

Transcription: Howard Walker

Today's date is February 24th, 2009. My name is James Crabtree and I'll be interviewing Mr. Howard Walker by telephone. This interview is being done in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm located at the Texas General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, 1700 North Congress, and Mr. Walker is at his home in Woodville, Texas. So now that we got that out of the way, sir, how are you this morning?

Howard Walker: I'm fine.

Great, great. Well we really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us and share with us and future generations and historians and others a little bit about your experience in the service, and I guess the first thing I always like to start off with is just tell us a little bit about your childhood and a little bit about your family growing up.

Howard Walker: Well, I was raised on a farm. I'm from Lufkin, Texas. Then went into the Army. I was drafted when I was 18 years old, and I was sent to Camp Hood, Texas to take my basic training there. Then they said I had a 30-day furlough, and when I got home I had a letter to report to Fort Ord, California, in 7 days. So I went from here to California. Then they gave us shots. In two days' time, I was already on a boat.

Going back a little bit, tell us about where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Do you remember where you were when you learned that it had been bombed?

Howard Walker: Yeah, I was in my field plowing. I was plowing my garden.

And how did you hear about it?

Howard Walker: On the radio. Had one in the back there, you know, you had the radio, but you had to have those old tall antennas, or a battery radio, and it skipped so bad and everything, you couldn't really understand it, but anyhow it came through clear.

When you heard that news, did you think at some point that you yourself would be entering the military?

Howard Walker: Yes I did. I said you know, I'm just a kid here, but I'll probably have to go to that war.

And so I imagine that was in '41, and you didn't enter the service, you weren't drafted until '44, so I guess all through high school then you were following the events of what was taking place.

Howard Walker: Yes I was.

Share with us a little bit what that was like as a child and then being in high school and knowing that our nation was at war. Share what your thoughts were, what your feelings were.

Howard Walker: Well, you know, a country boy raised on a farm, never had been any place. Furthest I'd ever been from Lufkin, Texas was to Houston, Texas. And I'd never been to any big cities, anything, and it was just a great experience for me, and you can't realize, I didn't really

realize what happened to me until I got overseas. Everything's different. You know, they taught us how to kill in the Army but they didn't teach us when we got back how to get over that. And it just, well, that's the most depressing feeling I've ever had when I was over there. I couldn't get any letters from home, couldn't hear from home, and just I was home sick, and it's a terrible feeling.

Did you have any good friends or siblings that entered the military as well during the war?

Howard Walker: Yes I did. I had three brothers. I had two uncles and I've had 'em in the Spanish American War, World War I, II, and III.

And so when you were finally drafted by the Army in '44, did any of them talk to you or give you advice on what to expect?

Howard Walker: Yes, my uncle did, and it was some of the best advice I've ever had. He said when you get over there now, everything is gonna be different, and you've got to look out for yourself, regardless what somebody else tells you. So he told me the best thing is not to try to be a hero. You know, take extra chances. And to do what I was supposed to do, but don't be trying to be a hero and get the souvenirs, stuff like that.

After you got your draft notice, you said you were just 18, how long after you graduated high school was it before you got your notice?

Howard Walker: Well, I really didn't graduate. I got it before I did graduate.

OK, so you knew it was coming then.

Howard Walker: Yeah.

So I guess how long was it after you turned 18, or that you graduated before –

Howard Walker: Well, they, back then when everything like I found out when the war was, I quit school and got a part time job working at Lufkin Foundry in Lufkin, Texas, making war equipment, and I left from there. I was working at the Lufkin Foundry. We made those 105 Hausers and pumping units. And I left from there and went overseas.

When you said you were drafted, you first went to Camp Hood which is now Fort Hood, how long did you spend there in basic training?

Howard Walker: You know, I can't remember. I know they said we were supposed to have a whole lot more time than we had. They just rushed us through there and just like I said, on that I was supposed to had a 30-day furlough from San Antonio. I got home and already had a letter to report to Fort Ord, California in 7 days.

And once you got to Fort Ord, were you assigned to a unit at that point, or were you still in transit?

Howard Walker: No, I wasn't assigned. We call it general _____, and went over I think, taking us about 30 something days. We joined a convoy off of New Guinea.

And during that time, did any of the guys who were with you, had they gone through boot camp with you, or training with you, or were you just completely on your own?

Howard Walker: I was completely on my own. I didn't, one time when I was overseas, we was having a mail call, and they called out Howard Christopher's name, and I said I wonder if that's Howard Christopher from Lufkin? I got to looking and found out sure enough it was, and he was the only man that I knew, or taking basic training with the whole time I was over there.

Wow, so tell us then sir, share with us what it was like when you finally got to your unit, and you said that was in New Guinea?

Howard Walker: Well, we joined a convoy. They had destroyers running out in front of us, just circling, like a bird dog out in front of you, and just going back and forth. And then we landed on Laytee, and then we stayed on Laytee, and then we were shipped from there to Sabou. Then from Sabou, we had been up in the mountains and we cleared out everything out up there and they shipped us back to Manila, and we was fixing to invade Japan, and they had us there at, on Luzon in Manila, they had us training. That Manila bay was full of boats, ships, and they had us training and climbing those ropes. Climb up on side, go to the other side of the ship, go down the other side, get in a boat and go over to the next ship, and that's what they had us doing. And we was alerted to go out and I had a chance to stop and write a letter. I was gonna write a letter home, and we was in this, oh I guess it was about a 16 by 20 tent and they had tables set up in there, and I looked up and here come a guy running just buck naked, jump on the table hollering "the war is over, the war is over!" So I said well, there's another inch lost in the rock. Well, in a few minutes, here come another guy, but he had his clothes on, and he was hollering "the war is over!" Well, everybody just rejoiced so much. Well, we went out, we begin to hear those guns shoot, and we went out there and looked out at Manila bay and those ships were cross firing, shooting across and just lit up the sky. So we didn't get to go. So they put me there in _____ depot, and we was moving vehicles to the, off the ships, to the ships, stuff like that. And I got to come home on points. The married men got to come home first, but I got to come home for points.

Share with us what it was like when you finally got back home and got to see your family again. Do you remember that day?

Howard Walker: Yes I do. I was restless. Nothing satisfied me. I couldn't be still. I couldn't, I was in a different world, completely a different world.

Did your family meet you at the train? I guess you came in on a train?

Howard Walker: No, they had a what they called a traveling bureau, and I hired this guy from, there was 12 of us, caught this traveling bureau out of San Antonio to Houston, and I asked this guy, I said, well I got to go to Beaumont. I said how much would you charge me to carry me on over to Beaumont? He said well, I tell you, give me \$12. I got a friend over there I've been wanting to see. And he brought me into Beaumont, Texas, and I guess it was about 2 o'clock. Well, I got home, I woke my mother up. She was just screaming and hollering and crying. We all was. And my little brothers, I didn't recognize them they'd grown so much. And I didn't get any sleep, stayed up all that night, and all the next day, all the next night. I was just, well, it's hard to explain how I felt. Nothing satisfied me. I couldn't sleep. Well it's just a terrible feeling, I really don't know how to explain.

Were you excited to be, were you happy to be home?

Howard Walker: Oh yeah, yeah. I sure was. I sure was, and then well, the next, my wife, we've been married 62 years, and she lived in Lufkin, and I ___ get, I went up there to see her the next day, and I drove up to her home and she wasn't there, and her mother said she was at a store down there. So I take off back down the store and I met her coming down the road, and we just hugged and kissed and jumped, you know, for joy, and were there for a good long while.

That's great.

Howard Walker: Then I really can't remember too much of what happened along back then. But she was working for the telephone company and we was gonna get married. We was engaged when I left. But we got married and I believe I found a little job there in Lufkin as a candy sale man for Atkins Candy Company, and then I worked there and that was a pretty good job for me because I could be out amongst people and moving. And then I didn't like that, so I got a job, an opportunity to go and take a butcher's training. I went to work for Broocher Brothers there in Lufkin, Texas, and I butchered there for a while, and then my brother called me and asked me if I'd like to go work for the railroad, and I said I sure would. I didn't like to, you know, be one place very long in time. So I come to Beaumont and went to work for the railroad, ___ railroad in Beaumont, Texas, and I stayed there until I retired. That's really and truly, I was miserable. I couldn't, you know, I liked to be moving, and that job just suited me at that railroad. I worked nights, days, I'd go to Houston on the train, Lufkin on the train, or Lake Charles on the train, and you know, I'd go work and come in like I'd go to sleep, and it was just a great feeling.

That's great. You mentioned sir, that your wife, you and your wife were engaged when you went into the Army. Did you have a chance to get many letters from her? I know you said earlier you didn't get a whole lot of letters while you were gone.

Howard Walker: No sir, I didn't. They had roll call. I told my wife, I said I set there many a night and just cried and cried, and I'd wait, hoping I'd get a letter, and I wouldn't, but when I'd get one, I'd set and read it, I'd put it in my pocket, put it down and read it over again. And no telling how many times I read them letters.

And did you have a chance to write her many letters?

Howard Walker: Yes, but she said most of it was cut out. But you know, I wasn't trying to put anything in there that shouldn't be, I wasn't trying to give any secrets away or anything, but she said most of it was cut out.

Well that's an amazing story, just the fact that you were engaged the entire time and how you saw her on the road when you got back home.

Howard Walker: The worst feeling I ever had when I had to push my mother loose from at the train up there in Lufkin, Texas. When I got on the train, she had her arm around my neck -

To depart, to go in the Army?

Howard Walker: Yes. And I guess the best one is when I come in that morning about 2 o'clock and seen her, woke her up. We set up there and cried and talked and hugged and then when I got to see my wife, it was another joyful time.

Oh sure. Now you talked a little bit, let's talk a little bit about your time actually in the service overseas. You mentioned the Philippines and Laytee, tell us a little bit about the units you were with and some of the things you did with them.

Howard Walker: Well, I was Americado, I was invasions, and I carried a BAR, Browning automatic, and they rode us up to them beaches and let that front end down and you hit the beach or you hit the water. If you hit the beach, then you just had to work your way in. That's a terrible feeling. Then you know, they teach you, they can't teach you how you're gonna be feeling, felt when you're being shot at and bombs blowing up around you. They didn't explain that to us, but it just, you wondered if you were gonna make it through the night or through the day. It's an awful feeling.

Were you part of the invasion of the Philippines when MacArthur went back?

Howard Walker: Yes. Oh, I was gonna tell you, I go to VA in Lufkin, and there was a little Philippino lady up there, and I knew how to say a few words in Tagalog, and she done something for, I said salama po, that means thank you, and she says oh, you know Philippino? I said yeah, I was in the Philippines in World War II. She wanted to know where I was at. I said well, I was on Luis Island and ___ at Sabou. I said we landed in Sabou, made a beach head landing. And she said oh, they got a big monument of where MacArthur landed there in Sabou. You have? I said man, I'd like to have a picture of that. So she was supposed to get me a picture. She has a sister that lives in Sabou and she's gonna try to get me a picture of it. I sure would like to have it.

Well tell us a little bit about the unit you were with when you made that landing and how long it lasted and just share with us your thoughts about it.

Howard Walker: We left out of Sabou city and just worked our way up in the mountains. The Japs had been dug in up there and they had a big magnifying glass out on two big wheels, and you could look down in Sabou city and see people walking around down there. Only thing, you just couldn't hear what they were saying, it was how plain it was. And we had to go up there and knock 'em out. They used flame throwers and they throwed octater in there and simps, and you just had to go through there. And dead people and flies. It was so bad with green flies, you couldn't open your mouth without getting some in it, without putting your hand over your mouth.

Did you ever have any doubt that your unit was gonna be victorious?

Howard Walker: You know, I really didn't have time to think about that. All I thought about is looking out for myself, trying to survive. I don't know, it just, I just can't express it.

When you were there, did you ever have a chance to see General MacArthur or hear General MacArthur?

Howard Walker: I shook hands with General MacArthur.

Wow, tell us a little bit about that.

Howard Walker: And Omar Bradley. OK, when we had left Sabou, they shipped us, well there wasn't many of us left, but they shipped us back to Luzon on a small boat, and we landed in Manila, and that's when we was taking that training going from ship to ship, climbing those ropes. Then that was when the war was over. Well, like I said, I stayed right there, well, they let the married men come on first. Then they let the guys on points come on, and we were, I was just working there at this ordinance deal and on my discharge, it showed ordinary, but I was in Americado Division, 182nd Infantry, but they never did show that on my discharge, and then I've tried to call and they said well, some of the records were burned up in St. Louis.

Yeah, that's right.

Howard Walker: And they don't show any of that and also I was wounded in my left leg. I don't know what it was, I'm pretty sure it was shrapnel. But anyhow -

Did you get a Purple Heart for that?

Howard Walker: No, I haven't.

OK, well we need to contact your Congressman then because that's something that he can -

Howard Walker: You know, I get so mad and disgusted at my Congressman.

Oh really.

Howard Walker: You know, I've been to a Democrat Congressman, and I've been to my Republican Congressman - oh yeah, we'll get it. Them politicians will promise you the moon.

Yeah, that's true.

Howard Walker: Oh yeah, sure, you've got your papers? Oh yeah, I got 'em. I even got a letter from Harry Truman appreciating my service, and all of that. Oh yeah, give me that. So I gave it to 'em. I haven't heard from either one of 'em.

Well let us make a few phone calls. I don't know what I can do, but that's something that should be fixed obviously.

Howard Walker: Sure, I got my officer combat badge, bronze star. I didn't know what you was gonna come here now, but anyhow I got 'em out this morning and I said, well they probably got a little dust on 'em, but I got 'em in the case. I was gonna let you look at 'em.

Oh yeah, we appreciate that.

Howard Walker: But getting back to this MacArthur deal, when we got back to Manila, they had, we was in two-men tents, and they had water out there in those lister bags, you know what those are?

Yeah.

Howard Walker: Went out there by the lister bag, they had a sign up and said wanted a volunteer to drive Omar Bradley out to MacArthur's home. So my Captain was over me was

R.D. Rio. He was from West Texas. I don't remember what town, but he was a big bird hunter, and me and him got along good. He'd talk to us. He wanted to stay and get me a civil service job. I said Captain Rio, little Texan ever put his hand back on the United States, he'll never leave it again. So he said well, I can get you fixed up with a civil service. I said no thank you. Said they want a driver to drive Omar Bradley out to MacArthur's home. He can dictate you any military courtesy while you're in the Army. I said yes. He can ____, he's got to wear 'em out. So I went back over to the company there in and I didn't have anything but those green fatigues, and they give me this order and I take it over there, and said hi, Sergeant. He give me 14 suits of khaki's, three pair of shoes and three hats. And I looked at those and I said Sarge, I said man, I can't wear these clothes. I said way too big. I'm fixin' to drive Omar Bradley out to MacArthur's home. He said I don't give a damn who you're gonna drive. Take 'em or leave 'em. And I said thank you. So I went back to my tent and put on a pair of those pants. They'd cover my shoes and go around me twice. My shirt sleeves, you couldn't even, straighten my fingers out, you couldn't even see my fingers. Put that cap on and it come down to oh yeah, and I said well, I'm a ____ dud this. I rolled my sleeves up, rolled my pants leg up, got me a pin, pinned my cap, and I'm taking off. And over there I'm picking him up at the north harbor. Well I got over there and big, __ staff's coming down, those MP's standing there with white gloves, white helmets, all that, fully dressed. I'm standing there by this Jeep and he walks up to my armed guards walk right up there then. I felt silly, but I mean, you know, that was things I wanted them to know. They should know about things like that. And he hollered, "at ease, soldier." He said, "roll them shirt sleeves down." I said, "yes sir." "Roll them pants legs back up." And I said "yes sir." He says "that the only cap you got?" I said, "yes sir." He says, "throw the damn thing away." So he said "roll them sleeves back up, roll your pants legs back up." So he said, "do you know how to get to MacArthur's?" I said "yes I do." So we, no, before we left there, he walked around, he walked around me three times looking from my head to my feet. He said "soldier, can you tell me why is it that an American soldier goes dressed like that?" I said "yes sir." I said "sir," I said "we just come out of the mountains ____ city. We was taking training over here. We're supposed to go to Japan. I didn't have any clothes. They had a ____ on the bulletin board wanting somebody to drive here," and I said "I volunteered for it." And I said "after I got these clothes, I knew they was too big," but I said "after I volunteered I wasn't backing down." Then that's when he told me to roll my sleeves up, roll my pants legs back up. He said "let's run for your outfit." Said it won't take long. He give me a cigar.

This is General Bradley?

Howard Walker: Yes. And he give me a cigar, and we drove. He was a real nice talking fellow. He was just plain Jane, yeah, you know, he was just like I was, only he had a better rank. And we drove up out there and he threw two \$20 bills and see, he says, "now I don't care where you go and what you do. Just be back here in the morning at 8 o'clock." I went back out there at 8 o'clock, I guess it must have been at MacArthur's home or probably about a 50-acre square, had a big, nice home there, tents around it, and I drove up there and they had a separate building from his home out there where they take care of all their business. And I went up and rung this doorbell. I think the smallest brass in there was a lieutenant, and he said "what do you want?" And he shut the door in my face. So I stood there a little bit and I rung the bell again. So he come back to the door, opened the door and he shut the door in my face. So the third time, MacArthur came to the door, and wanted to know what the problem was. I said - he shook hands with me, and I said "sir, I'm come over here to pick up General Omar Bradley." Well, then Omar Bradley got up and walked over to the door and shook hands with me and said "I've been detained." And he said "just wait'll I call you and then you can come back and pick me up." I said "thank you, sir." So I went on back to my company, and when I got there, there was

somebody hollering, H.D. Walker, H.D. Walker. Well, I wasn't answering him. I figured it was some detail, and it was a company commander. He run up there and said "what'd you do with all them clothes you was issued?" I said "they're over in my duffle bag." He said "well go get 'em." So I figured he got chewed out for doing that. I'm just gonna push my luck and lie, I said "I can't now, I got to go get General Omar Bradley." He grabbed me with both arms and he had arms, he said "you're not going nowhere 'til you get them clothes fixed." So they went, I went back over to the supply room there and they had Philippino men in there with sewing machines. They measured the top of my arms and around my arms, the bottom of my arms, my legs, my waist, everything, and said you're not leaving here, you get those clothes _____. So I said OK. So I went back to my tent and I heard this other guy come down through there hollerin', H.D. Walker. H.D. Walker. So I wouldn't answer him. I figure they got me on detail now. So I wouldn't answer him and he hollered again and said I got your orders to go home. I said "hey, right here." And he come over and handed my orders for me to go home. So he gave 'em to me and I was so thrilled, and so I told the company commander, I said I was supposed to pick up General Omar Bradley, but I said I got a chance to go home and I says I am goin'. He said take off. Don't worry about it. Said we'll get him. And that was that.

So you drove for the General, was that for just one day, or a couple of days?

Howard Walker: One day. I drove him to MacArthur's home and left him and I was supposed to go back and get him the next day, but -

The next morning.

Howard Walker: Yeah, but I got my orders to go home, so -

But they went ahead and squared away your uniform and everything, and then you got your orders -

Howard Walker: Yes sir.

How long was it after you got those orders before you were on your way back?

Howard Walker: Two days later, well, let's see, that was like the day and they got my clothes all in there, and the next morning, they loaded us on a 6 by 6 I believe what they called 'em, and they carried us out to this, I believe it was, ___ at the replacement depot I think that's what they called 'em, and you got, they gave you shots and everything and then they load you on down there and then they carry you down there and load you on the ship. Then I was nervous, moving around, and I went down to the TP Mess Hall and I asked the officer, who is in charge down here? He said that guy right over there. I believe that called them, no, what did they call them? Mess Sergeants. They had a different name from the Army. He said that's him standing right over there. I walked up to him and I said say, I said I'd like to volunteer for KP duty. He said what'd you say? I said I'd like to volunteer for KP duty. He said say that one more time. I said I'd like to volunteer for KP duty. He backed off and looked at me and he said, man I've been to the Navy, he told how many years, that I ain't never had nobody do that. He said well I sure will, but he put me on the serving line down there, just an easy job. So I stayed on the, I believe it taken us 17 days to come back and they told us we'd get to see the Golden Gate Bridge by morning, and see the lights. So I told that KP that sergeant over at the mess hall, I said well I got to go see them lights. And I'd go out and stand on top of that ship, and look, look, and I couldn't see. Then when we got close, and I stayed up all night looking for the lights. Well, I seen them

lights, well I stayed out there and I'd get cold and I'd have to go back and warm up, and I'd go back, and I just done that. But that's a beautiful sight coming under that Golden Gate Bridge. The sun coming up under one side of it, you coming up the other. And he put us off there and give us a little ticket and said you're invited to a steak dinner. Order anything you want. Well, I hadn't had any meal the first day since I been over there. So I ordered me a sirloin steak, and a quarter meal. I drank maybe a small cup of milk and me just all loopy, so I couldn't, my stomach had shrunk so I just couldn't eat. Then we got on the train and they'd load us up pretty quick. I ate some breakfast. Well they just one right after the other, and we left and come to San Antonio, and then that's where I called that bureau and come on in to Beaumont.

Going back to the ship for a second, why was it that you wanted to volunteer for mess duty?

Howard Walker: Just to have something to do.

Otherwise you would have just been sitting around?

Howard Walker: Yeah.

I guess you were closer to the food, too, right? Did you get any extra?

Howard Walker: Well, that wasn't my problem, really. I just, you know, everything was so much different. It'd be just like me taking you up there, I don't know if you ever been to New York City -

Oh yeah.

Howard Walker: Take you up there and drop you off right downtown. You don't know nobody, you don't know nothing, but and that's kind of a sample - I wouldn't express it as. Then oh, while we was in Sabou, the Japs attacked us just as dark, or just as the moon was coming up. Now this is before I went to Manila. The Japs attacked us that morning, no, that evening, and they come in there on you just throwing everything they had. But our company commander deserted us.

He deserted you?

Howard Walker: Yes.

Wow.

Howard Walker: See, that's another thing. Well, I've tainted my story. I said anyhow, that's when I got wounded. We didn't have doctors and VA had asked me well, what hospital was you in? I said I wasn't in a hospital. Well what's the doctor's name? I said they didn't have a doctor. They had line medics. Well, where's the hospital? I said we had about a 14 by 16 tent. Now that's the hospital we had. I said he put stuff on my leg and wound it up. Well, while I'm there, there's a beautiful beach and I was fixing to get a rubber mattress and go out there on the beach and just lay in the sun, and they come up hollerin', H.D. Walker. So I answered 'em and said, want you up to McDaggan Headquarters. When I get back to my story in battle, I disobeyed a command, and I thought that's what they had me up for. I told the major, I said you go to hell. I know where that fire's comin' from. So I thought that's what they had me up for to McDaggan commander for.

Now tell us a little bit about what had happened? You said a major had told you – what was the order he'd given you?

Howard Walker: Oh, we was attacking the nearest supply dump, and the guys, they'd get up and run and they'd just shoot 'em like ducks. They was many, I wished I'd had this guy's address. He was from Minnesota.

He was a major?

Howard Walker: No, that was my buddy. He was either from Iowa or Minnesota, and I can't remember. But me and him _____ ain't nothin', holdin' _____, anyway, we was in kind of three mountains come together, and where the water had come down through there, it left a gully about 3 or 4 ft. big, about 3 foot wide. We was in this gully. I said we ain't goin' no further. I said, I know where they come. I see 'em. And I found the best thing is not to ever let them know your position, and I said just hold tight right here. Well we sat there in this ditch, and I had this BAR layin' up on the bank. This guy walked up there and I'm layin' there lookin' up at him. He said what are you doin'? Get out there and find that fire, where that fire is comin' from. I said sir, I know where it's comin' from. He said I said get out there and find that machine gun. I said to the man, I said you go to hell. And there was two Japs oh, probably I'd say 75 yards, or maybe, I don't know, was there and they was fixin' to get up, and I had the gun layin' up on that bank and that BAR, you touch it, you're gonna shoot two or three shots, and I let it go off. Well, this major, he hit the ground. I mean I guess he thought I shot him. But anyhow, he was layin' and I told him, I said you better get down, get down in this ditch. And he said pass the word up and down there to withdraw. Well them guys get up and start runnin', and that's the wrong thing to do. They just picked 'em off like glass. We stayed there in this ditch all that day, all that night, all the next day, all the next night, and the next day, Snaple, I asked him, I said, he said H.D. – he called me by gosh H.D., he said what are we gonna do now? I said well, I know the way we come in here, and I said I can go back the way we come, and we left out and we got out of there and we met replacements coming to replace us. So they turned around and carried us back to there, they had a camp set up, and that's what they called a rest count. That's where I was when this battalion commander called me down there. Well, we walked in there and it was a little old small tent, and he said that was Porter and this major, uh, colonel, battalion commander, I don't know what rank he was.

What was the major, was he an XO or company commander?

Howard Walker: I don't know. I never seen him before and never seen him after. You know, you didn't know names. This buddy of mine, Snaple, I don't even know his given name, and he went by me, H.D. By gosh H.D. We'd be up when we dug our fox hole, after me and him was buddies, I said Snaple, I want you to promise me one thing, that you won't go to sleep on me. Stay awake. I said if you get sleepy and know that you've got to go to sleep, wake me up. Just don't go to sleep on me. Well, he'd hear something in the bushes and by gosh, H.D., I hear something out there. I said well listen, hold still. But he never went to sleep on me. And that's when I'd gotten back down there and they had called me over to that battalion and I thought they was gonna have me up there for that disobeying a command. And I'm out there and he said why I have you in here, he said I understand that, my heart I thought was gonna jump out, I just knew he was gonna say that you're gonna be court marshaled. So and I'll never forget this, he asked me three times what happened. He said well just put in your own words what happened. I said well, the Japs attacked us and men were getting shot, hollering and screaming, running, and I

said that company commander, he said, well what happened to him? I said sir, I said last time I seen him, he was running down the side of the mountain like a spider _____. This court reporter was writin' all this down. Then when we got through, he said I thank you. But he said you know, the bad part is you and I is gonna have to stay over here, but he said that captain, he'll have to send him back to state, passed him back. Well I'm all tired, I felt like I was 3 foot off the ground walking in there, and I must've walked 50 yards, and I just went down on my feet just as easy. I was closing in there because I was so afraid that they was gonna court me because they told you, if you disobeyed a command from the officers, they would put you through the fire. When I get back to it, when he first come up there, he made a threat to me. He had on a .45 and a yellow carbine, and he let me know that he had them rifle. I said sir I can bag a band of much ammunition as any little feller you ever seen. And that's when I kind of turned around and turned up, it was gonna be him or me. And I just, I don't know, I thought about it a lot of times, and goes through my mind, things you've done or should've done and all that stuff. Then I got a good one I'd like to put on a red cross.

OK.

Howard Walker: Ready?

Sure.

Howard Walker: We was up in the mountains and we hadn't had anything to eat, hadn't had a shave or haircut or bath or nothin' and we'd dug in on this mountain, and I asked, and he was a lieutenant but he was a real good guy. He'd been with us, he was from Nacogdoches, Texas. And I said they ain't no way you can get some letter to here or something we can get mail call or something up here? He said Walker, they've got a Red Cross up there about 50 miles back behind us, but he said it's too dangerous. They got road blocks set up. I said if I had a way, I'd go. He said hmm, I don't want to see you do it, but he said there's that old Jeep sitting there. It didn't have no windshield. The only thing it had on it was a 50 caliber machine gun. He said Walker, he said I don't care if you're goin', but he says I really don't want to see you go. So I got in that Jeep and had my BAR with me. I drove up to the first road block. They wanted to know what outfit I was from.

You were goin' by yourself?

Howard Walker: Yeah.

OK.

Howard Walker: I said I'm from the Americado Division, 182nd Infantry. I'm goin' back there to see if I can get something out of the Red Cross. He said well if you do, you'll be the first, but go ahead sir. So I went on and got down there. There was a little old, I would say it was about a 6 by 8 building, had a little old shelf out on the front of it. There was three women there and they had candy and cigarettes out there loose in these little boxes outside, cigar box. And I said, can I help you? I said yeah, I want enough stuff for a company of command. She said well this is all we have. I said where is the manager of this outfit? And it was a two-story building over to the left. And she said they're over there having a meeting. So the stairs, went upstairs was outside, so I just take off up them stairs and get up there and knocked on the door. This lady come to the door and every one of them, their mouths flew open and they just looked, you know, at me. I said I got a company of men up here on the front line, and I want some supplies. This

lady got up, I turned around and she went downstairs and a man got up and followed her downstairs, and I followed him. She opened them double doors down there and had two big locks on it, and she, it was full of stuff. I mean there ain't no tellin' how much stuff there was everything. She tore, and I never will forget this, there was a case of Camel's, I'm not talking about a carton, I'm talking about a case, sittin' up there and she just pulled the bottom open and reached in there and got three cartons. And they was a little light green slip of paper in there. I just happened to look over and seen it, and I reached and got it and stuck it in my pocket, and it was donated by some machine works in Chicago, Illinois. So I put them cigarettes back in that case. I reached down and got it and still had my rifle. I go out there and put it in that Jeep. I come back, I got Camels, Lucky Strikes, and Chesterfields.

Oh wow, you were set.

Howard Walker: I got as many as I could get on that Jeep, and I got razors and _____, and there was something else. I don't really remember what it was. That lady never said a word, or that man ain't never said a word. So I go back to my Jeep over there and I just walked by that place and reached down, I reached down and just got me a handful of gum and a handful of cigarettes out of that box, turned around and walked off and them ladies didn't say a word and I didn't say a word. So I drove back up there. Company commander, he was just a good old country boy, Nacogdoches. He put his hand on his head and he was scratchin' his head and he said Walker, do you know you can get in trouble? I said for what? He said holdin' a gun on them people. I said I didn't hold a gun on them people. I just had it with me. But I said I was in a mood and I would've pulled it. He said you mean that? I said that's exactly the way it happened. He walked off shaking his head, and that beats anything, he said I never got nothin' out of the Red Cross. I said well you got this. Get down here and have you some fun. Get you some cigarettes. I got Camel's, Lucky Strike, Chesterfield.

I bet that made you pretty popular with your unit, right?

Howard Walker: Yeah, I was.

That's a great story.

Howard Walker: I had lots of other encounters, but that was three stories I wanted to get out.

Oh yeah, those were great, those were really great. Sir, I know it's taken about an hour of your time, but –

Howard Walker: Hey, don't bother about that. I ain't got nothin' to do no-how.

Well I tell you sir, we really appreciate you taking the time to share with us and tell some of your stories of your service, and I know Mr. Patterson is a veteran and I'm a veteran and a lot of people that work here are, but everybody in the entire General Land Office appreciates your service for our country and what we'll do is we'll make a copy of this interview for you and we'll send it to you on disk so you'll have that to listen to and you can give it to friends or family and if you want more copies, just let us know. We'll make several copies of it for you and we'll also get a transcript done of this interview and we'll save all this in our archives. So hopefully one day years from now, future generations can hear these stories and know a little bit about your service.

Howard Walker: Yeah, well I appreciate you and just like, you know, I went to VA up here and my ___ tellin' about my letter I got from Truman, and she said really? She said Mr. Walker, I'd like seein' that letter. I said next time I come, I'll bring it. She said you know, that's only one I've ever seen. And I've seen other guys and this one lady, she said how come my husband didn't get one? I said I don't know. Said well he was in the Army. I said, yeah, a lot of people in the Army didn't go overseas.

Well yeah, that's quite an honor to have that as well.

Howard Walker: It is. Yeah, I had it laminated and I got it in my case. Got all my medals in there, ___ combat badge, bronze star, and ___ liberation over three -

Over three -

Howard Walker: Over three, see three stripes?

Yeah.

Howard Walker: And all of that.

Yes sir.

Howard Walker: Savin' 'em for my kids.

That's awesome. Well sir, we, again we really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today and we really thank you for your service and your sacrifice for our nation. We're very thankful here at the Land Office and I know that, you know, everybody in Texas is thankful for your service, and thank you for letting us talk to you today, and as soon as we get copies of this interview made, we'll get 'em out to you.

Howard Walker: OK, I appreciate you. You know, people forget about it.

That's true.

Howard Walker: It didn't take 'em long after World War II, but you know what? I wear a lot of times I wear my World War II cap, and I've been in restaurants and people walk up to me, you're a World War II veteran. I said yes sir.

That's great.

Howard Walker: Where'd you serve? I said in the Philippine Islands. And he said give me that ticket. I've had several people buy my meal.

That's great.

Howard Walker: It makes me feel proud.

That's right. There are a lot of people that have forgotten or are ignorant of history, but there are a lot that do remember and are thankful, too. So we salute you and we appreciate what you've done and thanks for letting us talk to you today.

Howard Walker: Thank you.

Yes sir, and give me a call anytime you need anything, and we'll also, I can't make any promises, but I'm gonna call a few folks and see what I can do about that Purple Heart thing because that needs to be fixed.

Howard Walker: I talked to Brady and oh, what was that Democrat? Congressman. Oh yeah, we'll get it for you. They don't think, that means a whole lot to me, but it don't mean nothing to them.

Sure, absolutely.

Howard Walker: They just brush that off, you know.

Well we'll see what we can do from our end as well and try to fix that.

Howard Walker: I appreciate it.

Yes sir.

Howard Walker: Call me anytime and talk to me.

All right sir, we will and take care. Thanks for talking to us today.

Howard Walker: Thank you.

Yes sir, have a good day.

Howard Walker: Bye.

[End of recording]