RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FLOYD SYKES

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Floyd Sykes on April 9, 2005, in Glenmont, New York, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Laurie D'Amico: Laurie D'Amico …

Glen Wyrovsky: … and Glen Wyrovsky.

SI: Mr. Sykes, thank you very much for having us here today.

Floyd Sykes: My pleasure.

GW: Could you tell us a little bit about growing up in Brooklyn with your family? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

FS: We lived in a house on 91st Street in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn. My family consisted of a half-sister, my mother and aunt and another aunt and her husband and we had a very harmonious relationship. I enjoyed my childhood. We really didn't want for anything, during the Depression, that I can remember. My life was pretty full. My father worked for the railroad. My mother was a homemaker. My one aunt was a person who sold goods to dress manufacturers and my other aunt was a legal secretary to a very prominent attorney who was also president of the American Safety Razor Company, I believe was the name of it, in Brooklyn. … I just enjoyed life. When I was about ten years old, it was discovered that I had a heart murmur and I was sort of refrained from the activities of young guys but I had no trouble after that, that I seem to recall, and I had a couple of good friends, close and personal, that lived nearby. One lived around the block; his name was Bob Casey. He has since died and a couple of the other fellows have also disappeared out of life and I don't know where they went. One went to West Point and was one of the first ones into Korea and got wounded and his brother was working on tugs and that's about all I can recall, I guess.

GW: Did you go to public school or private school?

FS: No, I went to … PS 185 in Brooklyn. … After I left there, I went to Boys High School and Fort Hamilton High School was being constructed. … I did a certain period, I don't know, two semesters or what, in Boys High, and then, I went to Fort Hamilton High School. I was one of the first class in there.

LD: You mentioned that your father worked on the railroad. What exactly did he do?

FS: He was a tower man on the BMT subway, which controlled the switches and all that.

SI: Was he in a union as part of the railroad?

FS: … Oh, I guess, yes. I think Mike Quill was the head of the union, as far as I can recall.

SI: Do you remember if there were any strikes that he mentioned or any problems?

FS: No, not that I can recall.

SI: Okay.

FS: Eventually he, and I came up here and worked in the Watervliet Arsenal in the railroad there.

SI: You wrote in your survey that he was from Ohio.

FS: Correct.

SI: Do you know why he moved East?

FS: Have no idea. He was in the Army. He got out of the Army in 1924, I believe, met my mother, had me. My mother was married to another man, who she divorced, and she had a child by him, my half-sister, who is now deceased.

SI: How long was your father in the Army?

FS: Well, from World War I to 1924; I really don't know too much about it.

SI: Longer than just the war?

FS: Oh, yes, yes.

SI: Do you know if he went overseas during World War I?

FS: Yes, he was overseas in World War I.

SI: Which branch of the Army was he in?

FS: Have no idea.

SI: You do not know if he was in the infantry?

FS: Have no idea.

SI: Did he ever talk about World War I?

FS: No, not really.

SI: Do you know how your mother and father met?

FS: I have no idea.

SI: Do you know if there is any kind of immigration history in your family? Did your mother or father's parents come to the United States from somewhere?

FS: Yes, my niece in Florida is into genealogy and she did send me some stuff. From my mother's side, they're from Germany and, on my father's side, they're from England. My niece found out what ship they came over on and what year and how old they were and so forth. I have some of that information inside. If it's incidental to this, I'll get it for you.

SI: We can look at it later.

GW: Do you know what year they came over? You said they are English and German. That sounds like an odd mix right before World War I.

FS: Oh, this was in the 1800s, late 1800s. … I think my great, great, great-grandfather came over in 1840.

SI: To go back to the area where you grew up, today we think of Brooklyn as a very urban area, but I understand, that in the early part of the twentieth century, it was more suburban, even rural.

FS: Oh, yes. A couple of blocks from where I lived, there was still a farm. I lived on 91st Street and, on 88th Street, there was a farm.

SI: Did you spend a lot of time playing in the fields when you were younger?

FS: No. In the street where we lived, you know, we played stickball, used the sewer as the home plate. [laughter] That was about it. I hadn't been back to that area until a couple years ago. It was probably forty years since I'd been there and I couldn't get over the change and all the apartments. That amazed me.

SI: Would you say that your neighborhood was an immigrant neighborhood or was it populated with second or third-generation Americans?

FS: Oh, I'd say it's a couple of generations. A friend across the street, his father was a butcher and they drove a LaSalle automobile; I can remember that. They don't even make them anymore. [laughter]

SI: Did you have to go to work early take part-time jobs, either just to make money of your own or to help the family out?

FS: Well, yes, I did. I worked two places. I delivered orders for a delicatessen and I worked in a butcher shop, delivering orders, also. … One of my jobs was to clean the meat block that the butchers cut the meat on and, boy, what a job that was. [laughter]

SI: Did you do that during the school year or in the summers?

FS: Well, after school and Saturdays and, of course, in the summer, to make a little spending money for myself, because, while I don't recall wanting anything, we never had a surplus.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside the home?

FS: Not to my knowledge. She was always a homemaker.

SI: You mentioned that you were somewhat protected from the Great Depression. Do you remember observing the effects of the Depression in your neighborhood or in the areas of Manhattan that you would visit?

FS: Not that I can recall, no.

SI: Did you see the bread lines or anything?

FS: No, never seen any, never saw anybody selling apples on the street. One uncle who lived with us was married to my mother's sister, he was gassed during World War I and he was unemployed. … He was a painter and, when he worked, he painted stripes on automobiles. … He had a beautiful set of miniature paint brushes that he used. … When he died, they had no children, I sort of inherited them and, when I was away, my mother threw them out.

SI: Just out of curiosity, was that uncle involved with the Bonus March movement at all?

FS: Again, not to my knowledge. …

SI: He never spoke about it.

FS: No. When my father got his bonus, we went back to Ohio to find his brothers and sisters, because, apparently, his mother, I guess, died at an early age and the kids went into an orphanage. None of them migrated east and he got the bonus and we went to Dayton trying to find brothers and sisters, no success, but, coming back on the train, I guess. I was, maybe, ten years old, he sent me into the dining car and he said he wasn't hungry. … The dining car, in those days, was very, very palatial, white table linens, glasses, china or china plates, waiters in the dining car, white aprons and very polite, and I ordered and I ate my dinner. … Then, they brought me a bowl with lemon in it and I didn't know what to do with it. It's to wash your fingers after your meal. [laughter] … I guess, as I got older, I realized the reason that my father said he wasn't hungry was because he didn't have enough money to pay for another meal and he sent me into the dining car to have a dinner.

SI: That must have been a big trip for you, to go fairly far west.

FS: It was interesting, because there were steam trains then. … I ended up firing a steam locomotive in the Arsenal and they're a thing of the past. … I sort of started out as a brakeman in the yard, and then, I became a fireman. … I really enjoyed working on the railroad.

SI: Were you able to travel at all, aside from this trip to Ohio, before you went in the military?

FS: No, not really. My one uncle, who subsequently married my mother's sister, who lived with us at the time was the only one in the family who had an automobile. Automobiles were scarce then and cheap. … I can remember going out; they used to get a summer place in Bay Shore and I would go out there, visit with them. They had servants, a maid and a butler. … My uncle would get in his car and we'd head out to the eastern end of Long Island and go a hundred miles an hour, just a thrill for a young guy to do; [laughter] today, no.

SI: During the 1930s obviously, Franklin Roosevelt was the big political figure on the national level. What did your family think about President Roosevelt? What did you think about President Roosevelt?

FS: Well, I think he did an awful lot for the country. We were in the depths of the Depression, people were out of work, people were hungry and starving. He started the WPA, Works Progress Administration, and the NRA, National Recovery Administration, and began to bring the country out of the doldrums that we were in. … I have my own personal opinion, I'm of a different political affiliation, but I think he did an excellent job.

SI: Do you remember, as a child, listening to the Fireside Chats?

FS: Oh, yes, yes, listened to them on a big Stromberg-Carlson Radio. … We also listened to Adolph Hitler, when he used to speak on that same radio. … We'd pick up the tirades of his, not that we were anti-American. …

SI: Before Pearl Harbor and before the war broke out in Europe, you were aware of what was happening.

FS: Oh, yes, yes, yes, not with the intensity that I would have recognized later on. I remember Neville Chamberlain, who was Prime Minister of England at the time, and he went over to Hitler to try to have a peace. … It wasn't successful. … I close my eyes, I think of him, thin and with his umbrella and his bowler.

SI: At the time, did you or your parents discuss whether or not we should get involved or whether we should be more involved in what was happening in Europe?

FS: No, I don't think we discussed that and I don't think they had an opinion on it, that I can recall. Sunday was a big day in our house, because other relatives who lived out in Woodside, Queens, New York, would come in and we'd have Sunday dinner at a big, old, round table with eagle-clawed legs on it.

GW: Did you think that Japan might be a threat?

FS: I don't think so.

GW: That was a complete surprise.

FS: I think to thousands of people. … Actually, I was personally affronted by the way the *Nisei* were treated, who are American citizens, and they were put into, basically, prison camps. It took a long time to justify their American citizenship. It's a blot on our history, I think.

SI: Did you know about that at the time or did you learn about that later?

FS: Later, of course.

SI: Going back to when you were in elementary school and high school, what were your favorite subjects? As you were heading towards graduation, what did you think you wanted to do with your life? Obviously, the war was like a huge cloud hanging over you at that point.

FS: Really, I had no idea about what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a Marine, I wanted to be a lifer, but didn't make it.

LD: As things escalated in Europe, were you expecting the United States to get involved at all?

FS: No. Again, I don't think so, because of my age. I didn't comprehend all that was involved, but, then, when we started to sell destroyers to England and things of that nature, I probably thought there was a possibility we might enter into the war, but, then, again, that was way in the back of my mind, not up front.

GW: Was there any particular reason why you joined the Marine Corps instead of say the Army or the Navy?

FS: I wanted to defend our country and I thought they were the group that would do a good job of defending the country. I've been very proud to be a Marine and still am very proud to be a Marine.

SI: Where did that idea come from? Did you know somebody who was a Marine? Was it from the movies?

FS: No, it just popped into my mind and I have no idea why, how or where.

GW: What did your father think when you told him you wanted to be a Marine, given his past experiences in World War I?

FS: Well, he thought I was out of my mind, I guess, and my mother was vehemently opposed. I tried to enlist in the Marines earlier, before seventeen, and, of course, she wouldn't sign the papers. I eventually convinced my father to sign the papers two months after I was seventeen.

SI: Do you remember where you were and how you heard the news that Pearl Harbor had been attacked?

FS: Yes, I pretty well do. I was at home and had the radio on and the news came over the radio, except I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was and I was energized to try to be a Marine.

SI: Was there any initial panic or fear after December 7th? People talk about being afraid that the Germans or the Japanese would invade.

FS: Not that I can recall, no.

SI: How did the area you lived in change as a result of the war? Were there Civil Defense drills and rationing?

FS: Oh, yes. People became united, there's no question about that, and made many great sacrifices on the home front for the servicemen, tires, gasoline, food rationing and, in the service, of course, you didn't have to worry about that. You're given delicious K rations.

SI: You were on the home front for about one-and-a-half or two years before you went into the Marine Corps.

FS: Just a year, I believe. December '42, I think, I enlisted. I was seventeen in September.

SI: Were you involved in airplane spotting or any other kind of Civil Defense activity?

FS: No, I was working at the Arsenal, on the railroad. If you don't know what the Arsenal is, it's called the Watervliet Arsenal and it's the only arsenal in the country that makes the big guns, like for the battleships. … Right now, that's caught in the economic situation and they're trying to develop other things, but we used to take the stuff from there, from the Arsenal, when it was manufactured, down to the port, where it would be loaded on ships, and then, dispersed properly.

SI: I misunderstood. You were working at the Arsenal before you went into the service.

FS: Oh, yes. I left school, I think in the second year of high school and went to work.

SI: Did your father help you get the job as a railman?

FS: Yes, my father was the yardmaster and that helped me become a brakeman, I guess.

SI: Can you explain for us what you did as a brakeman and what your job entailed?

FS: Well, when trains are made up, there's cars spotted in different places. You go around and you make the connection and completely build up a train of X number of cars that are going to be transported somewhere. … That was what I did as a brakeman and you'd have to go from one track to another, which might entail manually throwing a switch. Then, I became a fireman and fired what they called the yard goat which is a small steam engine.

SI: Can you describe the level of activity in the railyard during World War II. Was it hectic?

FS: It was busy, because they were manufacturing ammunition and weapons and so forth to get to the existing troops. … We were busy constantly. We had no free time, making up trains and moving cars around to be loaded and unloaded and so forth.

SI: Were you on a rotating shift cycle? Did you work a certain eight hours for two weeks and then shift to a different schedule?

FS: No, not that I recall. I remember, we did a lot of night work, but we also did day work. I really don't recall.

SI: Did you notice a change in the composition of the workforce? Were they bringing in more women or non-traditional workers?

FS: Well, none in the railroad aspect of it, no. It was all men. I don't recall any women being involved in that.

SI: What about the people who worked in the Arsenal itself, in the ammunition manufacturing end?

FS: I had no idea. I was never inside. I was always out in the yard.

SI: Were there any accidents or explosions?

FS: Well, no explosions. One time, we threw a wrong switch and the car went off the tracks. There's a way you could get it back on without having a crane come in. No damage was done, no physical injuries to anybody. Another time, I prevented an accident by seeing that the switch was in the wrong position. I jumped off the flatcar and was able to throw the switch to let the train go ahead without any damage. … The only danger was at night, from the guards, because, when you're a brakeman, you're walking around with a lantern, which signals the engineer what to do. … The guards were sometimes nervous and they'd challenge you. You were busy; you didn't hear him. You could have gotten shot then. … Usually, somebody else was paying attention and alerted us.

SI: I am more familiar with Raritan Arsenal. Several people that we have interviewed worked there. They talked about heavy security during the war and fears of saboteurs getting into the arsenal. Did you have similar concerns?

FS: Oh, sure. It was a well-guarded place.

SI: Did you have to get any kind of security clearance?

FS: I would assume so. I honestly don't know.

SI: Was it difficult to keep the railroad aspect going with people leaving for the service? You left to join the Marines.

FS: No, because most of the crew was, like, my dad's age, in their forties or fifties at the time. I was a young whippersnapper.

SI: You were the exception. Do you remember rationing and how that affected your life? Did it affect your life at all?

FS: Yes, it did, after I got out of the service. I can remember, we had our coupons for meat and things of that nature, but, obviously, it had to be done. It didn't affect me, that I can recall.

SI: You do not remember any shortages or having to wait in line?

FS: No, no, I don't. My memory could be failing, too.

SI: Do you remember hearing about any black market activity? Was that a topic of the day?

FS: Well, yes, there was always rumors around, that so-and-so could get you such-and-such, but I never was involved with it. … It existed, but in name only, as far as I knew.

SI: Before you went into the service, how closely did you follow the news of what was happening, particularly in the Pacific, but also in Europe, such as the fall of Wake Island and the invasion of the Philippines?

FS: Fairly close. … I was interested in the effect that things were having on our country and I was so upset when Wake fell and the Philippines were invaded and Corregidor collapsed. … It was scary in a sense, because, in the back of my mind, I always felt that we would dominate through American ingenuity and power. Of course, we didn't have the fanaticism the Japanese had, but, in a way, it was scary.

SI: When we look back on World War II, we think of it, overall, as being good, because of the victory and so forth, but that impression kind of glosses over the early period, when things were not so clear.

FS: Things weren't very good. You know, the fleet was decimated prior to World War II. There was a shortage of funding. I remember a Fox Movietone newsreel where troops in Louisiana were training with broomsticks. You can't compare a broomstick to a rifle, but that was probably the economics of the time.

SI: Can you tell us about the process of actually enlisting in the Marine Corps? You mentioned that you had to get your parents' permission. What about going down to the recruiting center and being sent off to Parris Island.

FS: Sure. My mother wouldn't give her permission to enlist in the Marine Corps, so I worked on my father. … When I was seventeen, I went down and enlisted, I believe the same month I was seventeen, I wasn't called to go to boot camp until December. … It was just a mass of people. Then, you were sworn in and because I was from Brooklyn, although I enlisted here in Albany, they put me in charge of the group going from Albany to Penn Station. … They gave

me the car fare for the troops, which I think was a nickel at the time, [laughter] to ride the subway. … I really didn't know much more about New York City than the people from Albany, but we got down there and we went to Parris Island. … That was an immediate rude awakening, where we met our DIs. … I can remember, our senior DI was an old China Marine who, behind his back, we called him "Lowbutt Lamb," because he was sort of short and rotund. To his face, we called him, "Sir." [laughter] … I had difficulty the first moment I was there; they lined us up and I couldn't keep in step. … The other DIs and "Lowbutt Lamb" fingered me to count the cadence and called me "Chicken," because I was the youngest kid there. … It was a hectic training schedule and it literally did two things; it separated the men from the boys and instilled the pride in the Marine Corps in you. You either loved the Marine Corps or you hated it. There was no in-betweens. I also had trouble learning the manual of arms, because I was moving my head when you go from right shoulder to left shoulder arms. … One of the DIs took out a bayonet, put it near my neck, like that, and had me do the manual of arms and he said, "Now, boy, if you get stuck, it's your fault." I didn't move my head, which is very noticeable, when you watch a company or a drill team, if somebody moves their head when they're doing the manual of arms. It's very, very noticeable. They were some of my instant memories of boot camp.

SI: You said you enlisted up here in Albany. Why did you enlist here instead of in New York City?

FS: Because I lived here. I was working on the railroad with my father.

SI: The railroad was up here.

FS: Yes, the Watervliet Arsenal is up here.

SI: I thought it was near Brooklyn.

FS: No.

GW: When you joined the Marine Corps, did you sign up with any friends or did you just sign up by yourself?

FS: Myself. Literally, when I lived here, I had no friends, no young friends. The people I knew were just the railroad people.

LD: While you were working on the railroad, did you stay in touch with any of your friends from Brooklyn?

FS: … I didn't. It was afterwards, when I was in the Marine Corps. I knew one friend of mine went to West Point. Another one was drafted into the Army and we did have a little correspondence, but not while I was here.

SI: Parris Island is designed to be a shock to your system when you get there, but in general did you have any difficulty going from living with your parents to being on your own and going from civilian to military life?

FS: No, I didn't. In a way, it's frightening, but you quickly get acclimated or you don't and, if you don't, you're in trouble.

SI: It sounds like you had some independence before going into the service. Most of the people we interviewed were living with their parents, then, they were thrown into the military, whereas you had a job, and had traveled a bit. Do you think that helped?

FS: I'm sure it did, yes.

SI: What were your first days at Parris Island like? What were the first things that happened that made you say, "Well, this isn't going to be easy?"

FS: The first formation after you get over there, I don't know if we went by truck or by bus, … they call out your name to fall in and assign you to a platoon and they immediately start leaning on you. I don't mean that in a derogatory sense. They're asserting their authority as a DI to make you a qualified Marine. … It begins the minute your feet hit Parris Island. My incident was the memory of not being able to count, keep in step, and making me count cadence.

SI: Today, the standard image of a Marine that comes to mind is that of a young, clean cut person in uniform. However, from what I understand, in the 1940s and 30s, the image was of a rough around the edges old salt. Your DI sounds like the standard old salts. Did you have that impression? Also, how many of those guys did you actually see in the Marine Corps?

FS: Well, the DI who I refer to as "Lowbutt Lamb" was an old China Marine and two of the other DIs were longtime Marines. … In boot camp, I really didn't meet any other old-time Marines, until you got assigned to a unit, and most of them, at that time, were more than ten or fifteen-year Marines, probably.

SI: Did any of these older Marines share anything with you, like stories of what they had done? Had any of them seen combat?

FS: No, not that I can recall. Most of them were on a mission to make you a fighting machine.

SI: Can you tell us about the physical training that you had to go through at Paris Island and how difficult it was?

FS: Couldn't do it today, I assure you of that. [laughter] It was rigorous. We … got up early in the morning, when it was still dark, and I think you had to be in the sack by ten o'clock at night. … What the DI's favorite cry was, "There's nothing that we can't do to turn out at two minutes after ten." … Particularly, if you made a mistake and called your rifle a gun, you were made to do an exercise; … [laughter] not in front of women.

GS: How would you characterize your training? Some guys trained with broomsticks. Many people said that they did not see a rifle until they got shipped out.

FS: Well, marksmanship is part of being a Marine, so you shoot a rifle. I think you draw your rifle the same day you draw your uniforms, the first day you're there. … One important thing was that you had to memorize the number of your weapon. … Then, after you go through somewhat of a basic infantry training, right face, left face, about face, squads and platoons and so forth, you go to the rifle range and you qualify. … If you qualified, … marksman, expert, I believe there were three. If you qualified for expert, I think you got some extra money in your pay, I don't recall, … and then, you had to do KP duty for two weeks after that. …

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

SI: Please, continue.

FS: Then, you were shipped out to an outfit and began training all over again, but more advanced training, … to prepare you for combat.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you were singled out for being the youngest person in your training unit. What did that entail? Was it difficult being the youngest person?

FS: No. It wasn't difficult. I wasn't worldly, like some of the other guys, you know. We had some real old guys. They were twenty-eight or twenty-nine, you know. … I was seventeen. It's a brotherhood.

SI: What was it like to interact with these people from all over the country and people of different ages and backgrounds? What do you remember about them?

FS: Not really too much. I remember the fact that one of the men in my platoon was from Gloversville, Joe Querbes and he had a brother who was also a Marine. … That brother was killed, I believe in New Britain. … Then, there was a fellow from Amsterdam, which is also up here, not too far away. I think his name was Ralph Downs. My platoon leader was David Andre Brewster. He was a Second lieutenant and his father was a brigadier general in the Marine Corps. … Our platoon sergeant was a fellow who was probably in his late thirties or early forties. We called him "Pappy" or Sergeant Peck. … One of the other platoon leaders was a[n] FBI agent who, I recently, a year or so ago, reading something, found out, … lived down in Louisiana and had retired. Our captain, the company commander, was a big, tall drink of water. His name was Captain Joslin and, I think, he was eventually killed on Iwo [Jima]; I'm not sure. Brewster, … I have no idea where he is. Another fellow from Brooklyn that I knew, I met in the Marine Corps was a fellow by the name of Sam Mare. … He was in the 23rd Marines, I believe. His company commander, whose name I don't recall, got the Medal of Honor on Iwo, I believe, also.

GW: Do you remember being struck by the different cultural attitudes of people from different areas of the country or did everyone just seem "American"?

FS: Well, in a sense, yes. We had a fellow come into the platoon who was, to use the expression, a hillbilly and could he shoot, oh, man. … Other than that, I don't think so.

SI: How well did you do at marksmanship? We saw in the picture that you had a marksmanship badge.

FS: Yes. I have no idea what that was. I guess I did all right, but I made one fatal mistake. I was chewing gum on the range and the range officer came up to me and said, "What are you chewing, boy?" and I said, "Gum, Sir." He said, "We don't chew gum in the Marine Corps. Spit it out." He rubbed sand in my hair.

SI: You mentioned that it was at this time that they really instilled the Marine Corps *esprit d'corps* in you. Can you specify what did that? Were there any actions that they took that made you feel like you were a Marine and you are part of the unit or that you were part of this long tradition?

FS: I don't think it's any specific thing. I think it's the culmination of everything. I even used to iron my shoelaces. I used to iron my shirts. We'd put two creases in the front, where the buttons are, and three creases in the back. It's something you assimilate; it's an intangible that you assimilate. It's the only way I could think to describe it.

SI: After you graduated from Parris Island, where were you sent for your advanced training?

FS: I was sent to a casual company at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. … While I was in that casual company, which is where a lot of people are assigned while waiting to be sent to permanent station, I was doing MP work. … I was on duty at a movie theater one time and some Marine came along out of uniform and I stopped him. … He had just come back from Guadalcanal and his gear hadn't caught up with him, so, I let him go. … Then, I was assigned to F Company, Second Battalion, 25th Marines, and that was gradually built up as all the younger guys came into complete the Forth Division. … Then, we went by transport through the Panama Canal, which I stayed up all night to watch, because it was interesting, to San Diego, California, where we boarded transports and motor transports and went up to … Oceanside, California. I can't even think of the name of the camp now. I'll think of it, eventually, Camp Pendleton.

SI: Was it a Marine facility?

FS: Oh, yes. As a matter-of-fact, it was right near where Ronald Reagan has his ranch.

SI: Please continue.

FS: We were in Las Pulgas Canyon. … I believe it was about thirteen miles from the main road. It was really a desolate area. The water for the showers was heated by solar heat and we'd be out on maneuvers and come back in and the first ones in the shower were the lucky ones, with the hot water. Everything else was cold. Camp Pendleton; we did a lot of training in there before we shipped out.

SI: Did you practice amphibious assaults?

FS: Oh, yes. I don't know how many times, I think, we attacked San Clemente Island, I believe it was … It was an interesting experience. The Higgins boats were the ones that we trained in, and then, the ones that we used on the invasions.

SI: They had switched to the Higgins by then. There were no older ones, where they opened in the back.

FS: No, no, this was the bow ramp. It went up.

SI: When you joined F Company, was it just forming or were you put into a unit that was already formed?

FS: It was forming. The whole division was forming at that time.

SI: What was done to create unit cohesion? I realize that part of it must be just a natural result of working together. What did you think of your lieutenant and your sergeants, your NCOs?

FS: Well, again, because of my age, I really didn't associate with the guys who played poker or smoked or drank or that. I thought very highly of my lieutenant and my platoon sergeant, Pappy Peck, I thought very highly of and very highly of our company commander.

GW: When you completed your advanced training, how prepared did you feel? Did you feel like you were ready to go to war?

FS: Oh, I thought I could win the war by myself, which was a big fallacy, although war, in itself, is basically limited, I think, maybe in the five feet on each side of you; just focus and try and stay alive.

SI: Either at Parris Island or at Camp Lejeune, was there anybody who just could not handle the training and had to leave or anybody who physically or mentally could not take it?

FS: Not that I recall in my group. I'm sure there were situations like that, but not in the camp, the basic platoon, I was in.

SI: What did you think of these new areas of the country you were visiting, like the South and California?

FS: I thought it was wonderful.

SI: Did you get to go on leave in any of these places?

FS: Yes, when I was in Camp Pendleton. I remember, it was Christmastime and it seemed very odd to have Christmas with no snow and I was lonely. I walked around, looking at houses and people enjoying themselves and getting a lot of Christmas spirit and I went in some gin mill. I

was under age, but they still served me. … I had a couple Tom & Jerries, celebrated Christmas that way.

SI: What is a Tom and Jerry?

FS: From what I remember, it's a thick drink that is sort of eaten with a spoon and, I guess, it has rum in it. I really don't know, but it made me woozy.

SI: When you joined the Marine Corps, was that your first exposure to drinking, smoking, gambling and more adult pastimes?

FS: Absolutely.

SI: You said you were not really that involved with them.

FS: No, never played cards. Well, I never played cards for money, never shot crap. I did smoke, mostly, though, a pipe. … I haven't smoked in forty-some-odd years.

SI: Your unit was training to go out in the Pacific in California. Were you given any specifics about what you were going to do, particularly as you got ready to go overseas?

FS: Well, you never knew where you were going, because of the secrecy thing. … I believe, from Pendleton, we went down to San Diego and, from San Diego, we boarded transports and went to Maui, in the Territory of Hawaii and that's where our rest camp was, which, at that time, was real, really beautiful, because it wasn't built up and we had a tent camp there. … We were getting ready to go out on an invasion, so, we went from Maui to Pearl. … While we were in the west lock, I believe it was, Pearl Harbor near Ford Island, we were on LSTs, there was an explosion and there were several of them tied up alongside each other. I believe that was on a Sunday, also, and we had to abandon ship and swim to shore and so forth. … It delayed the invasion of the Marshall Islands a couple of months, I believe.

SI: Was it an accident?

FS: I have no idea. I don't think it was sabotage, probably an accident. I don't even remember what we did after that, if we went back to Maui or what. … Then, we shipped out again, and then, we invaded the Marshall Islands. We went into Roi-Namur, which is in the northern part. The Army invaded Kwajalein, which was a much bigger island. My outfit went into Roi-Namur and there was an island off of there that was a radio station and we went in the night before and secured that, and then, the rest of the division invaded Roi-Namur and we were held in reserve and we started over to go to Namur, to assist the troops there, but they pulled us back. … Then, the kid I met from Brooklyn who was in our platoon was killed there, George Black. His father was an executive with the American Can Company. We went back to Maui, where they sent replacements in and built the troops back up again to combat strength. One day, I was called to go down to the Colonel's tent and thought, "Oh, boy, what did I do?" Well, they checked my service record and they found out I was a fireman on a steam locomotive. … There were a bunch of older men there, also, and they were all railroad men. … We were told that we were

relieved from all the training and duties. Our job was to light the boiler for the mess hall, so that the cooks could cook the meals. … All that entailed was lighting an oil-soaked torch, pushing a button and pushing the thing in, but, boy did we eat. The cooks took good care of us.

GW: While you were being transported, did you go in convoys or a single ship, convoys?

FS: Yes, convoys.

GW: Were there just transports or were there destroyers and other ships?

FS: Oh no, there's always battle groups. One of the most frightening experiences I had, I guess, was when we were leaving Norfolk to go down through the Canal. Our convoy came under submarine attack. … Of course, we're locked below. All the hatches are dogged down and the lights are off; just the battle lights are on. … You could hear the ash cans [depth charges] that the destroyers were throwing off toward the submarine and you're way down in the bowels of the ship. … That's scary.

GW: About how many men were on your ship?

FS: A lot. I have no idea. We also just didn't sit around. You had meetings and exercise routines. … When you are going to an invasion, they eventually explained to you where you were going and what beach you were going to land on and what support to expect and so forth.

GW: Do you remember how long it took to go from Maui to Marshall Islands?

FS: Not really, stopped at Eniwetok Atoll, which had just been taken shortly before that and some guys made raisin jack. I saw one guy walk off the side of the ship with homebrew.

SI: Going back to the incident where the LSTs exploded, can you tell us what you, specifically, were doing at that time, what you saw and what you experienced?

FS: Well, I heard a loud noise. I saw fire. … The ramp was down and I was looking to see what happened and the command came to abandon ship. … Some guys were up on deck, topside, with fire axes, trying to cut the cable, because there were some LSTs tied up together. … A lot of guys were hurt.

SI: Was there panic or people running to get off the ship?

FS: I'd say people were running to save the ship, no panic. People were scared, I was scared, made it to shore, though, and I don't swim, but I did.

SI: Did you have any gear on?

FS: No. I guess that was another thing that delayed the invasion, because rifles had to be reissued and packs and gear and so forth.

SI: Even before you got into combat, the experience with the submarine and this explosion of the LSTs demonstrated to you how dangerous war could be? Had you thought of that beforehand?

FS: No, I was a stupid kid, felt invincible. … I couldn't get over the pre-invasion bombardments. I didn't see how anybody could survive those. I thought it was going to be a cakewalk, but, certainly, it wasn't.

SI: You touched on this, but the Army, when they go into an invasion, they don't really tell their men too much. They do some training, but they do not give them specifics, whereas the Marines, it seems, gave you very specific information about where you are going to land and what you are going to do.

FS: Oh, sure, every unit has that. Well, the Army does the same thing and they did that in Europe, with Omaha and Red Beach and all that. Each unit has assigned to it a designated area. … I believe, when we went into Saipan, in the Marianas, we were on Red Beach 2 by Charankanda, a sugar mill. So, we knew where we were going and knew what our objective was; can't take a map out later on and try to find it.

SI: Before you were in combat, what kind of rumors were you hearing about where you were going or what would happen? Rumors seem to be a big part of military life.

FS: All the time. I don't think anybody ever, of the enlisted men, like myself, even heard of the Marshall Islands, let alone knew we were going there. There's always rumors going around, "You're going here, you're going there," but that's it. It's a rumor. … Then, maybe a couple of days before you're going in, they have platoon, company meetings and show you where you're going and you use mock-ups and photographs and there are airplanes and submarines taking photographs through the periscopes and so forth.

SI: Can you take us through this operation where you landed on this island just off Roi-Namur and took the radio station from the beginning, where you landed and what you did afterwards?

FS: Well, we went ashore, secured the island. … It's very close, you know; they're not that far apart. Then, we dug foxholes and waited for the next situation to occur and that occurred the next morning, when they put us on Higgins boats to go over, and then, pulled us back. … Then, we were assigned to be post troops down at Kwajalein Island, where the Army had been. … They expected a counter attack, so, we had to dig emplacements for defense, then. Also, we unloaded supplies. We were there, pretty much, I guess, close to a month, until the Army sent in what they called a defense battalion. Then, we went back to Maui and began the scenario all over again, … training and replacements, and so on, and so forth.

SI: Was there any resistance at this island off Roi-Namur?

FS: Very little, very little, but, on Roi-Namur, it was pretty heavy.

SI: Did they bombard this small island or did they just send in the troops?

FS: I assume they did, because most of the concentration would have been on Roi-Namur, as opposed to, I don't even remember the name of the island we were involved with. … I don't recall. …

SI: Were you shot at at all during that operation? Did you fire your rifle at all?

FS: Probably not. Before we went down to Kwajalein, though, there were other small islands that we thought were occupied, so, we waded across the shallow waters to those islands and secured them. … Again, I don't recall any enemy fire.

SI: What about on Kwajalein? Was there any action there?

FS: No, that was all secure. … We had a good time, considering the circumstances.

SI: I have interviewed one or two other Fourth Marine Division veterans and they said some of the things about Roi-Namur. They were on the main islands, but they expected a huge battle and it was over in three days. That kind of lulled them into this sense of, "Oh, this is what combat is," and then, when they hit Saipan …

FS: Different story, true.

SI: Can you take us through Saipan? What was going through your mind as you were heading towards the island?

FS: One of my memories, again, was "How could anything survive the naval bombardment?" When we went past those cruisers and tin cans [Editor's Note: a slang term for destroyers] and all that, seeing the brasses from the ammunition just laying on the decks, you know, heaps, how anybody could survive those was beyond my comprehension. … It was a rude awakening, because a lot of people survived and there was a lot of shooting back at you.

GW: Combat has got to be a life altering experience or very different from your training.

FS: The first thought I had is "You can get killed," and I'm Lutheran. We had a Roman Catholic chaplain, Father Hurley, who was one of the greatest men I've ever met in my life. He had the habit of, whenever you're on line, and in the Marine Corps and all the services, you're on line a lot, he would walk down the line and he'd grab you by the back of your neck with his two fingers and squeeze or he'd hit you on the back and call you rugged. … He was just a marvelous, marvelous human being. The last I knew, he had a parish some place in Minnesota or Wisconsin or something like that. [The] Marine Corps does not have chaplains. They do not have corpsmen. They are all on detached duty from the Navy and most of them aspire to wear the Marine uniform.

LD: Did religion play a large part in what happened to you when you were in combat? Did you pray a lot?

FS: Oh, yes, asking the Good Lord to keep me safe.

SI: Did you go to services while you were overseas?

FS: Oh, yes, yes, sure. They had church call on Sunday mornings, even on ships. Sunday mornings, they have church call. One memory I have of coming back was a burial at sea, people who died. … I'm trying to think of the hymn, … "Protect those in peril on the sea." … Then the ship's company and all the troops gather around and they say a prayer and up the board and the body is committed to the deep. That's been vivid in my mind for years. It's beautiful and moving and very sad.

SI: To go back to initial landing at Saipan, can you tell us about the process of getting into the Higgins boats and how you went in?

FS: Well, one thing they do is give you a good meal, usually steak, eggs and things of that nature, the morning of the landing. Then, you're lined up and there is a regular routine of who's going ashore and in what Higgins boat and so forth. … It's dark, climb down the cargo nets, which is also very chancy, if there's a rough sea and you're loaded with your gear and ammunition and rifle, go down. … Then, you circle around, usually for a couple of hours, and some guys get seasick being that the Higgins boat is much smaller and it's up and down and up and down. Then, the beachmaster sends you in and you go in and do your thing. I remember one thing, that as we were going ashore, there was a Navy SBD, I think, the gull-wing Grumman, got hit by enemy fire. The wing fell off and it seemed like just slow motion, that that wing was tumbling down out of the air. … The pilot did get out and the plane crashed. I could close my eyes and see that wing just coming down.

SI: Which wave did you land in? Was it one of the initial waves?

FS: Yes, I think we were in the first or the fourth wave. I'm almost implying, I think, the first.

SI: Were you taking fire when you hit the beach?

FS: Yes. … Our objective was to move inland and, I remember, we got to a certain point in heavy fire and there was a big tree and I hid behind a tree. … A tank came along, parked next to us and that drew a lot of fire. So, we encouraged them to move and they did.

SI: When you are thrown into this type of situation, does your training just kick in or do you have to get over the fact that you are being shot at?

FS: I believe your training is what saves you, helps you and that becomes automatic. You don't stop to think, really. That's where the training is so important.

SI: In the first few days, were you facing small arms fire or artillery fire?

FS: Both, and even friendly-fire.

SI: From the air or from short rounds?

FS: From ships, … the short round. You call in something and give the coordinates and, sometimes, they fall short.

SI: What was the first night like?

FS: Very scary. You dig in and, I imagine, you hear a lot of noises and you think each one is a potential enemy. You're always glad to see daylight.

SI: Were there any attacks the first night?

FS: Not that I recall, where I was.

SI: Approximately how far did you get the first day?

FS: I don't know the distance, but I'd probably say several hundred yards.

SI: I have been told that it was a standing order not to move at night, not even to go out to get people?

FS: Right.

LD: During combat, what was the attitude that was held towards the Japanese soldiers?

FS: Well, sure, it was pure hatred, because you either kill them or they kill you.

LD: Did the Marines train you to hate them?

FS: No, no. You were told that he was your enemy, but hatred, I don't believe so.

GW: I know that a couple of people have mentioned that, when they were training, even the sandbag figures that they used for bayonet practice were always Japanese looking, rather than German looking. It seemed like the military was subtly hinting that this is someone you should hate, getting you ready for it.

FS: Well, could be, you know, psychologically, yes. I don't recall that, though.

SI: How was the supply situation on Saipan? Were you able to get food and ammunition as you needed them?

FS: There was no problem, as far as I know.

SI: How close was the enemy during these operations? Would you be able to see them at all or were they just out there in the general area?

FS: Both. You could see them, … maybe snipers and troop movement, just like us, trying to take a position, maybe defend [it].

SI: Were you just a rifleman or did you have any other duties?

FS: I was a runner for the platoon commander, Second Lieutenant Brewster. If he needed help, he'd tell me to go find somebody or go down to the beach and do this or whatever.

SI: Was that your primary duty or did he just pull you off the line when he needed you?

FS: I was usually with him.

SI: How do you think Brewster reacted to the combat situation?

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Floyd Sykes on April 9, 2005, in Claremont, New York, with Shaun Illingworth …

LD: Laurie D'Amico …

GW: … and Glen Wyrovsky.

SI: We were just talking about Saipan. I was wondering how Lieutenant Brewster reacted to being in the battle.

FS: Calm and effective.

SI: Did you see anybody that could not adjust to combat, either in those initial phases or later on, after prolonged fighting?

FS: That happened on the Marshall Islands invasion. There was a fellow who didn't, couldn't stand up to it. … When we left for Saipan, he was left behind at Maui. … He went to Iwo and, I understand, on Iwo, he got either the Medal of Honor or the Navy Cross for falling on a grenade that was thrown into a foxhole with a bunch of guys.

GW: How long were you in combat on Saipan?

FS: Several days.

SI: About how far would you advance each day?

FS: Just, basically, short distances, I guess. I was injured and evacuated to a hospital ship and I went to Aiea Heights in Honolulu. Then from there I went to Bremerton Naval Hospital, in Washington, and then, from there, I went to St. Albans in Queens. Then I was assigned to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and I was discharged out of the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1944.

SI: Can you talk about what happened on Saipan?

FS: I really would prefer not to.

SI: How would you rate the medical treatment that you received?

FS: Top draw. We had a corpsman in our platoon who was an angel and took care of the troops. I was evacuated to a hospital ship and was laid on a table. … I thought I had lost my legs and the doctor said, "No, here they are, turned them up." … I knew he was just holding up dummy legs. Obviously, he didn't hold up mine. From Bremerton Naval Hospital, I was given leave and that's when I came East, until I was discharged. I was one of the guys that wanted to be a lifer and it was in the plan, I guess. I wouldn't have met my wife; we're married fifty-four years next month. …

GW: Were you able to receive letters or any correspondence while you were in the hospital?

FS: Yes. They had what they called V-mail. As an enlisted man, all your mail is censored, so that you don't give away any information, but that was postage free and all you had to do is write your name and information on your unit on it. … My father wrote me frequent letters that were wonderful.

SI: Was that a real morale booster, when you received letters?

FS: Oh, definitely, definitely. As much as you try to make a show of bravado, I guess you always miss your family and home and things of that nature.

LD: Did you notice anything that the Marines did to lift morale?

FS: Well, I don't think the Marines specifically did anything. There were USO shows and troupes that came around and entertained. I remember one; I can't think of his name. He was a marvelous banjo player and he was good, Eddie Peabody. I saw Bob Hope in Hawaii and he was terrific. He was with his routine and he had a bunch of attractive showgirls with him. I don't remember who they were, but he was good.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you ate K rations. Is that what you would eat in the field?

FS: Well, yes. We'd be on maneuvers and they'd set up cook stations and they'd, like, cook out in the field, but, usually, in combat, that was the meals, the K ration.

SI: Cold rations?

FS: Yes.

SI: No chance for a hot meal?

FS: No.

GW: When they gave you your rations, what exactly did that consist of? I hear that they included cigarettes.

FS: Yes, you know, think of a box of macaroni and cheese that's on the supermarket shelves today. It's about the same size. It's heavily waxed and in it was cigarettes, a very square, thick, heavy, maybe two inches long type of chocolate bar, cans of whatever the food was, toilet paper, which was a blessing, maybe gum or Lifesavers, something like that.

GW: Did they give you razors or a change of underwear at any time? When could you get something like that?

FS: You're supposed to carry enough ashore with you when you go on an invasion.

SI: Was the Army on Saipan while you were there?

FS: Yes.

SI: One of the most famous controversies of World War II is the Smith versus Smith controversy. Were you aware of that at the time?

FS: No. "Howling Mad" Smith?

SI: Yes.

FS: No.

SI: The old controversy was with the 27th Army Infantry Division. Was that after you left?

FS: Yes.

SI: In general, how did you view Navy, the Air Force, the Army, and any other services that you had contact with?

FS: I'd say everybody was a hero, in a sense. … Of course, always when we were in the States and going out on maneuvers and you pass an Army convoy, you'd always mock them and they mocked you and we called the Army "dogfaces" and we'd bark at them and they called us various names. … I just think, if you needed help, it didn't matter what branch of service it was, there was somebody that would come to assist you and, like the corpsmen, on detached duty from the Navy, they risked their lives more than anybody else to take care of somebody who is wounded.

SI: I have also read that the Navy left Saipan soon after the landing. They were supposed to stay in the bay, but, then, they left to intercept a Japanese force. I have been told that it had a morale effect on the people left on the island. Do you remember that at all?

FS: No, I really don't.

SI: I cannot remember if it was the First Battle of the Philippine Sea or what. I was just curious if you saw that or not?

FS: No. As far as I can recall, I can't remember seeing the ships out there. The hospital ships are interesting, in the sense that they're all painted white and they have wonderful names, *Solace* and Hope and they had a big red cross on the smokestack. That's my story, pretty much, hope it's of some use to you.

SI: It is, absolutely. Could we just talk a little bit about what you did after you got out of the service? First, the war was still on for half a year after you got out. I have heard from people who were not in the service or who were in the service later in the war that they would be accosted on the street by people saying, "Why aren't you in uniform?" Did you ever get any of that?

FS: Yes, that happened to me once. I was walking with a girl I knew and two soldiers came by and called me 4-F. … I got a little belligerent and the girl said, "Forget it, just keep on going," and I did. … I always thought, "These guys are probably new, (but didn't [see] combat themselves?)."

LD: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill at all?

FS: No. That was a great regret of my life, I didn't. I've taken a lot of courses over the course of years in connection with work. … I went and got a GED and passed that and I keep saying, "I'm going to go to college." … New York State has the highest state college [level] which you get life experience credits for and so forth, but I just never got up the gumption to go.

SI: Was there anything else like the GI mortgage or the 52/20 Club?

FS: Oh, yes. I was on the 52/20 Club, along with a fellow from Scouts that I knew. I got a job. I was on it for a while. Then, he got about the fiftieth week, I guess, and he realized, "Whoops, something has to give." So, he got a job and was trained as a professional chef. … Last I knew, he was doing very well for himself. Another fellow I knew became a horologist, a jeweler, and he was in the 23rd Marines, I believe. He was from Brooklyn, too, Sebastian Mare, and he went to work with Sears Roebuck. … I got a job. Then, I went to work for an insurance company and I met my wife.

SI: Did she work at the company also?

FS: Yes.

Muriel Sykes: And that was your lucky day.

FS: It sure was. I'll be the first to admit it.

SI: Was your first job at the insurance company or was it somewhere else?

FS: I was working with plastic, making signs, and that really wasn't for me. … A friend of mine from church, who worked for the insurance company, told me about it and I went over and I applied for a job. They hired me.

SI: Did you stay with that company?

FS: Oh, I was with them for quite a few years. Then, I got an offer to go to another company, then, another company and that went out of business. … Then I ended up with the company I was finally with when I retired in eighty-seven, I think.

SI: How do you think your experiences in the military shaped your life after the war or maybe helped in your business or anything like that?

FS: One of the negative effects, I think I was too hard on my children. I think, personally it was good for me. I am very proud to have been a Marine.

GW: I noticed that both of your children were not in the military. Was there any reason? Did you tell them not to?

FS: Well, no. One is a boy and one is a girl. My son, our son, is now fifty-one, so, in his age spread, there was no draft, nothing and that's one thing I believe in, universal military training. I think it's so important for people to have discipline, to have the experience of being in the service. It carries a lot of benefits over in life, male and female.

SI: It seems like your time in the service was the ultimate maturing process.

FS: I think so.

SI: What did you do between being discharged and getting this job making the signs?

FS: Bummed around, enjoyed my twenty bucks a week. That was a lot of money then.

GW: I know some revisionists have said that the atomic bomb was not necessary, but what were your thoughts when you heard about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

FS: I thought it was a blessing, because thousands of people on both sides would have been killed, thousands. The fanaticism of the Japanese is unbelievable. … I had a long problem with that for a long time, in the sense that I think you asked the question about hatred; maybe I did have hatred, but a Japanese woman, several years ago, walked into our church and she had no religious background whatsoever. … She became very active. Both she and her husband are very, very intelligent people. She does research for medicines and diseases and he's a university professor. They're back in Japan, now, for three years. … I realized that if I was going to deal

with her, I would have to change my animosity toward the Japanese and I had people pray for me to do that.

GW: All those years later, it was still there.

FS: No, not now but [back then,] yes.

SI: Did you have any trouble readjusting to civilian life?

FS: Not in the least, just floated around, trying to find out what I was going try to do. … Then, I was down in Brooklyn. I wasn't up here.

SI: Did your father continue to work at the Arsenal throughout the war?

FS: Yes, until the war was over and he came back to Brooklyn. I think he left the Arsenal, then he went to work in Todd Shipyards, I believe, back in Brooklyn.

SI: Do you remember where you were on V-J Day?

FS: No, I honestly don't, but I heard it was wonderful.

SI: You guys have any questions?

GW: Just one more. Did you notice any difference between people who had served and seen combat and those who had not seen combat, such as civilians who participated in the home front effort? Did you feel like there was a divide there, that you had maybe done more or been through something they could not understand?

FS: I think that's the second part, yes. I have a very good personal friend who was in the Navy, never saw combat. He was a photographer and he claims all he did was take pictures of dumb Marines who crashed airplanes. He was down at a naval training station in Florida and he says that to me, you know, because we break each other's thoughts. … I think there's a big divide between those who have been in combat and those who haven't been in combat.

GW: It strikes me that, out of eleven million people who served in the war, only a small fraction, less than a million, saw combat.

FS: Well, that's because of all the logistics and the support that's needed. I forget how many, I knew the figure one time, are needed behind in order to keep the one guy up front. Did you know Brooklyn contributed more guys to World War II than any of the other sections of the country?

LD: After the war, did you find a need to get involved in the veterans organizations or anything like that?

FS: Yes. For a while, I was involved with the Marine Corps League, … when we lived in Long Island. Then, I just got too involved with family and work and so forth and I haven't been in the VFW or the Legion or DAV or anything like that since. … I always wear my cover [a hat] Forth Marine Division, USMCR, something. That helps my wife find me when we go shopping because she looks for the red hat.

SI: Almost every Marine I have interviewed talks about the *espirt de corps* in the Marine Corps. Army veterans and Navy veterans are proud that they served, but they often do not think of themselves as soldiers or sailors, whereas you Marines think of yourselves as Marines until you die. Is there anything else? Is there anything we skipped over or anything you would like to put on the record?

FS: Well, I'd like to thank you for doing what you're doing, because, at the rate the veterans are dying; … I think that except for maybe you history majors, people have no comprehension of what went on. It was an entirely different world. It should be archived and be available, not only the people like yourself, but everybody.

SI: Thank you. Without guys like you telling your stories, this wouldn't be possible. I know it's difficult to talk about these things and we certainly appreciate that. If there is nothing else, we will conclude the interview.

FS: Okay.

SI: Thank you very much.

FS: Thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Sue Yousif 06/14/05
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 06/27/05
Reviewed by Floyd Sykes 8/05