

Corley Haggarton
World War II Veterans History Project
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By: Jean Reynolds
Transcript by Nicole Lomibao

Jean Reynolds: Let's start with your parents. Tell me a little bit about your mom and dad. Tell me what their names were and where were they from.

Corley Haggarton: My father's name was Nathaniel Corley Haggarton. My mother was Maddie Ethel Moseley. They were married in Alabama, I believe, and then they moved to Texas. [correction: they were married in Texas] After they lived there for awhile, they had my sister, Juanita. They had one stillborn before I was born. And then they had my brother. I was born in Cisco, Texas. We moved to Sweetwater and from there, they moved to Chandler, Arizona.

JR: So there was Juanita, Corley and your brother?

CH: Lawrence.

JR: So there are three of you?

CH: Three of us.

JR: And what year were you born?

CH: September 22, 1923.

JR: So you were born in Cisco, Texas. Then your family moved to Sweetwater, Texas. Where about in Texas is that?

CH: Sweetwater is towards the western part of Texas, by Abilene. Cisco was just west of Sweetwater. It's between Weatherford and Abilene.

JR: What kind of work did your father do?

CH: My father worked at a Gyp Mill, gypsum. Then he was a bricklayer. He worked on some buildings in Sweetwater, Texas; the one big city hall building. Then we came out here.

JR: What was it that brought your family to Chandler?

CH: My grandparents had already moved here. Charlie Willis of the Willis family, he was on a mission for the LDS Church and he stayed at our

house in Sweetwater. He called his dad and said that he had a family that had a bunch of boys that needed work. So, Angus Willis sent for him and brought him out here. My granddad was a tenant farmer, so we had to come out here at the same time. So, we followed shortly thereafter.

JR: So, that meant your grandparents on the Moseley side came out here. What were their names?

CH: James Madison Moseley and Gertrude Moseley.

JR: What year was it when your family came to Chandler?

CH: 1927.

JR: What area did you live in when you came into Chandler?

CH: We came and lived on the corner of Ocotillo and Lindsey Road, on the northwest corner, on a big dairy that was owned by Jess (Tenny??), whose wife was a relative of the old Ellsworths of Queen Creek.

JR: So, did your family pretty much stay in Chandler the whole time you were growing up, as you got into grade school and high school?

CH: Yes, they did.

JR: What other areas in Chandler did you live?

CH: Well, we made about four moves. My dad was working on the farm. We moved to where the Chandler-Gilbert Community College is now. We lived just east of there on a big, high place, a farm that was not leveled at the time. Then we moved across the street to where the Institute of Religion is now for the LDS Church, just north of where Arbuckle Park is now. My grandfather grew watermelons out where the community college is now. His boys worked off and on for Angus Willis. My grandfather was electrocuted moving a hay stacker on Gilbert Road, just north of where the 202 is running now. They were moving a hay stacker under a high-power line and one of the wheels dropped in a bar pit. The beam flipped up and hit the power line, when he tried to grab a cable to pull it down so it wouldn't hit. And he was electrocuted right there. He farmed mostly all of his life.

JR: Your dad was working alongside with him?

CH: In some instances, yes. He worked for different people from around the valley here.

JR: Doing different types of work?

CH: He was a contractor. He contracted crews of cotton-pickers and cotton-choppers. They weighed the cotton. I still got the scales that he used hanging in my little shop out there. It's a lot of history, too much to even try to think about now, but he was working hard all his life. That's about it.

JR: Those crews that he contracted with, were they groups of people from different racial backgrounds? Or a particular group?

CH: Yes, a lot of different racial backgrounds. He contracted for Dave Hadley, Joy Compton, all those farmers in there. He did some for Kunze, which was out near where Folley Park is now.

JR: I'd like to find a little more history on that family. Let's talk a little bit more about the time period just before World War II started. What were you doing before the war began, around 1940?

CH: In 1940, I was working for Mayor Burt Lewis, who was Mayor later on, at a Litchfield Service Station on the northeast corner of Boston Street and San Marcos Place. There was a man by the name of Bill Brooks that had a dance hall and a barbershop and a pool hall there on that corner. The service station was right out in front of that. I pumped the gas there when World War II started.

JR: Were you in high school?

CH: I was a junior in high school at that time. I got to be a carry out for Basha's, at the old number 1 right across the street there, and we kept getting deferments. Two of my buddies and I kept getting deferments, so we could go ahead and finish school. I did little odd jobs around that we could find. Finally, when it came time, we'd been playing ball at Chandler High School, we got our last notice that our deferment had run out.

JR: How old were you by this time?

CH: I was 19.

JR: I want to go back to that in just a minute. Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

CH: Yes, I was. I was at the service station when we got word that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. It kind of dried up tears. We were ready to go fight, all the young people were. During that time, I was a busboy at the San Marcos Hotel. That was quite an experience. I got to put water and

butter at Dr. Chandler's table. Every day, the busboy's duty was to go around and put the butter and everything to the tables. That was quite an experience just to see him walk down the sidewalk and talk to everybody.

JR: Did you actually talk to him?

CH: Once in a while, we'd say, "Hi, Dr. Chandler" and he would say, "Hi" back. That was about it.

JR: You were pretty young at that time, right?

CH: Yes, kind of innocent.

JR: So how did you feel when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese?

CH: It kind of caught us by surprise. You know how young guys are, "We're going to go fight them guys." But then we decided that we'd better stay in school as long as we could.

JR: So even though you were old enough to go in and enlist, you still needed to finish school?

CH: Yes, so that was in our junior year. We were in study hall, which is in the very front of the high school, looking down through the pillars. The houses that had been built across the street were for flyers from Williams Air Force Base and men from the base. They had a Naval recruiting station across the street. We saw the Naval recruiter walking down that morning. We asked the teacher if we could be excused, my friend and I, Richard Harris. We ran down there and said, "Hey, we got our notices. Uncle Sam wants us in the US Army. How can we get in the Navy?" He said, "Follow me." He took us in; we signed the papers, enlisted in the Navy. He said, "I'll see you on Jefferson Street and Washington Street in the morning." So we caught the Sun Valley bus and went over and signed up.

JR: That was the induction center?

CH: That was the induction center. I think we got to stay away about a week before we actually went over there and went in, on train to San Diego.

JR: So you were a junior at the time, enlisting in the Navy?

CH: I was a junior in high school. W.G. Austin, the superintendent, said, "When you guys come back from the war, if you come back, come back and finish high school." So, ten of us took him up on that. And we

graduated in 1947. And that was in 1943, two days before our junior year was up.

JR: So you enlisted in 1943?

CH: Yes, in 1943.

JR: What made you choose the Navy?

CH: I'd been sleeping in a good bed and I figured I better keep on doing that. Three square meals. I always liked the Navy anyway because I was a swimmer. That's how I got into the Navy first. After I got enlisted into the Navy, I was a swimming instructor and a lifesaver. I taught sea survival at Mission Beach in San Diego for a year. Then we couldn't bear it any longer, we had to go over there and fight. We told them that we wanted to be moved up. They said, "We got just the place for you." They put us up in landing craft school, amphibious forces - the ones that put Marines and Army on the beaches.

JR: Let's go back a little bit. You had about a week before you went to the induction center right after you enlisted. What did you do during that week before you had to go?

CH: Well, you tell everybody goodbye. Joe Woods, who owned the Rowena Parkwood Theater, threw a party for us at his house. The house is still standing on Washington Street over there. Edna Hall, Audrey Ryan and a whole bunch of our friends were all there. We just had a good time, hootin' and hollering.

JR: How did you feel about leaving Chandler?

CH: I was ready for a new adventure, to try it and see how it was. Which every red-blooded American should do at that time, they were ready to go to defend their country.

JR: When did you enter service? It was in 1943, but do you remember what month it was?

CH: It was in May.

JR: Where did you receive your basic training?

CH: San Diego Naval Training Station.

JR: Can you describe what basic training was like in San Diego?

CH: It was a lot of marching, round the grinder, hup, two, three, four. That's what we did. Then we learned how to fire a gun, how to be a sharp shooter and all these other different things. Learned how to be a truck driver. Let me explain what that truck driver means. The Boatswain comes out and said, "Needs somebody who knows how to drive a truck." That's what I had done, I hauled ice from the Chandler Ice Plant to Queen Creek to ice the vegetables down at the railcars down there. That was one of the odd jobs that I had. He said, "Oh, you're just the guy were looking for." He said, "Here's a shovel and a wheelbarrow. Get going." That was my stint of truck driving in the Navy. I never volunteered for anything else.

JR: So you were loading...?

CH: Loading dirt and dumping it.

JR: I bet you were pretty excited when you found out what the actual job was.

CH: Oh, yes.

JR: What was your military specialty?

CH: Specialty? One thing was swimming. I might back up and go to San Diego at Mission Beach. The Indoor Plunge, which was heated salt water, an Olympic size swimming pool in it. We taught two companies in the morning, two companies in the afternoon and a company of non-swimmers at night. They brought our food to us every day from the training station and took us back to the training station in busses after we were finished. Our weekends were free. That was one of the specialties I had in the Navy.

JR: How long did you do that for?

CH: For a year. Then, after we got overseas, first, we went to the Silver Strand, that's where North Island is in San Diego. We trained in the landing boats. We learned how to drive those LCVP's, the LCM's. We learned how to hit the beach, how to back off. They took forty or fifty of us. They said, "We want you guys to be in an outfit. It's going to be called Standard Landing Craft Unit Number Thirty." That was a salvage crew. When we landed the people on the beaches, sometimes the coxswain of the boat would get broached towards the beach sideways. The breakers slamming into the side of the boat. We had to go in and rescue them. I stood at a gun turret of a P-boat and hurled this Monkey's Fist, a heaving line, over to them. They pulled a 3-inch Howitzer over with a cleat and they put it on the clevises on the ends of the boat. Our boat turned around and headed back out to sea. The breakers went up and

when we went down, that was the power to pull. We jerked them around straight, pulled them off of the beach and out to the deeper water where they could clean out the strainers on the boat because it sucked in salt water and it cooled the engine. They would clean the sand out of those then put them back together. And put them back on and it'd suck fresh water up in and they'd go back out to their parent ship...for another of whatever they wanted them to do.

JR: Would you get back on the boat?

CH: We were already on the boat. We used the boat to pull them off the beach.

JR: Was it ever a dangerous situation?

CH: Yes, it was. Sometimes those breakers were four to five feet high. You'd go up a four or five foot breaker, come down on the other side, you got some power behind you. You'd rev that boat up and jerk that boat around off the beach. Sometimes, it'd almost turn you over.

JR: How many men did it take to do that operation?

CH: There were five of us on the boat. We'd take off some mornings about 6:00 in the morning. Have our Kapok jackets wrapped around us and lay down beside that Gray Marine diesel engine and get warm. Some of the guys would have some cans of soup and they'd put it up on top of the exhaust. They'd heat their soup so they could drink it during a break. A lot of the times, we were laying around out there. Sometimes we'd play with the whales, trying to get up on the backs of the whales. That didn't work too well. We had a good time.

JR: When did you deploy overseas?

CH: When we left Oceanside, California after training with the 3rd Marine Division, we went to Tanforan Race Track, which was a Japanese concentration camp [assembly center]. We stayed there and outfitted our crew, which were some of the pictures that you saw over there. When we left, we went to Port Hueneme, we left from out there, which is north of San Francisco. We left there.

JR: Do you remember what date that was?

CH: 1944. We went on from there, deployed on down. We went through the Hebrides. When we crossed the equator, they put us down in Davy Jones' locker and gave us all a big initiation. We went from the Hebrides to Guadalcanal, stayed in Guadalcanal for one night. Then our ship took us across the Iron Bottom Bay at Guadalcanal, past Tulagee where one of the

big battles were. Then to the Kavata Island, then went to the new Florida Island, which has a different name now. We camped there for, can't remember how long. After we got off the Mormack Dove, we got on the President Monroe cruise ship that had been outfitted to haul Army, Navy and the Marines. From there, we went to Kwajalein. We were salvage crew stand-by's for the push on Kwajalein and the Enewetok Atol, then we went on to Saipan and Tinian. When our turn came to go into the beach, we were headed for Guam. That's where we put our Marines and the 77th Division, the Statue of Liberty group, onto the beach on Guam.

After the island was secured, we made our headquarters camp at Piti. Piti Boat Basin, that was on the eastern side of Apra Harbor. Orote Peninsula, which jutted out into the Pacific Ocean on the west side, was the main entrance to the right of that to Apra Harbor. We were shielded by Cabras Island up to Piti Boat Basin on our left. The Seabees came in and leveled Cabras Island, took it down til only about three to four feet high and made a big break water out into Apra Harbor to shield the harbor from the currents of the Pacific. I rode out two typhoons on Guam. Winds were in excess of 100 miles per hour. We were in landing boats, pushing on the port side and the starboard side of the ship to keep them from being slammed up on the docks and up on the rocks during the typhoon. That was quite an experience.

JR: Can you describe what that was like a little more?

CH: Rain poured down on you. We had tarps stretched over the LCVP at the hold of it where we'd go underneath there and stay. We slept there, took naps during the day in the boat. They lowered the fuel lines down and we'd fill the boat tanks with fuel. We kept it going for about sixteen hours, pushing those ships away slamming them up against there [the docks] and back. We did a good job.

JR: How many landing boats did it take to do that?

CH: Six, for one ship.

JR: How long did it last?

CH: It lasted about twenty-four to thirty-six hours. It was quite an experience. One of the highlights of our deal was when the Seabees were lowering Cabras Island, we were out tying up ships in the harbor with a pilot from ports all over the world. They'd come on board these ships and tell us where to push the bough and stern and where to go and invite us on board for dinner after we cast a ship off. We got to eat dinner on board the ship. That's where I gained my weight. We got to eat a lot of fresh food up there. When the pilot would get through casting them off or tying them

up, he'd say, "Okay, boys, the Captain says, come on board and get your chow." When we'd leave, we'd usually leave with a ham and butter and different things that the chef wanted us to take. We had a larder in our Quonset hut. We ate more in there than we did in the mess hall. We had a good time. I got to see quite a few of my old buddies from Chandler on board ships that come through there that we tied them up and everything.

JR: Do you remember who you saw?

CH: Gerald Meacham. Gary...no, his brother [Arthur], came through. I can't remember who all they were now. Howard Fuller and I were on the same outfit. Roger Fuller was at the Marine base east of us and Howard was in our outfit and we were on the same tug together.

JR: How did it feel when you would come across these guys that were from Chandler?

CH: Oh, all the hootin' and hollerin'. We really had a good time. "Go Chandler!" They'd yell back the same thing. Somebody else on the back stern of the ship would say, "Oh, shut up, we're better than you are." And we'd just jaw back and forth. We had a lot of fun.

JR: Let's go back a little bit. I want to ask you a little bit more detail on a couple of things. You talked about that you got initiated. You said you went into Davy Jones locker when you got initiated? Can you describe that?

CH: They gave us a couple swats when we went through the trunk and gave us a little card. I've got it in there somewhere. It's a little card that says: "Davy Jones locker," with my name in it.

JR: So that was your initiation into the Navy?

CH: Well, you got 2,000 Marines on there and about 300 Navy personnel. It took a long time for them to go through. I was amazed when we went across the Equator, it's shallow over the Equator. You could see where the currents are coming from the South and the North, how they swept through there and carried whatever back to the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern.

JR: What did you think about that? Seeing the vast expanse of the ocean while taking a trip like that, coming from a place that's all desert?

CH: I was looking for some land. It kind of got to us. Those old Arizona boys. I had a couple of Indian boys that were from Sacaton, which is right down here where Snaketown is and Last Chance is, that were on. An old

cowboy and another fellow. We called him "Chief" and he brought his rope. He'd twirl his rope, spun his rope and entertain the sailors. They were really glad to see something like that. One good thing, though, when we left Tanforan Race Track, we all got together, and voted on what we wanted to take with us most of all across the Pacific. We bought a donut machine and five barrels of flour. When we got settled on Guam at Piti Boat Basin, we had our canteen all set up and we sold donuts to Marines all over the base. Air Force came down from North Anderson Field where the B-29's took off. We got a settlement out of it. There were about forty of us in on it. I got about \$350 dollars out of it.

JR: Did you make any donuts?

CH: I didn't make the donuts. We had guys that were cooks already and had made them before. We had the canteen, they made soft drinks and everything.

JR: Did you eat the donuts?

CH: Oh yeah, everybody ate donuts. They ran out and couldn't find the fifth barrel of flour. They got the Navy onto it; they ran that last one down and they flew it into us.

JR: Talk a little bit about coming to Guam. What you saw, and you talked about how Guam was secured. First, describe when you first came to Guam, what you saw and what you thought of it.

CH: When we came to Guam, it was about 4:00 in the morning in June of 1944. We were rousted out, had our breakfast, got our gear on and made ready to be launched. But then they called us off, but we could see the planes diving on to the big ridges around Guam, bombing and everything. If you've ever smelt firecrackers and rockets like that, that acrid smoke, this was worse.

You had a sense of feeling that you were really tensed up. As they called for different divisions on board our ship to go over the side on those rope ladders, you just tensed up because you didn't know whether you were going to be called to go over next to get into your boat and haul them.

The very first initial, we didn't have to go over. We had the 77th Armored Division, part of them, on our ship. They were waiting for another ship to take their 105 Howitzers to put them on the beach. That [route] was around Orote Peninsula out from Apra Harbor, turn around Orote Peninsula, and in on the beach. That's where we took them in and landed them. Their guns were sitting there waiting for them. We secured that part, got in our boats, and went all the way back around. They told us to

go in and land, that it was all secure here, so we went in there. We set up our tents and slept that night on Guam.

The next two or three weeks, we loaded wounded on hospital ships off our boats. We would carry litters across boats to put them in the sides of the ships. The doors were on the sides of the hospital ships. One boat to the next over and over.

JR: So they would be transferred from one boat to the next? What was that like?

CH: It was gruesome. You had blood running between our legs out of the litters. You'd lift it up, shove it on. It was just awful.

JR: When you were part of that, when you were landing the men onto Guam, how did you feel at that time?

CH: Let's hope we don't get broached on here because ain't nobody out there to pull us off. We were experts on getting the boat on and off because we knew how to hit the beach square, drop the ramps and let them off and then back right on off. The last one off would pull it right back. It's just too gruesome to talk about.

JR: How long were you on Guam for?

CH: Eighteen months. My duty, or our outfit's duty, on Guam, was to tie up ships coming into the harbor, getting supplies. They already had their Marines and their Army on board. We would tie them up when we came in, they'd take on supplies and cast them off.

In the meantime during that time, Hitler and his cohorts were doing their thing over there with the Army and Marines. They finally surrendered. When they made the transition from the ETO, European Theater of Operations, to the Pacific, they all left Marsailles, France. Apra Harbor and Marsailles, France handled more shipping than any other port in the world during that time. It was just a steady line of ships coming in and out.

One of the best things was, when they'd bring the hospital ships through, they had them all loaded down with nurses. Those nurses were all on the side of the boat yelling at us from the boat, hootin' and hollerin and showing off. Some guys on some of the boats that would take the bilge boards out that had two finger holes in it. They'd tie a heaving line on it, tie it to the back of our boat and they'd dive off and get on that thing and water plane. Just acting silly. It was really something though.

You know, you got your own people on those ships. You knew that they were heading for a place where it was going to be pretty tough. We would yell and just have a great time. They were, "Hey! Let's go out to so-and-so's bar tonight." And you'd yell back, "Oh, I'll take you, c'mon now," and just things like that. You know how boys and girls act.

JR: And I'm sure part of that was just trying to have some sense of fun and entertainment at a time when it was difficult.

CH: Nearing the end of the war, the USS Indianapolis was back at the west coast getting repairs. She had a special duty to carry out. She went back there. The history of it is in the books and everything. But what I wanted to tell is that when she left Mare Island, she had on board, welded to her deck, the atomic bomb. Nobody knew what it was. They had said they wanted it at Tinnean Island at a certain period of time. She broke the world record for a ship leaving Mare Island, going across the Pacific, and she did it in record time.

JR: Do you know how long it took?

CH: I can't remember now. There's all kinds of figures in the book in there. But, she delivered the atomic bomb. She left Tinnean and came to Guam to be outfitted to go onto Leyte Gulf, the Philippines. She came in on a Friday night, we tied her up at number one swing mooring, where when the currents would come, she could swing freely around. The pilot called us and says, "You guys got to be out there at least by 9:00. I'll need four boats." That was all he needed because she was already halfway turned around then. He says, "You guys go in here. You two boats go in on the other side."

I come in all real smart, all them sailors up there on board that USS Indianapolis, a heavy cruiser. They were all standing up there with their white hats on just looking at everything. I said, "Boy, this..." And the pilot says, "Go ahead. Hit her." I was the coxswain of the boat at the time. I went in there and put her forward. You can pull the lever back and the screw will catch water. The pin dropped out and wham! Into the side of the Indianapolis and knocked the guys over. They all came crawling out, and we finally got it back and shoved her out.

Five days later, we got the word that she had been sunk. 1,200 and some odd sailors on board. 312 survived. One of them was my friend, Carlos LaPaglia. Jesus LaPaglia was a big farmer around here and it was his older brother. He was killed up here on McClintock in an auto accident just a half a mile from where his headquarters was at the old PB Farms. That was really a blow to us. That was one of the greatest deals for recognition. I got to cast off the USS Indianapolis, and she was sunk.

JR: That was only three weeks later?

CH: Five days later. We cast her off on a Saturday and she was sunk on Sunday.

JR: How did you feel when you heard that?

CH: We were really down in the dumps. But here came a week or so later, a big seagoing tug, pulling her 21-foot of a bough that was blown off because it was water-tight. We skid her up off the coral reef in the middle of Apra Harbor right in front of Admiral Nemitz's headquarters. We got to see him take off of in the Saint Katherine in his private yacht. Every day he'd go around the harbor in his private yacht. That was quite a scene.

Another thing that was kind of gruesome to us was the USS Pennsylvania, the big battle ship, was towed into Apra Harbor. There were six sea-going tugs, and they're big, those tugs. They were tied up on the side of her and they were towing her. There was water coming from big pipes, the big pumps they had put into her bowels, shooting water out ten feet on each side. There must have been six on this side and six on the other side pumping water out. They brought her in and they put her in the dry docks. Number Three and Number Six dry dock was towed in and anchored in Apra Harbor. They put the Pennsylvania in there on Number Six, which was the largest, raised her up and let the water out of her.

Then the corpsman would go in there with shovels in those compartments. We could pass by the stern of her, the two starboard screws and the rudders were blown off. The rudder on the left, on the port side and the port screw were blown off. There was a big gaping hole there.

The corpsman had tables set up down below. They were all dressed in white gowns, rubber gloves. These guys would lower down bodies in mattress covers, the remains of those sailors, and sort through them to get their valuables and their dog tags, and everything out of them. So they can identify them. I don't know whatever happened to her after that, the Pennsylvania.

JR: Do you know where that was attacked at?

CH: That was probably in the Leyte Gulf. Kamikazes got her, and torpedoes, and stuff like that.

JR: Tell me a little about the dry docks and how they worked.

CH: The dry docks, they would fill them with water and they'd sink right down. They'd go under the ship. When they wanted to bring her up, they'd pump the water out of her and she'd come up. She'd lift that big ship up.

JR: That would help them do maintenance?

CH: They would do maintenance and everything like that.

JR: Tell me what you remember about when the European Theater closed, like on VE Day when they signed the treaty to end that part of the war? What do remember about how you felt or how other people felt about that?

CH: We were glad. We knew the war was winding down. They would notify us and tell us that these Army and Navy personnel were coming from the ETO, over. They were all prepared and they had ships in there. They had the King George V, the British battleship.

It was kind of comical one day, they had dredged out Apra Harbor was back to the south back in there. Built docks in there and they brought in this King George V and tied her up back there. All the battleships have a contingent of Marines on them. The British Marines were all swashbuckling. They tried to put on a show on the dock.

We were down there unloading some supplies off our barges. Here come these US Marines. They were kicking the butts of those rifles around and flipping them. They outdid those British Marines. That was a little entertainment for us.

JR: Did they have a little competition?

CH: No, they were just kind off showing off to one another. When we went to London in 1975, the King George was tied up in the Thames River just below the Tower Bridge in London. I could see her sitting off up there. She was small compared to our battleships. I've seen the old Missouri come in. They couldn't bring her in because she was too big for Apra Harbor. She would come in and they would take stuff out and load it on her. We knew right then the war was getting ready to wind down.

I saw the Nevada, Missouri, the Iowa, which was the biggest of them all, and the Indianapolis. I can't remember all of them. When they finally conquered Guam, the Nevada came in, and she had a bomb down one of her rifles, the big guns. It hit and exploded and blew up. She couldn't operate that cannon.

JR: So they'd fix it there?

- CH: No, they didn't fix it there. She left and went somewhere else.
- JR: How long did it take to secure Guam?
- CH: I think it was about two weeks. Just about two weeks.
- JR: Did you have the same kind of duties during the whole eighteen months that you were in Guam?
- CH: Yes.
- JR: You weren't transferred anywhere?
- CH: No, we weren't transferred anywhere. We were left there to take care of the harbor, tie up the ships and do what maintenance could do. We were trained for that part. That's why we stayed there and did our duties.
- JR: Did you do other kinds of maintenance work on the ships?
- CH: No. Only scrubbing down our boat. Just looking for ways to have some fun.
- JR: Can you talk about the Quonset huts that you stayed in? Can you describe what those were like?
- CH: They were heaven compared with our tents. We had guys that were there when we first got there, and put up our tents. I think we were the only outfit that had tents with wooden floors in them because some of our guys had confiscated lumber from another outfit way down in the harbor and brought them over. We built floors in our huts and our tents. They called our outfit "Ben Hardin and his 500 Thieves."
- We took supplies off of ships and put them on these [big] barges. They had big seahorse motors, like an outdoor motor on it. These guys, the Marines would run and go. We would stack all that stuff and we'd be driving by one of them. Somebody would say, "Hey, I got some pineapple over here." We'd throw heaving line over and they'd tie heaving line to it. We'd pull it up into our boat. We had all kinds of fruit and everything in our Quonset huts. They were really nice.
- JR: Was it a big change from growing up here in the Chandler area where it's desert and very arid, to Guam, it's a different kind of environment?
- CH: It was hot there too. But there were bombed craters all over the place. The Chamorro women would contract with us to wash our clothes.

They'd have steps down into the bomb shelters where the rainwater was. They'd go down in there and beat our clothes, bring them up and fold them. We'd take them when they'd send word at a certain period of time that our clothing was ready. And we'd go pay them for it.

JR: The Chamorro were the indigenous group that lived in the island?

CH: That was the people that lived on the island. The Chamorro lived on the island.

JR: Did they help the US military in different ways?

CH: Oh, yeah. They did quite a bit of stuff. But no fraternization or anything. The capital of Guam was just leveled. I have some pictures that show the buildings with just big holes in them during the battle.

JR: That must have been hard for the people that lived there.

CH: We have a lady that goes to our church. Someone was saying that she was from Guam. I walked by her in the hall and I said, "Do you know where Piti is?" She jerked her head around real fast. She knew where Piti was. I said, "Talofofo?" Talafofo was a big beach on the eastern side of the island. I didn't get to talk to her anymore. But, she was really interested. I'll get to talk to her some more.

JR: I want to ask you a few more questions about your experience there on Guam. Do you remember some of them men there that you were close with that were in your company, that you were friends with at that time? Can you describe some of them?

CH: Glenn Edward Quattlebaum was a golden sandies from Amarillo, Texas [high school]. He played football there and he went to Texas Tech. Johnson and Broderick and others. There's a picture of us all standing there.

JR: We can talk a little more about that when we look at the picture. What do you remember about your commanding officer?

CH: We hardly ever saw him. We saw the junior grade officers more than we saw him because he was always off somewhere else, getting different orders for us to do. That one picture shows us on the side on the building there where it says, "No Parking." That's C.D. Smith. We were on our honeymoon and I ran into him at Dutch's over in Long Beach, California. We went over there to see her [his wife's] twin brother on our honeymoon. Then, J.J. Fisher. He was one of the best ones. He treated us real good. We got along real good.

We were really a close-knit outfit because we had to depend on one another. We kept the boats in the harbor, kept them going. We were on the water most of the time, except on weekends we get to come back on dry land. We would get to go to the beach about 150 yards from our camp. We had volleyball nets set up on the beach over there. We would play different ships that'd come in. They would have a volleyball crew if they wanted to play, we would go play volleyball with them when we had time off.

JR: Were you any good at it?

CH: Oh, yeah. We won a lot of Pepsi and Coke. We would trade our cigarettes for Pepsis and stuff like that. That whole outfit that we had, there were only two or three of them that smoked. All the rest of them were just clean-cut guys, health-conscious. We had a lot of fun.

JR: How did you keep in touch with your family here in Chandler?

CH: V-mail. We'd write. That's the only way. We never did get to use the phone or anything.

JR: Did you get a sense of how your family felt with you being in the middle of the war?

CH: They'd write and say, "How's everything?" I wrote Lynn Williams of the *Chandler Arizonan*, there's a lot of letters in there, to Lynn Williams that I wrote. My mother kept a scrapbook of all the letters that I wrote.

JR: Do you still have that?

CH: Yes. They're buried back there somewhere.

JR: If you ever unearth those, I would like to see one or two. I know those are personal. Were you parents worried about you? Your mom? Did they ever say anything like that?

CH: Yeah, they were worried. But I'd always write them and tell them I was fine. I'd tell them that I'd have to cut it off short tonight and go to bed because I hear some of those four-motored mosquitoes were coming over. You know what that was.

JR: Did you enjoy receiving letters?

CH: Oh, yes. All the Chandler boys, there were seven of us from Chandler on Guam at the same time. I had the paper sent to me. I'd get a letter from

Chandler, Arizona from my buddy, Squeaky Harris, that went into the Navy with me. He'd be on another island somewhere. He'd write me a letter and I'd get information to him that way.

JR: Through the newspaper?

CH: Through the newspaper.

JR: So they sent you copies?

CH: Oh, yeah. I'd subscribed to it. All the Chandler guys would come around and read it. Dr. Roger Fuller was at the Marine Air Base just east of us. His brother, Howard Fuller, and I were in the same outfit. We palled around pretty good. Another, David Hulet, was up at Andersen Air Force Base, where the B-29's were. We'd all go up there sometimes and visit him on our time off. We kept busy and just had a good time.

JR: You had Dr. Howard Fuller?

CH: Yes, he was a doctor, too, later.

JR: Also, Hulet. Do you remember any of the other guys that were from Chandler on Guam with you?

CH: There was, I can't remember the Indian guys' names. They were always in Chandler when they came up. There was also two Mexican boys.

JR: Did you know them or you just knew they were from Chandler?

CH: I didn't know them, but I knew they were from Chandler.

JR: It would be interesting to get their stories and tie them into your story.

<Changing to Tape 2>

JR: That's a real interesting way that people could communicate with each other.

CH: That's how we knew where each one of us was at the time. We were separated by a thousand or so miles.

JR: That's how you kept in touch?

CH: Well, we knew where the guy was. He'd write a letter [to the *Chandler Arizonan*] and we knew that he was okay.

- JR: Plus you got to kind of see the news of what was happening at home.
- CH: I'd write one letter to the *Arizonan* to Lynn Williams. I said, "Tell Weepy Watts..." That was the Track coach at the high school. Tell him certain things. You're out there free and you're young. You don't know what's coming next.
- JR: Were you ever wounded?
- CH: No, but I've come close to it.
- JR: Can you describe that? Or is that something you don't like to talk about?
- CH: I was laying down in the well deck of a boat. One of my buddies was driving. We were leaving the beach after we'd taken a lot of the wounded off. We were headed back to our ship. A mortar or something like that dropped right beside the boat. It exploded right beside the boat on the side that I was lying on. But it didn't go through because it's armored plate. That's the only time.
- JR: How did you feel?
- CH: I was tickled to death that I got out of there.
- JR: I bet you were. What are some of your strongest memories of your experiences during the War?
- CH: The Indianapolis experience was the strongest. Training the sailors at Mission Beach. It was twelve foot deep in the deep end. The seventeen-foot tower on one side. We would have them jump off with their lifejacket on and tell them how to handle it.
- When they would step off, we'd have a little fun with some of them. We'd tug the bottom of their jacket when they'd step off. They'd hit the water and come up with their feet first instead of head first. Different things like that, you know. We trained lots of sailors.
- JR: What did you like about doing the training?
- CH: We got to be outside at lunch and play volleyball with the girls at Mission Beach.
- JR: This seems to be a recurring theme here.
- CH: I'll tell you one thing. You play on that hot sand for a year, you'll have calluses on the bottom of your feet that thick, about a quarter of an inch

thick. After we got on board ship and got going, those calluses started peeling off of our feet. We'd have to shake our mattress cover off every morning to shake off the calluses.

JR: That's an interesting process. Where were you on VJ Day?

CH: I was on Guam.

JR: What do you remember about that?

CH: When we heard it on the radio, we were tickled to death. There were ships out on the harbor tooting their horns. Everybody was yelling and hoopin' and hollerin', all running around there. They said, "How many points have I have got to get out of here?" So, I left there on Thanksgiving, aboard the USS White Plains, the aircraft carrier. They said they were going to take us to Hawaii and then to San Francisco. We wound up in Seattle and stayed there a week or two. Then went on leave.

JR: That was in November of 1945?

CH: Yes, November and December because I landed in Chandler on Christmas Eve 1945.

JR: What do you recall about the day you left the Service?

CH: They gave me my money. What I had coming. I dressed in my street clothes. Had my uniform, it's in the closet in there. Embroidering with dragons all up and down the insides of the legs and the jacket. But I can't find my hat.

I love the Navy. It's just really nice. That's what I love most, forefront. The Marines would say, "We're Marines," but I'd still say, "Yeah, but you're still Navy. You don't go unless we go because you can't get where you're going unless we take you there." Unless the Air Force takes them.

JR: How did you feel about putting on those street clothes?

CH: That felt good. Get to get on those Levi's, them t-shirts.

JR: What did you do when you returned from the war? You came out of Seattle, right? What happened after that?

CH: After I left Seattle and came back home on rehabilitation leave. I went to Fallbrook, California to the US Naval Ammunition Depot. We loaded boxcars with empty shells sending those casings back to the factory to be reloaded. There was a Farnsworth on there. Bob Farnsworth of Chandler.

He wasn't in my outfit, but he was there at Fallbrook at the same time I was. Then they sent me down to Terminal Island, then I was discharged right there. I caught a... I can't remember now.

JR: What was the date that you came back to Chandler to stay?

CH: The date was December 24, 1945. Christmas Eve. The guy standing on the sidewalk met me was my buddy that I went into the Navy with, Richard Harris. He says, "Hey, Haggy, come on, I want you to come and meet my girlfriend." He took me down to Duddings' old drug store, walked inside, and he said, "This is my girlfriend. Her name is Marie." She was a soda jerk. She had a pink sweater on. I could see her apron. I said, "I'll have a chocolate shake." She made me my chocolate shake.

It goes on and on, towards New Years Eve. Richard says, "Hey, can we get you a blind date?" I said, "I guess." That was New Years Eve. We were cruising down the road. My blind date wasn't what I wanted. I said, "Let's everybody kiss everybody's girlfriend." I grabbed Marie. This is the 21st of July 2009. And we're still together.

JR: So she was one of the first girls you saw when you came back into Chandler?

CH: Yes, ma'am.

JR: You came by train?

CH: I came back on a bus.

JR: Once you came back and you met Marie, you started working again?

CH: I started working. I got a job at Williams Air Force Base in the salvage department checking salvaged equipment, electronics and different things that came off the airplanes. I started taking her to her different classes in her junior year. She went to the state capitol, the whole class. I went with them then came back with them. I decided I was going to go to school, so I quit the air base and enrolled in school.

JR: You went back to Chandler High?

CH: Alice Woods said, "I need a guy to work in the theater." I'd show these angry kids how to keep their feet off the back of the chairs. I'd put up the marquee, I was an usher.

JR: You went back as a senior?

CH: I went back as a senior.

JR: That was in 1946?

CH: 1947. Well, it was 1946-1947.

JR: Were you the only person who came back at that time that went back and finished high school or were there others?

CH: There were ten of us. I was trying to figure out who it was: myself, Clifford Timm, Richard Harris, Elmo Powell, Ben Franklin, Walter Vance, Lefty Soto. It's kind of hazy right now, but there were ten of us that came back and finished.

JR: And you all graduated in 1947?

CH: Yes.

JR: How did that feel to come back from being involved in the war and being in military service at that time, to come back and finish high school?

CH: They welcomed us back. They had class elections and they elected me class President of the Senior class. You can look in the annual and find out all the things that I did during the four years of school.

The class before us that went on Senior Ditch Day that went to Grand Canyon, some of them were kind of rowdy on different stores coming back along the line. W. Austin wasn't going to let anyone go anywhere and I finally convinced him that the class of '47 deserved to go to the Grand Canyon. We rode down in the Grand Canyon on mules. Marie's mule's name was Juanita. She was scared to death because Juanita would put her hoofs right up to the very edge of the cliff. It was straight down about 2,000 feet. We have a picture of our group that went down. It was a glorious time. We were all young and really having a lot of fun.

JR: Did you have a different perspective than other students that were also in the Senior class?

CH: Well, I think that most of us realized that we better get an education. I had about eight or ten interviews this year from freshman at the school coming and interviewing me. The last thing I told them was, "The first thing you do in life is get your education because you never know what's going to happen to you. At least you got an education, you can do a lot of things that you wouldn't think that you'd be able to do." They were all really nice kids.

JR: Did the GI Bill affect you?

CH: I went the wrong way with the GI Bill. I went to automotive, body and fender school at ASU out at the old Thunderbird Field Number Two. That was the biggest [of the airfields].

JR: Where was that at?

CH: North of Scottsdale. Way out there. Came back and the entire automotive industry changed. They started using plastics and epoxies and things like that. I had lead and a bucket of oil and a torch in this hand and solder in the other. I'd take the torch and split it like that. It's all together different now. Things have changed.

JR: What year did you get married to Marie?

CH: We got married on October 11, 1947.

JR: So, right after graduation?

CH: We graduated in May. Then we had the summer to go through, working at our jobs. I helped build ten houses over here on Nebraska Street, back where the Park Manor addition is over there. There was a big barn down over there in the middle of where that project is, that we built the walls out of aluminum and tied them together with wire. We set them in the footing and then they came in and poured cement floors in there. We went back and put metal lath on the walls and then the plasterers came in and put the plaster on, scratch coated it. Then the other finishers came in and put the finishing on, the clear coat on. Tilly, one of the girls that was in our age group, she lives in one of them over here. There's house between her and West Mini [now called 'Park Manors'] Park. She's still living in that house. A tornado couldn't blow it down. There's ten of them over that just like that.

JR: You have three children?

CH: We have three children.

JR: Can you name your children?

CH: Carol Marie, James Dwight and Jon Corley Haggarton.

JR: How many grandchildren and great-grandchildren do you have now?

CH: We have fifteen grandchildren and twenty-seven great. They're all in that picture right over there. You can see the big bellies in there, they're all there, except for one guy and grandkids that are up in Salt Lake.

JR: I know you stayed in Chandler and started working and got into the fuel industry. Do you remember what the impact of World War II was on Chandler?

Ch: The impact was that one of the fighting-est outfits that ever fought in World War II was right here in Chandler, the Bushmasters, the National Guardsmen. A lot of those guys are all my friends. They went in before I did. Chandler started growing a little bit, kind of slow, just a big cotton center.

I got into the petroleum business. I was working at a service station on the northeast corner of Buffalo and Arizona Avenue, just south of where the Jack In The Box is. It was a Mobil station. W.C. Hook's son, Bill, said, "I'm getting ready to go over to Phoenix and open up this dealership there. Why don't you come to work for us?"

Finally he said, "I'm going tomorrow and Daddy's got to have a driver." I didn't even know how to drive a truck, wheel-barrowing it up, you know. I said, "Okay." So I went over and went to work for Bill Hooks as a driver salesman for the Standard Oil Company. Stayed there for 15 years.

One of the farmers and I joined forces and we got the Texaco Distributorship over here on the northeast corner of McQueen and Chandler Boulevard on Williams Field Road. I stayed there eighteen years and sold that and went to Phoenix Fuel Company as a salesman.

Stayed there six years and they bought out my old Texaco plant from the guys that were running it. I said, "Oh, I get to go back and work out of that office over there." They said, "No, we don't have any positions for you anymore." That was on a Friday afternoon.

I came home and Marie got a phone call and told me to call someone down at Brown-Evans Distributing. They told me to get over there and get to work. So that was on a Monday morning. I've never been without a job in that fifty-six years.

JR: And you just recently retired?

CH: I retired on May 31, 2004. October 27, I had a seizure. I hadn't had one before and haven't had one after. I'm trucking along.

JR: Do you know anyone from Chandler who lost their life during the war?

CH: Yes. Gene Matthews. It's on the top of the picture. Bobby Herman. Waylon Hooks, W.C.'s son. He lost it at Anzio. Another one of my good friends went into the Air Force, Grant Shumway.

JR: Gene Matthews, what branch of the service was he in?

CH: The Marines.

JR: Bobby Herman?

CH: Bobby was in the Marines.

JR: Waylon?

CH: Army.

JR: Do you feel like your service in World War II affected the rest of your life?

CH: Well, I think it did tremendously. It gave you a sense that you did something that was good for your country. Made you that much more patriotic. I collect patriotic sayings and different things like that. Everything that I see about these people fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq and other places over there, they've got to be true-blooded Americans to go and fight for their country. Black, White, Yellow and Red; they're true-blooded Americans.

Another thing that thrills me is that this last notification that we got, all these people from different countries that are serving in the Armed Services, are now citizens of the United States. Every one of them, [(from) different countries. Asia, Africa, England, China, Tongans; all of those people that served this great country are true-blooded Americans. And I salute them. I served right along side a lot of them in the Navy.

JR: What lessons did you learn from this time in your life?

CH: Nobody's going to give you anything. You're going to have to go and earn it. That's the best thing that I can say. Marie and I both have learned our lessons early because we learned how to work hard. Our children have seen us work hard. They're all hard workers and their children are the same way. Every one of them. This country here gives you the opportunity to do what you want to do, not have anything drag you down, just keep pluggin' along.

JR: What lessons for today's generation would you like to pass on?

CH: Obey those who are placed in authority above you. Give them the respect and you will get the respect, too. You can pass that onto your children. There's a lot of kids today that don't have any respect for their parents. Sometimes I see some of these guys walking down the sidewalk with their pants hanging down, their shorts are showing, I'd like to grab those pants and jerk them down and trip them.

JR: Do you have any other thoughts that you'd like to share about your World War II experience before we end?

CH: I was amazed when I first went over there and went through the Hebrides. We were winding our way through these islands. The white buildings with tile roofs on the top of them, sticking up on those islands. You understand then, that there's other people on this Earth that you never even thought were there. They're making their living out of bread, fruit, pineapples, bananas, different things like that. This whole human race is scattered all over this Earth. They're doing their own thing. I can't see anybody putting any opposition to them. They should help them do all that they could. Just be mindful that you're a child of your Heavenly Father and he expects you to render that to all of his children.

JR: Thank you very much, Corley. I think you have a wonderful story to tell.

END OF INTERVIEW