

Norton Diamond

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Cohen: Okay, so we're here November 15th, 2019 with Mr. Norton Diamond who served as a medic with the 1897th Aviation Engineering Battalion during World War II in the Pacific Theater. And he began to describe what life was growing up on the West Side of Chicago.

Diamond: Yes, okay, as you asked before and we were interrupted so I am repeating. I grew up on the West Side 13th and Crawford Avenue. I went to Bryant School (William Cullen Bryant School grade school). From Bryant's, I went to Marshall High School [John Marshall Metropolitan High School]. That was with the district. I could have gone to Manley [Hugh Manley Career Academy High School] as well but most of my friends, on the West Side there, went to Marshall's so that's where I graduated from. After graduating, I went to Herzl Junior College. That's where it was at that point in time and because during the war [World War II] they converted [Herzl Junior College] into a training center for service personnel. I was drafted. I went to Salt Lake City Camp Kearns which was outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. I got my basic training there. I think I had eight weeks of basic training and from, during my training period they ... They're always looking for – to build, for people to volunteer for different jobs because they're always building different divisions of the service you know. So, while there the Sergeant came in and said, "They were forming a new engineering battalion and they needed medics. They need fourteen medics to fill the roster.

Cohen: You know, Sir...

Diamond: What?

Cohen: Maybe, before we go forward, can we go backward a little bit and then go back to the battalion?

Diamond: How, how far back do you want to go?

Cohen: Well, what type of kid were you growing up? What were your interests?

¹ Rhonda Diamond edited this interview to facilitate readability after reviewing the initial near verbatim transcript but the content has not been changed other than the removal of one comment not germane to this interview.

Diamond: Oh, well okay, that's a very good question because as far as my recollection is concerned, I had no hardships. My father was in business, he had a delicatessen. I used to get my twenty-five cents a week in allowance so as long as that came in, I was a happy camper.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs] ... and of course, then during the Depression, when the Depression became full, like for instance, '37, '38, '39... it was really bad then because and the reason why I said it was bad because I couldn't get my twenty-five cents of allowance.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs] But what happened was, I'm getting older. My father had a very good trade. He was a cutter and he worked in the tailoring business, so he always had a job. When I turned sixteen... well, that's not totally true. Before I was sixteen I was getting a little more of an allowance, you see, but when I turned sixteen my parents said, "You know you gotta go out and find-get a job. Because you're no longer going to get an allowance". So, I got a part-time job working at Goldblatts, GB, we called it, on Saturday mornings, Saturday all day rather, seven hours. My salary was two dollars and fifty cents for the day and that was the same as my allowance for the week.

Cohen: What did you do in the store?

Diamond: With that money?

Cohen: Or what was your work?

Diamond: Worked in the stock room. Well, you know okay, if I dated somebody and that was part of the money, I would take somebody, a young girl to the movies. Movies cost thirty-five cents, so it was seventy cents for the both of us and a nickel for a candy bar that we split in two.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: You know. You're laughing... [Diamond laughs] but this is all the way it was.

Cohen: When you were growing up was your family or your friends talking about the rise of Nazism in Germany, like were you aware of world events?

Diamond: Was I aware of... in a sense I was because my... grandmother had a brother living in Europe, in Munich, Germany and his name was Hermann Glasser. He was a

tailor there; he had a business. He was a very successful man, because from what my mother used to tell me he had owned a factory and had a big car and when they decided things were getting too bad for them to immigrate to the United States. Here he drives his car down to the dock to be taken aboard ship, sailing for the United States and they wouldn't allow him to take the car. All they gave him was ten dollars.

Cohen: Hmm.

Diamond: So, my uncle came to this country with ten dollars in his pocket.

Cohen: Wow.

Diamond: But having said that, I still got my allowance. I had no problems, got what I wanted. I didn't think much about it. I knew there was a war going on, but it didn't affect me. And then...

Cohen: Did you have brothers or sisters?

Diamond: Oh yes, I had two brothers. One died a couple of years ago, the middle one. My younger brother is still living. When I was seventeen, my mother had twin girls, so I have sisters living. One lives in California and the other lives in Texas. Correct, huh?

Wife: Arizona.

Diamond: Oh, Arizona I keep on saying "Texas".

Cohen: Okay, that's okay [Laughs]

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: At thirteen I was bar mitzvah, so...

Cohen: [Laughs]... So, the usual, the usual pattern.

Diamond: [Diamond laughs] ... That's right. That's true.

Talking about Pearl Harbor 7:13

Cohen: Where were you when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Diamond: That was on a Sunday morning. I heard that on the eight o'clock news, radio news, that Pearl [Harbor] was bombed. Then I heard President Roosevelt give a speech on the "Day of Infamy". Now, you know, a year or so before that the U.S. started a draft. Okay, all males who reached the age of twenty-one had to register because then they would be subject for call and the reason for this, of course, is because there was war in Europe. The U.S., our president always thought, possibly, he wanted to be prepared in the event if it affected us. That's when they initiated, the U.S. initiated the draft system, so all males when they became eighteen, they had to register. It could be called at any time. When I was eighteen, I was going to junior college. I already registered November of 1942, is when I turned eighteen 'cause I graduated from high school in '43, January. So I always knew I was going to go. A lot of them volunteered. I decided I wasn't going to volunteer. They were going to have to find me [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: But that's a joke. Maybe a poor one, but any how I went, I didn't have any qualms about it.

Cohen: Yeah, Yeah.

Diamond: My mother was unhappy about it; you know my parents. You know, what's funny about that when my mother, just a little side story: when I reported to the draft board to be taken by truck for training, you know, my mother was there to see me off and just before I got on the truck, you know to be taken, she gives me a big knife like this [gestures with hand], she says, "Protect yourself" [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs]... A mother's love [Laughs]

Diamond: A mother's love [Diamond laughs] ... That totally surprised me 'cause my mother was not like that.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: But she... I'm not exaggerating, and I carried this, you know, I mean I had it, but I lost it. The way I lost. The way I lost it, I use to do a lot of scuba diving, so I carried a knife. In case you get entwined, you know.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: When you're under water, you have something to cut yourself out of. I used to look for different things for people. I used to do some jobs for the fire department. If a car went under the water, you know, or if somebody drowned...

there was a drowning victim they would want me to go down and you know see if I could find the body.

Cohen: Oh.

Cohen: How did you get involved with this rescue work or diving all together?

Diamond: Oh, scuba diving?

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: I've always liked it. There was a TV. show with... What is the name of it? Do you remember? Sea World? Anyhow, it was all about diving. So, and then one of the parks here, Franklin Park? They had the big pool there. They were giving diving lessons in the pool and so I went, and I took their lessons. I became- at that point in time you didn't have to have a card to be certified. All you had to do was pay a dollar and a half, to get a tank and pay a dollar and a half for air and dive and have somebody teach you. And then once you could dive... the test I took in order to pass to get my "card" you might say was to go to one of the strip mines around Carbondale. You know, they're all filled with water and they're about thirty-five, forty feet. You go down to the bottom and then you come back up, but what you're learning then is that when you go down... you have to go down slowly or you have to come up slowly both ways. So, we would knot the rope every ten feet with the anchor at the bottom, okay. We'd go down... as long as the bubbles are above our heads your fine. You don't want to be sideways then the bubbles going this way [gestures with hands]. So you always look for your bubbles and then when you come back up you stop every ten feet for about thirty seconds and then you go another ten feet because you don't want to get The bends [decompression sickness]. You don't want to get a bubble in your blood stream because that forms nitrogen gases and you can die. You follow the rules everything is okay...

Cohen: So going back a little bit would you like to describe which courses you were taking at the Herzl Institute [Herzl Junior College]? What were you studying before you were drafted? What were you studying at...?

Diamond: At Marshall... at Herzl?

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: I was taking pre-med courses, algebra science... I took algebra, geometry. All the sciences, biology, zoology. That was at junior college... Anatomy.

Cohen: Did you have an ambition to study medicine?

Diamond: Yes, that's what I thought that I would do, and the reason why didn't go into that... You want to hear that?

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: Okay, it's because I had lunch with a fella one time, and he was going to optometry school and we had a three-hour lunch. He was talking to me all about optometry school. So, I said, "Gee, that's for me".

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: So I came home, I quit Herzl and I went to optometry school.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: And I took an accelerated course. In those years, you could get an optometry degree in twenty-four months. Two and a half years actually. It's broken up. Classroom study was eighteen months and then six more months we went elsewhere to take lab courses. And then I took a course as an optometrist, I wanted to know how to grind lenses. So I learned how to do that because when I opened my office, I had a little bench lab as an optometrist. That's what I was in my other life.

Cohen: My favorite people are optometrists. My husband, I have a dear cousin-two dear cousins who are optometrists so that's good [Laughs]. So, but I assume you went to study optometry after you returned from the war.

Diamond: Oh yes after the service.

Talking about being drafted and training 16:02

Cohen: So when were you drafted and how-when were you drafted into the Army?

Diamond: March sixteenth I believe of 1943.

Cohen: And do you remember where you had to go or how it worked?

Diamond: Yes, Fort Sheridan is where they drove me to. From Fort Sheridan they sent me for my basic training to Camp Kearns, Utah outside of Salt Lake City. From there I went to... Indianapolis, Indiana for my medical training as a medic.

Cohen: So would you like talk a little bit more about-let's start with your basic training at the Kearns Utah Air Force Base, like what was a typical day like?

Diamond: [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Okay if you do k.p. [kitchen police] which is kitchen police work... I'm doing it backwards. They wake you up at 3:30 in the morning to go to the kitchen, okay, to start cooking to start cooking to start preparing breakfast for the soldiers who are going to get up at five. Some get up at five some get up at six depending upon their duty that they had that day. And then after breakfast, you have to scrub the floors, scrub the tables, they're wooden tables like park benches- park tables. You scrub them with soap and water. The soap was that lye soap that they used to sell years ago during the Depression eras and people used to make that at home to save a few pennies. We'd have to scrub up the floor and the tables, pots and pans. There were no dishwashers there so everything was done by hand and when you're finished with that, it's almost lunch time. So now you have to start setting the table again.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: So it's a vicious circle and then you do the same thing for dinner. As an inductee you have to do k.p. for one week. Okay, that's part of your training. Now, if you do k.p. for an infraction like, for instance, if you're doing the barracks at twelve o'clock at night and if you come in at 12:02 you're already on k.p. because the night sergeant checks all the beds, he stands outside of your door of the barracks. Twelve o'clock strikes his watch he walks right in checks all the beds. If there's an empty bed you get a demerit. When you come home, he's there to meet you and he says, "Okay, report to the kitchen at 3:30 in the morning". And you came in, at one. [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: It didn't matter [Laughs]

Naval plane crash at 19:03

Diamond: But you're a young guy, so you can do these things. You're eighteen and a half, nineteen years old, you know. I worked already on something twenty-four hours straight. There were two airplanes landed at the same time from opposite directions, "Boom!" And we worked twenty-four hours to extract the bodies and wrapped burns, you know, with gauze, Vaseline gauze strips and what not.

Cohen: Oh wow.

Diamond: They were naval planes. I was in the service then. It was a bad decision at... the people in charge of the landing of the planes you know. Airport authority. They allowed a plane to land-two planes to land from opposite directions and they came... see, they didn't see each other because where they hit the grade was a little bit higher. The beginning of the runway was a little bit lower, so they were coming together landing, "Pfft".

Cohen: Where was this and which island or--?

Diamond: It was on Okinawa. I think it was on Okinawa, yeah.

Cohen: Wow, ok.

Basic Training 20:44

Cohen: And going back to basic training, what did you learn?

Diamond: They teach you how to march in step. Some people have two left feet, so they have to learn how to go forward with one left foot and then the right foot and you walk in a cadence. They teach you – you do drilling, marching drilling every single day for about an hour and then they teach you how to... you have a rifle. You have to know all about this rifle. You have to know how to clean it, you have to know how to take it apart blind folded and put her together blind folded because what happens if you're in the dark and you have your rifle someplace-you're someplace and you're rifle jams. So you take it apart to clean it and it's dark and you don't have any light. So you have to know how to put it together.

Cohen: By feel?

Diamond: They teach you how to do this. They also teach you how to shoot a gun, learn how to hold it, how to press the trigger, how to aim it. They tell you, "There's a target there's a red spot in the middle. That's what you're aiming for". Some guys, you know they, "Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang" and they go up to the target and they say, "There's no holes in the target". That means they didn't hit the target. They're all over the place. Didn't know how to hold their gun properly and the reason was when you shoot an Enfield rifle, it's a nine-pound rifle. It's quite heavy and the recoil is quite a bit. So you pull it, "Ooh" -- you know.

Cohen: So you recoil off target you... yeah.

Diamond: Yeah, you get off target

Cohen: Did you find it hard to learn how to use a rifle or anything else?

Diamond: No, no. I was a boy scout. No I wasn't a boy scout.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Hobbies at 22:48

Diamond: I used to like-I used to read about those things in popular mag... in "Popular Mechanics". One of my magazines, by the way, that I used to read as a kid. You know what that magazine is?

Cohen: Yeah, do you want to talk about what you liked about "Popular Mechanics"?

Diamond: No, it's not that... I don't know. It had cameras in there. I used to be a camera buff. I built my own enlarger out of an old camera. Took it-tore it apart and made a... it was one of those bellows cameras [an accordion like camera], small ones. After I did it, I was sorry because it would have been a very good antique to give to the museum. See, I didn't have the money to buy an enlarger. I didn't want to spend the money so I made an enlarger out of it, but I can only enlarge it this big [hand gesture] from that [hand gesture] size print, you know like that. So after I had that a while, I decided that this is not for me. I bought a Federal. That was the name of the enlarger that was sold at that point in time where I could blow up a picture like that [hand gesture].

Cohen: [Laughs] that was worthwhile, yeah.

Diamond: Because, speaking of saving money, I made my own print box. You have a box, you have a lid with hinges, and you put an electrical wire through it with a socket and you put a bulb in here-in it. Now, the print boxes that they sell have a timer on it. So you set the timer and when it goes off you turn the light off but when I used to do it with my print box that I made I used to go, "1,001 1,002 1,003 1,004 1,005 off".

Cohen: You would do your own count.

Diamond: I did my own count; everything came out perfect.

Talking about being a medic and medic training at 24:39

Cohen: So it must be a little bit of what you mentioned before we started the interview. I think you mentioned that you had two choices. Your first choice was to become a mechanic and the second choice was becoming a medic within the services? Do you want to talk a bit about that?

Diamond: Well, I didn't get my mechanic job. They put me in... I became a medic. They sent me to school. They put me in a battalion for hospital training, okay. I was being trained to be a medic. I was classified a surgical technician. A surgical technician according to The Army records is an 8-6-1. I remember.

Cohen: [Laughs]...That was MOS [military occupational specialty].

Diamond: That was my MO [military occupation] that's correct. My training was such that I could assist a surgeon in an operating room setting.

Cohen: That's very impressive.

Diamond: My training was in the event that somebody had an appendix-appendicitis attack and they were in such extreme pain and there were no doctors round, I would be able to cut them open, take that appendix out and sew 'em back up.

Cohen: Was this the highest level of medics other than people who already were trained physicians?

Diamond: Yes, that's below a general prac... yes oh yes, yes because there were other medics who didn't have the same training I had.

Cohen: Would you like to talk about your training as a medic?

Diamond: Well, I had all the sciences, and this is an accelerated course, and I had pharmacology. That was not intense just a few drugs that I could use. Sulfurs, you know but anyhow... oh, I could treat... I had three pneumonia cases that I took care of. They didn't want to go to the hospital [Norton laughs] so I took care of them. I would see them every three hours, take their temperatures in my outfit. They just didn't want to go to the hospital- 'cause I had this training; see I knew what to do.

Cohen: How did you learn how to handle diseases like pneumonia or malaria?

Diamond: Well, you read a book and you learn what has to be done. You memorize it, I mean keep it in your mind. You try to picture things like this, you know. Yeah, a guy came in one day in the dispensary and his finger was dangling. He said, "Can you sew me up"? I said, "I'll have to send you to the hospital". He said, "I don't want to go to the hospital". I said, "Okay, sit down" and I sewed him up. I got a suture, I got a curved needle, a hemostat, sterilized it all, threaded the needle, sewed 'em up. Put a band aid and I said, "Come back tomorrow".

Cohen: Wow.

Diamond: "I'll check it out"

Cohen: So you had a lot of responsibility?

Diamond: Oh yeah. I used to go on ds service that means detached service. D-S detached service. When our battalion would be elsewhere on the island or one island building an airstrip, they need a medic around. You know, to take care of whatever happens. These are all welders. If there is an accident of some kind, I have to be there to do the first aid. I'm the first person that's responding until we can send them to the hospital, you see. So, most of the time nothing happened and when I had night duty [Diamond laughs]. That's another thing that I used to do-had a lot of fun. I didn't have anything to do so, I used to take this little tractor and race it up and down the airstrip.

Cohen: [Laughs] Something entertaining.

Diamond: [Diamond laughs] just something to do [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: I know that this is a general question over all of your service, but were you generally operating alone or were you with other medics or doctors?

Diamond: There were fourteen medics. If I go...assigned with a battalion with a company or squad to go someplace, to do something, I'm alone it's me.

Cohen: What would be a scenario where there would be a few of you?

Diamond: A few?

Cohen: Yeah

Diamond: In our tents, in our dispensary.

Cohen: Oh, I see, but each person, each medic was assigned to a different squadron or...

Diamond: Each medic...all... there were fourteen medics. We all had the same kind of... knowledge-education-training.

Cohen: I think you said the training for the training for that was a Fort Benjamin Harrison?

Diamond: Correct. Outside of Indianapolis, Indiana.

Cohen: That's right, and I think you had mentioned in the pre-interview questionnaire that you were taught that you would function independently. How did the

instructors convey this? What did the instructors...how did they train you that you knew, "Okay, I gotta be able to take care of it".

Diamond: Okay,...when you first are sent to get this training, you know, you talk to an advisor-you talk to a person, you know, he gets your education level and I guess it's like an aptitude test of some kind or maybe he gets a feel of what kind of an individual you are. If you're a dunce, well then, you go someplace else. If you have some kind of intelligence, then you're qualified, okay. So, you know, I... I don't know, I liked doing that, see, so when I got the job to do it, I did the best I could. And... I... I went from... you know... when you're in a medical group attached to a big battalion, there are very few medics. Maybe there are fourteen-fourteen of us. So they had two-two PVTs, that means private, three PFCs, private first class, they had maybe five T-5s, corporals, they had two sergeants, one staff sergeant, one tech sergeant, one guy in charge of all of us, okay. Now if everybody does their job and everybody does a good job and everybody-nobody gets into trouble, you stay at the same level. There's nowhere to go unless you transfer out. Now sometimes there's an opportunity to go to OCS, Officer's Training School. Now the only people who had that opportunity was the tech sergeant or the first sergeant...to go to Officer's Training School to become a first lieutenant. Now, when you become a first lieutenant, in the service, you have to buy all your uniforms, you pay for it. A first sergeant, tech sergeant, a master sergeant, which knows much more than a first lieutenant, gets everything furnished, so a lot of these guys spent their whole career as tech sergeants because they get a fantastic retirement, they can live on base. The Army takes care of them for the rest of their life.

Cohen: And what was your rank?

Diamond: My rank was a corporal. I couldn't go any higher.

Cohen: Sounds good.

Diamond: Our staff sergeant couldn't go any higher. He came from someplace else; you see. They sent a staff sergeant to be in charge of us. Our sergeant... all of us were put together, coming from different areas of the Army because that's what they were forming, and they asked for volunteers and all these guys volunteered apparently.

Cohen: [Laughs]... Including yourself [Laughs]

Diamond: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah, so after that was that when you went to the Westover field in Massachusetts [Westover Air Force Base] Okay, I wasn't quite sure about this,

maybe you could help me out? I think I was reading that the 1897th Aviation Engineering Unit was formed in Westover field, Massachusetts. Were you physically there too or did you join up with them at a different...?

Diamond: I phys-I was there, yeah.

Cohen: Yeah, and what type of training was going on there?

Diamond: I went through- I had regular Army training Air Force training. Marching, drilling. When I say train, that's what it amounts to. Learning how to shoot a gun, you know, target practice... but mostly marching [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: Mostly marching [Laughs].

Diamond: The purpose of the KP and the cleanup duty and KP which is kitchen police and, you know when you get your basic training there are certain things that the new recruits do. And they walk around the area and they-with a coffee can and they fill it up with butts, cigarette butts that were dropped so we did.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: That's discipline and you know you gotta pick up all the butts. You can't miss 'em.

Cohen: How did you find it? Was it easy or hard to adapt to this very disciplined...?

Diamond: Ya know it's hard to adapt if you don't want to adapt but... I'm there. I'm gonna make the best out of it, that I can out of it. And if whatever... whatever comes my way that I can take advantage of, to better my situation, I did it. That's why I volunteered to go to medics. [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: And then when I was working in the hospital, you work in the hospital you become an orderly and what you do is clean bedpans. Who wants to do that all day? Lot of guys didn't mind doing that. They didn't have to think. Take a bedpan from underneath a guy and clean it and hang it up on a rack, go to another bedroom take another bedpan and hang it on a rack. All day, except for a time he has to march.

Cohen: [Laughs] No but sounded as if where you could use your head you preferred to think, and to learn and to do.

Diamond: Yeah

Embarkation at 37:14

Cohen: Yeah...so after Massachusetts when and where did you ship out from in order to get to New Guinea? Like where did your boat leave from?

Diamond: The one word-one town comes into mind. There's a town called Pennsylvania, California. And that's a disembarkation. Not disembark-embarkation point. That's where I went and there were thousands of soldiers there, thousands, going someplace overseas.

Cohen: Where you there a long time until you embark...

Diamond: No two weeks and then my ship came-my ship was ready for me--

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: And I-and the battalion I was with boarded the ship and we were on the top deck, you know, and they said, "Okay guys, I'm gonna show you where you sleep". So we walked into the whole belly of the ship, all the way down to the bottom, and all these bunks are there. There were two, four-six bunks high.

Cohen: Six bunks high?

Diamond: Yeah, and if you-and if you are lucky and you get to one that has a middle bunk that's empty, you take it. Otherwise you get the bottom one, if you're the last one in or the top one isn't too bad but then if you are not a sound sleeper you might roll-fall out of the bed, see, but in the middle you don't have far to fall.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Seriously, there were guys falling out of the top bunk. And you know when they started too- they started to put little rails on the top bunks later on because that's what was-that's where the rails came in, that's the reason for it. People were flying out of there bunks.

Cohen: Well...

Cohen: Yeah...were you treating people for injuries or anything else on the ship itself? Were you—

Diamond: Yes, Yes. I remember one day I was called to Camp Kearns after my basic training, no this is not Camp Kearns... it was over Indianapolis at school. We got a new battalion coming in. They were about... well many battalions, but one day we inoculated 1500 soldiers and that's what I was doing. They had lines all day

from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening. Just running through in between us. And, you know, you were giving inoculations and I was on one side; I would grab one and the other-my-another soldier was on the other side to give 'em a different shot. They are getting two shots at the same time. So, you know, I looked at him pushed the needle in, he'd look at me push the needle in at the same time. See so then the guy, he didn't know what was coming [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Because some guys fainted after getting a shot.

Cohen: Oh.

Diamond: Oh yeah

Experience on ship 41:14 and the USO

Cohen: So what was it like on the ship? How did you and the others pass the time?

Diamond: Okay, we all had KP duty. In other words, we were on a troop ship and the kitchen, the galley, where we ate, the mess hall-was a large mess hall and after every meal, it had to be cleaned. So instead of having the sailors, that would normally do this, when there were know know... when there weren't any Army troops being shipped someplace they would clean everything but we're there so we would scrub the floor on our hands and knees, clean the tables, walk the dishes, pots and pans and by the time we're through we have maybe an hour to rest. And then we had to eat dinner, they had to- we have to serve dinner, starts all over again for a whole week, you know, a whole week. It's... Nobody liked k.p. duty, but it's something we had to do and one thing about KP though when you're in the States. If you do k.p. and, you know you're not on-board ship going from one ship to another, you get the weekend off. So you go to town, you relax, I used go to the USO [United Service Organization] because I liked to dance a lot and I used to spend my whole weekend at the USO. See I was not bar hopper, then. [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: I'm still not a bar hopper.

Cohen: But you like dancing?

Diamond: Yeah, I liked to dance a lot. So that's where I spent my time with a group of guys and gals, I mean we were all very good friends, we were all pretty fair dancers,

and we all looked forward to seeing each other on the weekends. And then after it was all over with at twelve o'clock, the person in charge of the dance, we used to call her the house mother, she would blow the whistle, you know. Okay, everybody would look up, oh it's twelve o'clock and she would come out in the center and said, "Okay guys you get over there and you girls, get over there". And then we're all separated, and she looks to see if there's all the girls there and all the guys there. And then the trucks pull up in front of the entrance and then says, "Okay guys..." "No, Girls first. File out, you're gonna be taken back-taken home", you see.

Cohen: Yeah, so was this at the time that you were in Indianapolis?

Diamond: Yes

Cohen: That the USO dances were held or was it els...

Diamond: There were USO's all over the country.

Cohen: But the ones you went to like dance where...

Diamond: Yeah, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, and...I went to a USO here in Chicago when I was-just before I was gonna be discharged and I wanted to see what the Chicago USO looked like. Oh enormous! One big ballroom, enormous. And yet if you go to a USO, they have people working vol-these are all volunteers and what they do is...well let-let talk about what happened to me in Indianapolis. I befriended this lady, see here I'm only a nineteen-year-old and this older lady came up to me, she's thirty-five years old, ya know [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Most women were about that age. Not quite forty yet, they weren't twenty years olds, they were usually in there thirties to be a USO worker because they wanted a mature-more mature women to be able to handle eighteen and nineteen-year olds, okay. I mean, after all, these kids have parents and parents expect their kids to be taken care of, seriously. That might be an exaggeration, but it's true that's what they're there for and they-they, because if you have a family visiting you, you go to a USO worker and they'll provide housing for them. See, they try to help them get around. I met this lady, she was very nice, she invited me to her family-to her home for a weekend and she had a daughter and a son who were a little bit younger, they weren't draftable age yet, you see. And they gave me the attic bedroom, very nice, very nicely furnished. And... they took me up at the USO dance, you know, and this was practice. A lot of people would invite soldiers to their homes.

Cohen: Yeah, show hospitality.

Diamond: Home cooked meal, they'd give'em a homey atmosphere, ya know. It's altogether different than the basic-barrack atmosphere, ya know. Bunch of guys and doesn't feel right. And so, that was a nice experience. Other than that I went through my basic and I went through school, went to California, went overseas.

Cohen: Just a little question, were the girls of the dances part of the women's auxiliary services, like the WAAC [or WAC] [Women's Army Auxiliary Corps] or the WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service] [for the Navy], the girls who...

Diamond: Was that part of it?

Cohen: Were the girls who were dancing, were they apart of the WAACs or the WAVES?

Diamond: No, no not all. The WAACs, the WAVES were an Army... organization, they were the women's core of the Army, of the Air Force [i.e. Air Corps]. They served. The women in service, especially the WAACs, they did mostly... secretarial-office work. Now, they're were army WAACs that went overseas on the islands and did work-that kind of work, as well, but they were trained a little differently. Now, I meet a group of nurses, who were Army nurses, and they were overseas. They worked on field hospitals, which means that if somebody is wounded or gets sick, they go there first. They are given so called, "first aid" or they are treated. If they don't have to go any further, if they need further or if the need surgery or med...What they do at the field hospital is do emergency surgery. If they can be sent to a more modern, more equipped hospital setting they're sent there.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah.

Diamond: So ya know, I was visiting a soldier who was in the hospital. I knew him and I knew him from my basic training days, and I met the guy when they had a dance, he wasn't in my outfit, ya know. And the reason I met him and amongst other guys, he was a very good dancer. There was always a group of us-us I say, good dancers, we always stuck together, and the women always came to us when they came to the USO because after a while you wouldn't want to dance with a guy who has two left feet, ya know? You'll go over to me who has a right and left foot, but I don't know which is right, which is the left but that's beside the point, but, ya know I'm serious about this. This is the way it was, the girls would come to the dances, the fellas who... would make good friends with them. And ya you heard stories of guys marrying their... USO friend, ya know, that they met there. And a...but they try to keep it very impersonal because they knew and the girls knew this, that this might be the last time that they ever see 'em. So why should they get really involved? They'll be friendly, they'll give good conversation,

they'll be dinner date so-called, a dinner partner, a supper partner. And you can spend all day at the USO with this person. Now the people who run the USO frown on that. See, they don't want this kind of familiarity. You get too friendly with a gal, now it becomes serious. They don't want that.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. The production team like Brad, whom you met or Angel do the editing, so. Okay, okay so going back to where you were...okay, so you were talking before about the USO and trying to discourage serious relationships.

Diamond: Well they didn't want any serious relationships to occur because, as I said, that maybe the last these people would... the girls would see the soldier. And a so, you try to keep it impersonal, but the service was very good. Food was as good as it could be during time of war and of course, ya know, this is government sponsored so... well it wasn't originally, but they used to get help from the government.

Cohen: Okay, so going back a little bit. You were in Pennsylvania, California and you were on the ship to New Guinea and you described what it was like when you had the KP on the ship, oh that's right and I was asking you what were some of the pastimes when you were on the ship itself and also just what was it like for you? Were you seasick, was there a ceremony crossing the equator?

Diamond: Oh, no as a matter of fact, ya know when we were in the Pacific, we went through an area-basically our crossing was pretty calm, ya know. It took two weeks, but it was fine, ya know. On nice days I would lay out on the deck. The hold the big... it's not on the deck itself. It's on a area that there's actually, big doors that they open up to load cargo into the hold, okay. And it stood this high off the deck [hand gestures] and it was covered with tarp and when the guys- when I didn't have anything to do, I'd lay down on the deck and get a sun tan, ya see.

Cohen: Sounds good.

Diamond: And ya know just relax or walk around the deck. There wasn't much you can do...play cards, they had movies, ya know but not very often. The ship is rolling a little bit and if there's a storm. Oh, we had one storm were the waves were forty feet high and this is a fact. I was having lunch then, ya know, and where we eat you don't sit where we were eating on this ship. There were no so-called tables or benches. They had counters attached to the wall or attached to posts, to keep them stationary with a guard around. The table was probably about this long, ya know with a guard rail [hand gesture]. If the ship is tossing side to side, your tray doesn't fall off the counter. And I'm sitting there-standing there having my lunch and the ship rocks over the left...let's see, what's the right side again, of a boat?

Cohen: Oh, I don't know sorry.

Diamond: I know bow and stern, forward or... anyhow, the right side. But it tossed, it was at a forty-five-degree angle and I'm seeing this wall, this big wave, forty feet high, no exaggeration. I thought we were gonna be tossed but the ship rode it out just like a cork in a wave, but that was scary.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: Yeah, I thought my gosh, after it was all over with here, it's gonna be all over if we have another one like this. This is not nice. This is not good. And I sure am glad I'm not a sailor [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: And that's, ya know, we didn't do much. They try to keep you busy by doing a lot of clean up. Oh yes, you know what else you had to do. You know, the rails and-- on deck, wash those or you're painting or you're polishing or... you're doing something all day to keep busy. And then an hour before mealtime--chow time you quit, you go to your bunk, and clean up and get ready to have supper or dinner, yeah.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: And then in the evening they showed movies. Until about ten o'clock and then you go to your bunk and go to sleep. And then they roll call on the PA system, "Do-do do da do, it's time to get up. [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: That was the routine [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs], all over again [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: Was there any shellback ceremony, a ceremony when you crossed the equator?

Diamond: Well...not really--yes there was a little ceremony. I'm trying to remember what it was, but you got a certificate from King Neptune.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Cohen: You know there's a certificate in the exhibit here crossing the 180th meridian from the Golden Dragon [Naval award], so it sounds like this type of thing.

Diamond: Yeah, yeah

[Laughter in the background]

Cohen: [Laughs] so I think you mentioned that you landed in Finchhafen, Finchhaf...?

Diamond: Finchhaven. H-A-V-E-N.

Cohen: Haven, in New Guinea?

Diamond: Yes.

Cohen: And I was reading a memoir by somebody from the engineering battalion who said, he wrote something like this, "We were guest of the Aussies. We use Australian money; we were welcomed at the Australian PX." So what were your impressions of having landed in a territory that had been recently conquered by Australia and how did they react to the American?

Diamond: Well, the Australians took it over. They fought the Japanese there and the Australians hated the Japanese because the Japanese treated the prisoners, when they were prisoners of war, so terr-very bad, very badly. They'd tortured them and so... I have to tell you a story about that. I met a guy who was an Australian. I met him at a... I visited this Japanese prisoner of war camp. I was outside. I didn't go in. I said, "Camp", it's a wire encampment. Big, six feet high wiring, ya know.

Cohen: Wow.

Diamond: Like you see on the separating yards or the highway, ya know. Separating mowed area from all the brush. Anyhow, we talked about that and he said, "Ya know, we would never treat the Japanese like you guys are treating them". I said, "How is that? What do you mean"? He said, "You're feeding them"!

Cohen: Hmm.

Diamond: I said, "So what do you do"? He said, "We just drop'em out of airplanes".

Cohen: Wow. [shocked]

Diamond: When they're transporting a group of Japanese on a big airplane, maybe one these twenty passenger planes or fifteen, ya know a small-it's a cargo plane that's what it is. It's not a real big one. When they get over the water they just drop 'em, push 'em out. I said, "Are just telling me a story"? He said, "No, we hate 'em. We hate 'em. We don't want to feed them. We don't want 'em. We don't want to go back home; we just don't want them". Look what they did at Corregidor [Island]. They marched people twenty-five miles. They were dropping, they let 'em drop, civilians. So, they had no feelings for them. Australians, they were terrific fighters, but they took no prisoners.

Cohen: They took no prisoners no, hmm.

Diamond: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: So I saw this, and the guy was saying, "This guy, he's like in heaven. He's gonna live and go back home and it's all over with. We're feeding him and he probably killed a half a dozen Americans or Aussies", Australians. And here this guys gonna go home.

Cohen: So they weren't concerned with the Geneva Convention or anything of the sort?

Diamond: No. When we went to the Island of Leyte, I was in the fourth wave going into our- and were going to our area to clean up the area so we could set up tents of Japanese dead. There were several Japanese bodies there and the story always went around that, ya know, all the Japanese soldiers carried a Japanese flag in their helmet. So when I came upon this dead body, I... that's the thought that came to me. I wanted a Japanese flag as a souvenir, so I took his helmet off and his whole scalp came with it.

Cohen: Oh, wow.

Diamond: The stench was so horrendous. Maggots coming out of him. I never used to be able to tell this story without getting sick, ya know. Post traumatic syndrome, whatever. I dropped the helmet and just ran. The stench was so bad. I never turned around again; I couldn't stand it but then after a while I got to think about. I said, "Ya know, is this what happens to an American soldier"?

Cohen: Just being left for dead to rot away?

Diamond: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah.

Diamond: Yeah, its...War is horrendous. It's so terrible. I mean, there are no rules of warfare. Whatever it takes to beat 'em you do. It's as simple as that. That's what is. They talk about, ya know, there are certain rules that a professional soldier abides by. Well, that's a bunch of bull.

Cohen: Were you, I don't know how to put it, were you in a sense relieved that you were more taking care of people and helping them and healing them rather participating directly in the fighting?

Diamond: Are you asking whether I felt better?

Cohen: Yeah, Yeah.

Diamond: I had a different feeling?

Cohen: Yeah

Diamond: No, no. That's my job. I mean, I was in the service, I was lucky to get what I wanted, and I did my job. I didn't have any, I tried to do the best I could, but I didn't have any particular glorified feeling that, "Oh boy, I'm doing something better than somebody else". No.

Cohen: Yeah, it's a...yeah. You had written on the biographical survey that when you were at Finschhafen, you had unfortunately, gotten Dengue Fever?

Diamond: Oh yes, Dengue Fever.

Cohen: What happened to you and what was it like?

Diamond: Horrible. My temperature went over to 105. I read in the paper sometimes, in our paper, "Tribune", people get 105 or more and they die. I was lucky. Depends upon, I guess, the physical condition before the fever. Whether the person was a healthy person or fragile person or whatever, but I had Dengue Fever and my fever was so high when I was laying in my...See being a medic, I didn't want to go to the hospital, so I had a doctor with me all the time, if need be. Which was part of our detachment. There was a physician on call, my call if need be, and I had other medics to look in on me and the guys took turns looking in on me, checking my temperature, giving me my medication, and one time I was hallucinating so much I threw myself out of the cot.

Cohen: Wow. [Quietly].

Diamond: And I'm laying on the cot floor on the tenth floor and we were tents then and this guy, Dean comes in. He says, "What are you doing on the floor"? I said, "I fell out on the floor. Put me back in bed". In my cot, I couldn't get back up. He asked me what I'm doing on the floor [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs] So you stayed in your regular tent and the others, medics and the doctor would help treat you and bring you your medication?

Diamond: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Cohen: So how did it take to get over this fever?

Diamond: I think I was in that stage, I had high temperature a couple days, couple days. After two days, on the third day it broke. It started to go down. I started...to feel much better and I was able to sit up in my cot, walk around a little bit, ya know. That third day they still brought me, my friends there good friends they brought me my meals, but after that I went to the mess hall and ate. Ya know, you spend two years, especially when I was overseas with same guys, you become pretty good friends. Ya know, you're like brothers and you take care of each other.

Cohen: I was about to ask you that, like how did people, in general, get along and was it at first surprising to meet people from different backgrounds?

Diamond: Oh yeah, there were so many. Ya know, if you really stop to think about 'em, I found to be, I use the word educational levels, which is true, ya know. There was one guy he was no good, ya know. He was harassing another fella and those two became good friends, eventually. One was an Irishman the other was a burlesque theater caretaker, that low life. That's what we used to call him. Earl was his name, Earl Pyle but anyhow. And then there was Steve. He had, at the time, he had-he wanted to go to med school, I think. He a couple years of college already. That was Steve. What was the other? I'm trying to think of the others. Oh, Polans-, what was his first name? He was this Polish guy, he's name was Polanski, I can't remember. He was a thirty-five-year-old. He was the oldest of all of us. He had a family in the States. I forgot what he did as a civilian. He was quiet, nice guy. Let me think a minute, who else? Stangi (??), yeah that was Stangi. Oh yeah, Stangi that was a short guy. I think he was about five feet tall and he was always harassing, I told you this maybe, Earl. That was the one who was harassing him.

Cohen: Did you come across any antisemitism?

Diamond: Any---

Cohen: Any antisemitism? Did you come any antisemitism?

Diamond: Well, not totally, no, but the guys used to go, just one guy. The guy from Kentucky. That was the hillbilly. "You're different, I like to talk to you. You're different". I says, "Ya know, you're different too". He said, "Why is that"? I said, "You're from Kentucky. The hills of Kentucky, I can talk to you too".

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs]. We never had this conversation anymore, but otherwise all the guys were pretty good, ya know. I didn't have any problems with 'em.

Cohen: That's good. That's good. One thing I was wonder about was: were you expected to do engineering duties as well?

Diamond: No, not at all.

Cohen: Not at all, yeah. And...

Diamond: I wasn't trained for it, so they would never ask me. That's just out of the question. My job was to take care of people.

Cohen: So what were some of the problems that came up, in general? Either being in the tropics or building or repairing airfields? What were some of the typical injuries or illness that came up?

Diamond: Well, we had a lot of ringworm. Ya know what that is?

Cohen: Well, I think my cats had ringworm.

Diamond: It's a bacterial infection that occurs-you usually get it between the toes. And it itches, it gets red, raw, it can be if not treated. And we used to treat it with Gentian Violet. Do you know what Gentian Violet is?

Cohen: No

Diamond: You put a-you have a cotton applicator stick, okay. With a lot of cotton, you dip it in the Gentian Violet and you brush it between the toes and that tends to dry it and heal it, but the bad part of it is your feet are purple.

[Laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs] forever? [Laughs]

Diamond: No, eventually it wears out. So you tend to wear socks a lot [Diamond laughs]. It's true, Gentian Violet.

Cohen: No, I didn't know that. I guess like its name [Laughs].

Diamond: That's the old remedy. They don't use that anymore, I don't think.

Cohen: [laugh], on another lighter note too, when I was reading the memoir the person writing said he was a little envious of the Australians because they had a more relaxed dress code. They could wear shorts, they didn't have to wear long

sleeves a buttoned up, they could sleep on hammocks by the beach near the breeze and the Americans couldn't. Did you experience any of that?

Diamond: Oh yeah, I wore shorts.

Cohen: Oh, yeah so you wore shorts, so maybe it was just his...

Diamond: Yeah, oh yeah. I took being in the-where it's warm, ya know, in the South Pacific, I couldn't wear long pants all day. I mean, I'm too warm, so I just cut 'em down. Just took a scissor and cut 'em above the knee and I- and we had this guy Steve. He used to do; he was a tailor as a civilian. I said, "Steve, put a hem on for me" and I watched him do it, so that seems simple. So the next pair of shorts I made, I cut 'em and made a hem. I was wearing, I had two pair of shorts but then I had to replace those sun tans with a regular pair of pants because you had to wear a, you had a dress code. So I had to have another pair of pants [Diamond laughs]. So when I went back to the quarter masters to get another pair of pants, he said, "Oh you cut your pants down didn't ya"? [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: "Ya, made shorts out of them". And you know what guys used to do? These heavy boots, shoes, Army shoes. I used to cut the tip off, the leather with a knife so air would flow through. It's like a sandal.

Cohen: [Laughs]. So you made a sandal [Laughs].

Diamond: Yeah, not me. Everybody used to do it.

Cohen: Everybody, yeah, yeah. And were you, I don't know how to put it. Were you close to the airfields, like when you were there were observing the airfields or...?

Diamond: Oh yes, very close. Oh yeah. Right on the north end of it or the south end of it. Close by, yeah.

Cohen: So so who do they, when you were on Finchhafen, how did they either build it or improve upon it? What did the engineers do to...yeah?

Diamond: Ya know, the islands are made up of a lot of jungle, a lot of brush, greenery, ya know. Trees, palm trees, so the first thing they do is land the troops. The second thing they do is land the bull dozers and the graders and tractors and they go to work. They start pushing the trees, the whole tree roots and all out of the ground. And then they get a tractor and put a chain on it and haul it away, make a big pile, set a fire, and then they burn it Because what are they gonna do? Take it someplace and grind it? It takes manpower, so they burn it. And this is how

they would clear an area and once they clear it of trees it's all naked ground. They bring in a...well it's a grader, it is a grader with a type of blade that smooth's it out, see. Then they'll get a finer-then they'll do a finer of smoothing it out and after that they bring in trucks with very fine gravel, see?

Cohen: Yeah, to sprinkle over.

Diamond: And they lay it with gravel. It's just smooth just like a runway only it's not concrete, it's gravel. Now once you're in place and it becomes permanent, and what they do is then they start laying cement for an airstrip that's gonna be there permanently or be used. Ya know, it becomes more...they want it more modern looking, up to date rather than crude because now you're getting all kind of soldiers in, you're getting families in, maybe. Well, not families, women, nurses, WAACs. A whole community.

Cohen: How long would it take until a plane could land on this smoothed out land?

Diamond: Well, we were building an airstrip on this island. The island is 7,000 feet long.

Cohen: Which Island?

Diamond: Huh?

Cohen: Which island...which island?

Plane with engine trouble landing 1:18:06

Diamond: Palawan Island. Palawan Island is a mile long and about three quarters of a mile wide, if that much. And because from air pictures that I've seen after the runway was built, it's very narrow, looks narrow and then I slip right down the center. It was a very narrow island. They build a runway from one end of the island to the other. When the runway was halfway through, we hear an airplane in the air. Maybe there up about 9,000 feet where you can see it, ya know. I can hear it and the reason I heard it is because the engine didn't sound right. It sounded like it was struggling. It was a B-25. Not a B-24, a B-25 is a little bit smaller plane, okay.

Cohen: Mhhmm.

Diamond: It's a bomber and it had-it had four engines. Two of them were out, one each side so he was running on two engines. And he was coming back from a bomb run and he was looking for a place to land because when he landed and he got out of the plane, he got down, on his hands and knees and kissed the ground. And here I'm running, with another guy, toward the plane to meet him. And he said, "Ya know, this wasn't here a week ago when I came over".

Cohen: Wow, wow!

Diamond: Ya see?

Cohen: Yeah [Laughs] so-so...

Diamond: "This was not here ", he said.

Cohen: All within the week [Laughs].

Diamond: And this guy's about a twenty-three-year-old pilot [Laughs]. That's why he got down on his knees. Well ya know, all the pilots were twenty, twenty-one, or twenty...the oldest was twenty-three. Some were nineteen, that age group were all pilots. Fighter pilots, transport pilots, and that applied to the women as well, although they did take older women in the service as ferrying pilots, going to Europe. Some of the women pilots were a little bit older. They were in their thirties. They did a fantastic job 'cause most of those peoples, pilots were women, they weren't men, because men were taken into the Army, Air Force.

Cohen: But in the Pacific were most of the pilots, men?

Diamond: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think the reason why they did that is because they didn't treat their prisoners very well. And they didn't want a woman taken prisoner.

Cohen: Oh...

U.S. nurse scarred at 1:20:07

Diamond: I started to tell you earlier about this woman, this nurse, who worked on the islands and she was taken prisoner. And she...one of the Japanese soldiers, she was lucky she was alive because she was slashed from here, not the breast, right on top, right here right across there [Hand gesture]. I could see the scar. I said, "What are you in for"? She said, "Well," and then she tells me the story. "And you see this scar? That's from that..."

Cohen: From her incarceration.

Diamond: I mean she just...the top. I saw this big; it was already healed; it was scarred up all the way across. That was sword slash. She said, "I'm lucky to be here" [Laughs].

Cohen: Was this on Palawan Island that the nurse was there?

Cohen: Did you meet the nurse on Pal-

Diamond: Oh, no... this was in...no. When I went to visit this friend who I met at the USO. This was on...I don't know, I think on the island of Leyte.

Cohen: On Leyte, okay.

Diamond: Yeah, no it was not Palawan.

Cohen: Yeah, the reason I wondered about Palawan is because I was reading that when the U.S. forces invaded, in I think '44 or '45, they had heard about a massacre, an earlier massacre of about 150 U.S. service people that survivors who had been sheltered by the local people, conveyed to the U.S. military and I wondered if you had heard about that, maybe.

Diamond: There was another massacre elsewhere that Julius Wiener (??) was in, his outfit. That's why they called his-his outfit, he was Infantry and ten percent of his whole battalion survived. Ten percent out of, over almost 900 men. So, because of battle so when they took over and the Japanese were killing civilians as well. So when they took over a Japanese hospital, there were sick Japanese and wounded Japanese soldiers in their bed. And they ask all that could walk to get out of bed and come outside with their hands up, ya see. Well this one guy came out, walked out but his hands were down. So they told him to lift his arms. So when he lifted his arms two grenades fell and killed some Americans, he got killed of course, killed some American soldiers. So what those American soldiers did and that was his outfit, they went back into the hospital and killed all the bed patients. Tokyo Rose, the following day, on her radio broadcast to the American soldiers, she used to play a lot of good music and her own what not to pacify the Americans. Talked about this division and she labeled them "the Bloody Butchers". "Those bloody butchers killed a lot of innocent bed patients".

Cohen: Without mentioning the triggering...?

Diamond: And that was Julius Wiener's outfit. He has a book on that by the way. I saw the book. They wrote a book on it.

Cohen: Is he a friend?

Diamond: He used to be. I hadn't seen him in years. He was are friend when we lived in Centralia [Illinois] and that's been a long time ago.

Cohen: So, I know that you were in a lot of places in the Pacific and I believe after Finschhafen you were sent to Maffin Bay?

Diamond: That's, yes. Maffin Bay, we stopped in Maffin Bay and it was a, we didn't go ashore. We went there, ya know to be honest with you I don't know why we

went there. We dropped anchor; the ship dropped anchor there. They sent a contingent of sailors to shore. Ya know, when we pulled in the bay it looked like death. It felt like death, it looked like death because it was so quiet, there was nothing there, there were no people at the pier meeting us, no civilians, no soliders. We didn't know what was going on. We all just stood at the rail on the ship looking ashore. Nobody's there, except you hear this little Navy boat. What do they call'em? It wasn't a landing craft it's just a regular, like a lifeboat, ya know. And they were just driving the...going towards shore and they came back after about thirty minutes or so, maybe longer. They didn't have any supplies. They had information, probably. They could have been communing [communicating] with maybe the underground or somebody. I don't know who they were communicating with but all I know is we stopped, dropped anchor there. They went ashore, I didn't see anybody on shore at the pier. This one boat goes to shore and then comes back thirty minutes later so you can assume whatever you want to assume.

Cohen: Where did the boat go after that?

Diamond: Oh, we were on our way toward Japan. We were on our way toward Okinawa.

Cohen: Well, so here's something I'm a little mixed up about and maybe you could help clarify. I know that you were at Leyte at some point. The Island of Ley-te?

Diamond: Yeah, Leyte.

Cohen: Leyte. Was this, was this after Finschhafen, in New Guinea?

Diamond: Oh yeah, yes, yes.

Cohen: The other thing that I think you had mentioned is that you were able to view the naval battle at the Bay of Leyte [Battle of Leyte Gulf]?

Diamond: A na-what?

Cohen: The naval battle that you were already on the Island of Leyte and that you could see the Japanese ships attacking the Amer...

Diamond: Oh you're talking about the Battle of Leyte Gulf. No I, you can't see the ships.

Cohen: So what did you see?

Diamond: Light flashes in the sky. Like thunder and lightning. You hear a noise, "thunder" and all of a sudden, the sky lights up. What is it? Is that a big storm out there? So

our base commander of the area, the guy in charge says, "There's a battle going out there". The naval Admiral Nimitz, he said, he broadcast this. "Admiral Nimitz, with his naval fleet, just intercepted the Japanese fleet that was coming back toward us" is what he said. To try and retake the island and he met the Japanese fleet, Nimitz did, fifty-five miles off Okinawa and there was a big battle.

Cohen: And when had you arrived relative to MacArthur's invasion, like when had you and your group arrived at Leyte in relation to MacArthur's entrance? Like... okay, I'll say it again. Had you arrived in Leyte after the Americans occupied the island?

Diamond: They were in the process of occupying. We arrived at Leyte just as the American troops were pushing the Japanese inland. The fighting hadn't stopped yet. The battle, there were Japanese still fighting. We landed on the beach and we set up our camp, encampment. Yes, that was... October nineteenth.

Cohen: Were there still Japanese snipers closer to the beaches where you were located?

Diamond: Yes, that's where they would be. Well, some not all because when we got to our area, which was ten miles inland that's how they assigned us to build an air strip. The forward group got sniper fire, see. What they did, what they usually do is call in the Air Force and they strafe them.

Cohen: They strafe them, yeah.

Diamond: If you get sniper fire, 'cause they're up higher. They just, "bump-bump", treetop, ya know.

Cohen: Yeah, Yeah. And there was something that I meant to ask you. Okay, did you hear about any kamikaze attacks on when you were on Leyte? I think that was the being of Kamikaze acts.

Diamond: Well, well yes. I experienced a kamikaze attack.

Cohen: Oh!

Diamond: On, when we...this was the invasion on Leyte, on the beach in Leyte. When all the troop ships, the LSDs [Dock Landing Ship], beached and their bow was open to disembark to get troops off and equipment and to what not. There was this one Japanese zero plane [Mitsubishi AM], fire plane, I could see him. He was flying, coming in at tree top level, the guy turned his head and smiled at me. [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: I swear I saw it, but anyhow. You may not believe it but that's the way it looked to me. That's how close he was. Tree top level and the tree was not real high. Eileen [his wife] is getting tired of hearing the same story over and over again, but this plane was not heading for our ship. Fifty yard, fifty feet down the beach there was another LSD and it rammed it. That's a kamikaze.

Cohen: Wow. Were you treating people who were injured from the kamikaze attack of ship nearby?

Diamond: No, that one I wasn't in. No, no, no.

Cohen: Yeah, wow. So what was it like making your way inland from the beaches? I think you had to go ten miles inland where the engineers had to start clearing the roads. What was that like making your way?

Diamond: Ya know, I'll be very honest with you, hot. It was so hot; we weren't accustomed to it. We were marching, ya know, we weren't riding. We're walking and it had gotten very hot because every hour we would take a rest when we could, five-minute break going to [Aria? name 1:32:55]. We could do this because we... the area was secured, theoretically, ya know, but we were always told to be on alert for stragglers. And ah... I was at one place and there were some stragglers. Well, we came up on, I was with this fella Mike and he...maybe I shouldn't tell this story, I'll forget it. Anyhow, there were stragglers, and we'd turn them in or tell them where to go if they want to go someplace. Or if they were civilians, you could tell the difference a civilian and a soldier dressed as a civilian, ya know. They're bigger, huskier, they're stronger, and they're well fed. They look well fed, anyhow and you just...they ask you for a cigarette you give them a cigarette and they go on their way.

Cohen: Would you have to, or you and your group have to arrest stragglers, non-civilian stragglers or would you have to take them prisoner?

Diamond: Well, it...that wasn't my job.

Cohen: No.

Diamond: I wasn't looking for it. I mean if there was somebody what am I gonna do with them? Unless I just march 'em to our encampment and we're not MPs [Military Police]. They'll just hold them for the MPs to come by. No, at that point in time a lot of the stragglers were turning themselves in. Americans didn't have to do that, and they were doing this because they wanted food, simply. And these were young kids, not older men who were career officers, career soldiers, usually, because a career Japanese soldier will not turn himself in. Because these soldiers that were turning themselves in were draftees, like me. So, I, ya know,

but I didn't run into this very often. It a...yeah. I was out one time exploring with a friend of mine, Mike Stone, and we used to look for things on Okinawa. We used to see these, ya know, they buried their dead, the civilians, during peace time in caves on the hilltop. Sometimes, one of these caves are open, ya see, and you look in and it's empty for what a reason. Maybe they were looted, ya know. Well, I told you before I came across this burial cave with all vases, vases, but that's the only thing that was a little bit different. But a...yeah it... I used to try to be very alert. I was always watching my back and then some of the guys used to say, "Why do you walk like that on your own"? I say, "Well, I don't know". I would say, "Look, we're here, were secured [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: That's what I should tell 'em, but one time I did get lost and it took me a while to get home. Yeah, I thought I'd never got home, 'til I decided to listen for truck noise.

Cohen: Which island were you on at the time that you nearly got lost? Which island were you on...?

Diamond: Oh, Okinawa.

Cohen: Wow.

Diamond: Yeah.

Cohen: You know, one thing that I was reading about was that on the island of Leyte ,the engineering, aviation group, I think they either built a hospital or provided 13,000 hospital beds for the hospital tents and I wonder if you were involved in any of the planning or carrying out of this part of it.

Diamond: No, no.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: The only thing we were involved with when it came to medical is our own tent and our own supplies, medical supplies. We used to get supplied with all kinds of serums and cough syrups. We used to get fifty- um, five-gallon drums of cough syrup [Laughs]. Some of these guys-- it was elixir Terpin Hydrate [Terpin Hydrate]. Elixir Terpin Hydrate has very high content of alcohol--

Cohen: Oh [Laughs].

Diamond: And the guys always came into the dispensary with a cough.

Everyone: [Laughs] of course [Laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs], and we used to give 'em a teaspoon of cough syrup and then they'd say, "Can I have another one for good measure"? [Diamond said to the soldiers], "No come back another time" [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]. I think you'd mentioned in the article that there was some kind of trade going on. That you would give the cooks some alcohol and they would make sure to give you better food. Do you want to talk about that?

Diamond: Yeah, that's all. Yapu know, we wanted some special foods, you know. We wanted some baked bread or maybe they'd make a cake or something or they'd make some cupcakes, you know, and they'd supply us with that and we'd give 'em maybe a half a pitcher of 180 proof alcohol.

Diamond: Now you can, you can cut that into almost two pitchers of drink.

Cohen: You can spread it thin [Laughs].

Diamond: And that'll last them a whole week, at least.

Cohen: Okay, okay

Diamond: But yeah.

Cohen: Okay, would you like a break or are you good?

Diamond: No, I'm fine, I'm fine.

Cohen: Sounds good.

Cohen: Okay I'm trying to think if there's parts along the way that I meant to touch on then I didn't but so I guess I was wondering if you had any recollections of the construction work of the airfields on either or Leyte or like Tacloba [Tacloban, Philippines] or Dulag [Dulag, Philippines] or if you have memories of the actual

construction of those specific airfields other than what you mentioned, in general?

Diamond: Well, the way we built an airfield was, they cleared the areas of trees, they graded the area, the strip that, they're gonna use or pave they never paved it but it's a strip and for planes to land. It's usually around 6 or 7,000 feet long, 7,000 closer to 7,000 and because it takes up a B-25 [North American B-25 Mitchell] almost that distance to land. It does. It needs that much, but I found out it doesn't really need that much because when we had one strip halfway through a B-25 landed and I told you this before the pilot said he came over this area a week ago, a week earlier and it wasn't there and he was happy that it was there, then, and he landed on about thirty-six, seven feet, thirty seven feet airstrip. He came to the end of it, ya see, but stopped. But anyhow it's made up of steel matting. They're twelve feet long, they're about about three and a half four feet wide and I use the word perforated. It's not just holes, it's big openings, you know, big, I guess the purpose of that is for drainage, good, better drainage or maybe it sets better on gravel. Gravel will get in between the openings but it's a metal area it's a metal surface and that's what they lay on top of the gravel after it's graded and airplanes and they're connected like an erector set, ya know - they clip together.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: They could put up an airstrip in no time, very fast and if you have enough men everybody gets out there and takes the pieces. There are about this wide [hand gesture] and like I said about twelve feet long and they put them together and airplanes land on them. Now they may stake them to prevent moving.

Cohen: Mm-hmm

Diamond: Ya know, it's not a stake it's like a hook.... it's like a u-shape hook. They knock it in the ground and that secures it. Periodically, ya know, different distances and once that laid, it's laid they can land B-25 on it.

Cohen: Were all the planes that landed or took off B-25 or were there other planes in used, too?

Diamond: There were smaller ones. They were B-4..., P-47s [Republic P-47 Thunderbolt], which is a fighter plane. It's a two-cockpit plane. P-38s [Lockheed P-38 Lightning] and it's a double-hulled plane and a fuselage in the center. P-38, P-51s [North American P-51 Mustang], which is a small fighter plane. It's just like the Japanese Zero and the P-40 [Curtiss P-40 Warhawk] and the P-47.

Cohen: Yeah. So after Leyte was that when you made your way to Okinawa?

Diamond: Yeah.

Cohen: And when would you've landed, you and the 1897th have landed at Okinawa?

Diamond: Okinawa?

Cohen: Yeah, approximately

Diamond: Late summer probably. Late summer of...middle of the summer probably at '45 June, July.

Cohen: So this have been while the Battle of Okinawa was in progress or...?

Diamond: No, well yes it wasn't quite over. It was almost over.

Cohen: Like toward the end of it, yeah.

Diamond: Yeah, toward the end of the Battle of Okinawa. They were cleaning up, there were still stragglers, but American troops were already landing all their equipment. They had it, it's theirs, ya know and they were inviting the Japanese. You see, before any kind of an invasion of troops they bombard the area with bombs plus leaflets telling the civilians to clear out we're coming. Of course, the enemy gets the same thing, but they try to keep up civilian casualties to a minimum. They don't want, you know, the world to think of us as murderers killing civilians. So we dropped leaflets to get out of the area. If they don't and they get killed that's not our fault.

Cohen: No

Diamond: 'Cause we do drop leaflets.

Cohen: So would a lot of the civilians clear out?

Diamond: Oh, yeah, they're gone, but once, the once the Americans land and secure the area all of a sudden, all the civilians are coming out of the woodwork [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: They come down to the beach and you know what they want? Food.

Cohen: Food, yeah.

Diamond: They don't have any.

Cohen: Were they were they given food?

Diamond: Oh yeah, we'd give it to 'em.

Cohen: Yeah

Diamond: Yeah, we were on the beach one time and this, well this family had food. They had a caribou and they're leading this caribou down the beach about a half a mile not quite that far and I'm watching 'em I say, "What the hell they gonna do with that"? And then I see the guy take out a table, a folding table, and he takes out a stand with a scale on it. And well and he had this... and then ya know they bring these cattle, this bull over and they slaughter it. And he's cutting it up on the ground and the guy that's doing it, the merchant, is asking... and the person who wants to buy it or get some he says, "I want that piece" [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: They could specify [Laughs].

Diamond: [Diamonds laughs] and that's what they did. They cut up the whole cow within thirty minutes it was all gone, all gone bones and all. And the blood they don't dispose of blood they use it.

Cohen: They were hungry.

Diamond: They use it for whatever reason.

Cohen: Yeah

Diamond: Cooking maybe. To make sure if they clear into something. Maybe they make blood wine, I don't know. Maybe that's why wine is red, I don't know.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: Did the civilians also come to you or the army for medical care?

Diamond: Not always, some did.

Cohen: Was this on...who would come? Was it people on Okinawa or was it post-war in Osaka?

Diamond: Oh no, no. No this is on the island this is on ... we were on the Philippines.

Cohen: In the Philippines, yeah

Diamond: Yeah, were in the Philippines. There were a couple of people wanted some.... this one old man came [coughs] then he points at elixir Terpin Hydrate [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs], they were onto it too [Laughs].

Diamond: He said he has a cold, but I didn't believe him. It has a lot of alcohol in it.

Cohen: [Laughs], seems like it was the best kept secret so to speak [Laughs].

Diamond: Yeah, I gave it to him anyhow. What difference does it make?

Cohen: [Laughs], by the time you arrived at Okinawa did you and the others have a sense that this that the war was just about over? Like were you...?

Diamond: No, not at all. We went to be, to Okinawa to be refurbished. Equipment and clothing for the invasion of Japan. The war was not, we didn't think the war was over at all.

Cohen: But what type of clothing were you given?

Diamond: Oh, we were getting winter clothing. So we knew were going up north to Japan. Oh yeah no, there was no talk about of it being over at. There was no talk of a big bomb until after it was dropped. That's secret was so well kept it's it's amazing, yeah.

Cohen: So where were you when you on VJ Day on August 15, 1945? Like how did you hear about you know the victory?

Diamond: Through the "Stars and Stripes". "Stars and Stripes" and radio.

Cohen: So throughout the war were you getting the Stars and Stripes fairly frequently or...?

Diamond: Oh yeah. Yeah, I had a shortwave radio.

Cohen: Oh you had a shortwave? Oh yeah. So although it was... although Tokyo Rose was from Japan were you able to glean information about the progress of the war from from the radio?

Diamond: Yeah, oh yeah.

Cohen: So one thing I would ask...

Diamond: Plus the army newspaper.

Cohen: The "Stars and Stripes", yeah. So one thing... I'll ask you about is that, you know in 2020 the Pritzker of Military and Museum of library will have an exhibit on the cartoons of Bill Mauldin and I just wonder whether you came across Bill Mauldin cartoons when you were reading the "Stars and Stripes"?

Diamond: I don't know.

Cohen: Yeah, it was like...right

Diamond: I never thought about any of the writers. Just the story.

Cohen: The story itself.

Diamond: Of course, there was one writer who was pretty well known. They made a movie out of him. What was his name? Ernie Pyle [said in unison with Cohen]. That's the only guy I knew.

Cohen: Did did you know him personally?

Diamond: No. Oh, ya know who I meet in the Philippines? I met Lew Ayres. Remember Lew Ayres?

[Someone]: The actor.

Diamond: Lew Ayres was a very famous movie actor of the 30s and 40s and early 50s. Maybe not even middle but 1950-'51. Lew Ayres was a conscientious objector and at that time rather than serve jail time he became a chaplain assistant.

Cohen: Oh.

Diamond: Okay?

Cohen: Yeah, yeah.

Diamond: He used to go around and do... perform duties of a chaplain, okay Lew Ayres?

Cohen: Yeah, yeah

Diamond: Now how religious he was I have no idea, but he was a conscientious objector and he said because of religious beliefs and I met him one day and he sounded in person just like he sounded on TV.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Old Lew Ayers, ya know, slow drawl and...it was quite interesting. I forget really the conversation whether the substance of it but, ya know we just passed the time of day and and he was there to talk to the service people because, as a chaplain assistant, and if anybody had problems they can come to him and he'll help, you know help or try to solve them and if not the big priest of our time of our battalion was there. He was a Catholic priest. A big guy, rough, you know. He's pretty nice guy. Everybody liked him. He knew Judaism as well as any Jew. [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughter]

Diamond: Well, Catholics do. They have to take a course in Judaism, but yeah, yeah, I met Lew Ayres.

Cohen: Wow [Laughs], well that's neat. That's a... Okay, so so how did you finally hear about the atomic bomb? Like how did it come about? Where you on Okinawa at the time or on the ship, like how did...?

Diamond: No, no we were on...land. I was on Okinawa. It's a big bomb that's all and the wars over. We didn't know much about it. A thermal nuclear explosion occurred over Japan and it was called the bomb was called what Big Bertha [Fat Man]? There was a name for it.

Cohen: Big Boy or something?

Diamond: Big boy, maybe. Anyhow and hoorah the wars over. We're going home.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: And I'll go home sooner than others because I had enough points. There was a point system then and some people went home before the war was over because they would they joined early, and they got a lot of credit for being in the service during peacetime. They could have been, it could have been during peacetime or during that period before we actually entered when every male had to serve a year. Twelve months every male over the age of twenty-one had to serve and then they go back home, be a civilian and two weeks out of the year after that they had to go to camp.

Cohen: Hmm, like a reserve type thing.

Diamond: Yeah, reserve. They were in the reserve as a matter of fact. And they had two weeks training to keep them up to date, keep their honed their skills in case they have to go back, and fight go back to war and but yeah I had enough points or I got out. Maybe like most did, that served during the time I served, ya know, the amount of time I served when they went in and I couldn't wait until I got enough points and I knew then that would be eligible to go back home, be discharged.

Cohen: So it sounds like from what you've said now and also from what you wrote on the pre-interview questionnaire, that you did have to serve in post-war Japan, in Osaka after the war ended for a little bit. Is that is that right?

Diamond: What did I say?

Cohen: I think you mentioned that you had to serve in in Japan - in Osaka after the war ended or am I...?

Diamond: Yes yes, We went in as occupation troops and the reason why we were there is because there was...Japan, Japanese had a lot of air strips and they had to be repaired because we bombed them all, and the reason we bombed them so planes couldn't take off and land, the Japanese Air Force. That immobilized them, so when we finally went back to Japan as victors, we had to repair all this damage.

Cohen: What were you're impressions of the damaged city all together?

Diamond: All I can say is that our Air Force was so precise, they could hit a needle in a haystack. I went through the city of Osaka and I was walking down the main boulevard. I dropped, I wanted to go there, ya know to, on my weekend pass. I wanted to see what Osaka looked like 'cause we were not too far from the city and a truck was going there about every hour or two, from the base bringing, bringing back, ya know, taking and bringing back. So I walked down the main boulevard and it was wide as Michigan Boulevard. On one side of the street, all the buildings, apartment buildings, skyscrapers. Well, they didn't have tall skyscrapers, but tall buildings was intact and the other side was flat, rubble. That's what was bombed and the reason why that was happening is 'cause apparently that side of the street contributed to the Japanese war effort. There could have been, could have been a base there, it could have been a military academy there, whatever. It was flat for blocks.

Cohen: But very precise, not the area that had non-military or army purposes.

Diamond: Oh yeah, yeah. So what I'm saying is our Air Force had a northern bomb site. That was a new bomb site that was developed during the Second World War and they named after the guy who invented it. It was so precise that they could hit a barn, a small barn, barn from maybe 20,000 feet or 10,000 feet, was a bomb.

Cohen: Wow, wow

Diamond: That's right.

Cohen: What was the reaction of the Japanese civilians to you and the occupying force?

Diamond: Well, ya know...when I, when the question is asked and if I think about and when I, which is not very often anymore but the point is this you know we're victors, we beat them you know. So you know we come into their home they have to respect this. Now I don't know exactly how they feel. They'll say, "Oh am I happy to see you", you know, "I wanna have you for dinner" and I went to dinner with one. And the more I thought about it afterwards I thought it was a bad thing to do. It wasn't smart but I was young. I could have been murdered for all I know, but I went but so the attitude of Japanese I could never figure out because they never smiled. You talk to him there they have their straight face, you know, and maybe they'll smirk but how did he really feel...can't tell what their feelings are about you know though look right in the face and they'll say, "Boy am I glad to see you", ya know. Things were so hard to get but you look around at their home they have all the comforts of home, they've couches, chairs but they don't have food. They have money, the Japanese yen, but they can't buy food. There's no food available. Everything went to the soldier and the soldier in the field, and they had rations they can only get so much and if you have a big family to feed, ya know. So all they ate was rice and rice was plentiful. Everybody had a rice paddy, but you can't eat rice all the time. Japanese like food...meat, ya know vegetables.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: So, I was indifferent about it. I, as long...see I tried to I tried to meet the people. Even then I didn't know what I was doing but I just trying my ulterior motive I didn't I didn't have one but I try to get out meet the people and talk with them and...find out about their culture, you know, and what they how they behave because you know the American propaganda system, I shouldn't use that word, I mean... they told the American people they're they' monsters. Well the soldier was a monster but not the civilian. Not the old eighty-seven-year-old, ninety-three, he was ninety-three that I met I met him on the "L". I was travelling, holding onto a strap there was no seats, and he came in and stood beside me I looked down at him. He's this tall [gestures with hand], my shoulder and I was

looking around when we stopped at a station. You've heard this before; I told this story so many times, but have you heard it.

Cohen: No, I have not heard it [Laughs].

Diamond: But I was longing for a station. I was called [Hotaragaiki? name of the station?] and he was standing next to me. He says, "Can I be of assistance to you; are you are you lost?"

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Laughs]. I said, "My gosh, you speak English. I don't speak Japanese, but you speak English". He says, "Oh yeah, English has always been a required language in Japan". Required -- every Japanese person, from the age, from the time they get into grade school, grammar school, they're taking English classes. So by the time they get to college, high school they're very proficient.

Cohen: So here was this ninety-three-year-old speaking fluent English to you.

Diamond: And and I said, I asked this guy, I said, "So where did you get your education"? He says, "I'm a Harvard graduate of the year 1903".

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: 1903, that's so many years before the war. Ya see, what the emphasis where the emphasis was?

Cohen: Yes, yes, yes on education and...yeah

Diamond: This guy was a wonderful gentleman. Slim, short, very proficient in the English language, and he said he said, "I'm really happy to meet you because I want to speak English. I want to keep up. I want to be...practice", is what he said.

Cohen: That's something. Wow, wow. So and did any of Japanese civilians after the war turn to you for medical care or...?

Diamond: No.

Cohen: No and the other thing I wondered about was were there injuries simply of people using the machines to clear and to repair the airfields? Were there people getting injured...as a result of the machinery or any other reason?

Diamond: Did they ever get injured?

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: Very few, very few, hardly any. Oh by the way, the Japanese had a, then, had a custom. You know, they have an area, in Osaka, that's they called, "Walled City" [possibly Kowloon Walled City?]. It's a, It It...

Cohen: Ancient?

Diamond: Huh?

Cohen: The ancient city?

Diamond: No its, well it's ancient, but they call the, "Walled City" and in this area it's probably a block full city block and then an area maybe bigger, but it's made up of houses of prostitution.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: It's true and every Wednesday at the clinics in Osaka you see long lines of girls getting tested. This is government sponsored and these are not geisha girls.

Cohen: So after Osaka, did you go back, did you, have, did you go directly back to Chicago? Like how did you get home after Osaka, after – were you sent first to a base?

Diamond: After being discharged?

Cohen: Yeah, yeah

Diamond: No, well, yes yes. Yes, I did, I came back to Chicago, I took the "L" home, nobody met me. I walked up into my apartment we lived, where we lived my family on thirteenth, 1301 South Crawford Avenue and I walked in the door and my two little sisters, who were then four and a half years old, were there and they greeted me and I forget which one was said, "Are you my brother"?

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: Funny. Were you writing letters a lot?

Diamond: Oh yes, I communicated, yeah, I wrote letters, my mother and I wrote back letters. My big mistake was not saving these letters because I just threw them all way.

Cohen: Yeah, it's hard to keep everything.

Diamond: They would have been very interesting because she should tell me the news of what's going on in the family and neighborhood and what they hear as opposed to I hear about the war, ya know and...

Cohen: Felt like you had a good correspondence going on with her.

Diamond: Oh yeah, we corresponded. I used to get most every day a letter. Well, that's not true. When I did get letter mail call, during mail call I would get a bunch of letters, ya see. Well ya know, they're held up. I would get maybe ten, eleven letters after two weeks 'cause my mother used to write to me every single day, a note and eventually they all caught up and I used to get them all, Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: And she used to send me a salami when I was overseas. I used to look forward to that. One of the small ones that fit in one of these coffee cans, ya know.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah.

Diamond: She used to put a salami in and stuff it, ya know. Sometimes, she put a can of sardines in, which I couldn't get or anchovies which I couldn't get. She knew I liked this stuff, and this is what I used to get from her.

Cohen: But the salami came through?

Diamond: Oh yeah, oh yeah, but my whole outfit knew about the salami when it came. I had to share it.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: [Diamond laughs]. There was another, this guy Steve, he used to get a salami. He was Italian, but he got an Italian salami. I got a kosher star salami from Lazar's.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: So I would share my salami with Steve and Steve would share his Italian salami with me.

Cohen: [Laughs] There you go.

Diamond: You gotta reciprocate.

Cohen: That's right, that's right. [Laughs], that's kind of funny. At that point in time did your father still have the restaurant or...?

Diamond: No.

Cohen: He was working as a tailor?

Diamond: That was closed in 1939.

Cohen: Okay so much earlier, yeah.

Diamond: Maybe a year earlier. '38, I'm not sure, probably '38, Yeah, it was '38.

Cohen: So what was it like coming home? You you see your little sisters who probably were babies...

Diamond: There was no big party like...

Cohen: The movies or yeah...

Diamond: Bugles playing and big signs, banners, "Welcome home, Norton".

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Because I told my mother, "Where are all the banners"? She laughed, no. No, seriously, I came home I took the streetcar home because my parents never owned a car. I never had a car and I walked up to the apartment and I had -- the doors were always locked in apartments, so had to ring the bell to be let in and when I got in my sister's -- little sisters were there to greet me.

Cohen: Ah.

Diamond: And they looked at me very strangely. They didn't run toward me and hug me because they didn't know me. I left when they were just about a little over a year old and but when they did say something that's what they said. They asked me if I was their brother.

Cohen: [Laughs] Checking you out.

Diamond: Yeah, and ah...then we talked a little bit and got friendly and then they walked away and went outta the way [Laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Did what they, two little girls do.

Cohen: Was your mother home at the time?

Diamond: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I think my dad was working that day, but I saw him in the evening. He didn't probably know exactly, they didn't know, well my mother did know I was on my way home, that day but anyhow my dad wasn't home. I saw him an evening.

Cohen: Yeah, so what did you decide to do after you were discharged? Like what?

Diamond: Well I went back to school, U of I [University of Illinois] and, like I told ya, I was there a semester and then I came back and then I came back and went to Roosevelt [Roosevelt University] downtown. Yeah, downtown. Yes, when Roosevelt was downtown, off of Michigan Boulevard. Still there?

Cohen: I think so, yeah.

Diamond: Okay anyhow and then I met this guy who was going optometry school and we had a long lunch and I quit U of I and went to optometry school.

Cohen: What what appealed to you about optometry? From the conversation with your friend, what seemed to be appealing about studying optometry?

Diamond: Well, the fact that I could help people. I always wanted to do something in the medical field. Now, ya see, at the time being in the service and being a medic, I was like a nurse. I had nurse's training. Okay, now at that time they didn't have a nurse's program for males, or they may have but no males ever went to nursing school. It was always female and...I met him a guy, what was his name? Alex, anyhow...well I met him and then I met Gerald. Gerald was a fellow that talked to us about me, we talked about optometry and that's what got me interested.

Cohen: Cool. Did you use the GI Bill [Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944]?

Diamond: Oh, yes oh yes, yes.

Cohen: So how do you think that the military might have prepared you for civilian life, if at all?

Diamond: Oh, it prepared me tremendously. First of all, and the reason I say that is because I compare some eighteen-year-old and nineteen-year olds today, ya know. They're different I think and maybe I shouldn't say that, but I think in my era they were more adult, in other words their thinking was different. They thought more of maybe having a career of some sort right out of high school as opposed to

maybe not. Or just getting a part-time job as long because their parents told 'em they had to get out to get out and work. I mean I'm totally wrong but just the way I look at it. I don't know because when I got out of service, I knew I wanted to go back to college. I wanted that, I knew wanted to get, do something in the medical field, whatever it was, you know. I could have been a nurse if there was a program that guys went to but there wasn't. Today you go to a hospital; fifty percent of the nurses are male.

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

Diamond: Ya know, so there's nothing that they feel very comfortable doing this whereas, when I was young, a guy wouldn't feel, he wouldn't be comfortable being a nurse.

Cohen: It's true, it's true. It's true. So is there an experience that you had that you feel exemplifies your service? Like is there one experience that you had that you think sort of sums up your whole military service?

Diamond: You mean what I've learned from it?

Cohen: Well, either way. Either what you've learned from it or if you felt something that typified it?

Diamond: No..I don't what you really want to know, but while, what I'll tell ya, how to answer it the way you're asking it. But what I'll say is this ...that going into service made me grow up very fast -- faster than maybe if I didn't go into the service because my experiences dictate -- they dictate how I behave and how I -- what I am today if that explains ...that tells you what I'm all about. But yes, I think my service did help me grow up...see things differently than one who was not in the service, yeah.

Cohen: So this museum is dedicated to the study of the quote unquote "citizen-soldier" and I guess I wonder does this term have any meaning for yourself, citizen-soldier?

Diamond: No, well yes. What it tells me is that I think every citizen of the United States should have some kind of military training. Yes, male/female, no difference they should have the same training and same opportunity in the service, whichever service it might be, and whatever job it might be because when I first heard that some women are volunteering to be combat fliers, in war zones, I got to think, "My gosh, she's crazy. Why does she why would she want to do that"? Ya know, she's not forced to do this, but then I get to thinking most of these women have taken flying lessons when they were 16 years old because a 16-year-old male or

female can take flight. Can fly a plane before they can even get a driver's license. Did you know that?

Cohen: No, I did not know that, no.

Diamond: Years ago, I read an article about a ten-year-old, actually with nine, nine-year-old taking his father was a flyer taught him how to fly and he was flying airplanes. He had, because he had to build blocks on the pedals, foot pedals...

Cohen: To reach them?

Diamond: To reach them. That's correct and he took he took an oral flying test with a certified flying and passed. He's qualified to fly an airplane, so. If a woman, if a young girl wants to fly or be a test pilot why shouldn't she?

Cohen: It sounds like you came to understand the importance of equal opportunities in the in the forces.

Diamond: Yeah.

Cohen: So on a romantic note, where did you meet Eileen, your wife?

Diamond: At a bar.

Cohen: [Laughs]

[Laughs in the room]

Diamond: The J.P.I. [Jewish People's Institute]

Cohen: What's J.P.I.?

Diamond: The J.P.I on Douglas on Garfield Boulevard. Yeah, the dance on the roof garden. I met her July 5th, 1946 at eight o'clock in the evening, 8:30.

Cohen: [Laughs], Precise [Laughs]

Diamond: I remember the time because it was an occasion, a happening. I saw her across the dance floor. She attracted me and I just gravitated toward her.

Cohen: Ahhh

Diamond: It's true, isn't?

Cohen: [Laughs]

[Laughs in the room]

Diamond: I saw you when I came into the roof garden and you were across the floor speaking with your two girlfriends.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: Their backs were toward me and heard, she was facing my direction. Now I don't know what would have happened if it was a reverse. Probably never would have met her.

Cohen: Well there you go. It was meant to be, yeah.

Diamond: She attracted me so much that I had to meet her.

Cohen: Ahh [Laughs]. So when did you get married and...?

Diamond: When?

Cohen: Yeah.

Diamond: We got married June twenty, July thirty...

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: I wanted to see if she'd corrected me. July thirtieth, 194...9.

Cohen: Nine, very nice yeah. Huh.

Diamond: Yeah, we met in '46 then got married in '49. We had our first child in '51,
[Diamond laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: We had it all planned out. [Laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs] And you worked as an optometrist over the years? Your career was as an optometrist?

Diamond: Oh yeah, I practiced optometry. Oh yeah, I quit relicensing after fifty years.

Diamond: Fifty years.

Cohen: Well fifty is a good career.

Diamond: Yeah, yeah maybe fifty-three. I think it was more fifty years.

Cohen: Wow, more than fifty years.

Rhonda: You worked into your eighties.

Cohen: Wow

Diamond: Yeah I, yes I was, you're right. I was eighty...hmm let me think. Eighty-two when I, yes eighty-two when I stopped.

Cohen: Wow

Eileen: You filled in.

Diamond: Huh?

Eileen: You filled in, yeah.

Diamond: Yes that's correct. I stopped.

Cohen: So after you stopped you substituted for optometrist or filled in when they were away? When Eileen said you filled in does that mean you would replace people-?

Diamond: Oh yes, people knew that I was available to, if they went on vacation that I could fill in fill in for them, yeah.

Cohen: So is there something that we didn't talk about that you'd like to talk about that I forgot to ask?

Diamond: Yes, I remember witnessing my oldest son's circumcision. You never mentioned that. [Diamond laughs].

Cohen: [Laughs]

Diamond: I did by the way. No, I just made a joke. It's not a joke is it?

Cohen: As a young father [Laughs]?

Diamond: There's really...nothing exciting. I have told you all my experiences. I can't think of any other that might interest you that I can remember you other than what I've said. And all...

Eileen: [inaudible]He's been very good father.

Diamond: Huh?

Cohen: So people can hear, Eileen said he turned, you turned out to be a very good father.

Diamond: Oh well that's for Eileen to say, not me.

Cohen: [Laughs]

Rhonda: I said to Eileen after hearing your extensive medical training, I said, "You could have delivered all three of your children".

Diamond: [Diamond laughs]

Cohen: [Laughs], Rhonda's you're name [inaudible]. Rhonda said, "With all you're training you could have delivered all of your children as well".

Diamond: I could have. As a matter of fact, as a matter of fact I...I forget where I was. It was overseas someplace. There was a woman in labor, and she came into the dispensary tents, and one of the Filipinos she was she said she was going to deliver, and she needed help. I said, "Go to the hospital". We took her to the hospital. I didn't wanna to do it.

Cohen: Yeah, be responsible like yeah.

Diamond: But I could have, in an emergency. Well, I was taught how to do it.

Cohen: Yeah, it sounds like you're very good at it, ya know. Yeah, yeah.

Diamond: Yeah, it's...I remember I -- this is Philippines as well. A lot of things happen there because first of all you can communicate with the people; they speak English. Elsewhere, like New Guinea, they don't speak English, ya know and you can't communicate but I... I sometimes you want a chicken, ya know, we were overseas, and we couldn't get chicken in our meals. So if you go to a civilian, they have chickens running all around there yard. So I went to one of the villages, it is in the village and when people, persons saw 'em this family's home because they had chickens out in the front yard, and I offered to buy a chicken. She said, "Sure". Ya know, it wasn't very expensive, and she got hold of one of the

chickens and she had a stump in her front yard. And she put that chicken's neck on the stomp, "bango"!

Cohen: The end of the chicken.

Diamond: What happened was the chicken got away from her, ya know, a reflex and the chicken is running around the front yard without a head. Ya know, that's where the old saying comes from. A chicken running around without a head and then it fell and then she got it, cleaned it and we had chicken for dinner.

Cohen: There you go. Well on behalf of the Pritzker Museum and Library, I thank you very much for your service and for coming in today and for sharing your story.