

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
CLAYTON NARVESON

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEW BY
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AND
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CYNTHIA TINKER: Okay, this begins an interview with Clayton E. Narveson on March the 15th, 2012 at his home in Maryville [Tennessee]. And my name is Cynthia Tinker. I'm with the UT Center for the Study of War and Society and also joining me today on the interview is one of our interns this semester.

JOSH RIGGINS: I'm Josh Riggins. I'm an intern at The Center for the Study of War and Society.

TINKER: And thank you Mr. Narveson for sitting down with us.

CLAYTON E. NARVESON: You're welcome.

TINKER: I know you've done this a lot so thanks for doing it one more time.

NARVESON: You're welcome.

TINKER: We'll start by askin' you about how you grew up, maybe you could start telling ...

NARVESON: I was born and raised in western Minnesota, January 27, 1924. I lived in Southern Minnesota at a place called Austin, Minnesota, my whole family grew up. Mother, father, seven children, of which six were boys—all six of us were in the service, by the way. We grew up during the Great Depression which in our case was a very severe thing because my father lost his business and his health in 1929, both.

TINKER: What was his business?

NARVESON: He owned a bowling alley and pool tables and things like that, and he had cancer of the stomach. They removed his stomach and he lived twenty-nine years after that by eating soft foods. But because it deprived us of his income, a large family, the federal government fed us. 1930, '31, and '32, they gave us a lot of cream of wheat, oats, powdered milk, butter—not butter it was oleo [oleomargarine] in those days. But it sustained my family such as it pulled us through the Depression. So those are my early years.

TINKER: Well, what, let me ask you about your mother. I mean, it says on your form [Pre-Interview Questionnaire] that she was born in Iowa. how did your parents meet?

NARVESON: My father rode a horse in those days and he went down to Forest City, Iowa and he called on somebody down there and that little girl standing over there in the corner [laughs] took a liking to him and he took a liking to her and she was one of eleven children, but she took a shine and pretty soon they were riding horses together.

TINKER: So her family had moved to Minnesota?

NARVESON: No, she remained in Iowa.

TINKER: Oh, okay so he was in Iowa.

NARVESON: He was down in Iowa. He came from Southern Minnesota down there.

TINKER: Okay, okay. And I noticed your father, he was born in 1878.

NARVESON: Yes.

TINKER: Did he ever tell you stories about his father and did his father, was he in the Civil War.

NARVESON: No. My father and mother were very reluctant to talk about their grandparents, and that's the way it was in those days. Other friends of mine tell me the same thing. They were very reluctant and why that was so, it's difficult. I'm a talker. It's difficult for me to understand that because there's a history; everybody has worth, everybody has a history, everybody has a story. But I don't know anything about my grandparents on either side. Now, that's tragedy.

TINKER: That's sad. Yeah it is.

NARVESON: On mother's side, they were born in Denmark. Father's side born in Norway.

TINKER: That's about all you know?

NARVESON: Yeah, and it's tragic. It is ...

TINKER: That you don't know how your family came over here.

NARVESON: No, no, and when, I would bring it up at the house: "Oh, Clayton let that go." You know, they're very reticent and why, but this was the way it was. They just didn't talk.

TINKER: You're mother was the same way?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: Wow. Did you or your brothers and sister ever try to do some research on your own to find out?

NARVESON: Well yeah, we had a cousin in Norway who did it, who did his thesis for a Master's degree from Oslo. And he came over here in the country, and to Minnesota cause we came into his lineage somewhere in the 1840s, with the name Narveson. And so, he did his

thesis, he went back to 1700, and he sent us a copy, all of us got a copy. And there was just a lot of Scandinavian (Laughs).

TINKER: I bet.

NARVESON: Yeah, it's ...

TINKER: Well, was there a central city, what was the main city your father's family was from in Norway, you remember?

NARVESON: Uh, Bergen I think. Yeah

TINKER: That's interesting, but yeah that's sad that you don't know. 'Cause I just interviewed a gentleman last week that he knew way back.

NARVESON: For thirteen years I've been talking to high schoolers about the Great Depression and World War II. I cover those subjects. And I tell 'em, "Talk to your grandparents, sit down, force 'em to." And so many of you have divorces in the family, some of these kids do not even know their grandparent on one side of the family, but I said, "You force 'em to, just force 'em to. Because," I said, "When you get older you're not going to be able to do it. And you won't know anything about them." And everybody has a story.

TINKER: Well, what did your parents do—I mean, was Austin was a very big city?

NARVESON: Austin was twenty-five thousand people in southern Minnesota. That's where we were raised, we moved there when I was six or seven years old. We were raised there. And when World War II happened we all went into the service from Austin, Minnesota.

TINKER: What was your childhood like?

NARVESON: Happy, but poor. But, you know, it doesn't cost money to have happiness.

TINKER: Well that's true, was you family ... (Laughter)

NARVESON: 'Cause the family just down the street was just as poor as the one across the street. The Johnsons, they were poor, we were all poor. But I didn't know I was poor until I was about thirteen.

TINKER: How did you figure it out?

NARVESON: Well, I just figured it out at school. I only had one shirt, I had one pair of pants, I had one sweater.

TINKER: Well, maybe you say somebody else who had two.

NARVESON: Well, the teachers would give me an apple, they'd do little favors for me, and I figured it out.

TINKER: What kind of things did you do as a child, like say in the summertime?

NARVESON: All sports, all sports.

TINKER: Oh, really?

NARVESON: Outside, mother kicked us out of the house.

TINKER: And your brother, all of you?

NARVESON: Oh, we all played sports.

TINKER: Well, what about your sister? (Laughter)

NARVESON: Oh, she shifted for herself. You'd think she was spoiled, but she wasn't. Mother made her, very demanding of her, very demanding, too demanding. She was too demanding of my sister.

TINKER: 'Cause she was the only girl.

NARVESON: Yeah, but she shifted for herself pretty well.

TINKER: So she had to probably help you mom a lot in the house.

NARVESON: Oh she did, ironed, ironed every day. Washed, my mother washed every day. She had an apron on every day. She only took the apron off to go to church. She was in an apron six days every week, every month. I mean, that's the way mother's were in those days, but she had to wash every day because we only had one of everything. We didn't have Goodwill and things like that in those days, your neighbors helped you. Neighbors gave us tomatoes; they gave us clothes.

TINKER: You said you all played sports.

NARVESON: Oh yeah.

TINKER: You and your brothers had almost enough for a whole baseball team.

NARVESON: Yes, we did. They used to say, the coach said, "Hey, here come the Narveson's. We're all set to go."

TINKER: We're all set! Let's play! (Laughter)

NARVESON: Yeah, here come the Narvesons. (Laughter)

TINKER: Almost for a baseball team ...

NARVESON: Oh yeah.

TINKER: ... a football team, and a basketball team. (Laughter) So who was the best athlete out of the—how many?

NARVESON: I guess I was.

TINKER: You were?

NARVESON: I guess I was, yeah.

TINKER: Oh, good. What was your favorite sport?

NARVESON: Every one.

TINKER: All of ‘em.

NARVESON: Including billiards and bowling inside, basketball; every one. I was too short for basketball, so I couldn’t make the varsity, but I made the B team. But I played all the sports, we all did.

TINKER: You mentioned going to church. Did you go to church every Sunday.

NARVESON: Mother and father and sister, we were in the Lutheran Church; we were raised in the Lutheran Church, baptized, confirmed. And I never knew anything but church. Every Sunday, my wife and I are Lutheran, and if I don’t get there, and I feel badly, or if she does, and we don’t go, my day isn’t complete. I’m eighty-eight years old, but I still feel that way.

TINKER: You feel like something’s missing if you don’t.

NARVESON: Something’s missing if I don’t get to church.

TINKER: Yeah, so, and were your mother and father both devout that way?

NARVESON: Yes, yeah, very. My father was a remarkable man. He never had any money, since he got sick. But he had more wisdom; a little fellow who had the Bible sit by his side all the time. And he’d quote the Bible, but he was not dominant about it. He just used the Bible for instructing his family, and he did. Mother was very much the same, but she was more quiet. But dad made the decisions and how you’re going to live your life. And he always used to say, “Be five minutes early;” “Come straight home;” “If you got an apple that you cut in half, give Bill the bigger half, you keep the smaller half.” Ethics. He taught ethics, he didn’t use the word, but that’s really what it was. And he lived by it.

TINKER: Yeah, that's nice. That's excellent. Did he, um—do you know how he realized he was ill?

NARVESON: Oh, sure. Well, he told us about that. It was cancer, they took the whole stomach in those days, that was very difficult to live with.

TINKER: He must have suffered for some time before they ...

NARVESON: Oh, yes, but we don't know about that.

TINKER: Oh, he didn't complain or show it.

NARVESON: He was not a complainer. He was not a complainer.

TINKER: So just, all of a sudden one day you find out your father's sick. And things are not good after that.

NARVESON: Yeah, but we were so little—1929 was the operation—and I was five years old. So, I wouldn't know at five, but we knew later on. Because the brothers talked about the fact that we had no food and we didn't have clothes, we didn't have a nice house. And so we just assumed, we made a lot of assumptions because of our status in life.

TINKER: Did he just have to stay home all the time after that?

NARVESON: Yeah, yeah, well, he couldn't find a job. He tried to find a job, but in 1929, '30, '31, '32 all those years, all the way up to '36, he couldn't find a job. He tried for six years to find a job.

TINKER: That's such bad timing. He gets sick and the Depression.

NARVESON: Fifteen million unemployed at the heart of the Depression.

TINKER: That's terrible timing.

NARVESON: Yeah, it was.

TINKER: Did your mother do anything to try and bring in extra money?

NARVESON: She got a WPA job in 1936, and that helped [Works Progress Administration]. And then my oldest brother got a job at Hormel's in 1934 and that helped. Had two brothers went in the CCC's, Civilian Conservation Corps, and they sent home twenty-seven dollars a month, both of them. So that—they kept five, the Federal Government, the status of that, thirty-two dollars a month, the boy keeps five, twenty-seven is sent directly home. So, my mother got twenty-seven dollars from both boys. So, that alleviated, when we got up to that point, then things were better.

TINKER: That whole period must have been tough on your father, too.

NARVESON: It was, uh, you know, he would have a sack of potatoes or a sack of corn delivered at night. He'd asked the man to please put it on the little porch at night. I don't want ...

TINKER: Everybody to know.

NARVESON: I'd go to school in the morning, and there it would be. We'd go to school and we knew what it was. And he was proud. I understand that.

TINKER: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Do you have any questions?

RIGGINS: Since your father was homebound a lot, did he have any hobbies that he did in his spare time?

NARVESON: My father's hobbies were reading and taking care of his family, frankly, and trying to find a job. (Laughs) But he had a fourth-grade education, you know. He ate only cottage cheese, milk, some ice cream, and he's lived twenty-nine years that way. But, you know, you can do it if you have to.

TINKER: He had a strong will.

NARVESON: If you're forced to, if you really want to, you can do it. Look at these wounded warriors who are hoppin' around on their legs. If you want to do it; you can do it. But that's life. Josh, you'll find that out when you get older, you'll do what you have to do.

TINKER: Was there a movie theater in your town?

NARVESON: Yeah, three of 'em.

TINKER: Three?

NARVESON: Yeah, I sneaked into all of 'em. (Laughter) We didn't have any money.

TINKER: What kind of movies did you sneak into?

NARVESON: Westerns, primarily.

TINKER: Like the Tom Mix variety?

NARVESON: Oh golly, Buck Jones. Oh yeah Tom Mix, Gene Autry. All of those Westerns. The three youngest ones, we'd all sneak in.

TINKER: Oh, you'd all go together?

NARVESON: The three youngest ones. I didn't have any money in my pocket, but I sure found the movie house. (Laughter)

TINKER: That's funny. And was it just walking distance?

NARVESON: Oh yeah. I never had a—all my years at school—I never had a ride to school. We walked, always walked.

TINKER: How far was the school?

NARVESON: A mile away.

TINKER: Really?

NARVESON: Yeah

TINKER: And did you like school?

NARVESON: I did.

TINKER: You did?

NARVESON: I did, I liked school. I liked college. I've always liked instruction, right to this day I read two books. I've always got two books going.

TINKER: What was your favorite subject?

NARVESON: History.

TINKER: Really?

NARVESON: Still is.

TINKER: Really? So all your life?

NARVESON: Well, history and the early Christian church. That fascinates me, I have a lot of books on that. But, basically history.

TINKER: That's interesting.

NARVESON: And all kinds of history.

TINKER: You said your brothers went into the CCC, two of 'em.

NARVESON: Two of 'em.

TINKER: Do you know where they went?

NARVESON: Yeah, Ely, Minnesota, which is north, and the other one went southeastern Minnesota.

TINKER: Would they write home and tell you the kind of work they were doing?

NARVESON: Oh yeah sure. One worked in the office, the other was out clearing stumps, building roads; the CCCs built roads, dams, trees. They built those things, that's what they did in Minnesota, and I suspect in the Midwest that is what they would have done. Like here, they worked TVA stuff here in Tennessee. I've inquired some stuff. They did pretty much the same type of work. They built roads here. The CCC's got a good history here with young fellows. And they—a lot of the trees they planted.

TINKER: My grandfather and my great-uncle were in the CCC up in the Smoky Mountains.

NARVESON: Yeah, okay, there you are.

TINKER: In the Park. Makin' trails ...

NARVESON: That's right.

TINKER: You know, building, like, the roads and the walls.

NARVESON: That's right, that's right.

TINKER: I was just wondering, did your brothers ever, uh, you know cause sometimes when the outsiders, the CCC outsiders, would go to another town, like, there were people from up north and all over that came down to the Smokies to work the CCC projects, and a lot of the locals didn't like them. (Laughs) They were kind of troublemakers.

NARVESON: Well, I don't know, they sure weren't, they wouldn't be troublemakers where I come from because ...

TINKER: Your brothers were still in Minnesota, they probably wouldn't have had that issue.

NARVESON: Well, let me tell you something. In the '30s, the jails stood empty. Twenty-five thousand people in that town. There was never anybody in jail. They stood empty. Money had nothing to do with stealing. It had something to do with ethics, and the way you are taught by your parents. It really has nothing to do—I never knew, the only person who would be in jail was the town drunk, or something like this on a Friday night.

TINKER: Like Mayberry.

NARVESON: Huh?

TINKER: Like Mayberry, on the *Andy Griffith Show*.

NARVESON: Well, if that's, okay.

TINKER: Because there's never any crime.

NARVESON: So, you know, when the jail stands empty, there's a reason.

TINKER: Yeah, that's interesting. So, when did you, on here it says high school. Did you go to high school for six years? Am I understanding that right?

NARVESON: Yes, junior high and senior high, six years.

TINKER: Oh, junior and senior, okay. Okay. Um, did you play sports every year in high school?

NARVESON: Yup, I like sports ...

TINKER: You sure do (Laughs).

NARVESON: I still do (Laughs). Well, in those days, that's all we did. I mean we had no other avocation. Nobody went to college cause there was no money. The dentist's son or doctor's son went to college, but nobody else did. Had it not been for the war, I would not have went to college.

TINKER: Did you ever have any injuries as a result of your sports? I mean you played a lot.

NARVESON: No. No, oh bugged up but hey.

TINKER: Never any serious injuries.

NARVESON: No, I recovered.

TINKER: And your brothers never.

NARVESON: No all of us, yeah.

TINKER: What did your oldest brother do? Did he leave home when he graduated high school?

NARVESON: Richard? No, no, he stayed. My oldest brother never married. He stayed home and supported mom after dad died. She lived with him. He was in the army. He was the first one to go in. His number was pulled out of the hat by Roosevelt. One of these early ones in 1939 ...

TINKER: Oh, when they first started the ...

NARVESON: ... they had a draft. And his name was pulled out of the hat, so he went in for one year and then back out, and when Pearl Harbor happened, they grabbed him right away.

TINKER: He went back in. Well, do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

NARVESON: Sure do, settin' pins at the bowling alley after church.

TINKER: You were?

NARVESON: Sure, after church, went down, four cents a line I got paid. And I walked in the bowling alley and somebody said Pearl Harbor, and like a dummy said, "Where in the heck is Pearl Harbor?" You know here I am a history major and ...

TINKER: Oh no, I'm sure everybody was sayin' what's Pearl Harbor (Laughter).

NARVESON: Yeah, like a dummy. Like a dummy, I didn't know. But we soon learned 'cause everything, everything—Pearl Harbor was everything.

TINKER: So you didn't feel like you had a clue at the time that that was coming.

NARVESON: No, but I decided right away before that I want to get in it—in those days they said it'd be over in a year. I mean the older people: "Oh, Clayton, you better get in cause it's gonna be over in a year."

TINKER: Well, because ...

NARVESON: They said that in the Civil War, too.

TINKER: Well, probably because when we got into World War I, the next thing you know, it's over.

NARVESON: That's right.

TINKER: Maybe that's why thought that.

NARVESON: Just a year and a half. Yeah that's right, a year and a half.

TINKER: Did your parents talk politics much at the kitchen table or around the house?

NARVESON: My mother—I will tell you my mother—I'm politically an independent, and so is my wife. My mother is the greatest Democrat the world has every known. She had the busts of Kennedy, Truman, Roosevelt in our home. She had—when Roosevelt was elected on January 30, 1933, the front page of the page went right over her bed, and it stayed there for fifty or forty, fifty years. It stayed right up there. She pasted it.

TINKER: You are kidding?

NARVESON: No I'm not. No I'm not. My mother lived and breathed—my father was a Republican. When he lost his health and his job, my mother completely flipped and kind of dragged him along. Although father wasn't quite that bad, but my mother, you were not to talk politics unless you talked about the Democratic Party. I am not kidding you.

TINKER: Well, did they follow, I mean, were they following world events at the time?

NARVESON: Oh yes, oh yes. Very well, very much. Father had that little radio on lots.

TINKER: Really?

NARVESON: Oh yeah. Yup.

TINKER: And did you kids have to listen to it?

NARVESON: We were allowed thirty minutes a night on the radio.

TINKER: But you'd listen to like shows, right, or were you listening to news?

NARVESON: Yeah, I'd listen to news show. We were out playin' outside most of the time.

TINKER: Well, what did your parents think after Pearl Harbor happened?

NARVESON: My dad followed it very carefully. Uh, he left the Lutheran Church in 1936, 1937 because of Adolf Hitler. The pastor was German, very much German. It was German Lutheran. We went to the German Lutheran Church. And from the pulpit, I don't remember this, although I'm sure I was there every Sunday, he thought Adolf Hitler, the sun rose and set on his head, and he didn't mind saying so.

TINKER: The minister, your minister in your town did?

NARVESON: Oh, yeah. That was common in those days, German Lutheran. Oh yeah, that was common. And he and Mom marched out of that church. My dad took it, so long. And he left, and he left, but he made us kids stay there which I thought was wrong, but I didn't think it was wrong at the time. Well, I did too, yeah. Anyway, they marched out of that church. My father, he followed—you go back to the '30s—my father followed all the news, very much so.

TINKER: I mean because it was pretty clear what was going on in Germany, and then, I mean, he invades Poland. Wow.

NARVESON: Yeah, yeah. He knew exactly what it was. And he had his little maps during the war, you know. We came back after the war was over, he has these little maps and he was following the European Theater and the Pacific Theater. He followed it very closely, and Mom right along with him; standin' right over his shoulder looking.

TINKER: Very involved. See that's very interesting. 'Cause, you know, I usually ask people that, and most of the time ...

NARVESON: But let me tell you something, though ...

TINKER: ... people didn't follow it like that.

NARVESON: ... your generation is probably not, you're getting close, we were patriots. The 1930s and the 1920s—coming out of the First World War—we were poor in the Depression, but we had a flag. You can see one right there. You can see one right in front of my house. It goes up every morning. We were patriots. My wife is a patriot. She came from the same type of—we were patriots in those days. The flags were flying. It meant something. We knew what history was; we knew what the Declaration of Independence [was].

TINKER: Right, and it was taught in school.

NARVESON: When I talk to the kids at school it used to really bother me. It doesn't anymore, but they don't know, they have no idea who John Adams was; who's Thomas Jefferson. They do not know. One out of twenty knows who Winston Churchill is; it's pitiful, it makes me sad. Sad.

TINKER: Yeah, history's being lost. So if your parents were this aware, then they probably knew when Pearl Harbor got attacked that their sons would be going in the military.

NARVESON: Absolutely. My father wanted us to go, too. Do your duty to your country. He was a patriot, very much so.

TINKER: That's good. That's good. So what day did you enlist?

NARVESON: October 12th, 1942.

TINKER: October 12th, 1942. And how old were you at that time?

NARVESON: Eighteen.

TINKER: Eighteen. So did you wait until you turned eighteen?

NARVESON: Oh no, I took my physical before I graduated.

TINKER: You did?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, there was several of us went from school right up to Minneapolis. We got a ride in a car. I think it was five or six of us went up to take physicals for the Marine Corps. And I passed, but I had too many cavities in my teeth; I had to come back home and earn some money, and had 'em filled. The Marine Corps wouldn't take me without my teeth being better.

TINKER: So that was sort of the delay there?

NARVESON: Yeah, it was a little delay; a couple of months, then I went in.

TINKER: Okay, what made you pick the Marine Corps?

NARVESON: My older brother was in the Marine Corps and I knew that they had a history of, well, fighting for their country. I knew that. I just knew from school, from reading. And so, I wanted to go into the Marine Corps, and I did.

TINKER: So you knew you would be fighting, literally.

NARVESON: Sure, sure, sure.

TINKER: So you didn't go into it like ...

NARVESON: But I didn't think of it. You just thought, "Hey ..."

TINKER: Yeah, 'cause your eighteen.

NARVESON: "Hey, I'm going. I want to get in." (Laughs)

TINKER: So, were you the last one to go, or ...

NARVESON: No, my younger brother was the last one to go.

TINKER: ... you had one more younger one. Okay, and what branch did he go in?

NARVESON: Army. Two in the Marines, four in the Army.

TINKER: Give me the names, like, in order and what branch you all went in.

NARVESON: Richard, the oldest, went in the Army. Maurice, the next oldest, went in the Army. Paul, the next oldest, went in the Army. Norbert, the next oldest, went in the Marine Corps. Clayton went in the Marine Corps, and Howard went in the Army. No Navy! (Laughter)

TINKER: I know, no Navy. No Air Corps, either.

NARVESON: Well, yeah, the Army was part of the Air Force. The Air Force was part of the Army.

TINKER: Did a couple of 'em go in the Air Corps?

NARVESON: Yeah, two of 'em went in. Paul and Maurice went into the Army Air Force. They went into the Army.

TINKER: Yeah, did they fly?

NARVESON: No, neither one. For every flier there's ten jobs.

TINKER: Oh yeah, yeah. I was an Air Force mechanic, so I can totally relate to that. Like, you know, the pilots always get the glory, but then there's like a whole group of people.

NARVESON: Sure, for every flier there's twenty people working.

TINKER: That's true; that's true. So when you left home, did your parents—was it the traditional goodbye?

NARVESON: Mom and Dad were in bed, dad's knees were up, and I hit them. "Dad, your knees are up again." And I shook hands with both of 'em and Mom said, "Be sure to write, Clayton, now be sure to write." I said I would do that. I still remember, though. Off I went. That was five in the morning. I remember that. (Laughs).

TINKER: What about your sister during this period, seeing all her brothers leave?

NARVESON: My sister was living with her—to save a mouth to eat, early on in the early '30s, she went to live with Mom's sister down in Iowa. So, she was half-raised by her. It helped.

TINKER: So she really wasn't even there when you all ...

NARVESON: Part of the time, yeah. In 1937 or '38, she went to Iowa to live with her sister, Mom's sister.

TINKER: So, where did you go from ...

NARVESON: San Diego, went from San Diego.

TINKER: Did you take the bus? Or take the train, or?

NARVESON: Train from Minneapolis to San Diego along with sixty other Marines.

TINKER: Was that the first time you had really been away from home?

NARVESON: The farthest I've been away from home was sixty miles, before I went in the Marine Corps.

TINKER: Oh, and what was the sixty miles?

NARVESON: To Mom's farm.

TINKER: Oh, in Iowa. (Laughter)

NARVESON: People didn't travel in those days. You walked, everybody. We had a lot of old cars, but we never went anywhere because we didn't have a car.

TINKER: So going to the farm in Iowa, was that like a vacation?

NARVESON: Well, it was—the four youngest ones, pile 'em in there and away we go. Dad had an old car, but he was a pretty good mechanic.

TINKER: What happened when you—or did anything happen of note on the train ride out there?

NARVESON: To California?

TINKER: Yeah.

NARVESON: Oh no, I remember the trip. Probably took us five days, because we had—so slow. There was a lot of trains moving all across this country. But no, I remember it. I remember that trip. First time I had ever been on a train.

TINKER: Yeah, what did you think of it?

NARVESON: Oh, didn't think anything of it. I really didn't.

TINKER: What did you do to kill time on the train?

NARVESON: Read.

TINKER: Read? Slept?

NARVESON: Yeah, we passed books around, magazines and books. Yeah, I remember the trip.

TINKER: Well, what happened when you first got to boot camp?

NARVESON: The Marine Corps is discipline. Discipline and then some more discipline. And then you march, and then you march, and then you march some more. And in those days they needed Marines real quick 'cause the fighting was already on Guadalcanal, and so they moved boot camp was seven weeks instead of nine weeks. Seven weeks, and one week on a rifle range, and away; they put us aboard ship and we headed over. Went to New Zealand, joined the 2nd Marine Division.

TINKER: So you just spent seven weeks in Marine Corps boot camp.

NARVESON: Yeah, it's more now. But they rushed us because of the war.

TINKER: Yeah, it must have been pretty intense.

NARVESON: It was intense.

TINKER: What kind of classroom instruction did you receive?

NARVESON: Very little, it was all outside. How to use a rifle, rifle march, machine gun, hand grenade. All the things that are the basics of the Marine Corps. In those days they were the basics, and they taught you how to use each one of 'em. A lot of running, a lot of walking. But, you know, in those days, and I tell the kids in high school that I was skinny, weighed a hundred and twenty-five when I went into the Marine Corps. And as soon as I got out of boot camp, I weighed a hundred and sixty. But one thing I had, I had strong legs, 'cause we walked all over. But it was also, everybody else in the Marine Corps, they could walk. Because those were Depression kids, we all were.

TINKER: Right, everybody's in good physical condition.

NARVESON: They all were. We're from Minnesota, rural kids. So you understand, strong legs. And to this day I, God bless for this, I have good legs because I've always walked, and I've kept it up.

TINKER: That's good. That's good. Do you have any questions, Josh?

RIGGINS: When you got to San Diego, was it a lot different than?

NARVESON: San Diego was a lot smaller, it was a Navy Base and a Marine Base, both. And that was marching, a tremendous amount of marching there. But, also, how to use a weapon.

TINKER: Did you ever have a free day?

NARVESON: No, not in San Diego. No. No, the day we got out, we graduated, our platoon—sixty people in the platoon—we got a four hour pass. And I went into San Diego with three friends, and I was going to have a glass of beer or something, and they wouldn't take me, I was too young. And they kicked me out, and I thought, "Well, I guess I don't belong here anyway." And my mother was happy when I wrote that to her. (Laughter).

TINKER: They said they wouldn't give you a beer?

NARVESON: Yeah! Then we boarded ship and we all went to New Zealand. We all went in the infantry.

TINKER: You gained ...

NARVESON: I was five-foot-five and I went to 5' 10" in bootcamp. I weighed a hundred twenty five.

TINKER: The food must have been pretty good?

RIGGINS: What were feeding you?

NARVESON: The Marine Corps has always fed good. They still do 'cause I ask Marines.

TINKER: 'Cause you grew and gained weight.

NARVESON: Oh did I ever. Three good, square meals.

TINKER: You must have been pretty solid when you graduated.

NARVESON: Yeah, and skinny. Little Clayton Narveson. But, you know, I wasn't alone, there were other one that were that way.

TINKER: So, it must have been around—was it before Christmas that you left San Diego?

NARVESON: Left San Diego—April we went overseas.

TINKER: Where did you go from ...

NARVESON: To New Zealand. We went from San Diego to New Zealand.

TINKER: Okay, so and that was in, so it would have been summertime down there so it's ...

NARVESON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TINKER: ... you never really had any of the cold weather.

NARVESON: Yeah, New Zealand was good people, I liked 'em.

TINKER: Yeah I've got a friend down there. How long were you all there?

NARVESON: Went there in April '43, ... then November, we boarded—October, we boarded ship went to Tarawa. When that battle was over, we went to Hawaii. So we were only there for, say, five months.

TINKER: I know they serve a lot of, in New Zealand, they serve a lot of fish.

NARVESON: Fish?

TINKER: And sheep, too. Did you eat the lamb?

NARVESON: Mutton. Oh lord, we went in the service—mutton, mutton, mutton. But you know, I learned to like it. I really did.

TINKER: I interviewed one guy who said he'd never eat it.

NARVESON: Well, you can fix it seventeen different ways, but by gumbo I like ‘em, I like mutton.

TINKER: Do you remember the ship you sailed on?

NARVESON: Yeah, the USS *Lurline*, L-U-R-L-I-N-E. USS *Lurline*, remember the name of it. It was a liner; a passenger liner that they grabbed a hold of and made it a troop ship.

TINKER: And how long did that trip take?

NARVESON: Went to New Zealand—well, we first went to Australia, went to Samoa, and then I suppose that trip took us twenty days.

TINKER: Being on the ship wasn’t too bad? Did you have any seasickness?

NARVESON: No, oh I was sicker than a dog. (Laughter)

TINKER: You were?

NARVESON: Oh God, I was downstairs throwin’ up for three day. Oh, but I wasn’t alone. They put us, the sick ones, on the lower bunk so you could throw up.

TINKER: They didn’t have anything to give you for the seasickness?

NARVESON: Oh no, you know, “just go on and throw up.” Either over the rail, go up and over the rail, feed the fish, or go on downstairs. And for three days—oh God I was sick. I’d never been on a ship before. And that thing—oh God I was sick.

TINKER: And you know, I’ve been seasick before, it’s all you can think about. It’s so miserable.

NARVESON: And then the nasty Marines, “You want a greasy pork chop?” “Clayton, I’ve got a greasy pork chop for you!” (Laughter)

TINKER: You must have lost some of that hundred and sixty pounds while you were on the trip.

NARVESON: Oh boy, oh God I was sick. Oh, I was sick.

TINKER: Were they givin’ you any updates about the war during this time, or were you just in like this bubble?

NARVESON: Oh no, aboard ship you always had a little news clip. It came over the radio, or the Teletype. And they put out a little news thing whenever you’re aboard ship, any ship you’re on. And so you get a few—but the news was always about what’s happening in the war.

TINKER: And was it telling you about Europe and the Pacific?

NARVESON: Oh sure, it'd tell both.

TINKER: So you all were able to keep up with what was going on.

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: So do you want to tell us about the preparations for Tarawa?

NARVESON: Well, the Marine Corps, they put me in the mortar, 81mm mortar, that's a artillery piece. And from the time I got to New Zealand that's all I did, was in the mortars. Because they take certain people put 'em in the mortars, the machine guns, so forth.

TINKER: Was that just random? Or did you have some qualification?

NARVESON: Oh no, well, Ms, Ns, Os, and Rs went into the mortars. My name was Narveson so they just took 'em that's how, you didn't have a choice. So I went into the mortars and I stayed there the whole war, so if you become proficient at that, that's what you're going to do.

TINKER: So when you were in New Zealand, you were doing mortar training?

NARVESON: Yeah, mortar training, all of it.

TINKER: And what was the training like?

NARVESON: Oh, a lot of hiking. Sixty miles, go thirty miles, forty miles, a lot of hiking. A lot of mortar training, we fired a lot. And it rained quite a bit. They didn't bring us out in the rain too often. Although, the Marine Corps isn't above making you march in the rain, I tell you.

TINKER: So what all would you carry?

NARVESON: Well, the mortars are fifty pounds, no matter, there's three parts to a mortar, they all weight forty-nine or fifty pounds. You carry 'em on your shoulder. You have your M-1 rifle on the left here, and you have your canteen and your bullets that you carry around. And you have a knapsack on the back, we had a knapsack. And it took care of your K Rations, and gas mask, and I forget what else was in there. So you actually have—you're carrying quite a bit of stuff. But you're young, you know, you can handle that.

TINKER: How are mortar men dispersed throughout the—where was it like one per how many like, say, per company or platoon.

NARVESON: I don't what the percentage. You've machine gun squads, I company is always machine guns, Able company is ...

TINKER: So you didn't have like a mortar squad?

NARVESON: We had a mortar battalion, a whole battalion, yeah.

TINKER: A whole battalion. Okay.

NARVESON: Part of the battalion would be M Company; all of M Company was mortar. The infantry was Able Company, Baker Company, so forth. So they divided they up that way and that's just the way you trained.

TINKER: And it stayed that way?

NARVESON: Yeah, it stayed that way during the whole war.

TINKER: So you were M Company.

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: How soon before Tarawa did they tell you that you were going to invade?

NARVESON: One day after you get aboard ship, never tell you ahead of time. We're so afraid of secrecy. Our country's always been that way, very much so. Still that way, they don't tell you anything. And I think that's good, basically I like that.

TINKER: But did you all have sort of a sense that, okay, something ...

NARVESON: What we used to do was to bet on where we're going, what battle we're gonna go to. I didn't think we were going to go to Tarawa.

TINKER: Where did you think you all were going?

NARVESON: Oh, I was thinkin' Wake Island.

TINKER: Oh, did you?

NARVESON: Yeah, but I just remembered that. I just remembered that. But ...

TINKER: I'm just looking at my map here. Well, what was it like when you got on the ship and then they tell you we're going to invade Tarawa?

NARVESON: Oh, played cards, and then you drilled—calisthenics. up and down, calisthenics every day. The Marine Corps don't let you sit; you never sit in the Marine Corps. It's still that way. So, if nothing else you have ...

TINKER: And you're in this massive convoy right?

NARVESON: Oh your ship went—when we went a little early and we were all alone. The ships went by themselves. They took gambles, but they couldn't get a convoy of all of us 'cause their

ships are going every day, leaving San Diego and San Francisco all up and down the harbors, on the East Coast and West Coast, and ships went by themselves. It was the cargo ships that had convoys.

TINKER: What was the briefing that you got just before the invasion? Did they give you a briefing?

NARVESON: Oh you bet. Got all the information they have. They have a mock-up of the island right there in front of you. And every battalion, all the squads, they have a so-called expert there, a Navy or Marine or somebody who could give us the information, what they have. Very often the information came from submarine, submarine's periscope. Going way around the islands, that's how they picked a lot of information. And airplanes with cameras picked up a lot of information. So, they'd draw a mock-up of every island, no matter what it was, and they'd give you the best information. Funny thing about Iwo Jima they missed was the lava, uh ...

TINKER: Yeah, the sand. Yeah.

NARVESON: They didn't know that, they should've known somehow. But, you know, if you've seen any pictures it was up to our knees. But, you know—what's your first name?

TINKER: Cynthia.

NARVESON: That saved the lives of probably myself and a lot of others because Japanese shells went into the sand and then erupted out. If it had been point detonating, it'd have taken a lot more lives. It saved, it really saved—a lot of women wouldn't understand what I'm talking about, but I can see that you understand what I'm talking [about].

TINKER: 'Cause the shells just ...

NARVESON: That's not point detonating, yeah, it's armor-piercing.

TINKER: They just go in there and it like it's a dud, 'cause it's just going in the sand.

NARVESON: Yeah it goes down and—but it being up to our knees saved a tremendous amount of lives.

TINKER: Did you all feel the Tarawa briefing, were you?

NARVESON: They did a good job, except the Navy screwed up, they didn't realize the water would be up; the ebb and flow of the tide ...

TINKER: Yeahm the reef.

NARVESON: They had the tides completely wrong. We had to wade.

RIGGINS: It's the neap tide.

TINKER: The what?

RIGGINS: The neap tide.

NARVESON: The tide. On Tarawa they missed the tides, the Navy screwed that up.

RIGGINS: Wasn't it that the coral reef got in the way of the landing boats?

NARVESON: Well it did because of the—but it wouldn't have had the tides been right. But you see what they did, they missed the tides.

TINKER: That's a big problem.

NARVESON: The Navy learned that lesson, and also, they learned the lesson about the shells. The Japanese had built block houses of wood-on-wood timbers, and they were just tough to—the Navy shells coming from those battleships and cruisers; they were point detonating, and its not going to do it. They didn't know how to penetrate, they got the wrong shells shelling.

TINKER: They needed to penetrate and then explode.

NARVESON: That's exactly right. They didn't do that. But they learned that lesson.

TINKER: So they shelled and the Navy ...

NARVESON: ... But the Navy is very reluctant to even talk about that. They don't like talkin' about that, but they learned a lesson. Tarawa taught that lesson.

TINKER: Because didn't they—they shelled the island for ...

NARVESON: Days.

TINKER: ... a long time before, right?

NARVESON: Yeah, they shelled, they dropped bombs from airplanes, too, many days, many days beforehand. But the Japanese are very sharp that way. They built block houses that were tougher than nails.

TINKER: So, did you all, was the invasion early in the morning?

NARVESON: It was in the morning, yeah.

TINKER: Do you remember that day?

NARVESON: We took four prisoners, that's all we took on that.

TINKER: Oh, total?

NARVESON: Total, four because Japanese.

TINKER: Oh, yeah. They didn't want to be taken prisoner.

NARVESON: No, no. On Iwo Jima, I've since found out that there were some sixty prisoners gave up, surrendered. And that was strange that they would do that. Korean laborers that they made work for them, Korean laborers would give up; they would do that wherever they could, but boy that's all.

TINKER: What wave were you in the Tarawa invasion?

NARVESON: Second day. Second morning.

TINKER: You were the second morning?

NARVESON: Second morning, yeah.

TINKER: Okay, do you remember what beach you landed on?

NARVESON: Oh, you know, I don't. I don't to this day.

TINKER: You don't?

NARVESON: I don't to this day.

TINKER: 'Cause I printed out a map.

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: They're color coded, each beach. It's kind of hard to see, but. (Looking at map)

NARVESON: Yeah, I'd guess Red 1 [Red Beach 1].

TINKER: You think it was Red 1?

NARVESON: Yeah, I think so. I think it was. I remember Iwo Jima, though. Boy, I don't know, somehow I just have always remembered that one. So I can really give you a pinpoint on that.

TINKER: Well, what was it like for you when you went in with that second wave?

NARVESON: Oh boy ...

TINKER: Were you under fire?

NARVESON: The things that I saw was the dead Marines. That's the first thing that just ...

TINKER: 'Cause you're the second wave, so you're seeing ...

NARVESON: But you know the dead bodies layin' in the water; Dead Marines. And of course they get bloated when they're—the body bloats when it's—and it was just hundreds. It seemed like maybe three, four hundred of 'em that were wading ashore that never made it because machine guns cut 'em down. But that's once again the tide. We had to go across that. You see, the Navy missed that.

TINKER: They had to come so far before they even hit the sand.

NARVESON: That's exactly right. So you see, the Navy learned that lesson, though, to watch those tides.

TINKER: That's a costly lesson.

NARVESON: Yeah, but I always claimed the Navy should have known that.

TINKER: Well, they should have.

NARVESON: I'd like to argue that with some admiral, I really would.

TINKER: Well, they know they should have, they just don't want to admit it.

NARVESON: Sure, sure, sure. And the Navy learned. But that's how we learn. War teaches those things. But some things, you think that they should know. Like that Mount Suribachi, they should have known that that lava came from there, and that it was always left there. and they did it for a reason. The Japanese General, Kuribayashi, he left it there because for the simple reason what happened. He knew that we carried a lot of weight. Get bogged down.

TINKER: So when you went in with the second wave, the whole tide issue was still there, so you had to ...

NARVESON: No, I went in the second day, not wave.

TINKER: Well, yeah second day.

NARVESON: But still the tide was still a problem.

TINKER: So it's still a problem?

NARVESON: Yes, yeah.

TINKER: So you had to slog through the water.

NARVESON: But we got in closer.

TINKER: You got in a little closer.

NARVESON: Yeah, we got in closer. The tide was enough, so we got in closer. But that first day was a ...

TINKER: How far did you get before you stop to step up to start firing mortars?

NARVESON: I walked through water, I remember distinctly that, for some distance, maybe thirty, forty feet. We walked in past the beach, oh golly I don't know, a hundred feet.

TINKER: And stopped to set up.

NARVESON: And we set up mortars. Yeah. The mortars got three parts to it. Have ever seen a mortar?

TINKER: Yeah, the tube and the tripod?

NARVESON: The tripod, the tube, and the base plate. There's three different Marines involved in there. Now I was an ammunition carrier on Tarawa.

TINKER: Oh, you carried the shells?

NARVESON: Yup, I carried the shells. I was low man on the totem pole.

TINKER: You mean the shell carrier of the mortar team, the shell carrier was ...

NARVESON: But boy, they're heavy.

TINKER: Yeah, I bet. (Laughter).

NARVESON: Darn right they're heavy. 'Cause you got light, medium, and heavy.

TINKER: So, you don't remember about Tarawa then as you ...

NARVESON: No, well it was over quick. Three and half days and that fight was over. It was brutal.

TINKER: Three and a half days and you went on day two, so you just had another day and a half then. Do you remember anything about at night?

NARVESON: I was scared.

TINKER: Were you?

NARVESON: I had my first cigarette that night on Tarawa. I was taught—nobody smoked in high school, none of us did. You're not supposed to smoke at night either, but you get under your poncho, you pull your poncho, you put it over your head. Somebody gave me a cigarette, and I smoked it. Frankly, I was scared.

TINKER: Yeah.

NARVESON: Yeah I was, durn right I was. And I smoked my first cigarette.

TINKER: Did you tell your mother?

NARVESON: I doubt it.

TINKER: I'm teasing, I'm teasing. (Laughter)

NARVESON: No, I would doubt that I told her that.

TINKER: What was going on that made you ...

NARVESON: Well, there was still firing at night.

TINKER: They were?

NARVESON: Yeah, when we get to Iwo Jima, I'll tell you about star shells that saved the day for us [on Tarawa]. But, there was no star shells on—I think somewhere along the line, star shells were used, probably, Peleliu [Battle of Peleliu], but Iwo Jima's where they really came into use. The Marine Corps figured it out. The Navy, figured it out. The night's gonna be day. We're gonna make it like day. And that will not allow any infiltration into our lines and no *banzai* attacks, none of that stuff. We're gonna light it up. And they lit up Iwo Jima. Lit it up at night. You don't read this anywhere, but they did it.

TINKER: Were there *banzai* attacks that you saw at Tarawa?

NARVESON: Yeah, there was one. There was only one.

TINKER: One? Okay.

NARVESON: Yeah, there was only one, and I wasn't part of it.

TINKER: You weren't part of it?

NARVESON: No.

TINKER: Did you know anybody that was?

NARVESON: No, I didn't know. That was the 2nd Division, 2nd Marines.

TINKER: Did you lose any friends on the island?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: You did?

NARVESON: Two. Two. Yeah.

TINKER: How were they killed?

NARVESON: Artillery. One was killed by sniper fire. One was Bill Kroll [William A. Kroll, Cashton, WI] from Wisconsin. Yeah, yeah.

RIGGINS: How do you remember feeling about the Japanese as your enemy?

NARVESON: Two years. It took me two years after the war before I could forgive 'em. I hated the Japanese, but I came to the conclusion, on my own, that you can't go through life hating people. After all, I'm on my fifth Toyota, you know, so I can't feel too badly. But I came to realize what a remarkable people they were. But I hated them because they killed, you know, when you lose your closest friends, and I still get teary eyed about it. Yeah, you know.

TINKER: It's understandable. But they, um, what was I going to say—the two, your friend, Bill Kroll, you said?

NARVESON: Bill Kroll, Wisconsin. Yeah, a sniper got him.

TINKER: Did you know him from basic?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, he was our barber.

TINKER: So you were together since basic.

NARVESON: He cut our hair. (Laughs)

TINKER: He cut everybody's hair.

NARVESON: And if you didn't have a quarter he'd do it for nothing. I liked him.

TINKER: There are some guys who are just good at that, that can cut the hair. Well, that's too bad. When did you know it was over on Tarawa?

NARVESON: Oh, we just knew it. It just ...

TINKER: All the sudden it just stopped?

NARVESON: Yeah, and the flag went up about that same time. They put it up on a tree. They had no pole; they put it up on a tree. And I remember standing there at attention.

TINKER: Really. How'd you feel at that moment?

NARVESON: Oh, proud. And for some reason, we don't know why, the very day we left that island, the Red Cross girls, they brought the Red Cross people on Tarawa. And they greeted us as we left. And I want you to make a note of this, but it's the truth. They wanted to give us a toothbrush, but they wanted to charge us. And I think that's wrong.

TINKER: They did? You said you don't want in the—I don't think that's too harmful. So, they bring the Red Cross on shore and then ...

NARVESON: The day we left they came on shore, those gals.

TINKER: But they wanted to charge you?

RIGGINS: Did you even have any money on you?

NARVESON: No.

TINKER: I was gonna say, you just got through fighting a battle.

NARVESON: I had no money. Well, a lot of the guys had money in their billfold from New Zealand. They had some money. Yeah, we had money from New Zealand.

TINKER: That does seem odd that the Red Cross would even come on shore that soon.

NARVESON: They allowed 'em. They allowed 'em. That's top brass allows that.

TINKER: Well, that is a little odd, isn't it.

NARVESON: Well, you see, it's a mixed emotion thing because they shook our hands. I mean ...

TINKER: Yeah, like, thank you, way to go.

NARVESON: Yeah a mixed emotion type of thing, but most of us, we didn't like that fact. And the one thing you want to do is get your teeth done because your teeth are so gritty that you want ...

TINKER: It's been days.

NARVESON: So anyway, that left a bad taste.

TINKER: So when you got back on board ship I guess cleaning up was the first thing you did.

NARVESON: Oh yeah, in saltwater. Saltwater bath is not the best bath.

TINKER: You had to have saltwater showers?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, that's what we had, but, hey, it helped. It helped believe me. (Laughs)

RIGGINS: Do you remember your first meal after the battle?

NARVESON: I don't remember it, no.

TINKER: Well, I'm sure it was very good, whatever it was.

NARVESON: We had K rations and C rations, both.

TINKER: And then you were going to say you all went back to Hawaii after that.

NARVESON: We went to the big island of Hawaii and that's where we trained until we were ready to go to Saipan. This is in May of 1944, and we boarded ship, LSTs, at Pearl Harbor.

TINKER: So you spent the whole spring in Hawaii?

NARVESON: I did, yes. We trained. Oh we trained there. Well, but the Marine didn't give us leave. We were out in the middle of the boondocks.

TINKER: Oh, you didn't get leave?

NARVESON: Oh, the Marine Corps doesn't do that, in wartime. The Marine Corps is ...

TINKER: Hardcore.

NARVESON: No, they isolate you. They didn't give us leave.

TINKER: Like the four hour pass.

NARVESON: I had one leave to go to a dentist. I had to go to a dentist to have a tooth pulled. And it was in Hilo, Hawaii, and I got that day to go. That's all, one day.

TINKER: All the months you were there in Hawaii, that was it.

NARVESON: No, we didn't have any leave. We had, once in a while on a Saturday afternoon, one o'clock, be back by seven.

TINKER: Even at Christmas Time?

NARVESON: Yeah, sure. The Marine Corps's tough.

TINKER: It is tough. This whole time, were you pretty good about writing letters home?

NARVESON: I was. We had V-mail. V-mail was free, otherwise it's three cents. And my mother had sent me some stamps and so I sent to her, and I wrote to another couple that I knew, and another man who had befriended me in Austin. So, I had three people I wrote to. And I was pretty good, I think so.

TINKER: And did they write to you a lot?

NARVESON: Yeah, they wrote to me. Yeah, they wrote to me. Mail call was a big thing, oh boy.

TINKER: It's your life line.

NARVESON: You talk about the Civil War. My Civil War books, you'd see the "can't wait to get a letter from home" during the Civil War.

TINKER: It's everything.

NARVESON: Oh yeah, so I enjoyed getting 'em.

TINKER: Did they ever try to send you any care packages, or presents?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, not care packages, just cookies, oh yeah I got cookies. Mom would make some cookies and send some. They were in pieces by the time they got there.

TINKER: But it didn't matter did it? (Laughter)

NARVESON: Everybody, the whole squad jumped right in. After we'd come in from marching and stuff at four, five o'clock, every body gets right into the cookies. (Laughter)

TINKER: Yeah, it's kind of like the Marines become your family, so you just share with 'em like your family got a package.

NARVESON: Yeah, it is. It is. And that's why deaths are so hard. They are. It's hard.

TINKER: When you're in Hawaii, did you continue to attend church?

NARVESON: Yup.

TINKER: You did?

NARVESON: On sandbags. Church was always sandbags because it was easy to fix. You know take sand and we ...

TINKER: Sandbags for the pews?

NARVESON: Sure. And we always had an altar up there, but I attended.

TINKER: And did you have a Lutheran minister or was it another service?

NARVESON: No, we always had a chaplain. It was a Navy or Marine chaplain. Marine is part of the Navy, although we deny it. They would have a chaplain up there for services. And I went on Sundays. Jim and I—Jim was from North Dakota, he was Lutheran too, and he and I went to church on Sundays.

TINKER: Did you find that really helped sustain you?

NARVESON: It's always done that to me. I think it's always done that to me. Like I said, if I don't get to church, I still feel—my day is not complete.

TINKER: Did you find a lot of the Marines went to church?

NARVESON: I would say no, boy I don't know, probably half.

TINKER: Probably half?

NARVESON: Yeah, probably half; that's a guess.

TINKER: Then maybe some of the other half went occasionally. But the regular goers was probably about half.

NARVESON: Yeah, yeah.

TINKER: Do you have any questions, Josh?

RIGGINS: Um, no, I don't think so, not yet.

TINKER: Okay that's fine, I don't want to leave you out too much. So, you're pretty much restricted to base the whole time you're there in Hawaii.

NARVESON: Yes.

TINKER: Training, you're still training. Now, were you still on the 81mms?

NARVESON: Oh yes, all through the war. All through the war.

TINKER: So you never were on any other mortar?

NARVESON: No. But in Hawaii, when we went aboard ship in May of '44 to go to Saipan, there were five LSTs layin' in a row on one of 'em I was on. And they all blew up at the same time. I think they had hearings on it. I think it was an acetylene torch got too near gasoline.

TINKER: But, okay, all LSTs blew up?

NARVESON: Yeah, there were twelve in a row. Five of 'em went.

TINKER: You all were getting ready to go.

NARVESON: We were getting ready, we had just boarded ship. We had boarded ship in one day and we were all onboard ship. I think we had been there one or two days, we were gettin' ready to move out. We were playin' cards.

TINKER: You were on the LST?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: And it blew up?

NARVESON: And it blew up, yeah. That's how I got hurt. That's how I ended up in the hospital. And then I missed that invasion. They wouldn't let me get back on with my squad. They kept me in the hospital 'cause a lot of ...

TINKER: Did you get a Purple Heart for that?

NARVESON: No, 'cause it wasn't in battle, it wasn't in fighting.

TINKER: Did anyone else get hurt?

NARVESON: No, well, yes. Oh yes, quite a number of us were in the hospital.

TINKER: I never heard this story.

NARVESON: Oh yeah, but the Navy covered it up a long time.

TINKER: Five LSTs.

NARVESON: They didn't want this known. I've been watchin' for the papers and the newspaper to—I saw it on television about a year ago. They had a whole program on it. And they concluded they don't know what caused those ships to blow up.

TINKER: But you think it was an acetylene torch?

NARVESON: Yes, I do. I think that because there were men with acetylene torches working on there, and it was not some Jap sneaked aboard.

TINKER: Torpedo, or something.

NARVESON: No, no.

TINKER: So they were all five lined up ...

NARVESON: And they all blew ...

TINKER: ... and which one were you on?

NARVESON: ... yeah gasoline blows.

TINKER: Which LST were you on in the line?

NARVESON: Oh boy, I don't remember for the sake of me. I don't know.

TINKER: 'Cause I'm thinkin,' say it starts with one LST and they—just like a chain reaction?

NARVESON: But they just—the first I became unconscious. The top blew off where we were sitting and that slanted down into the hole. And I, apparently, hit the bulkhead downstairs and then I became unconscious. I came to, and as I came to, a second blow came. A second eruption. And then I led a Marine off there and we got him aboard a little Amtrak [LVT] over the ship along with. Oh, there was five or six amtraks loaded with injured and we went to the hospital. I missed that invasion, see, that's how I got with the 4th Division.

TINKER: I was wondering 'cause when I'm looking at your form [Pre-Interview Questionnaire], I'm thinking, "How did he go from the 2nd Division to the 4th Division."

NARVESON: See, when they come back from Saipan and Tinian and Guam, they put me with the 4th Marine Division.

TINKER: Did anyone else from your division go to the 4th?

NARVESON: No, not that I know of.

TINKER: You were the only one?

NARVESON: Yeah, I don't know where they all went. I really don't know.

TINKER: So then you're completely separated from all your people.

NARVESON: Yeah, that's right, I tried to get ...

TINKER: ... get back.

NARVESON: I tried to bribe the chaplain. I said, "Chaplain, I want to get back with my boys." I said, "I want you to go see the captain." He said, "Listen, if they are telling you to stay here, you just stay here. Now don't be arguing about going somewhere." He straightened me out real quick. (Laughs) "You're here for a reason, you coughed up blood. You stay here, don't ask me to go see the captain." I remember that. So I waited for the 4th Division to come back.

TINKER: It's terrible that you were separated from your Marine family. What was the extent of your injuries?

NARVESON: I had a lot of tin and metal in my back. And I coughed up some blood. And they don't know what erupted. Something eruption, the eruption caused ...

TINKER: The shock.

NARVESON: Yeah, and I don't know where in my stomach, or whatever, or where it came from. But they kept me at the hospital. I guess I was there about two weeks, but by then they shoved off, took off.

TINKER: How many others were seriously injured?

NARVESON: Oh boy, to this day I don't know; they kept that under wraps.

TINKER: Did anybody die, that you heard?

NARVESON: Oh sure, oh yeah there were people who died. They had hearings on this.

TINKER: They did?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, they Navy hearings. There was admiral, commodore, captain, lieutenant commander. They quizzed me the day I got out of the hospital; those admirals were sittin' up there, and here I am a little ole peon.

TINKER: So you went in front of the inquiry?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, I testified what I knew. They wanted to know what do you know, what happened to you.

TINKER: So you just told 'em, I'm sittin' there and I blow up.

NARVESON: I'm sittin' there and I thought I smelled kerosene. At that time I thought it was kerosene, but, many years later I thought, well, it had to be gasoline I smelled, not kerosene. But I testified that way, but to this day they've not told.

TINKER: Well, they had an inquiry I guess, because there was some suspicion. Somebody must have been suspicious that it was on purpose.

NARVESON: Well, when five ships blow up, you're going to have a hearing, I can tell you, 'cause people died there, marines died there. There could have been some Navy deaths too. I do not know.

TINKER: Nobody's ever ...

NARVESON: Nobody's ever probed. You can't find out. You have to be President or Vice President of the United States to get into those archives. And I'm not about to go to Washington for that.

TINKER: Were your parents notified?

NARVESON: No.

TINKER: Did you tell 'em?

NARVESON: No. Couldn't. Didn't dare tell that stuff.

TINKER: Didn't want to worry 'em?

NARVESON: No, I told 'em too much. I got ten days bread and water once. I wrote a letter and told 'em where we're going overseas, where we been, and you're not supposed to say that. And they searched the seabag of a Marine going back from Guadalcanal. And it was on our ship, and that letter "Dear mom and dad" it was cut all to pieces, "Love, Clayton" at the end. But I got ten days bread and water because I sent a letter through the mail and I shouldn't do that.

TINKER: You did? You got ten days bread and water because you sent your parents the letter?

NARVESON: The Marine Corps don't stand for that. We didn't call it bread and water. You know what they call it?

TINKER: What?

NARVESON: Piss 'n' punk.

TINKER: I've never heard that.

NARVESON: Ten days.

TINKER: Piss and what?

NARVESON: Piss 'n' punk. Bread and water.

TINKER: Punk?

NARVESON: Punk is the bread.

TINKER: Oh, the punk. Like P-U-N-K. Punk.

NARVESON: Yeah, piss 'n punk. Yeah, I got ten days. I got ten days out of that. So I didn't—
from then on I didn't decide to write ...

TINKER: Well I thought they were censoring letters anyway?

NARVESON: They were censoring mine. (Laughs) We weren't supposed to—I told 'em when I
went overseas we stopped at Sydney, Australia. We started at—we stopped at another island, uh
...

TINKER: Yeah, New Zealand.

NARVESON: No, another one.

TINKER: Samoa.

NARVESON: Samoa. So I wrote this to mom and dad. Well ...

TINKER: So you put it in the mail; Marines see it. Next thing you know, you're in for it.

NARVESON: Captain called me in, "Shame on you, ten days piss n' punk. Off you go."
Marched me to jail. (Laughter)

TINKER: So you really went in the, like, the brig?

NARVESON: We called it the brig.

TINKER: (Laughs) Like, I hear—you hear about these things. I've never actually met anybody
that went through it.

NARVESON: Yes, sure, I got ten days bread and water. I'm polite. I say bread and water.
(Laughter)

TINKER: That's the polite way to say it. Um, so you missed Saipan altogether?

NARVESON: And Tinian.

TINKER: And Tinian.

NARVESON: Tinian, too.

TINKER: And then you ...

NARVESON: They came back.

TINKER: So you get well.

NARVESON: Yep, and I joined the 4th ...

TINKER: You get sent to the 4th Division for who knows why.

NARVESON: Well because they needed—in Saipan and Tinian, they had some killed. They had been injured and killed. So they recruited me real quick.

TINKER: Um, did you—let me ask you this. This is kinda off our direction right now but you know the Navajo Code Talkers?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: Did you know any or know about them then?

NARVESON: Well, we knew about them, but I didn't know any of them. That movie's all skewy.

TINKER: We've interviewed—oh yeah, the movie's not.

NARVESON: It's all skewed up because—they're the Code Talkers, they're not out there with a rifle. They're doing this, ya know.

TINKER: We've interviewed one and it was a great interview. He told me, he said—because you know they very much, the Navajo still very much stick together and they have their Code Talkers meetings every, all the time. And they decide as a group what to do. When the Code Talkers make money they share with their families, the children on the reservation.

NARVESON: Very, very family oriented.

TINKER: Yes, and he always would tell us that, he said, “Yeah, you know that movie, *The Windtalkers*?” He said, “That was my fault.” Because when they had the filmmakers come and they attend their meeting and they all get together and they tell them they wanna do this. So when the Navajo, he said, when they meet to decide whether or not they should do it. And Sam, his name was Sam Smith, and he says, he told the others, “We should do it ‘cause we can use the money and send the children to school for college and everything.”

NARVESON: Sure, sure. Yes, yes.

TINKER: Course the movie turned out to not be really true to history. (Laughs) So that's why he tells people now, “That movie was my fault.” (Laughter) He's a very funny man but, yeah, they didn't carry rifles or anything. They were with the commander or ...

NARVESON: Communications. They were very valuable to us.

TINKER: Oh yeah. Anyway, I just wanted to know if y'all knew about that. Okay so, when you got well and then you got assigned to the 4th Division did you continue training?

NARVESON: Then I became, because of my experience, they made me gunner. I was the gunner.

TINKER: Oh, okay.

NARVESON: I didn't get an extra rate.

TINKER: You didn't?

NARVESON: No, no.

TINKER: You're still a PFC [Private First Class]?

NARVESON: Still a PFC. Oh yeah, Marine Corps don't give rates.

TINKER: But that meant you didn't have to carry the shells, right?

NARVESON: No, but I carried fifty pounds. You trained all the time, we trained a lot. We fired a lot.

TINKER: So you go to Iwo [Jima] and what ship, um, or do you remember what ship you ...

NARVESON: We went aboard an LST. Right on an LST. We boarded in January '45 for Iwo Jima. We didn't know we were going there until we got aboard. Then they had, of course, the mock-ups; all the ships had the mock-ups of Iwo Jima. But we knew that was gonna be a tough nut.

TINKER: You did?

NARVESON: Oh, you bet we did. 'Cause they shelled the hell outta that. They had been working that island over for many weeks and months.

TINKER: Yeah, two or three months, right?

NARVESON: Oh, yeah. Malta was hit more times than Iwo Jima. It was the only island, I think, in World War II where there were more shells from airplanes on the island of Malta because it was so valuable. The Germans wanted that. But they knew we were coming. All the stories showed they knew we were coming.

TINKER: Yeah, they knew. So what was it like going over? I mean you know on the LST are you feeling ...

NARVESON: Well, we were twenty-five days aboard LST.

TINKER: Twenty-five days?

NARVESON: Well, because they're slow. LSTs, they only make twelve knots. So, of course, you've got a long ways to go. But I have vivid ...

TINKER: Did you stop anywhere, any of the other islands on the way over?

NARVESON: No, no. That was all—no stopping.

TINKER: Hm, do you have anything?

RIGGINS: While were on Hawaii, just to backtrack a little bit, what sort of training did you do?

NARVESON: Mortar training?

RIGGINS: Mm hmm.

NARVESON: A lot of marching. Whenever in doubt, they march ya. (Laughter) Marching to training. But it was all mortar drill and rifle firing, too. They changed the rifles to the—we got the carbine. We went to the carbine. That's five pounds. Five pounds one ounce. That's a lot lighter. Plus, being a gunner, I had a .45 on my hip. But they trained us on the carbine. So we had to zero that in and that's a good little weapon, .30 caliber. BUt, we did a lot of firing.

TINKER: But nothing special or different in preparation for Iwo Jima?

NARVESON: No, no. Discipline. Marine Corps has it.

TINKER: And when did you get your briefing before the battle, the night before?

NARVESON: The minute we went. The minute they started doing it, I don't remember the day, but a few days after we got aboard ship. I'm sure I don't remember the day, but I'm sure it was—because they had a lot of information on that place. But they sure missed ...

TINKER: That sand.

NARVESON: Yeah, they missed that.

TINKER: Did you make quick friends with the new men? Your new unit?

NARVESON: Oh, sure. Yeah.

TINKER: Anybody stand out in particular?

NARVESON: Squad leader. His name was Seir, S-E-I-R. He was from West Virginia coal mines and he didn't have much education, because he used double negatives, but you could tell the way he talked. But he was a solid Marine. Double negatives all the time, "I ain't got no" and stuff like that. That's lack of education. But he was a good man, and there were other—I got to know all them.

TINKER: What company were you with in the 4th?

NARVESON: The 4th Division. 23rd Regiment of the 4th Division, 1st Battalion. And then M Company was changed to Headquarters Company. They changed it somewhere along the line, so I became part of Headquarters Company instead of M Company. I don't know. The Marine Corps changed it, I don't know why.

TINKER: Huh, that's different. And the morning of the invasion ...

NARVESON: D Day was, uh, the 19th at 9:00 a.m.

TINKER: Did you sleep the night before?

NARVESON: Night before? I'm sure I prayed. I don't remember the moments at all before. No. Over the years it's ...

TINKER: Were you able to sleep at all?

NARVESON: I don't know. I know the first two days on Iwo [Jima] I did not sleep. I sat up. We set—we have our gun emplacement—so you sit around your gun emplacement at night. 'Cause star shells, the Navy had learned, to shoot the destroyers and cruisers. But I didn't sleep the first two nights. There was too much noise, jeez. You just can't sleep in that stuff.

TINKER: Shelling?

NARVESON: Yeah. But I think after the first two nights then I was so darned tired and I had to sleep.

TINKER: So what was it like when you all landed and you're ...

NARVESON: It's shelling all over the place.

TINKER: Just constant shelling?

NARVESON: Dead bodies the minute we got aboard.

TINKER: Did you land the first day?

NARVESON: Yeah, fourth wave. That's fifteen minutes between waves, so that's two hours after the first wave hits the beach. And, uh ...

TINKER: And dead bodies already.

NARVESON: There were so many dead bodies' brains all over the place so you knew what was going on. And, uh, pray like mad.

TINKER: Yeah.

NARVESON: We didn't fire on the first day. 'Cause we were in too much sand. That sand was over, not only the first wave, but it was pretty sandy in a ways. We didn't fire the first day. Not at all.

TINKER: You couldn't find a setup place?

NARVESON: Well not only that, because there was Marines ahead of us. The waves ahead of us were not moving as fast as they wanted because there was too many killed and injured. The shelling was—there was bodies all over. So, we weren't able to move ahead far enough for us to take a hold, if you follow what I'm saying?

TINKER: Mm hmm.

NARVESON: Okay. So it was, I think it was the second day—second or third day before we fired.

TINKER: And then did you fire constantly that day from that point on?

NARVESON: My memory doesn't help me there. Uh, I can't tell how much one day goes into the next. So, it's hard for me to tell. We fired a lot.

TINKER: Who's directing your fire?

NARVESON: I remember D plus ten. Along came a war dog. I saw that sucker; it was a Doberman Pinscher coming from the front lines to the artillery in the back. Obviously the communication was broken by Japanese shelling, or our shelling. So that the communications, the radio was broken. So they put it around the neck of the dog. What did they want to fire? The Observation Marine tells artillery where to fire. That they put around his neck and he (laughs) I saw him going ...

TINKER: You mean the dog just comes back by itself?

NARVESON: They are trained—there was three trainers for every dog. When they're training in camp you're not allowed to come within a hundred yards of those dogs. Not a—no marine because they don't want that dog smelling anybody but those two guys. That's how they—but through the shelling like that, how those dogs can do it, I have such great, ya know these dogs that smell drugs and stuff like that. It's just amazing to watch 'em ...

TINKER: That's one of my favorite topics. You know they had a war dog with them on the Osama bin Laden attack?

NARVESON: Oh, I don't doubt that at all.

TINKER: Yeah, they parachute with them now; Special Forces. The dogs have their own little suits and they attach to the special operator. They have their own little dog goggles. They jump in with the dog on them.

NARVESON: Oh sure. It's amazing. Oh boy.

TINKER: They're so valuable. It's a great service.

NARVESON: What a tragedy, especially in the Army, ... those fellas, when the war was over, they wanted to take those dogs home, and they weren't allowed to. And I thought that was a bad—that's a bad scene.

TINKER: Yes, and a lot of people, a lot of American families volunteered their dog to the military, to serve.

NARVESON: I think that was a bad mistake.

TINKER: It was a very bad mistake. And then in Vietnam, they just left them over there. Did you know that?

NARVESON: I had heard that.

TINKER: Just left 'em.

NARVESON: I heard that.

TINKER: They were categorized as equipment. The actual law did not, or the guidelines—I think it was a law, executive order, to change that was not changed until Bill Clinton signed something.

NARVESON: Yeah, somewhere it was changed. I don't know where.

TINKER: It was Bill Clinton that started it. But now they're much better. Now they actually are trying to let them adopt them.

NARVESON: God, I got pictures of war dogs. They had—my talks to the kids—I've blown up pictures of war dogs. A whole line of them. All German shepherds. How they were trained in 1942, '43.

TINKER: Did you know there was a war dog memorial on campus at the vet school?

NARVESON: Is there?

TINKER: Yes. And when you first walk in the small animal clinic, they have a display about this little tiny—it's no bigger than your dog—little tiny dog that was a war dog that would parachute in. I can't remember its name, but I didn't know that was there until I went into the

clinic one day. But I knew about the war dog memorial they have, and it has a Doberman Pinscher on it. They have a very nice memorial.

NARVESON: Yes, smart. Oh, what noses [they have].

TINKER: So you're just sitting there, the shelling's going on, and you see this dog go by?

NARVESON: Of course I knew right away what it was. Heading right for the artillery. (Laughs) Sure.

TINKER: Did you—who's directing your mortar fire?

NARVESON: Forward observers. F. O.

TINKER: And are you on the radio with them?

NARVESON: One of our men who's—the squad leader ordinarily would be the one with the forward observer. They're on the telephone. And the squad leader is listening and telling his mortars, "Clay, fire." And he'd give me the setting. Three heavy or three medium. Fire three. So I'd fire three, one right after another. Well, while I'm doing it ammunition carriers are giving it to the tube man. The tube man, they take the increments off. He has help taking the increments off. We know how many increments have to come off, and they'd drop them in that tube one right after another. Then we'd wait. And just say, "Fire so-and-so, you're dropping short. Fire so-and-so. And we fire some more." I mean, that's the way it goes all the time.

TINKER: How long were you in that first position before you advanced a little further?

NARVESON: Oh, I don't know.

TINKER: A long time?

NARVESON: I don't know. Uh, golly, I would say probably two days or three days. Two or three days. The trouble is the days run into one another, and it's so hard.

TINKER: Well, 'cause you're not sleeping, you're not...

NARVESON: Now that you think back, how long? It's so hard to know something like that.

RIGGINS: How many shells did you all have?

NARVESON: Oh, they have a rubber two-wheel carrier that's pulled, two men, two ammunition carriers pull it. They've got grippers on it, and there's like, oh God, there's probably a hundred shells on there. And when those are all gone, they have to go back to the beach and get some more. That's—the ammunition carriers are constantly going from the beach, and many of them were killed.

TINKER: I was going to say, I would not want to do that.

NARVESON: Yeah, yeah. You bet.

TINKER: Dangerous. Did you ever see the Japanese?

NARVESON: Three bodies of Japanese at Iwo Jima. Of twenty-two thousand, I saw three.

TINKER: You saw three?

NARVESON: Three. I know a couple of Marines who saw none.

TINKER: Really?

NARVESON: They were all under, all down in the caves. Magnificent. That general was magnificent. He should get a congressional medal of honor. His name was [Tadamichi] Kuribayashi, and he was very brilliant. Very brilliant.

TINKER: Oh I'm sure. I think I've seen a documentary about that. About him and the caves.

NARVESON: He was close to the emperor. He was the emperor's dear friend.

TINKER: Oh really?

NARVESON: Yeah. But he also was a graduate of Iwo Jima or ...

TINKER: He killed himself, right?

NARVESON: Yep. Last day.

TINKER: Hmm. You only saw three. Did you know what was going on? I mean, did you know that there were so many in the caves?

NARVESON: Yep, we knew that because we could see the flamethrowers going. And they dug 'em out with those flame throwers. That's how—it really saved a lot of lives.

TINKER: And they'd come running out?

NARVESON: Yeah. It's a hell of a way to do it, but that's what they had to do. Otherwise you're going in with grenades and rifles, and you didn't—you have to dig 'em out. The Japanese were good fighters. They were damn good fighters. I've been asked by many people, "Clay, do you think you killed any Japanese?" I said, "I don't know." And I'm glad I don't know. As I sit here, I'm glad I don't know. We fired an awful lot, but how do we know? How do I know? You don't know those things.

TINKER: That's even what a, in the European Theater, a tail gunner said to me. I said, "Did you—do you remember the first plane you hit? How many did you [kill]?" He said, "You almost

could never really be sure.” You know, he’s firing at these German fighters, but he—I think he shares your attitude. He did not seem, he didn’t say he was glad he didn’t know, but he said, “I didn’t try to keep track. I don’t know.” He said, “I would see it and think,” “Well, maybe I hit it.””

NARVESON: But I’m glad I don’t know. I mean, after all, war is hell. General Sherman said so. But the tough part is the loss of friends.

TINKER: Yeah, your friends. How many did you lose on that island?

NARVESON: Oh, nine or ten that I knew. Two in my own squad.

TINKER: Really?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: Were they nearby?

NARVESON: Uh, first day the son of a British admiral; he was not a citizen of the United States but he came in the Marine Corps. And he joined in ’43 and he was a little older. His name was Flagg, F-L-A-G-G. He was just the nicest guy, and he died the very first day. A shell.

TINKER: A shell got him?

NARVESON: Yeah. So many times we don’t know where the body is ‘cause there’s only an arm or a leg to bury. You know, people don’t realize sometimes a body just blows to bits. That’s kinda tough talkin’ like this because you remember them. And—you just do. And in fact, sometimes you don’t know what happened to the body. Hey, if a shell hits ...

TINKER: You just know they’re gone.

NARVESON: Well, there’s an arm or a leg or something. If it’s a sniper fire, if it’s a rifle, of course the body’s right there. The chaplains have such a hard job. They have to bury those people, and they have part of a body to bury.

TINKER: Were they trying to do burials while you’re still under fire?

NARVESON: Yes, yep. They did. They did. Uh, B-29s were landing. D plus 12, I think the first B-29 landed. We saw that big thing coming in. I’d never seen one. Boy, that was a big sucker.

TINKER: It was coming to get some of the bodies?

NARVESON: Huh?

TINKER: The B-29?

NARVESON: The B-29 was coming in from Tokyo. It got shot up over Tokyo. They were landing and—you say, they were burying, they were. They were. They had dug out—trying to think of the—it was right in from the beach. Right in from the beach where the Caterpillar dug out a whole trench and they would, uh, take the dog tags. A lot of Marines helped. The beach people, they helped bury them. I never envied that job, boy. I'm glad I didn't have it.

TINKER: Then I think they, would they give them all—at the Punchbowl [Crater, the location of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific] in Hawaii, are they actually, is that where they'd have a marker for them?

NARVESON: I'm trying to think. Betty and I were there. We went there, and I'm trying to think of what the Punchbowl's got. The names. The Punchbowl's only got so many names there.

TINKER: Yeah. It's not everybody, but it's a lot of the Pacific deaths.

NARVESON: I'm trying to think of how many names. I don't remember at the Punchbowl. I don't remember.

TINKER: Were you still on the island when the flag went up?

NARVESON: Yeah, that's a remarkable thing that happened for me. We were firing and it was in between. We weren't firing at that very one minute, but one of my ammunition carriers says, "Clay, the flag's gone up!" And I turned around and tears were in his eyes and so was mine and, uh, we could see it. Then of course, the cruisers and the destroyers, the bells started ringing from the ships. Noise for about ten minutes. This was the first flag and I remember it. I remember it.

TINKER: You all just felt so relieved and proud?

NARVESON: Excuse me, I'm sorry.

TINKER: That's okay.

NARVESON: I get ...

TINKER: Do you need to take a little break?

NARVESON: No, that's alright.

TINKER: Okay.

NARVESON: But you see, we were a patriotic nation in those days and the flag means something to you.

TINKER: That's right. Well, it still does to some of us.

NARVESON: Yes, and you bet it does. You bet it does.

TINKER: We just haven't had to pay the same price that you all paid.

NARVESON: Yeah. But, uh, I'll never forget it. I turn around, and my two men grabbed me by the shoulder. I'll never forget. "The flag's up, Clay!" Then, I think three or four hours later the second flag went up. It was in between the two. We were on the island thirty-four days; thirty-four days when we left. We went back to Hawaii, and then the 4th Division allowed some people to go home on furlough. I had gone over long enough so they let me go home, so I had a thirty day furlough. I was home when the war in Germany was over.

TINKER: When you came home on your furlough, did you just want to relax and be with your family?

NARVESON: Yes, I did. I sat out on that porch with my father and mother and I just sat. And, uh, bacon and eggs. God, I wanted bacon and eggs. I told Mama. I got something funny to tell you. The very first morning, I got up at six o'clock in the morning. I come in that door. Mama and Dad are out of bed. Mom grabs her housecoat. Dad says, "Clayton, would you like—what would you want?" I said, "Can I have a cup of coffee? Just a cup of coffee." [He replied,] "Okay, I'll get the pot on." When it was hot, she served it and I said, "Can I have some cream and sugar?" My mother looked at me with daggers, she said, "Clayton, you don't drink coffee in this house with cream and sugar and you know that!" I said, "Mom, they mixed it aboard ship for us." I mean, that's how—it was twenty-five days coming back to get on furlough, and they mixed it and I got so I'd like it, so I'd like to have [cream and sugar]. She said, "You will not have it." And Dad says, "Mom, he's been around the world for God's sake! If he wants cream and sugar, let him have it!" She said, "Not in this house! He will not have it!" And she would not let me have it, so I had to drink it without. My dad was madder than hell. He was ready to crown her. But she was Danish and she wouldn't allow that. She said, "You do not allow cream and sugar." And I didn't have it. So I had to have cream and sugar. I wanted it, but she wouldn't allow it. Can you believe that?

TINKER: No, I can't.

NARVESON: But that's my mother. You've got to know my mother. (Laughter)

TINKER: Oh man. I'd have to side with your dad on that one.

NARVESON: She lived to be 95. She had a mind of her own.

TINKER: Well, yeah. Did you, during these sitting-out-on-the-porch moments, did you tell 'em anything?

NARVESON: One of my brothers was in from Italy, the Army; he got a furlough too. He came back. So he and I—then I was old enough to have a beer, so we went out and we had [some beer]. My mother didn't like it, but...

TINKER: Did you and your brother swap stories?

NARVESON: Oh yeah, yeah. I found out where he was and he would tell me about the boot, he was down at the boot of Italy. Ah, yeah. When we got out of the war, all six of us went to California because we had two aunts out there and so we decided to take a little trip. So we went out there.

TINKER: How fun. That sounds nice.

NARVESON: Yea, the six of us. We stayed a whole month, and drank beer too.

TINKER: And you drank beer?

NARVESON: Didn't tell Mama about it.

TINKER: Now did you keep smoking your cigarettes?

NARVESON: Yea, I smoked until 1960 when Major General Terry Allen, who was the Surgeon General of the United States, was on television with a two-hour program about smoking cigarettes. And I happened to be watching, and my wife was watching. I threw my cigarettes at her and I said, "Nuh uh, no more for me." And that was the last cigarette I ever had.

TINKER: You know, most successful stop-smoking people that I've met have all just quit cold turkey.

NARVESON: Cold turkey, that's the way to go.

TINKER: It's the only way to do it, isn't it?

NARVESON: It's the way to do it for any addiction as far as I'm concerned. You could talk to psychiatrists or psychologists all you want. And I've hear 'em testify because I was a lawyer for many years. You can say what you want, but cold turkey's the way to go.

TINKER: Had any of your brothers picked up the habit too?

NARVESON: All of them.

TINKER: All? That is interesting. Every single one of you. Did they all quit like you did?

NARVESON: Yep. Not when I did.

TINKER: But eventually they all quit.

NARVESON: Yep.

TINKER: I bet that trip to California was a very nice bonding [experience], sharing stories.

NARVESON: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, it was fun. It was great. Well, you know the war was over. You go on and get on with your life, get married and get on with your life. And I wanted to go to college. There was the G.I. Bill, and boy, I grabbed a hold of that sucker. Five years they paid for me. Five years, six years of college, they paid five years.

TINKER: And you stayed in Minnesota?

NARVESON: No. Well, Minnesota, yes. Yes, at that time I sure did. I went to law school there and I stayed there until my wife's health drove me to California in 1972.

TINKER: Oh yeah. So you went to St. Paul College?

NARVESON: College of Law.

TINKER: College of Law, okay.

NARVESON: I practiced law in Minnesota for 20 years until she had pleurisy and we went to California. I moved my family to ...

TINKER: When did you meet your wife?

NARVESON: At a dance when I was in law school in 1950. A Christmas dance.

TINKER: And was she in law school as well?

NARVESON: No, she worked for the state of Minnesota and so did I at that time. I met her at a dance.

TINKER: What was your—did you work at the same time you were going to school?

NARVESON: Yeah. It was night law school.

TINKER: What were you doing for work?

NARVESON: Working at a law firm. Investigating ...

TINKER: It says here, I think you put your first job after the military was a meat packing plant.

NARVESON: Yeah, Hormel's, Austin, Minnesota. When I came back and went to pre-law, I had—Hormel's give me a job.

TINKER: Was that full-time or part-time?

NARVESON: That was full-time.

TINKER: And you went and took classes as well?

NARVESON: Well, no full-time, and then as soon as class work started I quit. See I saved my money. Plus, they gave me fifty dollars a month, the government did. Pretty nice government that'll do that. My books and tuition, too.

TINKER: Oh yeah, G.I. Bill. That was a good thing.

NARVESON: You betcha. But you must remember books and tuition was a lot cheaper than it is now. This is a shame to see ... these kids have to pay this money to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. That's shameful the charges that they make. I don't care, you cut it anyway you want. Charging somebody \$20,000 a year, \$30,000 a year, that's shameful. I don't care how you cut it.

TINKER: I agree. Did you always know you wanted to go to law school? When did you decide?

NARVESON: No, when I was overseas. I dreamed about it. And when they passed that G.I. Bill, I thought, "Oh boy! That's for me."

TINKER: So when you're overseas ...

NARVESON: I dreamed about becoming a lawyer, yeah.

TINKER: You mean literally you dreamed it?

NARVESON: Yeah. Well, I thought about it.

TINKER: But what made you, was there something that happened that made you think about [becoming a lawyer]?

NARVESON: No, it's just because I liked history. Somehow law fit into history and I wanted to go.

TINKER: Well, so many famous figures throughout history were lawyers. Maybe that was it.

NARVESON: I just felt, I equated history with law. I did.

TINKER: Did you know what kind of law you wanted to practice?

NARVESON: Yeah, civil trial work. And that's what I did.

RIGGINS: What was it like being a young veteran in school at that time?

NARVESON: Oh boy, half of the class was veterans. (Laughs) And during the war there were 300,000 women in the service. The WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service], the WAACs [Women's Auxiliary Army Corps], the women Marines and the SPARS [nickname for US Coast Guard Women's Reserve]; 300,000. So we had a few of those in class, too. They don't get the credit that they're entitled to. I don't know if you know about the gals

who flew the fighters and bombers over in North Africa and Europe. Do you know about 'em? They don't get the credit either. They were all second lieutenants. And they didn't a G.I. Bill.

TINKER: They transported the new ones over there.

NARVESON: But they didn't get the G.I. Bill for so many years. Now, they've now become—they've now got credit for what they did. But it took 30 years for them to get it.

TINKER: Yeah, it did. Yeah, because they got out and they really didn't have the same benefits.

NARVESON: Darn right they didn't and that was wrong. It's a mistake our country made.

TINKER: Anybody that wears the uniform.

NARVESON: You're darn right. And they found out also that they could fly as good as the boys. (Laughter) You're darn right they did.

TINKER: Now I have heard, I have a friend, her dissertation was on the WASPs [Women's Airforce Service Pilots].

NARVESON: That's what they called 'em.

TINKER: Yeah, Women's Airforce Service Pilots.

NARVESON: Auxiliary, uh, pilots.

TINKER: And they—when Paul Tibbets [World War II colonel general for the United States Air Force] was trying to train his men to fly the B-29, the plane that dropped the [atomic] bomb, and the pilots were hesitant. I mean, it's this big monster of a bomber. And it's new, you know, so he brought some WASPs in, Paul Tibbets did, and had them fly it.

NARVESON: I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

TINKER: To show the guys, like, "Look, these girls are flying this." (Laughs)

NARVESON: No, I didn't know that.

TINKER: Yeah, she told me that story. She'd found that, I guess, doing her research.

NARVESON: Boy you know something which you could make her research is Jackie Cochran, the leader of those women. There is a book out on her, and I read it, but it's not a good book. I wish someone'd put out—there's a woman.

TINKER: I will try and find you a better book

NARVESON: A good book on Jackie Cochran. Yep. You call me if you get it. Will you? 'Cause that woman is ...

TINKER: I will. Yep.

NARVESON: Amelia Earhart and all that, but hey, Jackie Cochran is the one that—she's the Jimmy Doolittle.

TINKER: Of the women's pilots?

NARVESON: You bet. If you get it, you call me.

TINKER: I will. I'll have to ask my friend about that.

NARVESON: You bet.

TINKER: Well, when you graduated law school, you were married by the time you graduate?

NARVESON: I was married, yep.

(Phone rings)

TINKER: I guess that's you. I can pause this.

NARVESON: Do you want some soda pop or something?

RIGGINS: Oh no, I'm fine.

NARVESON: Okay, alright.

TINKER: You need to get some water or something?

NARVESON: No, no, no.

TINKER: Well, I was just going to ask about, when you—so you're married, you graduate law school.

NARVESON: We've been married sixty years now.

TINKER: Oh, congratulations.

NARVESON: Yeah, we married in law school. And I think my marriage is going to stick.

TINKER: I think so. I think you're safe at this point. (Laughter) Well, did you set up practice right away?

NARVESON: I was investigator for a law firm while I was in law school, so I stayed on with them. I stayed right on with them, see.

TINKER: When you say "investigator" ...

NARVESON: Well, that's a gopher.

TINKER: Oh okay. (Laughs) I'm picturing like spies and stuff.

NARVESON: Whatever they wanted me to do, I did. And I was going to law school at night, so ...

TINKER: Like what kind of thing would you do?

NARVESON: Oh, investigate a car accident. Go out and take pictures, take statements from people. We need to look for a witness, "Clayton, there's a witness doing something here. Will you see if you can find that witness?"

TINKER: So you're saving lawyers a lot of time?

NARVESON: I'm a gopher, but I'm learning all the time. And they let me second-chair on a few cases. I second-chaired in court. You can't say anything, but you can second-chair. And so I got to do that. So I was set up for it.

TINKER: So you're getting experience that you needed the whole time. And getting paid for it.

NARVESON: And Betty was working.

TINKER: Oh, what was she doing?

NARVESON: She was a first-class secretary. First class.

TINKER: For who?

NARVESON: First of all, state of Minnesota. Then she worked for a bank, then she worked for the Toni Company.

TINKER: The Toni Company, what's that?

NARVESON: Hair. Hair wash. Toni, "Which one has the Toni?" You're too young for that.

TINKER: No, I don't know the Toni. (Laughs)

NARVESON: Okay, that used to be on television. "Which one has the Toni?" It's a television advertisement. (Laughter) She worked for the Toni Company.

TINKER: How long did she work?

NARVESON: Oh she worked 'til we got our first child, then she stayed home. Scott was born in '59 and Julie was born in '62. So once we got [the kids], then she stayed home. I'm old fashioned. (Laughs)

TINKER: Oh no, my mom stayed home. I couldn't imagine—I would not have wanted my mom to go work.

NARVESON: The wives stayed home in those days. That's how we were raised in those days. Women during the Depression, women didn't work. They stayed home.

TINKER: Yeah. Now, when did you sort of strike out on your own from this other law firm?

NARVESON: Oh that's a long story. I struck out—two partnerships they didn't work out very well; neither one for various reasons. In 1972, Betty got pleurisy. The pleura is the covering of the sac that covers the heart and lungs. That's the pleura. And the doctor said [you] either wear a—she wore a overcoat in the house in the wintertime and the summertime, all the time. Because of inflammation, the sac ... So [she said,] “Clayton, you go to warm weather. So pick your spot. That's where you're gonna go.” So we went to southern California because my brother was out there. So we went to southern California.

TINKER: Which brother was in California?

NARVESON: Paul. Yea, so we went out there and within one year, she was much better. The cold weather is what it was. See, she's from northern Minnesota. She walked against that northern wind ...

TINKER: All her life growing up.

NARVESON: Sure. And it took its toll later on, see.

TINKER: I didn't know anything like that.

NARVESON: Yeah, well you can't give a shot in the butt for that, you know. You gotta move. There's nothing they can do for it. So she recovered nicely.

TINKER: Where did you move in California?

NARVESON: Southern California. El Toro, Fountain Valley, that area.

TINKER: Is that far from Los Angeles?

NARVESON: Yeah. Fifty miles south.

TINKER: Oh, I bet that was nice. Where did your brother live?

NARVESON: He lived in Torrance, California which is in the southern part. Do you know where Torrance is?

TINKER: That's closer to LA right?

NARVESON: Yeah, that's ...

TINKER: So he was close to you.

NARVESON: That's close to the ocean, too. Torrance isn't far from the ocean. And so we didn't live, we only lived like twenty miles from the ocean.

TINKER: I bet that was very nice.

NARVESON: Yeah, we enjoyed it until it got too many cars. (Laughs)

TINKER: I bet your kids enjoyed that.

NARVESON: Oh yeah. Yeah, they did.

TINKER: Being in California. Well, how did your professional life work out?

NARVESON: I went to work for an insurance company. I would have to have gone back to practice to pick up three subjects in California. California's got the toughest bar in the world. It's a tough bar to pass and because they purposely want to keep you off. They don't want any more lawyers out there. So rather than go, I was 48 at the time, I decided to go to work for an insurance company. And I did handling malpractice cases. I enjoyed that work and she recovered nicely from it. We went to Albuquerque in 1985 and that's where I retired.

TINKER: Oh really? I spent a couple of years in Albuquerque. That's a very nice city. I love the dry. I love Albuquerque. And delicious food there. They have great food.

NARVESON: Yeah, hey. They got some good Mexican food. And in fact, they've got some good Mexican food here too.

TINKER: That's what Josh was telling me.

NARVESON: Hey, they've got three or four restaurants here that are just great.

TINKER: I need to get the names of all of 'em. I'm always on the hunt for good Mexican because you know, you get spoiled in Albuquerque. And when you go anywhere else, it doesn't ...

NARVESON: They've got some good ones here. Pancho's is right down here.

RIGGINS: I love Pancho's. Do you go to Los Amigos?

NARVESON: Los Amigos is my wife's favorite.

RIGGINS: I grew up on Los Amigos.

NARVESON: Oh my, that's out by the library. That's my wife's favorite. Of course, I like it too. (Laughter)

TINKER: Now you're making me hungry. So, give me an example. You're working for the insurance company, like what would be a typical case?

NARVESON: A lawyer suing another lawyer. These are lawyers' malpractice not medical.

TINKER: Oh, lawyers suing lawyers?

NARVESON: Sure. Oh yeah, it's heavy. In California and in Florida.

TINKER: I guess there'd just be no end to that work, wouldn't there? Lawyers suing lawyers.

NARVESON: That's right. I was handling six hundred cases.

TINKER: Oh my word.

NARVESON: And they got me so much heavy work that they gave me two more men to work for me. Then I would hire lawyers—as soon as it went into lawsuit status, I would send it out to one of our firms. We had six firms that did our trial work for us. And I found it enjoyable work.

TINKER: Well, I bet you got to meet a lot of people. A lot of different people.

NARVESON: Sure did. Yeah, through that me and my wife—they were always inviting us to supper, those lawyers. And I understood that because I did the same thing. So Betty and I got to eat in a lot of nice restaurants. (Laughs)

TINKER: Well is there anything in your military career, your military service that?

NARVESON: Helped me?

TINKER: Yeah, helped you or, like, you're doing your work one day and ...

RIGGINS: The discipline you learned maybe?

NARVESON: I was just going to say, the one thing that's always helped me is discipline. But that started in my home. The discipline started with my mother and father.

TINKER: The military reinforced it.

NARVESON: Reinforced it. But his[Josh's] point's well taken. I always felt that my Marine training has helped me in discipline. I'm five minutes early, five minutes to church, I'm always five minutes early. So is Betty. We were raised in the Depression. Our family was always five minutes early; my father insisted on it and we were. Five minutes early to school. I know exactly that you were three minutes late here today. I know it.

TINKER: I'm sorry. I feel terrible now.

NARVESON: No, but I say it because that's a part of my psyche. I'm always on time. But on time is five minutes early. I wouldn't think of being late. I mean, that's just the way I am. I was the first one to work at the law firm. I was there five minutes early. I was there early, we opened at 8:30 [am], I was there five minutes before that. No other lawyer showed up at that time, but I always was there. I always was there. I always have been. But so have my brothers. They were the same way, five minutes early. It was inculcated into you. So you understand what I'm saying.

TINKER: Oh yes. Yes, I wish I could be more like that, of course. Don't we all. (Laughs). Was there anything you wanted to ask him?

RIGGINS: What sort of work did your brothers get into after the war?

NARVESON: Oh boy. Meat packing, two of them. Back to Hormel's Meat Packing in Austin. One did accounting work in California. Morris went to work for Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing [3M Company], office job. Howard, uh, did work for General Motors in the office. And then I was the only professional. My sister, she married to a—you don't want that. So, a little of everything except myself.

TINKER: So you lived in California from '72 to '85?

NARVESON: '72 to '85 and then we moved to Albuquerque. Came here six years ago.

TINKER: What did you do in Albuquerque, the same thing?

NARVESON: Investigations for a company that do nothing but investigations. They have no insurance, so when they get any kind of a case against, then, with my background. I have a good background, so I worked there. And I retired at 63. And I recommend retirement to you.

TINKER: (Laughs) I'm looking forward to it, believe me. What about your children?

NARVESON: Scott's never married. He's an outdoorsman. He's 51, 52.

TINKER: Did they both graduate high school or no?

NARVESON: They graduated in Albuquerque.

TINKER: In Albuquerque. Okay.

NARVESON: Uh, Julie lives twenty miles out here, our daughter. That's why we're here.

TINKER: So she's not far. How did she end up in this area?

NARVESON: She married—she went in the service, the Army. She met her husband there. It didn't work out. There was a divorce. And she's married to a man who's twenty miles out here. So that's why we're here. She wanted us near as we got older, and so Mom and Dad thought, "Well, we should do that."

TINKER: Well that's nice to be close.

NARVESON: But we like it here. Betty, my wife has quite a bit of arthritis, but she's learning to get some new medication to help her.

TINKER: The weather here in this area is okay for her health?

NARVESON: This weather is good for her.

TINKER: Is it?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: Good.

NARVESON: And I kinda like it, too.

TINKER: I'm glad you like it. So you've been here for six years?

NARVESON: Yeah.

TINKER: What did you think when you first moved here?

NARVESON: Oh I liked it right away.

TINKER: You did?

NARVESON: Yeah, the rolling hills of east Tennessee.

TINKER: What'd you think about the people?

NARVESON: Oh, they're friendly. These are friendly people.

TINKER: I'm glad to hear that.

NARVESON: Yeah. Hey listen, a great day for me is a two-hour lunch period. We go to these restaurants, Mexican. The girl comes out, she says, "How are you, sweetie?" Well, I like that. (Laughter) And then if she gets real carried away she might say, "Hi darling, how are you?" I like that, doggone it! That's friendship. (Laughs)

TINKER: I'm glad. That's a good one. There was another question on my mind. I can't remember now. Maybe I should pause this recorder.

NARVESON: Well you can call. Call me.

RIGGINS: You speak in public a lot and go to schools, right?

NARVESON: Thirteen years, I've been doing it.

RIGGINS: How did you get involved in that?

NARVESON: From my church, I had four boys in my car 13 or 14 years ago and I said, “Fellas, have you heard of the Great Depression?” Not one of them. I said, “Do you know anything about World War II?” Not one of ‘em knew anything. I said, “For God’s sake. You don’t know anything about World War II? Or the Great Depression?” [They said,] “No we don’t Mr. Narveson.” I said, “Oh my God.” I went to two high schools and I said, “Please, can I talk to you about what you are teaching these kids.” And I decided right then and there, I’m going to go into ...

TINKER: Schools.

NARVESON: They don’t know, they didn’t know, and they still don’t right here. They’re a little bit better here, but right here. This is a good school right down here, John, uh, William Blount.

RIGGINS: William Blount? That’s where I went to high school.

NARVESON: I go in there, and I’ll tell you what I ask the kids. Who was John Adams? Don’t know. Who was Winston Churchill? I don’t know. What is nine times seven? I don’t know. When do you write an essay? Not one of them. The teachers do not ask them to write essays because they can’t punctuate; they can’t spell properly. That’s their situation. Thirteen years. And I’m in touch with two senators here. Doug Overbey [Tennessee state senator representing District 8] knows my feelings about this. In fact, even the governor, I campaigned for the governor here because I got to meet him. They know my feelings about our education. It’s not only here, though. Albuquerque is even a little worse than here. They can’t spell. They cannot spell. Can’t spell. Well let me ask you, what’s nine times seven?

RIGGINS: Nine times seven? Sixty three.

NARVESON: God, good to hear it. (Laughter) Good for you.

TINKER: You’ve made his day, Josh. I was sitting here thinking, “I think it’s sixty three.” It’s been a long time since you’ve had to think about the times tables.

NARVESON: No, but I know ‘em. Nine times nine is eighty-one. I remember that I before E except after C. I know how that works. Go ahead, you were going to say something.

RIGGINS: I know my personal experience going to William Blount High School. They didn’t teach us really how to write. I mean in English class ...

NARVESON: But you’re supposed to know that in fourth grade, fifth grade.

RIGGINS: We’re supposed to know how to write essays and how to make a reasonable argument.

NARVESON: Here ... go ahead, keep on talking.

RIGGINS: We're supposed to know how to form a reasonable argument before we get to high school so that, you know, you can get better at it. But I think people get so—they're trying to fulfill the standards that they forget...

NARVESON: The basics.

RIGGINS: ... there's more to education than just the higher test scores. You have to learn, you know, how to make an argument. You have to learn history.

NARVESON: But why don't they teach spelling? Why don't they teach English? My wife, when I was in school; "A capital A" go around for an hour, go around the blackboards. And they taught us spelling and the multiplication tables. I still remember. I still know them.

TINKER: I think they really think it may not be as important. I think even the education ...

NARVESON: This, this (makes cell phone texting gestures)

TINKER: Yeah, the texting. I think maybe the education system. They have this feeling they're supposed to be progressing and progressing but you should never progress beyond the basics, your spine, the core.

NARVESON: You sound like Clayton. That's the way I talk. (Laughter) But I've talked about this for so long, for so many years, I don't talk about it anymore now. I mean because I'm a voice crying in the wilderness. Someday the education will turn around, but it isn't now.

TINKER: I know what I was going to ask you. You didn't indicate on your questionnaire that you joined any veterans' groups or associations.

NARVESON: The Legion, the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

TINKER: Oh you did?

NARVESON: Yes. I'm not active in either one, but I did join 'em both.

TINKER: Do you still belong?

NARVESON: No. To the Legion I belong. I belong to the Legion, but I don't the VFW. I got away from it. I just did.

TINKER: What about reunions? Did you ever go to any Marine Corps reunions or division reunions?

NARVESON: No, funny but I never did.

TINKER: You didn't?

NARVESON: Well, I never—the 2nd Marine Division didn't have any, uh, get-togethers. I guess they did somewhere along the line, but I never heard about it. The 4th Division either. I've never heard about the division. No.

TINKER: 'Cause you know you always hear—have you been in touch with any fellow Marines?

NARVESON: Here and there, yeah. Just here and there.

TINKER: Just sporadically?

NARVESON: Yeah, sporadically.

TINKER: What about the Marine Corps League in Knoxville?

NARVESON: I belong to it.

TINKER: Oh you do?

NARVESON: Yes I do.

TINKER: The Bonnyman, Alexander Bonnyman?

NARVESON: Yes, you bet I do.

TINKER: Do you ever go to any of their things?

NARVESON: Oh by the way, next week I'm getting—one of my ambitions was to go to the Marine Corps Museum up in Quantico. I'm going. Tuesday it's pickin' me up; I'm going to ride in the back seat. I'm heading up finally.

TINKER: Really? Who's, the Marine Corps League is making a trip up?

NARVESON: No.

TINKER: Who is?

NARVESON: I'm doing it on my own. I just want to do it.

TINKER: You're doing it on your own?

NARVESON: But I belong to the Marine Corps League, yeah.

TINKER: Wow.

NARVESON: I got a picture like that. I've put that up there because I think it's a good one. But Marine Corps League, yeah, I belong to that. And I'm going next week. I'm gonna get to see it.

TINKER: Who are you going with?

NARVESON: A fellow who's in the Army at my church. He and his wife are going up to see their brother who is sick. And they're going to Pennsylvania and they're going to drop me right off there at that door and I'm going to stay two days, three days, and they'll pick me up.

TINKER: That's great. I'm excited for you. This'll be your first time at the Marine Corps Museum.

NARVESON: First time, yes. My wife's happy for me. She's not going.

TINKER: You be sure and wear some Marine Corps something because I'm sure when they see you come in they'll ...

NARVESON: The closest I got is that hat.

TINKER: You need to find a Marine Corps emblem or something ...

NARVESON: I've got a shirt that'll do it. I've got a couple of shirts.

TINKER: ... so they'll show you the proper respect when you come in there.

NARVESON: I'll also have my discharge in case they ... (Laughter)

TINKER: In case they question you.

NARVESON: Keep that right in my hand.

TINKER: Well, I guess we're finished up here. Was there anything you'd like to offer as a conclusion?

NARVESON: No, do you send me anything for this? A piece of paper saying, "Clayton was here this day" or anything like that?

TINKER: What we typically do is Josh will transcribe this word for word. We'll send you a draft to look over of the transcript. You can add or subtract anything, make corrections.

NARVESON: And sign it and send it back? Sure, sure.

TINKER: Yeah, and we proof it actually a couple times because when you're typing out people's conversation word for word, it can get kind of difficult. You know, we do not speak the way we write.

NARVESON: I know, I've been around courtrooms enough. I know what you mean. (Laughter)

TINKER: Because you can proof it three times and there will still be a mistake. Several that get through.

NARVESON: Sure, sure yes, you bet.

TINKER: But anyway, that will be the process. Now, that'll take some time, but we will get that to you.

NARVESON: That's fine. If I can be of any help, you let me know.

TINKER: Oh yeah. We thank you for your time.

NARVESON: Yep, you bet.

END OF TRANSCRIPTION