking about while you were in battle. Of course they tried to get hot meals to you didn't they?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. We got a lot of hot meals. Sometimes they'd, and us . . .

Johnson: Bring 'em up to the front or bring' em to you.

McGilvra: Well yeah they'd be maybe some other outfit would come in see and they'd have, they couldn't get to their outfit. They'd come up far as they could in a jeep and you know we were, about a thousand or two thousand yards behind the infantry.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: We were infantry to, but we weren't in the rifle company. We was in the heavy weapons company. We fired over those people. And they couldn't get up there and they'd come by and give us part of their food and stuff.

Johnson: Hot cooked meals?

McGilvra: Well it'd be hot soup or something like that. That'd be all you'd get.

Johnson: And bread.

McGilvra: They didn't have no bread.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: 'Cause you know bread would ruin, it's hot. It was hot over there and rainy.

Johnson: Muggy? Hotter than East Texas?

McGilvra: Oh. You don't know the half. In New Guinea, you lay down at night and it'd be a hundred and five and a hundred ten.

Johnson: That was something.

McGilvra: Hundred and ten degrees. It'd be a raining.

Johnson: It never cooled down. It'd rain every damn day. And you'd get a, you'd have uh, uh, you'd get the sore eyes.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: You'd get the itch.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: You'd get jungle rot.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Which I got.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Still got it off and on. And I've got uh, and you'd have uh, the worms that, they's, you've seen that kids have these little o' round worm things . . .

Johnson: Roundworms.

McGilvra: You'd have them all over your body. I got 'em.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: I did you know. They finally cured 'em.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And they, you sure did have a lot of kidney disease over there 'cause you couldn't get enough water.

Johnson: Well I was going to say what did you for water?

McGilvra: Well we uh, uh, get water out of the creek or a branch or anything, but we had them little pills and we'd put that in there you know.

Johnson: And uh . . .

McGilvra: Had uh Chlorine. Yeah we'd shake it up . . .

Johnson: It tasted terrible didn't it?

McGilvra: It tasted terrible. But you had to do it. You put, I, they said always, any kind of water you put one pill. I'd always put two. Chlorine you know . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . I can smell it now you know sometimes in the water, oh.

Johnson: But you drank it though.

McGilvra: But I drank the stuff.

Johnson: You had kidney problems [McGilvra talks over Johnson]

McGilvra: You had kidney uh, problems and you'd have pinworms and I had those things when I come home.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: On a count of, you couldn't kill 'em. You know. The darn thing. Even parasites, you had all kinds of parasites you know. A lot of people don't know it. I even, I'll tell you the truth about it, I know, I'm going to tell you

how bad it was. I even had a tapeworm when I came home. I didn't know it.

Johnson: Um. How long did it take you to get that treated?

McGilvra: Well, I stayed in the hospital with that malaria and they treated it to. I don't know how long it taken, a couple or two or three weeks, I guess they said. But I stayed in Galveston hospital after I came home for six weeks with malaria.

Johnson: Oh I see. So you, you . . .

McGilvra: I didn't work at all for a year.

Johnson: Did you come uh, where did you return to this country at? New York?

McGilvra: Uh . . .

Johnson: No.

McGilvra: No. Uh . . .

Johnson: California?

McGilvra: California.

Johnson: And how . . .

McGilvra: San Pedro.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: San Pedro.

Johnson: And then you came on Home.

McGilvra: I went up to Orange County and they, they uh, separated us there at the separation center and I rode train from there on up to El Paso and that's where you got your, duck. Your little . . .

Johnson: Oh, ruptured duck.

McGilvra: . . . discharge. Ruptured duck.

Johnson: Uh huh. Do you still have that?

McGilvra: I have my suit and everything.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: I, I have my Eisenhower jacket.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Even have my whole, my shirt and my pants and everything. I had it stored.

Johnson: And your ruptured duck?

McGilvra: And my ruptured duck and I have all my metal infantry battle.

Johnson: Did you win any medals Paul?

McGilvra: Well, I, I didn't, I never did get wounded or I never did win a silver star. I always, seem like everybody won one but me.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Around me, seem like. Everybody you know, I don't know it just happened.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Wasn't too many seemed like in my squad there that got any.

Johnson: Any bronze stars?

McGilvra: No. No bronze stars. And I, uh, I always, we always felt that it, it was politics you know. [Johnson says something unclear] That's what, I know we deserved it. You know a lot of 'em but we . . .

Johnson: You did not get a, a, a uh, purple heart?

McGilvra: I got a crown back, I got a, uh, no I didn't get a purple heart.

Johnson: You were not wounded.

McGilvra: Lucky. A lot of 'em did though. Around me.

Johnson: You went through that war unscratched [unclear word]

McGilvra: Unscratched except that malaria and all those parasites.

Johnson: Well you came on back you say to El Paso. Uh where you mustered out there?

McGilvra: Yeah I was mustered out.

Johnson: And came on home or what?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: And this is early 1946?

McGilvra: Yeah that was uh, January the 18th. I believe it was in 46. January the 14th 1946.

Johnson: Well that, you had made good time then if you left Japan right after, or during Christmas.

McGilvra: Yeah I made good time on the boats there coming back. It take, let's see, it taken, it didn't take very long.

Johnson: Did you suffer sea sickness?

McGilvra: No I didn't suffer sea sickness there.

Johnson: You had gotten your sea legs huh?

McGilvra: Yeah. We come on home real quick. Let's see, anyway it didn't take, let's see it didn't take but see, seven days or something like that. It didn't take very long and they just kept moving us. We just over night, they, we just got in there and ate one meal and we come right on to El Paso and that's where they discharged me.

Johnson: When you landed in California was there anybody there to welcome you?

McGilvra: Uh, yeah. Salvation Army.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: That was the only one. You know uh . . .

Johnson: Serve food or something?

McGilvra: And when I got to San, uh, when I got to California to get off all I had with me was my razor and my toothbrush and the clothes I had on my back.

Johnson: That was it.

McGilvra: That was it. I threw the rest of 'em overboard. They were dirty, no place to wash 'em. [Johnson chuckles]

Johnson: Well uh, how did you, how did you get home to Lufkin then?

McGilvra: Lufkin? Uh, I, I caught a, something like a Taxi out of El Paso. I don't, they have a name for 'em, World War II. Had a name for 'em. These guys that have cars and they'd take you anywhere in the United States you wanted to go if you had enough money. Well this guy, I met up with this guy and he said uh, "Do you know anybody that wants to go to Houston tomorrow morning at 8 O'clock?" I said, "Yeah. Me." I said, "You got a way?" I said, "Are you a soldier?" He said, "Well I am a, uh, a first lieutenant in the army." He said, "I'll take three guys at seventy-five bucks a piece."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, he carried us, the next morning I got two of my buddies. We give him seventy-five bucks a piece and, and uh in thirty-seven Ford and he carried us to uh, a bus station in Houston, Texas.

Johnson: Yes and then, then you got the bus uh, from there . . .

McGilvra: No, I didn't catch a bus there. I got out on Quitman Street. Back then I uh, I knew . . .

Johnson: On Quitman?

McGilvra: On Quitman St . . .

Johnson: Right down town .

McGilvra: Yeah. On Quitman Street and I started thumbing and I uh, that morning about 8, about 10 o'clock I left Houston and at 3 o'clock I was standing here at the Cash Drug Store in down town Lufkin.

Johnson: At what drug store?

McGilvra: Cash Drug Store.

Johnson: Really?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: Well did your family know you were coming in?

McGilvra: Yeah I had sent a telegram to my sister in Port Arthur.

Johnson: Yeah. Did someone meet you?

McGilvra: No. They didn't. Didn't meet me there. They didn't know what, I told 'em I'd be in Lufkin that week probably. . .

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: . . . sometime. I didn't know exactly. When I was in California I sent them a telegram.

Johnson: Your mother had died during the war.

McGilvra: Yeah she died in April of 45.

Johnson: And was your father still alive?

McGilvra: Yeah he was still a living.

Johnson: And uh, where did you first see any of your family then?

McGilvra: Out at my old home place there.

Johnson: You, you got a ride out there?

McGilvra: Yeah. I met up with a girl that I knew that I went to school with and, and she knew that I just got out of the service. She had heard about it and . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . so she took me home.

Johnson: Um hum. Well what was the reception you got Paul?

McGilvra: Oh, I got a great reception. My sisters and the whole community around there met me that afternoon. About 4:30. I never will forget it. I was so excited and choked up you know it was a great . . .

Johnson: A lot of tears huh?

McGilvra: Oh yeah. A lot of tears.

Johnson: As you uh you have already indicated that you had some difficulties there, uh, adjusting to being, I guess out of the war.

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: What did you do immediately after you got home?

McGilvra: Well I rested up for about two weeks. I'd sleep everyday to twelve o'clock till my daddy would wake me up. He was afraid; he thought it was something a matter with me. But I did have that malaria you know and I told 'em I was, I was kindly puny and sick you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, so it wasn't, it wasn't three weeks and that stuff popped out on me. I had to got to Lufkin doctor here and they said nothing that you can do about it. And finally I went to uh, the VA office, they had a VA office temporarily set up here and the guy made a appointment in Houston to put me in a Houston hospital and let the government pay for it.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But that Houston hospital advised him that, that uh, they didn't have a VA hospital. Or nobody to take care of you, except they had a, a naval base a temporary naval base set up down in Hitchcock, Texas.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Close to Galveston there, in Galveston County. And they sent me down there, and they treated me for six weeks. I say treat me, all they did was give me Edifer and Quinine.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: There at Hitchcock?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: And what was it just a small hospital?

McGilvra: No they uh, had a lot of GIs there and had a lot of sailors there that had come back that were wounded overseas you know. And there was a, they had uh, probably four or five hundred people there in this hospital.

Johnson: Well they didn't cure you though.

McGilvra: Oh no. I come back home and my hands would swell up and my eyes, my neck. Well that Edifier I was allergic to it and you know that was the only thing that . . .

Johnson: Well did you get a job and go to work?

McGilvra: No, I wasn't able to go to work. In fact I had a, uh, I had a professor over at, over at Sam Houston State College to come get me to play football. He said he would give me a scholarship because he had heard about me in high school you know.

Johnson: Had you played football in high school?

McGilvra: Well I played uh, scrub football but I was a good basketball player and uh, and uh, and he was a really interested in because he had another professor there that had told me, had told 'em about me that I would make a good football player, which I think that I would have. I, I'd been a real star I think.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But I was fast, but uh, I couldn't, I told him that I just wasn't able that malaria and I could see that it was dragging me down.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And I got down to from hundred eighty down to about a hundred fifty-five or sixty pounds. That went on, for off and on, I didn't do any work for about a year. A year and a half.

Johnson: Just stayed with your dad.

McGilvra: Yeah off and on and my sister down at Port Arthur. I worked fro a refinery down there for three months but that malaria just messed me up.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: They didn't want to hire me but they . . .

Johnson: Did you have any income?

McGilvra: Well the army was paying me eighty-eight dollars a month.

Johnson: Uh, during this period of . . .

McGilvra: Yeah, when I . . .

Johnson: . . . of recuperating?

McGilvra: Yeah. Um hum. But they uh, after about uh, two years they cut me down to fifty and down to twenty dollars a month and they just cut me out.

Johnson: You could live on eighty-eight dollars a month . . .

McGilvra: Oh yeah I lived on that, that's what I, in fact that's what me and my dad and my two little brothers lived off of.

Johnson: Um hum. You had younger brothers at home.

McGilvra: Yeah I had two younger brothers.

Johnson: Uh, uh, Paul what had you heard from home during the war?

McGilvra: Very little. You know. I'd get, I'd get a letter every once and a while but you know, it wasn't any encouragement or anything, you know. In fact, they didn't even know where I was at.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: For a long time. And uh, And uh, I go a letter one time and my mother says uh, before she died, she said uh, "I know where you at because . . .

Side Two of Tape Two

Johnson: This is side two of tape two of the interview with Paul McGilvra. Well we were speaking about your, uh, contact with home and you said you did, did you not get many letters?

McGilvra: Uh, when you, when you, you got your mail you'd get fifteen or twenty letters at one time.

Johnson: I see.

McGilvra: That's way it would be. You might not get not ant mail for three months. Then you'd have thirty or forty letters, some of the girls they'd write me and so forth and, but they . . .

Johnson: Did you write many letters yourself?

McGilvra: Very few. I, I'd write but they was all censored, you'd have to, you couldn't tell anything.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Your, your company commander, or your superior officers would read everything and . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . . it was just uh, but my mother uh, wrote me a letter and told me she knew where I was at.

Johnson: How did she know?

McGilvra: Uh, I wrote her one time and I mentioned that, I said mother you know I always uh, like milk. Sweet milk. I was, I could live off sweet milk.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh, I said, "They sure do have a lot of milk here." And that went through. And she immediately said, she immediately, my mother was a, a read a lot and she knew every country in this world and the capital and all about the people and everything.

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And she said, "He is either in Australia or New Zealand."

Johnson: You mean they didn't know . . .

McGilvra: 'Cause they knew, she knew that, she told my sister after I got back, my sister told me, my daddy to said, said uh, "Your mother said that New Zealand was a, uh, a great diary country."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And she knew I was in, she figured I was in New Zealand. She guessed right too.

Johnson: Um hum. Well uh, your mother died while you were in the service. How did you hear about that?

McGilvra: Uh, she died in April and, and my girlfriend wrote me and told me.

Johnson: Oh I see. That's how you knew.

McGilvra: Yeah it was May the 28th.

Johnson: The military did not make an effort to inform you.

McGilvra: No the military didn't inform me.

Johnson: That must have been an awfully lonesome feeling.

McGilvra: Yeah. I, it was. I was really let down. It really bothered me more than anything when I was overseas.

Johnson: How old was your mother?

McGilvra: Uh, my mother was forty-eight.

Johnson: Forty-eight. Would you say that was the lowest time you had?

McGilvra: I'd say it was really. It was, they sent me back for a couple of weeks you know and I . . .

Johnson: Um hum. You were where then, in uh . . .

McGilvra: Let's see, uh, uh, I tell you where it was, it was, I was speaking before, telling you where we killed those Japs and things.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: That was down in Sanna Maria Philippines in Louison Island.

Johnson: And that's where heard about your mother?

McGilvra: Yeah that's where—about my mother.

Johnson: Well, uh, you finally of course got over . . .

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: . . . your physical problems enough to go to work I think. Is that when you went to work at the paper mill?

McGilvra: Uh, yeah. Well I had two or three other jobs before that but not, I worked on the pipe-line for a couple of months and I worked for Armco Steel and . . .

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: . . .then I worked for Texaco for a few months and then I went to work for Southland Paper mill.

Johnson: I see. And of course you stayed there what, forty years?

McGilvra: Yeah I worked from 48 till 1988.

Johnson: Uh huh. So you had forty years there.

McGilvra: I had forty years and one half.

Johnson: Well we have already talked about that. [See McGilvra interview on Southland Paper mill]

McGilvra: Yeah we have already went through all that.

Johnson: I do want to ask you a couple of other things before we stop here. We are thinking about things that are nearly a half century ago. Uh . . .

McGilvra: Um hum.

Johnson: . . . what uh, how do you think that war affected your life Paul?

McGilvra: Well, it probably helped it a lot more than it hurt you know in a way. Far as making a living after I got out of the service. Uh, you know I was raised up on the farm and far as education, I had a high school education. What they, what they call a high school education. I look back now and it probably equals about . . .

Johnson: A college now. [Johnson chuckles]

McGilvra: Reckon?

Johnson: yeah.

McGilvra: I don't know. Sometimes . . .

Johnson: You knew more than kids today know

McGilvra: But anyway, I wouldn't have been able to go to college or anything like that. It was no way. There is no way. Because my parents, they didn't have that kind of money, you know. They didn't have transportation and uh, I don't know I was a, a I guess, I guess you say I was raised back in the back woods you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: But I did have a high school education. But I wasn't what you call a super-intelligent, you know, student in school or anything. I didn't think I was

now. But I, I seen after I got in the service that I was a lot smarter than a lot of the rest of them you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: I got around, but I, I'd say the army really educated me, you know. And I was always interested in history and economics and you know and what was going on in the world. And uh, and I say if I hadn't uh, if the war hadn't came along, I wouldn't been, I'm not the only one I don't think but I never would have been able to really probably make a lot of money or anything like that. What I had in mind doing is going to work in the oil field, oil refinery or something like that cause my mother's brothers worked for Humble Oil and Refinery Company.

Johnson: Oh really? Where was then?

McGilvra: In Texaco. In Port Arthur, one of 'em worked for Texaco and he made good money and my, uh, in Baytown, Texas. He worked for Humble down . . .

Johnson: My father worked for Humble.

McGilvra: Is that right?

Johnson: Uh huh.

McGilvra: And they made you know, they made good money and made a good living and I see, that's the only thing that I could see and my mother always encouraged me, said, "You got to have a high school education to go to work for those people."

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: You know that was my dream . . .

Johnson: So you think that the war helped you in some respects.

McGilvra: Yeah I think it did. Cause . . .

Johnson: Did it, did it change you?

McGilvra: Oh yeah it changed me a lot you know. I, it made me more, after the war and I got a job I felt more secure you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And uh . . .

Johnson: Have you ever thought about the, the, you had the, probably the ultimate experience of your life when you were twenty years old.

McGilvra: Yeah that's, that's another I look back on. I say, "You know there is not, I am sixty-five today. And I said uh, I can look back and see that uh, that was a lot of experience for an eighteen year old boy, you know. [Johnson chuckles] Course I wasn't the only one. There was a hundreds and hundreds of other, thousands of GIs you know. But that was a great experience. And, and most of the old boys that was in the army, most of them, I didn't realize it, but they, they came from the farm you know.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And, and back then that was the foundation of America. The farms you know in this country. Its changed a lot. I can see it you know.

Johnson: Well we are talking about change of course you were gone, but how do you think that war change East Texas?

McGilvra: Well it change East Texas a lot you know. Well, most of the people during the war, uh, they went off, uh , to the shipyards and uh, the oil fields and other uh, you know the building guns and so forth like that. And they made money, otherwise, in other words they never would have made that kind of money. They paid off their farms, they had cars, they had refrigeration.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And even, uh, it changed East Texas a lot of, especially in Angelina and Nacogdoches surrounding counties. They didn't even have electricity. You realize that?

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: My, my parents didn't have electricity until I, I came back out of the service. We didn't . . .

Johnson: But they had gotten it in the meanwhile.

McGilvra: Well they got it after I came home.

Johnson: Oh really?

McGilvra: After I came back out of the war. Just a few miles west of Lufkin, five miles west of Lufkin.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Lot of 'em had REA, but we didn't. But it changed uh, it change the transportation system, it uh, it changed all different ways of making a living in East Texas.

Johnson: In a way, East Texas was brought into the modern era.

McGilvra: Right. When they brought the trans-, good highways, well that changed a lot of it you know in East Texas.

Johnson: Have you ever thought about what, you know, what, what your life would have been had you not been in that war?

McGilvra: Yeah I thought about it. Its like I said, I, I had my mind made up really to go to work for a oil company. I knew that's what, if it hadn't been for, if I couldn't have got a job there, I really don't know what I would have done. There was nothing here in Lufkin except a, a, a foundry here and I just wasn't interested in their type of work.

Johnson: The paper mill had been started just before the war.

McGilvra: Yeah. The paper mill, I had no idea about the paper mill you know.

Johnson: Um hum, Um hum.

McGilvra: But when I come out of the service I, I realized that was a good place to work you know.

Johnson: And you had no regrets about going there.

McGilvra: Oh no. I had no regrets. I worked shift work the whole time I was there.

Johnson: Do you ever thing about the war any now Paul?

McGilvra: Yeah I do. I, I imagine its not a week past that I don't, I don't lay down night and think about it probably.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: Maybe two or three nights a week.

Johnson: Do you ever have any contact with other people you knew.

McGilvra: Yeah. I, I called a friend of mine up in Dallas here awhile back. I, I hadn't talked to him in about five years. And uh, I was talking to him, he said, "Well," he said, "I don't know what you made out of yourself Paul," but said, "Good Lord has been good to me." And I said, "Well, what ways?" And he said, "Well, give me a good living," said, "Uh, in fact, I'm a millionaire." I said, "You are?" [Johnson chuckles] I said, "Well I am not." [McGilvra chuckles] But anyway he said, "That's beside the point." He said, "The good Lord has been good to me."

Johnson: Were you in combat with him?

McGilvra: Yeah. I was in combat with him.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: And I have a friend that I went to see out here the other day. Out here at, uh, east of Lufkin. Raymond L. Ricks. He was in combat with me.

Johnson: How would he be to interview?

McGilvra: Uh, he'd be good. He was in the same outfit that I was.

Johnson: Is that right?

McGilvra: Yeah he, only he, he was in heavy weapons but he was in the, he was on a thirty-caliber water-cooled machine gun.

Johnson: And he was from Lufkin?

McGilvra: Yeah.

Johnson: And you and he went through the war together?

McGilvra: Yeah. We left here and went through basic training, uh, he was in a different company, I believe I was out there in basic training, but we ended up in the same division, the 43rd Infantry Division.

Johnson: Well, that is ironic isn't it?

McGilvra: It is.

Johnson: How do you feel today about Germany and Japan, they seem to be our friends now?

McGilvra: I still have mixed feelings about Japan because, I know uh, Japan I could see they were thriving just like ants over there you know. And they could,

they could do anything with their hands and they, they, uh, they would actually uh, good people I would say. You know the, the people I met and everything. But uh, Japan I always uh, read about them and heard about them and they said they are copycats. And I still think they are copycats.

Johnson: Best in the world.

McGilvra: Best in the world. And I think that they will take advantage of us. The business people, Japanese business people are smart. And uh, they are tricky. And uh, that's the way they were in combat and they wouldn't give you a, they wouldn't give you a chance. They'd choke you to death and let you die slow.

Johnson: Yeah.

McGilvra: But uh, the American people deals with 'em I guess everyday and I don't know seem they are taking America inch by inch. They're buying all the huge buildings and uh, in New York City and Houston, all the major cities in the United States, including Hawaii.

Johnson: Um hum.

McGilvra: I just hope they don't start buying up the timber companies in East Texas, if they do they will cut every damn thing we got. [Johnson chuckles]

Johnson: Have you ever had any desire to go back to that part of the world Paul?

McGilvra: Yeah I would like to go back to New Zealand. I, I wouldn't go back to Tokyo or Japan if somebody paid my way.

Johnson: But you would go to New Zealand?

McGilvra: Yeah, I just don't have anything in common with the Japanese people you know. I mean I, I can uh, I can communicate with 'em and everything but I know it has changed and it'd be prohibited to the average American to go to Tokyo its so high.

Johnson: Oh yeah. You couldn't afford it,

McGilvra: You couldn't afford it. But I'd like to go to New Zealand.

Johnson: You ought to go.

McGilvra: If I had the money I would. [McGilvra chuckles]

Johnson: Well thank you very much.

McGilvra: Yeah.