

## Transcription: Kenneth Stark

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*Today is Wednesday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010. My name is James Crabtree and I'll be interviewing Mr. Kenneth Stark. Mr. Stark is at his home in Beaumont, and I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us. First question I guess, is just tell us just a little bit about your childhood and your boyhood and your life before you went in the Marines.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, I was born in \_\_\_\_, Louisiana, and we moved to Nederland, Texas in '29 during the Depression. My dad, he made mattresses and just jack of all trades, and he stuck a nail in his foot on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July in about 1935, and he died 14 days later. Blood poisoning.

*Yes sir.*

**Kenneth Stark:** So after that, my mother and a sister and my brother, and one sister lived with my mother, and she had cancer, and she died just four years later. I went to school at Nederland High School. During that time, well after my dad died, of course me and my brother just did odd jobs mowing yards and stuff like that to get along. There were seven of us all together. Well we had three of 'em was married and they gave us a little money every month. Of course we sold milk, butter, so that's the way we'd get along.

*Were you the oldest brother?*

**Kenneth Stark:** No, I had a brother four years older than me, and I had a sister four years younger. So after that, after she died, I went to live with my oldest brother and stayed with him a while, and then I went to live with my sister, and when I was, I must've lived there from 17, in fact I joined the Marines on August the 12<sup>th</sup> I think it was. But I wasn't 17 until the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

*Was that 1941?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, 1941.

*So you were already in the service then when Pearl Harbor was bombed.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Right. I went in in August.

*Did you have to get permission from someone?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well I suppose, yeah, I had to get permission, but I lied about it. I wanted to in the Marines. There was five of us who wanted to go. About the only thing I knew about the Marines Corps was what I read in a book. A friend of mine, well they called them comic books then, but it was about this Marine and we used to read that book and hear the experiences and stuff like that. Well we decided to be Marines. So we all went to the Marine Corps. I went up there to see about going. They was all 17 though. They put my birthday down as born in '23. But I was born in '24. And so I had to bring the papers home for my sister, and when she read the papers, she says they got your birthday wrong here. It says '23. I said well, what they got? I said well, I'll get 'em to change that when I go back.

*Yeah.*

**Kenneth Stark:** And she accepted it and signed it. So that's when I joined.

*How long was it, sir, between the time you signed up before you were on your way to boot camp?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh it was just a few days, it was not long.

*Not long at all. Where did they send you?*

**Kenneth Stark:** San Diego, Marine Corps basics in San Diego.

*Did they put you on a train to send you out there?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, we got on a first class passenger train and boy we said we're Marines! Well that changed real quick when we got there. They said you know, you're nothin' and you won't be nothin' until we make you a Marine.

*That's right.*

**Kenneth Stark:** And they did.

*Was that your first time going away from home?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yes.

*So you were born in Louisiana and you had grown up in Beaumont -*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, Nederland.

*Nederland, but you had not been away from that area, right?*

**Kenneth Stark:** No, I'm still just living a few miles from where we lived in Nederland.

*I guess my question, sir, was that your first time on a train, your first time going across the country?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah, that was the first time really to get out in the world.

*What were your memories of the recruit depot at San Diego when you got there?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, nothing in particular except everybody knows when you go through that, it's rough, you know, the training, but then I didn't have no particular problems except just normal routine of going through boot camp.

*What are your memories of your drill instructors?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, we had one who wasn't quite as strict, but we had one that was real strict. Of course everybody had an opinion of drill sergeants. But the last week we found out we was really better than we was giving us credit for.

*Sure. What were most of the men like in your platoon?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, they was all, we didn't have nobody was really protesting. I mean they all wanted to be Marines, and all were pretty good fellas.

*The Depot has been there since the 20s, so I know you did a lot of your training there at San Diego, and then did you go up to Camp Pendleton at any point?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, after we got out of boot camp, we went to Camp Elliot. They didn't have Pendleton. It was Camp Elliot. It was right out of San Diego, and wasn't that long we got on a detail who volunteered, out of the 5 that went, two of us stayed together, out of my best buddies, and we got on a detail to go to China. Well, we were going to be a big deal going to China. Old Marine talks about China. So we were going over there to go to China, and about that time we went to San Francisco to catch another ship that was going to Hawaii, and there from China, but that was about the time they started pulling Marines and stuff out of China. They had some serious problems then. They changed our orders to go – they canceled that, so we went back to Camp Elliot, and were stationed there at Camp Elliot.

*Were you an Infantryman?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yes.

*So you were back at Camp Elliot. Were you there then when Pearl Harbor was bombed?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, in fact we were on \_\_\_ in Los Angeles on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and fixin' to come back that afternoon. I think it happened somewhere around 1 o'clock, and we heard about it, so everybody get back to their base. So we had to be in \_\_\_ when that happened. We went back to Camp Elliot.

*Did you hear about it over the radio?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah well, on the streets, newsstands and all that. We seen people crowdin' around there, getting the things, big crowds, and we got in there and found out what it was. It was announcin' all over the service then to get back.

*What did they tell you when you got back to your unit?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well not much, but we started some extra training and falling out, getting ready for extra training if I was going, if we had to go.

*I'm sure you and your fellow Marines must've known at that point though that you would be going to war, right?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah. We heard about it as Marines on Wake. They was takin' Wake, the Japs was, and I think they had about 400 Marines in Wake, and that held us out until they either killed or captured all of them.

*Yeah, and then of course the Japanese attacked.*

**Kenneth Stark:** That made us want to go more, get over there and whip them little devils and get it over with.

*That's right. How long was it before you guys got shipped out yourselves?*

**Kenneth Stark:** A little later on I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines, and they wanted volunteers to go for replacements overseas, so I got in on the volunteer outfit to go. My buddy didn't make it. They took the first ones up there and there was more of them wanting to go than they was asking for, so I went ahead and went. So I left him.

*Where did they send you to first?*

**Kenneth Stark:** At first we went to Pearl Harbor. We left on about the 7<sup>th</sup> of January.

*So about a month, almost exactly a month after Pearl Harbor.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, about a month. We started overseas and we went to Pearl Harbor first, spent the night, and the next day, next morning we were on another ship and went to Midway.

*When you were at Pearl Harbor even though it was a brief period of time, could you see the damage that had been done?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah, we pulled into the harbor that afternoon. We went right through all the mess. They hadn't cleaned up nothing then. Then we left there and went to Midway the next morning. We didn't spend any time in Hawaii. We went to Midway.

*What are your memories of Midway?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, Midway was two little small islands, very small, and the one we was on was Sandaw. You could almost stand in the middle and see water all around you. It was just all sand. At that time, the Japanese, they hadn't made their big move yet, and so submarines was shellin' us about every night. The submarines would come up and shell us, and wasn't doing a whole lot of damage, but they would go and come up every night and shell some. That's about all was happening there. Was in two infantry companies, and we worked all day and stood door all night.

*What did they have you doing during the day when you were working?*

**Kenneth Stark:** During the day we were fortifying that island, setting up barbed wire, land mines, and just getting ready for an attack. When the Japanese decided to make their big move, we got word of it, the intelligence, so they told us that we were going to be, they would probably come and invade us and do us like they did Wake. Just fight you good. But they never did actually land on Midway. They started out with bombing and strafing. In the meantime, the Navy was preparing to attack them. The Navy was ready to attack them when they came in. So the big battle was out in the ocean with the Navy.

*That's right, the Battle of Midway which was a big victory for us.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah. They used to come in and bomb and strafe us, so we didn't have any, they didn't make a landing. They weren't able to land at Midway.

*From where you were, could you see or hear any of the battle out at sea?*

**Kenneth Stark:** No, no, they were far enough out then. They were over the horizon, and I think our Navy when they contacted them it was still a pretty good ways and they started attacking them with dive bombers and stuff. That's when a lot of them pilots, they destroyed all the air, the ones that landed, and I think if I remember right they got three or four carriers.

*I'm sure that had to have been a big morale lift for you and your fellow Marines to have heard of that victory, because up until that point it had been a lot of blows from Pearl Harbor, Wake Island and the Philippines.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, if it wouldn't have been, if our Navy hadn't gotten together, by that time they got, I think that was June, June 6<sup>th</sup> I think, that they came, attacked. They were supposed to according to intelligence take Midway and move on to Hawaii, and land, but that was six months later. They were going to go back to Hawaii and attack Hawaii. They had lost lots of troops.

*It was certainly a big turning point.*

**Kenneth Stark:** And it was a pretty big deal. That was going to be their big deal.

*After that battle was over and you learned that our forces were victorious, how much longer did you spend there at Midway?*

**Kenneth Stark:** After the Battle of Midway was over, there wasn't too much going on. The war kind of moved over to the South Pacific, more like down in Guadalcanal was our first offense. But it didn't happen. We didn't do a whole lot. But I spent about 20-21 months on Midway, and then came back, went through Pearl Harbor and on back to the States. Then when I got back to the States on a 30-day furlough, went back to San Diego, and it wasn't long I was in an outfit that they were going back overseas. Meantime I got married and -

*You got married in San Diego?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, we got married at the Marine Corps Base.

*At the recruit depot?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah.

*Wow. Who did the ceremony?*

**Kenneth Stark:** I don't remember his name now. He was a chaplain.

*Yeah, Navy chaplain.*

**Kenneth Stark:** That's where we got married. And I was in the hospital since I had a trick knee from football, and when I first went, they sent me to the hospital to get that fixed. So I stayed in the hospital a couple of three months, something like that, and they sent me back to Camp Elliot, and then we went, got in another outfit going back overseas.

*When you got married, had you met your wife back home in Texas?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah, we were in school together.

*In high school together?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah.

*So she came out then just to San Diego to see you and get married.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, well she had an uncle that was a master sergeant in the band. He was over at the Marine Corps Base band, her uncle, and so she was just going to come out and visit and live with them, and they lived right across the street from the Marine Corps base in that Marine Corps housing there, and well, her uncle was married and had two children, three children, and she stayed with him until we decided to get married. I was in the hospital when we got married.

*So your wedding was actually at the hospital?*

**Kenneth Stark:** No, it was at the San Diego base.

*That's right, at the base with the chaplain. How much time did you have to spend together before you had to leave again?*

**Kenneth Stark:** It wasn't too long when she went to work, got a job and she was working at San Diego and we got us a little apartment. It might've been a couple, maybe three months or so.

*Not very long though.*

**Kenneth Stark:** No, not long. In the meantime just before we left, she was pregnant with our first child.

*What was your rank at that time? Were you a corporal?*

**Kenneth Stark:** I was a corporal, yeah. I made corporal on Midway.

*So you were an NCO by that point. The unit you were with was stationed at Camp Elliot?*

**Kenneth Stark:** That's where I was, yeah.

*You mentioned earlier that you were with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> -*

**Kenneth Stark:** I think it was 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.

*OK, so you were still with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.*

**Kenneth Stark:** I was still in the Infantry when I left on that replacement deal.

*Then by that point with the war going on and the draft and everything –*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah, the war end.

*You had a lot more experience than a lot of these young Marines that were coming in.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah, I had a lot more experience in the war. That's when it really started. Compared to what we done in Midway, well when we left, went overseas in the Battalion and went to New Caledonia, we stayed a little while in New Caledonia and we moved onto a little island off of Guadalcanal called Pazusas. That was the rest \_\_\_\_ Division, and we joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Division then.

*I think I read somewhere sir that Bob Hope did a big USO show there.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, he came, that was after we come back I think from \_\_\_\_\_. We went to, yeah, he came and put on a show there.

*Did you have a chance to see him?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, only from a distance.

*Well that's what I meant, yeah.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, not personally.

*What was that like to be there in the middle of the South Pacific fighting a war, and have a star entertainer and others come and put on a show? Was that kind of a little taste of home?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, some ways we didn't like it because at that time some people, some women in the Red Cross was taking advantage of it, and they sent them out on the different rest camps, and they actually didn't have nothing personal or personal contact except some officers, and they go and entertain the officers. We didn't have much use for them. We had one Red Cross man that really fought to get stuff that we needed, and we were getting ready to go on Peleliu. We were training there. Meantime I was in a machine gun squad. I had a machine gun squad and we landed not in an assault wave, but a few wave, we went to Peleliu. We stayed about 30 days on the water before we landed, practicing before we hit Peleliu, and they told us there wasn't nothing there. We'll have it in two-three days. Two days, maybe three, was nothing there. So that's about all we got out of it. Well later on, intelligence and the ones doing all the planning and stuff, we were already on the water, and they were going to take Peleliu for a drop-off point for the General \_\_\_\_ to go back to the civil base. He was going to make his way back. He left out of there when there was fighting in the Philippines. He come back to the States and he vowed to go back. Well about all they had on the Midway they thought they could use was an air strip. And the air strip starting with the beach. Like I say, they didn't think there was much there.

*Obviously there was. It was a bad battle.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well it turned out to be the biggest battle in the Pacific, the most killed and wounded.

*Yeah, I've read that percentage-wise it was the worst by far. When you went ashore there, at Peleliu when you finally went ashore, did you know at that point that it was going to be a bad fight?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, not too much. We were still under the impression that there wasn't much there and actually we were surprised when we landed and got the forces there of defending, until we found out we got into more than we bargained for. We were right on the beach and the airport was right on the beach, and across there was nothing but thick jungles and stuff. Peleliu wasn't very big. It wasn't very long. Might've been 8-10 miles or something like that, if that big. We had a problem, another thing we didn't know about, but it was a mistake, in fact I got an order from it was over in Peleliu, about it come out in the paper a year later, and they were saying that Peleliu was a big mistake. They were going to call it off, but Admiral Nimitz said he was attacking. Admiral Nimitz was in charge and he went ahead and attacked it. But they really didn't want to take it, they wanted to bypass it.

*Yeah, I've read those stories, too.*

**Kenneth Stark:** So they had a big story about it, but at the time back here in the States they didn't know much what happened. They know they did a lot in Peleliu. When we landed there, it was pretty rough. We were pinned down on the beach with our backs to the wall at night. We might've had as little as 100 yards, 200-300 yards of beach. That's all we had. So it got pretty rough that night to start with. They were bombing and shelling us all night, and they had little tanks, little two-man tanks and they attacked that night and some of them broke through the lines, completely behind it, and finally got them knocked out with bazookas. Couldn't get the General Sherman's in, that first day. We spent the night on the beach because they didn't want to move into the jungle before it was out, and go across, they were waiting to get the General Sherman tanks in. And they had trouble with that so they didn't get 'em in. So we had to stay on the beach that night. That's all we had. We got where we landed, we didn't advance very far, and decided not to go across the air strip and stay on the beach. But then they had all the high ground. It was right behind the Air Force was all real heavy territory, and we found out that they had around 15,000 Japanese Marines on it, and it was a big cave, and a whole lot of them were just amassed there in those caves. Everything was in caves and they had railroad guns just above the airport that they would open them up and roll them out and fire, and roll them back in. Or they would bomb and really didn't hurt 'em too much because they were all in them caves. The meantime, the air strip, well we had the CB back then. There was working outfits, civilians.

*OK, sure.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Went in to islands and did the work. Called them the CB's. Construction Battalion.

*That's right.*

**Kenneth Stark:** And they were bombing and shelling the air strip and our planes was using the strip all the time. They had their people repairing them, CB's and I think it was recorded, supposed to have been recorded as being the shortest bomb in the war because they would take off and fly 1,000 yards and dump 'em. That's where they was, just above in caves and all. It took a good while to get some of the high ground. It took us about, I don't know, I think about 31 or 33 days.

*What did your platoon sergeant tell you and your Marines while this was all going on?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well not a whole lot, just knew we weren't going to take 'em like we thought we was. It was just going to be \_\_\_\_ without 'em, which it ended up worse. But it took a while to get 'em routed out of them caves. They would always be in the cave. We would lay on the line, just lay there, and they had bombs and would keep coming in and bombing and strafing, and they would pull up their fire and all them Japs, they would run out of the caves and was there to meet us. So it didn't do much harm to 'em.

*When you were getting ready to go, when you were in that type of situation, what if anything do you think about in terms of do you pray or do you try not to worry about it, or do you just worry about the Marines who are with you? I think a lot of people, especially people listening to this interview who have never been in combat, they have a hard time understanding how a person can get through that. I was wondering if maybe you could share with us how you approached it.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Not when it was happening. You really didn't give yourself to thought. You just did what you had to do, and follow the orders. Getting down to actually thinking about it, there wasn't much thinking to do about it. You were just worried about getting it done. They were pretty slow in getting them where we could get control, but as far as I suppose everybody's attitude was everybody had a good attitude about it, but they were waiting for it to get done. There wasn't much else to do except just keep going. Like I said, the night time was the roughest because you couldn't see, and they would throw up flares every few minutes and light up the thing, and you'd think, you know, you couldn't see nothing. When a flare went up, they hid, and when the flare would go out, we couldn't see because you got a light and then dark again, and it takes you a little while to get back in focus. But all the time, most of the time it was hand grenades. We never did at that time we had on the machine gun we had two or three guys, and the machine gun post should have about 10 men. Supposed to be a gunner, an assistant gunner, and everybody else was ammunition carriers to keep them supplied. Of course all of them could be a gunner. But at night what the Japs wanted, they wanted us to open up so they could tell exactly where we were. Then they knew exactly where our machine gun was.

*What type of machine gun did you have?*

**Kenneth Stark:** It was .30 caliber air-cooled, and during that, oh, there was lots of things happened, you know, normally stuff that happens in a battle, at night, yeah.

*At night did you ever have any worries about yourself if you were gonna make it through that?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, you couldn't help but worry about getting back. At the time, back home my wife was expecting. And if it weren't for that, we were on the front lines when she was born back home. So that was the biggest concern. Other than that, didn't have nothing much, but they had like I said, the battle would get pretty bad and we had one, there was about three of us taking cover behind a big rock, and we had some cover, dug a big hole in the ground, but there was a great big crack where a grenade landed in the hole with us, and it went off in the hole but it fell down in a crack way down, it was a deep crack caused by the bomb. So we didn't get, just shattered with rock. Another night the same thing happened and I was crouched down behind this rock and I had my right hand up on the rock, one hand. I was laying down, and something hit my finger, I felt it hit my finger. But we went ahead and my finger started throbbing. I felt like there was blood on it, and it was like numb. So I called a Corps man, and the Corps man looked at it and he called for a flare and it had mashed the ring down. It was a Marine Corps

ring, and all of a sudden there was a Marine Corps \_\_\_\_, didn't have much around it. The crown is mostly all emblems, and of course it flattened the whole ring, and then the Marine Corps ring just went on down into my finger, and I got to thinking about it, and when the Corps man seen it, he says well, you're gonna have to get that ring, he says your finger is turning black. So he got like scissors they use and the first aid kit, and he managed to cut it. He said you're gonna have to go. You can go back to first aid behind the lines. And I was like a lot of guys it happened to, they didn't think it was bad enough to go back. So we just stayed, and he cut the ring off with those little thin around the crown to get the ring off. I still got the ring. But I just stayed and things went on just like nothing happened.

*When did you know that the Battle at Peleliu was going to be over?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, after the heavy fighting was over, it kind of calmed down and wasn't as \_\_\_\_ composition, and then we had another outfit was making a flank move on what was there and closing in on what was left in there. One thing about it, there was lots of snipers that was up in the caves but you couldn't get to 'em. I think they had one instance there where they had a Jap was up in one of the caves and couldn't get to him, and they tried getting a tank up in there and the tank got lodged and couldn't get the tank out, and they got out and he shot them. I think the report was he killed about 80 some Marines, and that was several months he spent up there in that cave, still killing people that come through there. That made a story for the Marine Gazette, a little paper back in the rest camp you could get 'em. We heard about that, but I said after they got, was closing in on him, you know, finally they decided to bring in, we had an Army division. They had another island right off of Peleliu, so they landed on that but there wasn't nothin' there. So they were just standing by, so our Marine commander on Peleliu, he said he was going to take him himself. So they didn't bring the Army into it. It was pretty close to the end of it. They relieved us and went down out of the fighting, and it wasn't long before we went back to Vavuvu rest camp and started training for Okinawa.

*Tell us a little bit sir about Okinawa.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, the main time I was on that machine gun at Peleliu, but they wanted some volunteers to go into a demolition squad and do front line demolition, and so I volunteered for that and I was actually picked to go with that school, and so we spent our time training all about explosives and the kinds and how you could use it and what you could do with it, how to devise mines and booby traps, stuff like that. That was a lot of fun working with that. All of the rest of the outfit would practice on another little island making practice landings, and then we'd go before them and set up all kind of charges where they were going to land.

*Where were you, sir, when you learned that your baby daughter was born?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, we'll go back to when we left the lines, we had regular mail. Of course everybody, I was the only one that was expecting, and so they were all interested if I was gonna get the word, but I really didn't get the word until we were off the lines, and we came off the front lines what was left of it, and they had a mail call. It was an announcement that the baby had been born.

*I'm sure that probably made you pretty happy to get that word, even being where you were.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, oh yeah. All them other guys were waiting for whether you're going to get a boy, that's all they thought it was going to be a boy. But like I said, nobody knew what she

was going to have. And they all crowded around to wait and see what it was. And I said it's a girl. Oh my goodness, it's a girl. That was the end of it. After we went to Okinawa, of course Okinawa was another big battle, the longest one the Marines fought. It lasted about three months and the Marines was used to fighting those fast on and off in battles, you know, jungle fighting. When we landed on Okinawa, it was a little different. But like they told us, what we knew about it was we were schooled every day about how rough it was going to be. It's a beach with lines with pillboxes, and fortified real heavy, and said if you think Peleliu was bad, wait until we hit that. Well, you know, we couldn't think of anything being worse than Peleliu, but actually when we landed, the first Marines landed unopposed. We didn't have no opposition. And one lieutenant died in the boat with a heart attack that we heard about. It wasn't nothing personal, but we heard about it. When we landed, he had a heart attack, the suspense and everything was pretty great, and when we landed, there was no opposition. There wasn't a shot fired from the enemy, and we had the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division landed on the top half, just about in the middle of the island, and we were going to split it in half, and the Army was going to take the south part and the Marines was going to take the north part. Our orders was to just push across the island, cut it in half, and go north, fight toward north. Well it wasn't nothing there. There was nobody. There were no Japs. They had moved all the Japs and everything they had and most all the civilians down below the river, and it had a river run up through there, and they just stayed down there waiting for us. I think about three or four days before the Army hit 'em. They run into 'em first. In the meantime, we were kind of like on hold, and then when that happened, they moved the two Marine Divisions and filled in with half of it with Marines and half of it Army, and kept trying to push down. But Okinawa was like 80 miles long.

*Yeah, a much bigger island.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, and we fought there about it was three months before we secured it.

*Once all that was secured, where were you when you learned, to jump ahead a little bit, where were you when you learned that the first atomic bomb had been dropped?*

**Kenneth Stark:** The whole 6<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Division was down, was on, about in the middle of the island and we pushed all the way across it, came back, bivouacked around the beaches and stuff there, waiting for the orders.

*To go invade the mainland in Japan, right?*

**Kenneth Stark:** And that's when they ordered us down, take over \_\_\_'s Army. Of course it was a little different type of fighting, especially the Army and the Marines. Army don't fight the same kind of battle as the Marines, and we had some trouble with the Army attacking a hill and backing off, and Marines don't believe in backing off. There was a few times that the lines was open, they had backed off, the Marines kept going, and they infiltrated between which made it bad to keep up the same persistence of moving forward.

*Were you on Okinawa when the war ended?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, I stayed there until, when the battle was over, they moved us up north, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, and moved up north and we had \_\_\_ rest camp there on Okinawa. So we set up another camp and started training for next island which was going to be island off of Japan we heard, that's what it was going to be.

*What was that day like when you learned that the war was over and you weren't going to have to make that invasion?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, all I can say, it was pretty great to hear that.

*I imagine there was a lot of celebration and excitement.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Oh yeah, as much as you can shoot. Wasn't much to celebrate with, but we celebrated, but like I said, we didn't have much to celebrate with.

*At that point, how much longer was it before you were able to get back?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, what happened after that was when the war ended and they started preparing for what they were going to do, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division had orders to move close to China. Well, that's where it all started so that's where we were gonna go. But at that time before that happened, that's when you know, they were letting guys out on the point system, and you had to have a certain number of points. Well I was in the highest points.

*Yeah, I would think so.*

**Kenneth Stark:** And so I got relieved to go back to the States, and of course, another thing I never said before, but after Peleliu, we lost a lot, we lost so many people, and so I just in other words they lost it within command, leaders. So they had to start replacing them, but there wasn't no rates. They would give you a temporary rate acting. They said well, them rates ought to come in. We keep waiting and waiting, and in the mean time we just kept acting. We didn't get paid for it.

*So they had made you an acting sergeant?*

**Kenneth Stark:** Acting Sergeant, yeah. Later on I was made Acting Platoon Sergeant. But everything was acting. You didn't get paid. I remember one time before we went to Okinawa, we'd all got together, it was like that all over. It wasn't just us. But in our company, we decided to protest and went and talked to the captain. And we decided we weren't going to go unless we got a promotion. Well we were gonna go again with backing. Well, he took it all in stride, and he agreed with us, but he says he didn't know right now. You're going. No doubt about you going. If you want to go and be a leader, or you're going to be along with somebody that leads you who's never been there before. So you know what we did. We went back to where we were and started acting. And we acted up on to Okinawa, and took us about a month or better waiting for transportation to get back to the States. The rest of the Division left and was going to China.

*When you got back home, did your wife know you were coming home or did you surprise her?*

**Kenneth Stark:** She knew I was back in the States. I let her know that, we were back in the States. There was another big -

*Were you reunited back -*

**Kenneth Stark:** When we got back to the States and it took us a month or better to leave and get to come back. When we come back, they put us out at Camp Pendleton, and they sent us out there in the boondocks with some other Marines, and look like they forgot about us or

something. They lost the orders. We stayed there a good while. You're supposed to be mustered out within five days. I had agreed, in fact I said when I went in there I was going to make a career out of it. I always thought I would in the Marine Corps. But then my wife didn't go for it. She didn't think it would be very good, and the more I thought of it, I said no, if she didn't like it, well it wouldn't be good for either one of us. So I decided to get out. So when my enlistment was up in the four years, they asked me what I was going to do and I told them that I'll just go COG.

*Yeah, come back to Texas.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Position with that's what they called it, so I agreed I'd be getting out, so I was just held until it was over and get mustered out. So when I came back and it took us so long to get to the process of getting us out, while we were in the barracks preparing to be mustered out, a bunch came in and some of them was the guys that we was with in China, and they got the promotion when they got back to China, and they came back discharged with a promotion. But all of us that was acting never did get nothing extra.

*I understand. Well sir, I want to tell you that everybody here at the Land Office is very grateful for your service in the war and your time as a Marine. There's not enough we can do to thank you. Everybody like I mentioned before we started this interview, Commissioner Patterson, myself, there's a lot of us here that are Marines and Marine veterans, and everybody that works here at the Land Office is appreciative of what you've done for our country, and I know a lot of people probably don't realize it, but we do and we're gonna send you a copy of this interview. You should get it not long from now and you can give copies to your friends and family, and the Commissioner is going to send you a letter and a nice certificate, too.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah, well that'd be nice.

*It's not a lot and it doesn't make up for the promotion you didn't get, but it's our way of saying thanks.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Well, it's a lot more than I was expecting.

*Well sir I really appreciate it. I know I've taken over an hour of your time, but we'll get that interview all out to you soon and you've got my number, so call me whenever you've got any questions or you need to follow up or anything, but I want to thank you for your service and for letting us interview you today.*

**Kenneth Stark:** I thank you. I won't be getting nothing except they're gonna send me a copy, you said?

*Yes sir, we're going to send you copies of this interview on CD, several copies, and we're also going to send you a letter that Commissioner Patterson is going to write to you and as well as a nice certificate that's going to come in a nice commemorative binder for you to keep. So it's kind of a nice item.*

**Kenneth Stark:** I won't have to be contacting nobody -

*No sir, I'm going to mail it to you once we get it all printed up.*

**Kenneth Stark:** Yeah well, that's good. I appreciate that.

*Well we appreciate you, sir, and again thank you very much and semper fi.*

**Kenneth Stark:** OK, semper fi.

*[End of recording]*