

## **Transcription: John Howard Harrison III**

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*My name is Tom Cengle and I am with the General Land Office. Today is July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008. It's approximately 3:10. I am interviewing John Howard Harrison III by personal interview in his home. The interview is in support of the Voices of Veterans Program of the State of Texas Veterans Land Board. The purpose is to create a permanent record of military service experiences of veterans. Mr. Harrison, as you know, I am about to interview you relating to your military experiences. The interview and I will be using a tape recorder to record this interview. The interview will be transcribed and made into a permanent record at the Veterans Land Board in Austin, Texas. Does the Veterans Land Board have your permission and consent to conduct this interview and make it a part of the permanent records of the Veterans Land Board?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Correct.

*OK. Now the purpose of the interview is to record your recollections of your military experience. We will follow somewhat a question and answer format, but please feel free to expand on your answers and add anything that you think may be helpful in refreshing your recollections so that future generations will have the opportunity to know what it was like for you during your military life and how those experiences have shaped your life since then. We understand that some of your experiences may be difficult to discuss, and if so, you are free to limit the interview to the extent you are comfortable in relating the experiences. OK, now I'm going to begin with some background information. Could you give me your full name please?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** John Howard Harrison.

*OK, and your address?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** P.O. Box 97, Lexington, Texas, 78947.

*And how old are you Mr. Harrison?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I'm 96 years old.

*96, OK. I want to ask you just some basic family information, and let's start with where were you born?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** In Waco, Texas.

*In Waco, Texas, and could you give me the names of your parents?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Jack H. Harrison and Catherine McAllen Harrison.

*Did you have any siblings, brothers or sisters?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes. Quite a few, but they're all deceased.

*OK, and how many were there altogether? Do you recall?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** 6.

*6? OK. Were any of your brothers or sisters in the military during WWII?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** My oldest brother was a full colonel in the National Guard, Texas National Guard, and was a pilot trainer in Brady, Texas in the airfield there in McCullough County for several years.

*OK, could he ever go overseas, or did he spend all his time in the states?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No, he was training in the States.

*OK, so he was a pilot in the Army Air Corps.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*OK. Would you tell us what your education was before entering the military?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I graduated from high school, Waco High School, in 1931. I started to work during the Depression, the Great Depression, and working that way until I decided that I needed to further my education, and I enrolled in Baylor in 1937.

*Baylor University?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Baylor University.

*Now, but while you were working, what kinds of jobs were you doing?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I was clothing representative of one of the largest haberdasheries in Waco, Wood Brothers. And I modeled their clothes throughout the year and on the campus.

*OK. I forgot to ask you, what did your father do for a living?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** My father was a contractor, a building contractor.

*A building contractor, OK, all right.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** With my uncle, called Harrison Construction Company.

*OK, and what, how long were you at Baylor University?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Four years.

*Four years? And did you graduate?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I graduated and I was scheduled to leave Waco on May the 2<sup>nd</sup>, but Pat Neff, the President of Baylor University, was a personal friend of mine, and he asked my mother if she would come and walk across the stage for commencement and receive my diploma for me while I was in the service, which was done.

*You received your degree before you entered the service?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** My mother got my, yes, I had finished my work, and she got my diploma.

*And what did you study at Baylor?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Art and English.

*Art and English, OK. I can see by all the things around us that you are a painter.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes.

*OK, great. And how old were you when you joined the Army, and did you join or were you drafted?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Well, I enlisted.

*You enlisted?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** April the 30<sup>th</sup>, 1940.

*And that was your birthday.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** That was my birthday.

*OK, and why did you enlist? Do you remember why you enlisted?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** It was my responsibility to be of service to the country that was so good to me, and trying to do a little help one way or the other.

*And how old were you at that time?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** 30 years old.

*30 years old, OK, and the year that you entered the service was -*

**John Howard Harrison III:** 30.

*No, what year? Was it 19- ?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** 1942.

*1942. So the war had been already going for at least a year.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes.

*When you joined.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** When all of the students at Baylor that were graduating all enlisted or several of them were drafted from Baylor.

*OK, and how did you end up choosing the Army as opposed to the other services?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Well, my brother was in the Army.

*At that time.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** At that time, and prior to, he went to OCS in Georgia for Officer's Candidate School, and came out a colonel.

*OK.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And I had to follow in his footsteps.

*Do you remember December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Definitely so.

*And can you tell me what you were doing that day - ?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** My mother and I were having lunch in our home in Waco, and Roosevelt came on and called it a day of infamy.

*Were you shocked by the news?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I said mother, this is war. I guess I'm gonna have to go. And so we discussed it and my mother was by herself, but she wanted me to join the Army and be of service, whatever I could do.

*But you waited until you had finished school before you did join.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes.

*OK. And could you tell me where you received your basic training?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I left Waco April the 30<sup>th</sup>, 1940 -

'42.

**John Howard Harrison III:** And went to Mineral Wells, Texas, and there we were waiting to see where we'd be transferred from there. We waited one day sitting out there under the trees wondering how long it'll be before they call me to go somewhere. It was all that day and all next day until noon, all night sitting out there, waiting for orders. The next day, a man came out. It was a sergeant. He had stripes on his arm, and said is anybody here can type? Well I had been told not to ever volunteer for anything in the Army, and I didn't. I waited a day. I waited a day and a half, and I got tired. And he came back and said if anybody can type, we'll get away from here sooner, and I held up my hand. And at that particular time, I could type 30 to 50 words a minute with no problem, and he carried me in the office and there was a personal friend of mine

that was a sergeant in the quarterly room. Jack, why have you waited so long? I'm not gonna volunteer. Well come here, I've got a job for you. And I started typing the orders of sending men to different places from Mineral Wells to the different replacement camps. Finally I stayed there over the weekend and I thought well, and the man came, sergeant came in and said Jack, do you want to go to Waco with me and see mother for Mother's Day? I said you're kidding. He said yes, get your things together, let's go. And he gave me a three-day pass for helping him type and get the people and orders to go and I took a three-day pass. The first thing that I did in the Army was to come to Waco to see mother on Mother's Day.

*That's a pretty nice introduction for the Army. I don't know too many people who got introduced that way.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Then I came on back and was transferred from there after several days to Little Rock, Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and stayed there for a couple of years.

*For a couple of years?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Transferring people in and out, and I was a clerk in Colonel Raymond's office of headquarters in Robinson, Arkansas.

*Now did you have like a basic infantryman's training, or did you just - ?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I just went in and started typing.

*Is that right?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And before I knew it, I'd made corporal.

*Wow, so you didn't have to do the running, the jumping, the training to shoot and exercising and all of that kind of stuff.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** All of that stuff came after we finished the replacement of the men in the Army. Then I went in to basic training right there.

*And it was how long after?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Where's all those pictures?

*Just approximately, was it maybe two years before you got basic training?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh, no, it was basic training all the time I was there.

*OK, so you went through basic training while you were also typing.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Training Arkansas.

*Being a clerk both at the same time.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yeah, in Arkansas.

*You stayed there for two years.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Close to two years.

*OK, during that two-year period, that would've been 1942 through 19-, sometime 1944?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Somewhere along in there and I went into the service.

*Did you wonder why you were staying there instead of being sent to - ?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I was basic -

*They considered your work crucial right there -*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Working in the office, and that's where they assigned me to go to the office to work, and along with my basic training, I did that.

*Do you recall what kind of jobs you did while you were there? What kind of clerk jobs?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Type the orders transferring from J.G. Robinson Arkansas to different places in Arkansas and in Fort Mead, Maryland and along the East Coast, and they were transferred from there with the orders that we cut for them.

*OK, just a matter of curiosity. You were a college graduate at that time. I assume because of that, you were qualified for OCS, Officers Candidate School if you wanted.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** After a long period of time, I waited for two years before I made up my mind to go to OCS. My brother wanted me to become an officer, and to a certain degree, I was satisfied. I had five stripes and was getting along pretty well, but he wanted me to go to OCS, which I did, and they transferred me to Camp Hood on the south side and I was there a week, and Colonel Saladin -

*Saladin?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Saladin transferred me to OCS Harmony Church Virginia, Harmony Church Georgia, and I stayed there 90 days, got along real well, and was real pleased that I was gonna be an officer. And everything worked out fine. The day before I was to get my assignment, I had my uniform, my pink uniform, my lieutenant's uniform, my gold bars on my shoulder. I felt like the world was mine, and we took a 14-mile hike on the day I was supposed to finish my training. I made the 14 miles, and coming back, I got back within 100 yards of the barracks on August 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>. It was on my mother's birthday approximately, and I had a heat stroke and passed out, and they threw me in the shower with a colored man, and he took care of and then until they brought me to and put me on my bed, and I stayed there a couple of days until I was able to get up and I was assigned away from OCS, took my uniform away from me, took my bars away from me, took my certificate, put me back in my five stripes, and said transferred somewhere. So I stayed there for quite some time, how long I don't know. And after there, I was -

*Did they tell you why you were not going to receive your commission?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** He's too old, he's 30 years old, and he can't make the grade, and so I didn't.

*Because of the last march.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Because of my falling out and having a heat stroke and took me away.

*That's an amazing story.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** From there the commanding officer, I tried to reason with him and he said sergeant, we're gonna take care of you, and they transferred me to Camp Pickett, Virginia. No, Camp Pickett, South Carolina, and I stayed there oh, a month or six weeks, and with two others that faded out when I did, the three of us were then transferred to Camp Mead, Maryland for the port of embarkation, and there I was looking, there was a big ship Queen Elizabeth, and I was assigned with 24 men, a platoon of men, to take care of 'em on the ship going overseas, which I kept intact until we landed on the Isle of Firth in Scotland, five or six days later.

*And that was on the Queen Elizabeth?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** On the Elizabeth.

*So you went over on the Queen Elizabeth. Was that a scary trip for you?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I was on watch up in the brig one night and that was all.

*Were you concerned about German submarines and the possibility of being attacked?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yeah, what we were looking for, but I had no problem, came on back down and went to the dock and left and landed in Isle of Firth, Scotland.

*Was that your first trip on a ship on the ocean?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*How did you fare?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh, I had it great.

*It didn't bother you, the sea didn't bother you?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No. All of my men were, all of them were getting sick and didn't know what to do, but we had to take care of 'em.

*But you didn't get sick yourself?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No.

*You're a lucky man.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I had a good cabin and I had good records and I had to take care of in my cabin and all. It was fine for me, and I made it over fine, and we disembarked in Isle of Firth in Scotland at midnight. That was the only dock the Queen Elizabeth could dock in. Only one that could take the depth of the ship.

*Were you happy to get overseas? Were you glad that you were getting closer to the action, or would you have preferred to stay back in the States?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I had a job to do, and I didn't know exactly what to expect, but I had the responsibility of those 25 men, and I did not realize at the time until the end of the trip that they were replacements for those that had been killed, in Achen and Ufen. That was the first time that I then realized I was in the war, that I had the responsibility of those 24 men to take 'em on assignment and we left sail then to, at midnight, thousands of people there going this way and that-a-way, and another lieutenant, whoever he was, I forget what his name was – go this way, take your men and go that way. Where are we going? Go that way, this way. All the others went to Normandy to the right. I went to Choirwau \_\_\_\_, and Bernier, and Achomps and Frankfurt and Ufen and Achen, and there I left my men at Achen in a bombed out theater in Achen, Germany at the time, and I said since you are replacements for someone else, it's time for me to go back, and I left.

*You left for where?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I came back to Frankfurt, Germany and through that part of the edge of the bush and -

*Let me pull you back just a little bit. You came to England. Do you recall when it was that you landed in Scotland, approximately month and year?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I don't recall.

*Was it before or after D-Day?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh, I got in the war before D-Day, long before. That was in '45.

*No, D-Day was June 6, 1944. That was the invasion.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** That was the invasion of Normandy.

*Yes.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I was up the other way.

*Yes, but when you first got to England, do you recall whether that was before or after the invasion of Europe took place?*

**John's wife:** It was before, because he'd missed Normandy.

**John Howard Harrison III:** With Normandy going that-a-way, we left and went on into Scotland, but I don't remember –

**John's wife:** A wave of the hand kept him from going to Normandy.

*Yes, OK, that's OK. You don't have to recall everything. It's not necessary. I'm just trying to kind of get a little emphasis about when and where, but when you got to Scotland and then you went to England I assume -*

**John Howard Harrison III:** The train was in Vervie.

*OK, let's stay in England first before you went across the channel.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** We went into Coventry and on a pontoon bridge with the convoy with my 25 men in trucks and crossed the river.

*That's when they waved one group one way and another group another way.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Another way, right.

*And those that went the other way -*

**John Howard Harrison III:** To Normandy.

*--ended up being involved in the D-Day landings on Normandy.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*For your group, you did not go to Normandy.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No, I went to Choirwau, Belgium and Vervei, Belgium and the battle in Belgium there and in Germany during that part of the bulge.

*OK, but you must have stayed in England for a while first because D-Day was the invasion of Normandy, and Belgium had not yet been secured from the Germans at that time.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No, we left Southhampton and went across and went on up into Scotland and came down through London.

*Did you go to Belgium by ship?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No, convoy, truck, with my 25 men.

*OK. But you had to have gone across the body of water to get from England to Belgium.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** To Coventry at the river there where the pontoon bridge was, was strafed by German Luftwaffe, but nobody was hurt or hit during crossing the river. But -

*That's all right. Hold on a second now. I'm gonna put you on hold for just a second. OK, so rather than going to Normandy, you went with a group that eventually made their way to Belgium.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*And you still had the 25 men with you.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** With me, yeah.

*OK. What were your duties when you got to Belgium?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** We just got in trucks and went right on up to a train and we got into Choirwau -

*What was that word again, the town?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** C-h-o-i-r-w-a-u.

*And that's in Belgium?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Belgium. And then we went right on through there. The train was strafed there, and in Choirwau, Belgium, the Luftwaffe the night before we got there had bombed the orphanage on the train track there where the train was, and killed so many of the orphans there. Now this was the first time or maybe the second time that I realized that I was in the war. I went into the school of the orphanage and talked to the head nurse there, and while talking to her, she said let me see your hands. You're fresh from the States, fresh meat. I said no, no fresh meat. She said anyway, tell me about the States. I said well, I've got a responsibility. And about that time, they brought a German pilot on a stretcher and they asked her where to put him. Put him down at the end of the hall. That SOB probably is the one that bombed these children yesterday. Put him down there and leave him. You're not gonna do anything to help him? No. And I walked down there and I looked at him and I turned around and I had to walk away because that was the first time that I had come close to a soldier that was wounded. After that, I got on the train -

*Before you go further, you said the train that you were on when you were going there was strafed.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*Strafed means that -*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Fired on by machine gun from an airplane.

*OK, do you recall that happening?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh yes, there was no one hurt that we knew of. There was a lot of people when we got on into Vervei, and that was V-e-r-v-e-i I think. Vervei, Belgium. The people of France were there waiting for the wounded soldiers to come back by train and we had to wait there overnight until they could get all the wounded Frenchman off of the train and then we went on the train and went on forward. Then we got on into further into Germany around a bridge and then crossing the river at Coventry.

*What river did you cross?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I can't -

*Do you remember? Was it the Rhein?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I don't know whether it was the Rhein or the Oder? It was a short name for the river. It might have been the Rhein.

*This would have had to have been sometime in early 1945.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** '45, no, it must've been before that.

*OK, let me help you just a little bit. The Battle of the Bulge took place in the winter of 1944.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right, my feet froze.

*OK, let's talk about how you were involved in that. Was your group, the 25 men, with you then?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Sure, 25 men still there with me and it was cold, snow and ice on the ground, and we were all cold and all of my luggage and my records and everything went to the orderly room, and I got warm in the orderly room, but next day we had to lay around, lay over for quite some time before we went on up.

*Do you recall what town you were near or in at that time?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh, it was above that city that I mentioned, north of Frankfurt, up there close to Achen and Ufen, and - I've forgotten.

*That's OK. Let's talk about the Battle of the Bulge. You mentioned that you were taken there and did you know that you were going to where that battle was taking place?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** In the bulge?

*Yes.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** There was talk about it and where we would be taking those replacements that I had with me would be near or starting for replacements for the Bulge. But that was down at Achen, Germany. And now that was east of Frankfurt. You come in Frankfurt and what's that big city up there where the massacre of Patton's army was?

*I don't recall that.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** So many of the men were killed in that area.

*I'm not sure.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Well we were on the outskirts of that area there.

*Do you remember what your duties were then, what you were responsible for?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Mostly just trying to get where we could be with these men to Achen and from there, I didn't know where I was gonna go or what to do.

*Did you ever end up firing your weapon? Did you have a weapon?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh, I carried it with me all the time.

*What did you have?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** An M-1.

*Did you ever fire that?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No.

*OK, you were never in that situation.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Never fired it at all.

*Other than the strafing while you were on the train, were you ever fired upon?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** That was the only time. It didn't hit the boxcar or the coach that we were in. It was all above by the train more than anything else.

*They were trying to get the engine.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And from there, with all those French people there and then we went on up into Germany. But I've forgotten.

*Did you have a feeling at this time that the war was coming to an end?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I didn't know, had no idea that it was coming to an end. I'm trying to remember in 1945, when they said the war was over in December.

*Well no, that would've been in April.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** April, April, early spring, that's right.

*Do you remember where you were then?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** When the war was over, I was in Achen.

*In Achen? OK.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And I stayed there a couple of days and I said these replacements there, here they are. There's no place for me. I'm leaving. And I didn't like the word that I was replacing one that had lost his life.

*So that's when the 25 men that you were –*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Assigned to, I left 'em there in that old bombed out theater in Achen, Germany.

*And that was at the end of the war.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No, that was before the end of the war. And there was a train 40 and 8 for horses, and men that was loaded with duffle bags of all those dead replacements, bringing 'em back to Frankfurt. I think that's where we left 'em. I've forgotten.

*Were you in Frankfurt for long?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I was there five or six months, something like that.

*So you were there at the end of the war.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes, after this bomb had – I was in the Elizabethan school as the headquarters and then I can retract, cut if off of me -

*You would like to relate an experience that occurred in Achen.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Met the man from Odessa, Texas.

*A soldier from Odessa.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And he says come on, Jack, let's get on the train. So the company was being fed chow right along the side of the railroad track, and we were moving real slow, couldn't hardly move, and we couldn't get off to get any food, and he reached down and grabbed a case or a crate of apples and picked 'em up and threw 'em in all of his duffle bags on the boxcar that he and I were in with his luggage, and so we had apples to eat all the way to Frankfurt. He just reached down and grabbed it and threw 'em in there and we had something to eat.

*Why were you going to Frankfurt?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** That was just on the way back down. Now, where I came back into Frankfurt, I'd been into Paris and was going back to Frankfurt. I had been assigned back to from Paris to the Elizabethan school, high school in Frankfurt. And I had a jeep loaded and in Paris, at \_\_\_ headquarters, I was in charge of all of the officers that were coming in and I better not cut this off.

*OK, you last recall that you were in Frankfurt and this was towards the end of the war.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yeah, and this Frankfurt had been bombed. The \_\_\_ department building was not hit, but the Elizabethan school neighborhood all around was bombed out, and they had dozers in there pushing down all of this rubble, looking for booby traps and stuff like that, trying to pile it up to burn it there on the lots where these homes were, beautiful home. That's where that -

*OK, we'll take a look at these.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Clear around here. You see these \_\_\_ things, they were bombed, they were in the street, they were on the road, in the gutter, all of it was just scattered around everywhere. What to do with, painting, an artist I saw it, and just picked it up in the street.

*And brought it back, OK.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And brought 'em home.

*OK, you were in Frankfurt probably at the end of the war.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Probably so.

*And then you got transferred to Paris.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** To Paris, right.

*Were you happy that you were going to Paris when they told you?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes, I wanted to go to Paris, but I didn't know what – do I recall – somewhere along the line, I broke my leg, and I was in the hospital in Switzerland for two months, and then I came to Frankfurt from Switzerland, and then I came on down with my leg in a cast and I had my jeep and I got my orders from my commanding officer, and \_\_\_ headquarters, I was assigned \_\_\_ headquarters Paris in the – what was the name of the hotel? Richter? Well anyway, the hotel that was at \_\_\_ headquarter.

*That's the big guys.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** It's the big guys, yeah. And I was assigned there, and I walked into, told 'em that I carried my order, and I was villaging in this small, petite palais, or the little palace of Paris.

*Wow.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And I was villaging there.

*And what was your job there?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I was just coming through Paris, to \_\_\_ headquarters, so I came through the village and went up to \_\_\_ headquarters at the hotel, and walked in and reported with my orders and I was standing there, but my drama teacher from Baylor University is my commanding officer in Paris, France.

*Is that right?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I couldn't believe it. He said Jack, you give me such a nostalgic feeling to know that somebody I know is from home.

*Is that right? What a small world.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Small world. So he said where are you going? He says I've been here four years. I'm ready to go home. And I knew his wife, Kitty, his wife's name was Kitty he called her, and his two daughters. He said I want to go see my family and will you take these orders down to the headquarters and get 'em cut to transfer me to Texas? I said OK, so I did. And while I was down there, they said well, why don't you get your orders transferred to Texas, too? Well I'd like to go home. And so they cut his orders and my orders. I got back on my jeep and drove back to \_\_\_\_ headquarters and got delivered his and he said well, let's go. So I got in my jeep and I drove down to the dock with my leg in a cast, and I got out of my jeep. What am I gonna do with my jeep? It had been mine ever since I'd been to Frankfurt and I traveled to Vienna, Austria; I'd traveled to Heidelberg; I traveled everywhere in Europe in that jeep. So I, Paul Baker said come on Jack, let's go, so I left the keys in my jeep and walked up the gangplank and they helped me up the gangplank with my cast, carried me to a cabin, set me down in there, and I came home.

*What ship were you on? Do you recall?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Just an LST.

*An LST.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And had a good cabin all the way home, taken care of all the way.

*How did you break your leg?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Skiing in Switzerland.

*OK, that wasn't a combat wound.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No. And that was while I was on rest period, but I've forgotten where it was in Switzerland. It was in Devil's Flood, Switzerland where I was in the rest – what?

*What happened to your jeep?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh, it was green and it was in front of that ship that was Navy. Before I could get up on the gangplank, the arm had come out, dropped a chained down, circled my jeep, picked it up and had it in the hold of the ship and it was painted blue before I could get settled in. I didn't never hear whatever -

*It became a Navy jeep.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Became a Navy jeep and they kept it on that ship the rest of the time I guess.

*So you came home –*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And I went to Fort Hood where I was discharged from and that was in when –

**John's wife:** February of '46.

*OK, in February of '46.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And Betty and I were married in August of '46.

*Did you know Betty before you went overseas?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** When I was in Baylor.

*So you knew your wife from college days.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And rolled her in the snow in Baylor and got up and left her, and I had a date with her to go somewhere and my orders came in from Fort Benning, Georgia, that I had to get on the train that night so I stood her up on the first date that I had with her, my wife.

*Did the two of you write to each other while you were overseas?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Oh yes. I told her I was coming back, a lot of letters.

*Did you plan on marrying her?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes, I was waiting for her all the four years I was there.

*And she was waiting for you.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*OK, all right. I'm gonna stop for just a second here. OK, we're just gonna finish up with a few questions I'd like to ask you more general questions about your experiences, and you can answer them as best you can and if you feel the need not to, you're certainly free to do that. One of the questions I'd like to ask is what do you think was the toughest part of your experience during your service in the second world war?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** The toughest part. It was up in the Coventry area when we were under combat firing, but we were protected to a great extent because the fighting and all was over – would you bring me that map, that globe?

*Were you ever afraid that you might die or be killed?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes, I was, but then I turned around and I – the Lord to take care of me.

*OK, and you have a book in front of you, a small book, and it's called A Spiritual Almanac for Servicemen, and –*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I carried that in my chest pocket of my uniform for four years.

*You carried that all the time that you were in the service in your chest pocket.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Right.

*And did that give you some –*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Assurance,

*Assurances?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** This was given to me on the day – there's no date there, but the man that signed it put my name in it, was a missionary that was on board the train that I was leaving Waco, going to Dallas, and he said keep this with you.

*So he gave that to you when you first went into the service.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** The first day of my birthday. I was crying, everybody else was. For a girlfriend and all.

*And you carried that book with you throughout your entire service.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes.

*And did that give you help and support?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Not the little book, but what it stands for.

*And what was that in your mind?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** The Lord is with me all the time.

*And you felt that all the time that you were –*

**John Howard Harrison III:** And He's still with me, and he's God in me right now telling me how much longer he wants me to stay here. But death cannot be determined one way or another.

*Have you had that faith all your life?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** All my life. I was scared lots of times, but all in all, was able to get through and I look at it now, I did so little compared to those that gave their life for their country and their service. It breaks my heart to know that so many of them that I knew are gone, and I'm still here.

*But you did your duty as you saw it, and as they told you to do it.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I tried to.

*You have no regrets about what you did.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No regret, but sometimes it was difficult, but all in all, I was just thankful that I was able to get through all of it and -

*As you look back now, how do you think your military service affected your life?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Mr. Tom, that's been so long ago. I've had so many more blessings since then. I was very fortunate to be able to come back, which I was grateful, but my blessings today is my family and my girls and my home, and my wife. And that's my life now. But Army life was a transition from change, year to year, through \_\_ combat and traveling and I was able to travel throughout Europe, but in traveling, I was learning a great experience of what others have done for our country, and I'm sorry that I was not able to do more.

*OK, I appreciate that comment. Do you think often of the war years or do you try to forget that?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** No, I can remember where is my little notebook with all my little pictures – I was wanting to show you – is it down at the bottom? Here we are. When I look at those and -

*So you have photographs in this album of many of the men that you served with.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Yes, they were all my buddies. This was my buddy here, but this is my buddy, he's gone, he's gone, this one's gone, and we come back in to those little pictures. This little picture here I said he's the best sergeant or something like that. Those are pictures of me \_\_\_\_ on guard.

*So you've kept an album of your time in the service that you still have today after all these years.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Kept 'em all.

*All right. When we're finished here we can talk a little about those, but I'd just like to kind of wind up the interview and just ask you a few more questions. One would be what are the greatest memories you have of your military service?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I guess even though we had been in combat and in the areas and I'd never seen the soldiers that were dead or but the greatest thing that I could say that impressed me, not me individually, when they said the war is over, it's over. Now, you won't understand what I'm going to say, and I'm not belittling you in any way, but Tom, Mr. Tom, there's been six wars I've seen, six. World War I. I was in a parade Armistice Day with a flag across my breast and my mother says get up early, the war is over, and fire you little canon with firecrackers. World War II came along. Word of the war is over. I had to realize that is it over? Is it over? Just went through my – several days until I soon saw and we were moved around, the war is over, and thank goodness for that. Now maybe I can go home. That was the main thing.

*And I'm sure that thought was shared by a lot of other soldiers at the same time.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** So many of 'em were there to wait with me and you said you were from Chicago. I have a personal friend that lived in Chicago that was with me. He was a sergeant and he said when the war was over, I'm going home, and I can pick out a little band here, with all of that was in headquarters company, the war is over. I'm gonna pack up my things, close my desk. I'm going home. Because he thought the war is over he could go home, but he was still there. Two years later, like a lot of us were, before he was able to go home. But Max wanted to go home. He was not satisfied in the Army, but I want to go home. And he was the only one in that group that said I want to go, let me go. But all in all after it was over, I said now that it's over, maybe we get to go home. I was a long way from home and was thinking

about Betty and everybody here, and that's why I was glad it was over. But the most important part that bothered me more than anything was the fact that I was in headquarters company and I was not in combat in Arkansas, and we were shipping them out every day, and I was sitting there just typing their orders, get him out, get him out. Where is he going? That was one of the trying times because they were buddies that I knew that were in Arkansas that was with me there at the time.

*And you knew they were going.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** But some of them came back, some of 'em didn't. And I don't know. But that's it. I have no regrets of my service in the Army. I felt as though I could've done more when I think about how the others gave their life for it, the service. I was never placed in a position that could cause me to feel that I was not wanted in the service or that I was in the service for a reason. That reason was uppermost in my mind was to do the best I could.

*OK. I'm going to ask you one last question, then we'll let you off the hot box. Is there anything else based upon what we talked about, is there anything else that you would like to add to the interview so that future generations can have a fuller understanding of what your generation went through during that war?*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Tom, it's like this. I still have the feeling that I didn't do very much. I did what I was supposed to when I was in the service, but I didn't see what the war was. And what would I tell another generation that I'm going through with right now? They're not interested, so many of them are not interested. They do not have the patriotism that a person has when he's in the service, that I'm here for a reason, and whatever my reason is, I want to do the best I can, and if that reason is not enough, I just pray that something else would happen that I could do better and it did come to pass when I was in Arkansas, in the replacement depot. We were not bothered about the war too much. People were coming and going. But I didn't realize it until that lady said put that man down at the end of the hall and let him die. He probably bombed us yesterday. That was the first realization that I had with reference to the life of a person and I couldn't do anything about it. He was a German. I had to walk away. And that's with me all the time, continuously, but then on the other hand, if I tried to turn around and say what they did and the whole scope of the war come down to me as an individual, how can it affect me? If I let it, if I let all of those white crosses in Planter's Field where the poppies grow, if I let them bother me, but no, I look forward to seeing them to know that they gave their life for me. I wish that the generation of young people today could have that understanding, that patriotism, that reverence for those white crosses and what they stand for, and it's just like they say, in Planter's Field where the poppies grow between the crosses row on row, that's my life. I love 'em. I look forward to it and I hold 'em with the utmost reverence for every day that I see and hear and know. These men, I don't know all of 'em, where they are still or not, but I still look upon them as they did they part like I was doing mine, and that's what I wanted to do.

*OK. Well, Mr. Harrison, it's been a privilege. I certainly have enjoyed listening to you and sharing your experiences with you to the extent that somebody who wasn't there can share an experience, and that's what part of our program is about, is about letting other people who weren't there have an opportunity to know what did happen and how people dealt with it and lived through it. So I want to thank you very much for participating in the program and I think at this point in time we'll call the interview as complete.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** Fine. I've enjoyed being with you and renewing my acquaintances with these and with you.

*With these meaning the men you served with.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** It's been nice.

*OK, thank you.*

**John Howard Harrison III:** I've enjoyed it.

*[End of recording]*