



Charles A. Matz

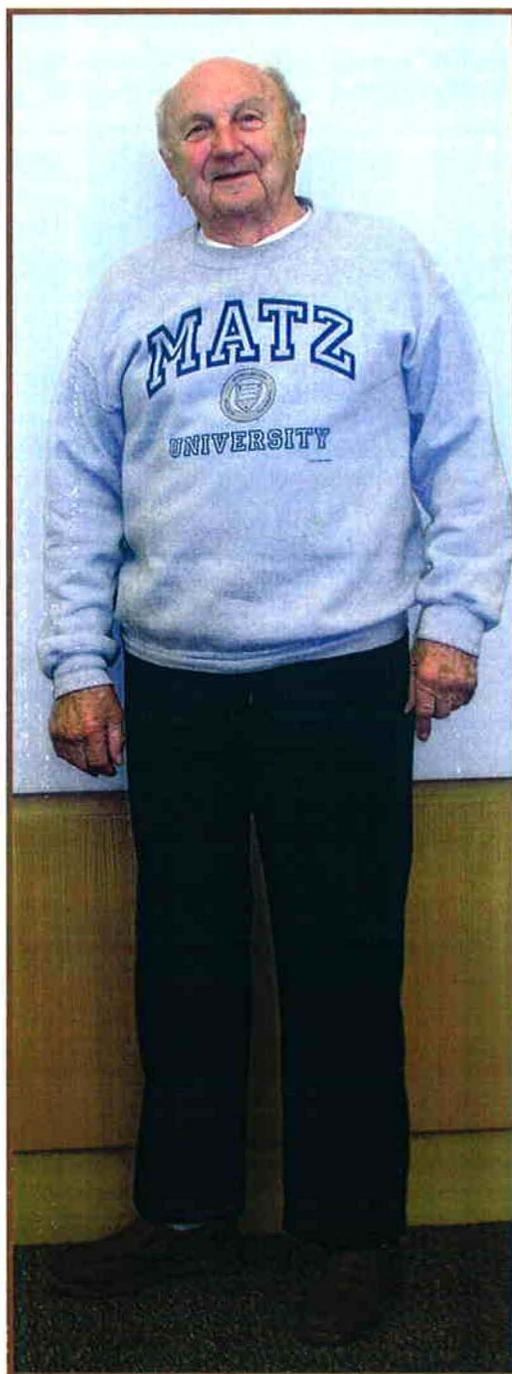
***World War II
U.S. Marines -1st Marine Division
Pacific
Gunnery Sergeant**

Charles A. Matz

**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
October 15, 2009**

**Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois**



Niles Public Library District
Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: **Charles A. Matz**

Rank: **Gunnery Sergeant**

Branch of Service: **U.S. Marines**

Theater: **World War II - Pacific**

Unit: 1st Marine Division, 5th Marine, 11th Marine

Interview Date: October 15, 2009, 2-4 p.m. Place: Large Meeting Room - B

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted here at the Niles Public Library in the large meeting room on the Thursday afternoon of October the 15th in the year 2009, and the veteran, Mr. Charles Matz, who's being interviewed today, his birth date was April the 18th, 1919. We're delighted that Mr Matz, who's a resident of Niles, has come in to be interviewed for purposes of providing us with a memoir of his service to his country during World War II. Mr. Matz has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project, and we're going to have a nice conversation, and follow the outline that we usually follow for purposes of the Veterans History Project.

*So we will begin the interview with Mr. Matz, by asking when did you enter the Service?
(Interviewer's questions follow in italics)*

I entered Saturday, December 6th, 1941.

Where were you living at that time?

I was at 4726 West Schubert in Chicago.

So, that would be around?

Diversey and Cicero. Cicero Avenue is 4800 west..

What were you doing at that time in your life?

I think I worked for Chicago Rotoprint at that time.

So you already had completed high school?

No. I had to get out in my second year. We had a large family, and my dad said, "You know how to read and write. You go to work." So, you go to work. It was the Depression-- we had six people in the family, four boys, two girls. It was hard for my dad to support us almost. So, soon as you were old enough, I was selling newspapers

when I was only six, seven years old. I worked with a peddler in vegetables. Everybody had to work in the family. It was rough in the Depression.

What high school did you attend?

Foreman High School.

You learned a lot there?

Well, first, I went to Lloyd School. I graduated from sixth grade – middle-school.

I went to Kelvyn Park the next two years, and then I was going to go to high school. I went to Lane Tech. They just opened up, and I was only about two months there, and they says, “You’re out of our territory. You can not be here in Lane Tech.” So, I was transferred to Forman High School. So I used to walk all the time. Forman High School is on Belmont and Leclair, about 4900 block on west Belmont. I walked back and forth both ways.

So did you enjoy working for the Rotoprint--

That’s associated with W. Hall Printing Company. They did telephone books. Well, the Rotoprint is a big press with big rollers, and it goes real fast. And we printed mostly catalogs for Wards and Sears, stuff like that. And it was a really rough job there. But what are you going to do? Depression time.

So then, when the war breaks out in 1941, for the United States--

Yes, it was December 7th.

So were you drafted, or did you enlist?

No, the ruling at that time was that, if you got drafted, you had to go into the Army. Well, I didn’t want to go into the Army. So, it was on a Saturday afternoon, I went downtown, the city of Chicago, by the U.S. Court building. And there was a Marine in there. And he looked sharp with those dress blues. I said, “I want to go-- I want to join the Marines.” I go upstairs there and go into the Navy Department. I says, “I don’t want the Navy. I want to be a Marine.” He says, “You go with the Navy because we don’t have doctors. The Navy takes care of the Marines.” So, we go up there, and you got to strip, you strip. And he marks 17 on my chest with Mercurochrome or Methylene, whatever you want to call it. 17. I says, “What the heck is that for, now?” “He marks all your papers 17,” he says, “That’s so, you’re all naked, the doctor knows one from the other, so you can’t put the paper with somebody else’s and switch papers.” They were very smart. So we had to go through six or eight doctors, getting examined.

Then I come home that night, and we all talk. Our family, we’re talkers. We talk like oh, heck! My ma says, “How come you’re so quiet? You’re not saying nothing.” I says, “I’m

leaving.” I said, “I joined the Marines.” She says, “You can’t go in the Marines. They want great big guys, not a little guy like you.” I open up my shirt. “See, it says 17.” Oh, then, my mother starts crying. “You’re going to die. You’re going to die. All the Marines, that’s all they do! They all die!” So, what are you going to do?

So you-- the war broke out on--

Sunday.

December 7, 1941, and then at the end--

The next day, the very next day.

Then later that month, December the 30th--that’s when you decided to go in, right?

No, I was already in there, but they said, “When do you want to leave?” I says, “I want to stay home until the day after Christmas.”

So what day did you actually go down and sign up?

I went in there December the 6th.

The day before.

The day before. When we were downtown, celebrating with my buddies, we didn’t even hear about that. We were all bar hopping. One guy was in the Army already. And one guy just came out of boot camp in the Navy. And they said, “Oh, they bombed Pearl Harbor.” “So what?” I says. I didn’t know what Pearl Harbor was. They said, “We’re at war.” We didn’t know that.

So you actually went in before?

The day before. I knew I was going to be drafted, and I didn’t want to go in the Army.

So why did you know-- why did you think you would be drafted?

Oh, they were drafting, numbers would go up in the paper. They would publish in the papers your number when you were ready to be drafted. I was 22 years old, and not married, and I was in prime condition, so I knew I was going to be drafted pretty soon. My numbers were going to come up, and I didn’t want to go in the Army, so I joined the Marine Corps.

So, it seemed to you and your buddies, at that time, that the country was getting ready for war?

Oh, yes. We were all getting ready. They were sending everybody all over out there.

It was coming. It was coming.

Everybody knew that. Everybody knew that.

So did your parents mind you going in the Service?

No, they didn't mind. Well, you have to go. You have to go. I said, "I'm going to be called up anyway, any minute." And I was fortunate. Normally, when you're east of the Mississippi, you go to Paris Island, South Carolina. They call it P.I. The boot camp west of the Mississippi, you go to San Diego. But the camps were so full, they sent me to San Diego. Thank God, I went to San Diego! I went to San Diego in the Marine Corps boot camp there.

Why do you say-- is it easier or different?

No, but the climate is altogether different. It was like in the movies. They called me a Hollywood Marine. See, a P.I. Marine is Parris Island. And you go to San Diego, you're a Hollywood Marine. It's like saying the Chicago Cubs and the Chicago White Sox. You're just a little something like that.

Were you the eldest son?

No. I'm the baby of the family. I'm the youngest.

Had any of your brothers had to go in?

No. Well, my brother, Art, later on, he went into the Army. They drafted him. They were drafting everybody. He had one thumb off. He was working on a print press. He was working. Everybody had to work. He was only a kid. The machinery didn't have any guards. He put his finger in there and his thumb came off. So, they said he couldn't use it, but, later on, the Army drafted him. They made him an MP up and down the east coast of Florida, back and forth. He was an MP on a train for the Army.

Even without a thumb, they still took him? Wow!

Yes. Later on, towards the end, they were using-- we were using people like you wouldn't believe. We started with hardly anybody. We wound up with 10 million men under arms.

So you got into the Marines. You didn't want to go in the Army.

No.

You see this guy looking good in his dress blues.

Oh, awfully sharp.

Okay. I'll be a Marine! So, you were, what, inducted downtown then, and they sent you by train out there?

Yes. By train there. Yes.

So was that the first time you ever were out of Chicago for any length of time?

Yes. We never travelled. We had no money. We had nothing to do.

Coming out of the Depression. So what was basic training like?

Oh, it was really rough. You had to do, first, you go to the quartermaster, and they throw, just throw, clothes at you. I tell them my right size. "Don't worry about it. You'll grow into it." This sergeant, he says, "I know what the size is, that's the size you're going to have." That was it.

Now, we go to boot camp. It was rough. No, you couldn't eat no pogeey bait. Pogeey bait is candy. You can't do this, can't do that. You get up at five o'clock in the morning. You don't go to bed at taps at 10 o'clock. You really work right around the clock.

So, we were getting to the end of boot camp. I think it was twelve or fourteen weeks. And I had about three more days to boot camp before we all graduate out of boot camp. And the last thing we were doing was on a firing range. So I figured I shot expert, and I wanted to shoot sharpshooter. If you're sharpshooter, you get two dollars more a month. That's a lot of money. If you're a sharpshooter, you get a telescopic sight, and you're special. And I was on a range. I shot expert already. I was going to shoot for sharpshooter. My rifle started going all over the place. The gunnery sergeant grabbed me, said, "What's the matter with you? Hold that rifle!" And he looked at me. "Corpsman, Corpsman, come over here!" He looked at me, put a thermometer in my mouth. "You've got 104, 105 fever. You've got cat fever." They call it cat fever when you get all these shots, diphtheria, and tetanus, and yellow fever, all kinds of shots, you have a reaction. So, then they put me, the corpsman called an ambulance, I went in a hospital there in San Diego. Was it beautiful in there! All the nurses wore nice white uniforms, all pretty. The corpsman, all white. They were all pretty. I was there for five days.

I come down, my seabag, somebody packed my seabag when my platoon graduated. They all went to different places, some to Infantry, Board of Transportation, communications, and what not. Where they all went, I don't know. I had my seabag, was up there, and four other Marines. We don't know each other, but we were all boots. They say-- there was a truck out there, "Get in the truck. You're going up to Camp Elliot." It's about thirty miles outside of San Diego.

We go to Camp Elliot. We report to the first sergeant there. He's going topside. All the barracks on, first and second floor you say in civilian life, but in the Navy and Marine

Corps, it's first deck, upper deck. "Go up the upper deck," he says. "There's some officers will interview you guys." So we went up there. A little while, about four officers come. Oh, we jump up to attention! We're boots. We've never seen anybody. But a Major! It was like the pope. We jump up! "Oh, relax. Sit down. My name is John. This is Frank." Holy God! We shook hands. You don't call an officer by his first name! So, the officer says, "Now, let's get this straight. All you's are 21 years of age, right?" "Yes." "None of you's are married, right." Right." "Okay, so you're all going to take a physical." Take a physical? Hey, we came out of boot camp. We're hard as a rock! "You all got to sign papers, since you volunteered," One guy says, "Volunteered? We didn't volunteer!" In the Marine Corps, you learn you never volunteer for anything. He says, "You volunteered for the Carlson's Raiders." The Carlson's Raiders are like a copy of the British Commandos. Like now, you go in the Navy SEALs and stuff like that. And it is a special group. We said, "We didn't volunteer." "What do you mean, you didn't volunteer!" "None of us volunteered." "You want to volunteer?" "No." We turned it down. "So, then, no use talking to you guys!" They left. Then, I got put in the 2nd Marine Division, 10th Marines Artillery. That's in San Diego. We're training. Well, skip that. We've got a long way to go, so--

Did you ever go back and retake the test to become a sharpshooter?

No, no, that's over with. You are out of boot camp. You go out of the range. You're through with that. I qualified as an expert. I got a medal for expert. That's it, now.

We're training there in San Diego. Now, they split us. They keep expanding so fast. Everybody's expanding. Now, the war is on; they're drafting like mad. Now, they say, "You go to the East Coast." Now, we train, we split the whole outfit, and we went to the East Coast, Camp Lejeune. It's in North Carolina. I get there, and in the artillery outfit there. And we're training. I really knew artillery. I really studied all kinds of books I could get on it. Most people don't do that. I'm a reader. That's why I come to the library. I love reading. And I study everything in there, and now I made corporal.

I'm a big shot now! Boy, I'm an NCO. I'm going to be in charge of the working party instead of being in the working party!

He said, "Get up. Go up there. The first sergeant wants to see you." Oh, I come up, and I says, "Boy, I'm going to have my first shot of taking charge of somebody!" The first sergeant says, "Pack your seabags. You're going into the Army." I says, "What! I don't like the Army! I'm a Marine!" "You go where the Marine Corps sends you. There's thirty-three of you all picked. I don't know how they picked you all guys, but you are all going to Aberdeen, Maryland, the Chemical Warfare Center of the United States. They think the Japs may be using gas, and you thirty-three guys are going, got to go on a crash course up there."

And, oh, the Army, they treated us like God! These guys were cooks on a train, these colored guys, they were, oh, the best cooks! There were-- they made us liver and onions. They made us anything we wanted. For the Marines, anything.

Oh, but we had a real hard training there! We came out of there, the thirty-three of us, and we had special papers. Nobody could touch us. We were going to go right to Australia and meet the 1st Marine Division. They were coming off of Australia, off of Guadalcanal. Now from there, we graduated. We all advanced one grade. And I get to be a sergeant. Now, that's unheard of in the Marine Corps. It takes you ten years to be a sergeant. First, I'm a corporal, and, two or three weeks later, I'm a sergeant!

So, okay. Now, we're going to go-- we travel by train to the West Coast. And, oh, the ship we went on, it wasn't even an American ship. It was a Dutch ship. I don't think you want to go into that.

What was the name of the ship?

I don't know. I don't know the name of the ship. It was a prison ship. Years ago, they had the colored, they had prison cages down there. That's what we slept on under the Dutch flag. We weren't in the convoy even.

So you sailed from San Francisco?

Yes.

Was it San Francisco?

Yes. We're going towards Australia.

And it was a Dutch flag-- are you heading for Australia?

Yes.

Did you get seasick?

No, but this was a rotten ship! And we had thirty-three of us Marines on there. There was about forty aircraft, I mean Air Force guys in there, about six nurses, and about four doctors. Now, this was a cargo ship. It wasn't equipped.

Yes.

We had almost a hundred people there. Well, they were going to have a small galley. They had maybe ten people in there, and officers, and that's it. Well, they couldn't feed us. They feed the doctors and the nurses. But we got slops to eat. Oh, hardly nothing to eat.

But when we passed the equator, the party we had! Holy God! When you pass the equator, you decide to be a pollywog, or something like that.

Yes. Yes.

Well, they give you a nice diploma. A guy, one of the Dutch crew, gave us a nice diploma with a sea serpent on there when we passed the equator and so forth. And we had a party. And all the nurses, they just had their bras and their panties on there. They had rubber gloves, surgical gloves they filled up with powdered milk, and they made holes on them, and the nurses had to suck on the tips of the gloves like on a cow. And some of the officers, of course, made out with the nurses. Whatever happened, I don't know. We were drinking and we had a heck of a time.

So, now, we land on the Fiji Islands with this goofy ship. And they were going to wait for an American ship to take us to Australia. Now, we're staying there a day or two. And all of a sudden, an officer comes running, "You, you, and you, follow me!" he says. "You're in the Carlson's Raiders!" "Oh," I said, "Not again! The Carlson's Raiders!" Our head sergeant says, "You can't touch us! We got a letter right here from the President of the United States," a signature with a rubber stamp. He says, "You can't touch us! We're going to meet the 1st Marine Division in Australia and teach them chemical warfare. You can't touch us!" Oh, I was glad to get out of that!

We get aboard an American ship. We go to Sydney, Australia. From Sydney, Australia, we get on a train. We go to Melbourne. From Melbourne, we go down to Brisbane. That's where the 1st--

Brisbane. Oh, yes, Queensland, yes.

We go there to meet the 1st Marine Division. I'm up in the 1st Marine Division. And they says, "Okay, you go here." "You go here." "You go there." I get on a jeep, and the jeep takes me. I says, "This is the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines?" "Yes." I said, "What kind of outfit is that?" He says, "An Infantry outfit." I'm an artillery man. So, I get there, and I see the first sergeant, and I tell the first sergeant, "First Sergeant, it's a mistake," I says, "I'm an artillery man," I says. He says, "You go where the Marine Corps sends you." I says, "Where did I hear that before?"

I said, "It don't make sense, First Sergeant." I says, "I'm an artillery man. I'd be more valuable to the Marine Corps in artillery. It's like putting a cook in transportation and transportation in cook! It doesn't make any sense." He says, "You go where the Marine Corps sends you. Shut up!"

I says, "I demand to see an officer." "Oh, you want to see an officer, huh? You are a smartass. Are you a lawyer?" I says, "No," I says. "I know my rights." "Oh, you know your rights. We don't have no officers here." So, he says, "Just a minute." He gets on the phone. "Sergeant Major," he calls the sergeant major, he says, "We got a guy, happens to be a Hollywood Marine." These guys are all P.I. Marines, all from New York, Pennsylvania, all that stuff. "We've got a smartass here who thinks he's a lawyer. He wants to see an officer." "Send him up here." I go up there. And you see the roughest, toughest Marine you ever-- that guy might have been ten feet tall! He might have been in

the Marine Corps for two hundred years! Was he a rough guy! "You," he said, "Don't you know you go where the Marine Corps sends you?" Again, they tell me that! I said, "No, Sergeant Major, but--" He says, "Shut up! I didn't give you permission to talk! You want to see a lieutenant, an officer?" "Yes." "Hey, lieutenant!" And a little kid comes here. He's come out of boot camp someplace, himself. A young, little officer. He calls me into his office. He's coming in, coming in the office. "Well, you got two choices, Sergeant. My advice to you is to go back into the Infantry. The second thing, you go over my head, you can ask for a court-martial. There will be five officers there. They will all be captains, and majors, and maybe even a colonel. And they are Marine Corps from the day they were born. You lose, you will be busted from sergeant to corporal, maybe private. You will never get advanced in the Marine Corps as long as you are in the Marine Corps." He says, "You will never get nowhere. You'll still go back in the Infantry." "So," he says, "Why don't you just go back into the Infantry?" I says, "Okay."

I get back there. The chief driver takes me back. And the first sergeant, he's smiling. The sergeant major already talked to him on the phone, of course. "Well, well, here comes the lawyer. You know, I've been thinking about you. I've got just the spot for you. You're so intelligent," he says, "I'm putting you in the Intelligence section." "Intelligence section?" "Yes, we've got a nice sergeant. There's three sergeants. Sergeant Mike, and he's on special detail, and Sergeant Jesse Blondel Link. He's a Southern boy. He's from South Carolina. He don't like Yankees." "And," he says, "you're going to be the junior sergeant, and you'll be under his control."

"In the meantime," he says, "I have a few jobs for you," he says. "We need a sergeant to take care of the mosquitoes around here. Two guys will be spraying kerosene, so there's no mosquitoes for malaria. And then I need a sergeant in charge of the garbage detail. And now I need a sergeant for this. I've got a lot of jobs for you, sergeant," he says. "You're going to be so busy you won't be able to sleep!" "Oh," I says. What an officer I've got! Yoy, yoy, yoy, yoy!

Well, skip a lot of stuff. We go into combat. We go into New Britain, Guadalcanal, Camp Gloucester.

So they're never-- They weren't utilizing your expertise?

No. No.

In chemical warfare? It was--

No.

When you got to Brisbane, and they told you to go there--

Yes. You've got to go wherever they tell you.

So, now, I'm going to be the head scout. Boy, that's the kiss of death! "What happened to the other guy?" "Well, he's dead, of course."

You go, you know, the Japs are in there, you got to go ahead of somebody and find out where they are at. You know, that's the kiss of death.

So they even have sergeants doing that?

Oh, yes. Yes.

As chief scouts, yes.

Our primary job in the Intelligence section, we've got to search the dead Japs for pictures and maps and so forth. Some of the dead Marines, too. We've got to help put them in body bags. I'm so tired of putting guys in body bags, all the maggots coming out of their eyes, and their nose, and their mouth. And all the Japs got to search them for all kinds of stuff. And we got a lot of special details in the Intelligence section. You don't have to be smart to be in the Intelligence section, but I've got a good story about that, too. But we skip along and go a little faster.

You never wished you'd gone into the Army, though, right?

No, no.

Still glad you're in the Marines?

Once a Marine, you're always a Marine.

Alright, in the Intelligence, scouting, yes. Wow, yes.

So we're in combat there, and we're leapfrogging. I'm going about fifty feet ahead. Another guy, a scout, comes along with me, hits me on the shoulder. He goes fifty feet, and then behind us is a squad of about eight or ten men. And behind them, there's a platoon. The Japs are out there, but we don't know where they're at. The jungles are real thick. You can't see anything. So, he hits me on the head, and he's going to-- he walks up, he takes about ten steps, the Japs open up. He's all loaded. Boy, there must have been fifty bullets in him. He lands right on top of me. Well, dead weight, when a person is dead on you, you can't move. All the blood is running on top of me. He was--I don't know how many bullets he had in him. He bled. I can't get up. I can't move. The Japs are hollering, "Banzai! Banzai!" The Marines are hollering. Pretty soon, some guy lifted the body off of me, gives me a kick in the butt. "Come on, Mac! Quit goofing off! Let's go!" Typical Marine!

So you're going forward- you had a rifle, an M1, or something?

Yes.

Yes.

Well, I had a carbine, but--

A carbine, yes.

But a carbine, but I don't like that, either. So next day, next time, not the next day, but a lot of things happened in between. In the front lines, our planes are coming, strafing the front lines. I'm in the real, real front.

Yes.

All the shells are coming off the wings of the plane, hitting you in the helmet. Feels like hail. Man, those shells are pretty thick. They're about three inches big, hitting you. Man, I got to get out of this outfit! There's some way I have got to get out of this Infantry outfit! How am I going to do that?

So another time then, we're back in with the colonel. I'm with the colonel behind a great big tree with big roots, all big, about twenty feet wide. I don't know what kind of tree it is. The colonel's there. His name is Lieutenant Colonel David McDougal. And Major Joseph Skoczylas was second in command. He's in behind this tree. I'm there, and there's a captain, and about two or three radio operators. They've got these big antennas in there. We're only about four hundred, five hundred yards behind the very front lines. The colonel is right there. Now, he was in World War I, see, so he's talking to the major. I'm there, because he wants me go in the front lines and find out where the Japs are coming. So, he tells the major, "You know, I got a feeling, Major," he says. "I got hit in World War I in France. I got wounded. I had that feeling I was going to be hit. And I got that feeling I'm going to get hit now." He says, "If I get hit, you're going to be in command, Major." Major Skoczylas says, "I don't want to, Colonel." He says, "I don't see how I can do it. If you get hit, I want to get hit!" Well, it wasn't long after that, wham, the colonel gets hit right in the shoulder.

Wow.

And the corpsman, corpsman comes. "Can you walk, Colonel?" "Yes, I can walk," he says. "There's a bad wound there," he says. "There's a hospital ship out in the bay, though. They'll take good care of you. I'll walk you back. We'll get in a jeep and take you there." So, we're walking. Fifty minutes later, wham! The Major gets hit right in the jaw. He gets hit. Well--

These are artillery, or howitzers, or--

No, we're in the jungle. The Japs are in front about four or five hundred feet.

They had weapons that could get you in trouble?

No. Wait, see, so when the Major got hit, we says, "There's a sniper, a Jap sniper." He's a sharpshooter, too. He's got telescopic sight. He can see the officers giving directions, so he knows who's in charge. So when Major Skoczylas gets hit, now the funniest thing, to get ahead of my story, I meet the sergeant major. I mean, (I hate that sergeant major), the major, officer. I met him about five months later on an island. I said, "Major Skoczylas," I said, "I thought you went stateside." He said, "Ah, I wish I did, too. But I didn't. Lost eight teeth and my jaw was all reconstructed. They had wonderful doctors aboard the hospital ship."

They're so short of officers. We're losing officers like you wouldn't believe. Man after man after man! And that's when I'd seen him, you know, so I says, "I got to get out of this outfit. How the devil am I going to get out of it!"

So, a couple days later, a guy, my men said, "Hey, Sarge, you better not go near the front lines!" "What do you mean?" "You're all yellow. You look like a Jap." I lost weight, too. I lost about twenty pounds, so I was getting kind of skinny. I said, "What do you mean, I'm getting yellow?" "Corpsman, come and take a look at the sergeant!" He looked at me. "Come on! You go in the back and see the doctor," I go in the back there, and the doctor takes a look at me, and examines me. The corpsman, he's giving me a urinal. "Urinate for me." I urinated black coffee, black as all heck. He says, "You got yellow jaundice." Oh, am I happy! I got yellow jaundice! I got malaria already. Everybody gets malaria. Yellow jaundice! I'm going stateside. I'm happy! "No." he says. He gave me a slip. He says, "You go down to the beach and see the mess sergeant." "You can have nothing to eat," he says, "but drink juices from big cans of peaches, pears, fruit cocktails. The cooks got to pour it all off, and the only thing you can drink is all those juices and sugar," what the heck it was. And the doctor gave me some pills, gave me four or five big pills. And four or five days later, back to the front lines.

In New Guinea?

No, this was Cape Gloucester.

Cape Gloucester.

Well, New Guinea, too. I don't know what the devil it was.

But when the two officers got shot by the sniper, that was in Cape Gloucester?

Yes. Cape Gloucester. Their real names were Colonel David McDougal and Major Skoczylas. So, I got to get out of that outfit! What the devil, how can I get out of that outfit and go stateside?

No, so we're going to another island, a small island, but we're Reserve. I'm a 5th Marine. So the assault troops are either the 1st Marines or the 7th. And the 1st Marine Division consists of the 1st Marines, the 5th Marines, the 7th Marines, and the 11th Marines. 11th

Marines are Artillery. So, we weren't the assault. We were out circling around in the water on a boat before they call us in. And, usually, the 1st or the 7th Marines were the assault troops. They went out, forward. There was no resistance. They went in further and further. And, all the sudden, the Japs opened up. They let you come way in. It was a quarter of a mile. And our artillery, 75 pack howitzers, which I love, which I want, and I was trained in, they put them on the beach. And, of course, Marines, the first thing they do is Joe. Joe is coffee. You always got to have coffee. The four sergeants get together and they make coffee. And when the Japs open up, a mortar shell hit them, the four sergeants. Well, I don't know that. We're out in the bay. So, they called us in then. They say, "Well, it hit the fan. Come on in."

So, we come in. I see a major. I said, "Hey, Major." The guns were all there. I says, "I was Artillery. I wish I could be-- I was chief of section." He said, "What!" He says, "You're kidding me." He asks me four or five questions. And I says, he answers. "Boy," he says. Alright, I was training officers, when I was coming out of Quantico, in artillery. I was in Camp Lejeune there. And I says, "I was training officers and I had my own section," which I didn't. I was only a corporal at that time. But he wasn't going to know this. "I had my own section. I was chief of section. I was a sergeant there," and blah, blah, blah. "What's your serial number? What's your outfit?" I told him. Okay, four or five days, it was over a week, it was a small island, we cleaned them all up, all of a sudden, my first sergeant says, "Hey, your buddy wants to see you." "My buddy, who's that?" "The sergeant major." "Oh."

Is this the same guy?

The big guy, yes.

The same guy. Oh, wow!

I go. "You, you scum you, you call yourself a Marine!" He says, "I don't know how you did it! I don't know how you did it! But you did it!" I said, "What did I do?" "You're transferred to the 11th Marines. You're going into Artillery!" Oh, the major, when I gave him my serial number, he wanted me. He needed sergeants.

So, now, my trouble first begins! You say, "Well, Charlie, now, how come? You wanted Artillery. Now, you're in Artillery, you dummy! What else do you want?" I'm getting a report there. The first battalion, the first battalion is 75 howitzers, the same battalion 105 howitzers. The 3rd battalion is 105 howitzers, bigger guns. So, this is the outfit which got hit, the 75, which is my specialty. I go there. I report. The captain interviews me and talks to me. "Okay," he says, "you go take the third gun section." There's four guns, one, two, three, four. Each gun consists of one sergeant, two corporals, about fifteen, sixteen enlisted men. There's about twenty in each gun, for each gun. There's a gunnery sergeant, a first sergeant. And he says, "You take, you go to the third gun." Now, the gunnery sergeant looks at me. He's a P.I. Marine. The first sergeant is a P.I. Marine. All these guys were in combat together and came out of boot camp. They're all P.I. Marines. Now, I come get the third gun section. All the men hate me. This Corporal Hughes, who

would be advanced, getting the next, they would all be promoted to sergeant. Now, Corporal Hughes won't be promoted to sergeant, because I'm already a sergeant. And all these other guys who got promoted from corporal to sergeant, they hate me. My gun crew hates me. The gunnery sergeant hates me. The first sergeant hates me. But that's nothing! I can take that. Don't mean nothing! You think you're in trouble? Oh, you're not in trouble yet! But I have a lot of trouble!

So they're in training. They told me--

Where are we now? Are we on--

We're in some island, training.

Training.

Yes. We regroup.

With all your casualties and sick people and all that stuff. So, we're training, and the gunnery sergeant is giving school, and we're all laying underneath. It is a nice, beautiful day, and the machine gun sergeant is having school with the machine gun section, we're Artillery. The gunnery sergeant is giving us instructions on artillery, and transportation, and so forth and so on. And the officers are walking around seeing that you're not goofing off, weren't goofing off. But we don't have to come to attention when the officers are there because we're in training. So this gunnery sergeant who hates my guts is giving school, and he doesn't see the officers, and I don't see the officers. So, the gunnery sergeant says, "Well, say, here's the situation. We're all set up with our guns and around the corner on the road comes a Jap tank, and he's pegged. Now, we will have the Hollywood sergeant tell us what would you do, sergeant." Well, the officers are in there, and they hear this. They know something is up. They say, "Now, what is that sergeant going to say?" I got up. I said, "Well, gunnery sergeant, according to Chapter 19, blah, blah, in the artillery book, I would have armor piercing," black tipped hard shells, that's armor piercing, "I would throw those at him. I would have a four charge shell. I would..." blah blah, blah. And the officers, all clapping, "Very, very good, sergeant." Well, that made the gunnery sergeant extra mad. Now, he really hates me! It embarrassed him, and the officers saying, "Very good. Very, very good."

Now, we're going to go into a mockup for training. We got to go aboard ship. The Navy needs training, too. We're going on a rehearsal. We know we're going to go into combat pretty soon. So, we're going to go, got to climb down the nets into the boats. And a crane comes along with an artillery piece and sets artillery into the boat. And then we go ashore. And the beach master already, a Naval officer there, you have an orange beach, green beach, whatever it is, and he calls you in on a wave, what time you're coming. Infantry first. We were about the fifth or sixth wave with the light artillery. So, we go in, and it was a beautiful day. And we all go to shore. We're not going to shoot, though. We set the guns up and everything. And he said, "Break for lunch." So, we break for lunch. "Emergency! Emergency! Everybody aboard the ship right away! There's a big storm

coming up, and the captain of the ship wants to get out in deep water! Everybody get going!" We got boats, see, they rode the artillery piece up on a boat. And, so, we're looking around, and there's a cinch. Somebody packs a howitzer. You break it down in traveling position. You got drawbars. You can pull it with toggle ropes like you put a harness on it with a line one inch from now. And about six of us, we can pull that gun all over. We don't need a truck. But a cinch, it holds it all together. The trail, the back trail, you break off, put it on top of the gun with shovels and axes. And you put it all together with a cinch. The cinch is like, well, like a, you see, on a horse when you throw a saddle.

You put that thing underneath. That's a cinch. But this cinch is about two feet, three feet wide. You put that underneath there, the gun, and strap it together, and you hold the whole gun together. And then you can roll it all over. Well, the cinch is missing. Well, one of my guys buried it in sand. See, and my crew don't like me, so they buried it. And I don't have a cinch. And everybody is hollering, "Get aboard ship! Get aboard ship! The captain wants to go out in deep water! Hurry up! Hurry up before the storm hits!" I come down. I tied my gun together with these lines, we go aboard, and get on our boat, and we go toward the ship. And who's leaning over the rail, the gunnery sergeant! "What happened to you, Gun Number 3? Where's the--" I says, "I had trouble." "You had trouble," he says. "You are trouble! You are nothing but trouble! What happened to you now?" I said, "I lost my cinch." "How can you lose a cinch?" I know one of my guys buried it. I said, "I don't know, Gunnery."

You didn't say that, though?

No. I couldn't say that. I can't say that. I lost it. I'm responsible, right. I'm the sergeant. I'm in charge. I said, "I tied my gun together with the toggle lines." "If that gun sinks, falls apart and goes in the drink, sinks that boat, and then you get hurt, you're going to be in the brig for twenty years! You're always in trouble! You cause trouble!" The gun held together. Whew! You think that's trouble, that's not trouble! That's no--! Let's see how I really get in trouble!

Now, this term the Marines have of Gunnery Sergeant?

Yes.

What does that mean, Gunnery Sergeant? You're in a --no.

No. First, you're a private. You got nothing. Private first class, you got one stripe. Corporal, you got two stripes. A buck sergeant or regular sergeant got three stripes. Now after that, they call you a staff sergeant. You get one rocker, it's a platoon sergeant. Gunnery sergeants get two rockers. That's-- you're a gunnery sergeant.

Is that a term for the second bar or whatever?

Yes, underneath, then you get three stripes. Then you get a rocker here, another stripe, you know.

That term, gunnery, doesn't mean, doesn't relate to weapons or rifles--

No. No.

or guns? It's just a higher sergeant?

Yes.

Thank you. Yes.

And then after that, you get the third one is Sergeant major. Top sergeant, it's high as you can go, as far as you can get, six stripes. Gunnery sergeant has five stripes. I'm a little guy. Most Marines are six foot six. I'm only five foot seven, five foot eight, see. I get them later on, so. Oh, he's mad at me!

So, now, we're going to go into combat, real combat. Now, the island I'm going to hit is Peleliu.

Oh, yes. You have that here, yes.

Now, that's one of the hottest battles, the worst. We didn't get any publicity on that because this is as good as Iwo Jima or any of them, we lost hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Marines, probably thousands of Marines. Because that's when Normandy happened in Europe. They got all the publicity. Normandy is like that. So, okay, the Navy is shelling, shelling, and you'd think there was nobody left there. But the Japs are back there. Peleliu is a really, really hot battle.

So we go over there, come back in the boats. I got my boat. I got Lieutenant, First Lieutenant Barnes with me. He's the executive officer. He's going to lay the battery instrument, like a surveyor instrument that lays the battery. You just don't shoot anyway you want. Artillery is very complicated, very complicated. He's with my boat. He's in charge. And the officers are in different boatw, we split our officers apart, so that when the Japs shoot the boat, you don't lose all your officers. So we're on a track, and the track looks like a tank, but it's empty. It's got a ramp. The ramp falls down. You roll the artillery piece right off, see, so he's got these two tracks that are going around. So, we're in there waiting, going around in circles and circles, waiting to be called in. Then, all a sudden, they said, "Okay, get ready. Stand by. You're going to go in!" But then we start going in circles, and the lieutenant says to the guy driving, I think he's a sailor, a young sailor, a young kid, and he's crying, he says, "What the hell are you crying!" "I was in one of the first waves," he says. "The Marines are all over! They're dead! We ran over all the bodies. There's hundreds of them laying all over." He's crying and crying, you know. So, oh, what are we going to do? So, the lieutenant says, "Come on. Let's go." And we're going in circles. He says, "I can't. One of the tracks are stuck!" He's got only one track. Then you go in a circle, right? You got two--

Yes.

Treads going around, so we're going around and around. And the lieutenant says, "Well, I've got to go in!" He called another boat over. He says, "I'm going to jump into this other boat within the circle so I can lay the battery down!" "Okay, Sergeant, you're in charge of the boat!" I says, "Oh, thank you." He called the boat and track, okay, so we're there going around and around. "Come on," I said, "Let's get this thing going!" Well, along comes a Navy cruiser. Now, on the side now, we're on the right flank of the combat on the beach, very right flank, and, behind a little hill, comes a Japanese tank, a light tank with like a 37 millimeter. And he comes, boom, boom, boom, he throws two or three shots. And he's going to hide behind the hill. Now, see, when you're behind the hill, the Navy can shoot this way. They can't get behind that hill. They can't hit you.

They can't lob, yes.

So, he shoots. Well, you think he's shooting at you, but there's so many boats out there, he's shooting at anything he wants. Then he goes behind the hill, but his cruiser comes along, They lower the five inch guns. On the bullhorn, they said, "Get that thing out of the way. When we shoot, when that Jap comes out, we're going to blast him! You'll be where there's a blast, it's going to blast you guys out of the water. Get that thing out of the way!" Both tracks went brrmm, real fast.

You're on the edge of the beach, right?

No, we're out on the water.

You're still in the water?

Oh, we're in the water.

Shallow water?

Yes. Fairly shallow. Both tracks are working. I said, "What's the matter with you?" I said, "There's nothing wrong with that track!" I took my rifle, pinned him in the back of the head there, and my gunsight cut his head. I said, "There's nothing wrong! You're a coward!" Then I said, "If not, I'm going to blow your head off! I'll take the track in!" They needed help right now. Oh, the Japs were hitting us! They were killing us, you know. Then he says, "Okay." I said, "Get us in! I don't care if you take this here boat to New York, but you're getting us in now! The Marines want us now! They need firepower!" So, then we get in.

So the guy was chicken?

Yes. He was goofing off. He was so frightened from seeing all the dead Marines, he cracked up. He was a basket case. So, we come on the beach. Who was waiting for me, the gunnery sergeant! "I had trouble." "Oh," he says, "You are always in trouble. You

cause trouble! Now, what's your excuse?" I said, "You got to ask Lieutenant Barnes." I says, "This guy--." "Ah, I don't want to ask Lieutenant Barnes! You're trouble! Come bring your gun. Put the gun right there." I says, "Gunnery, I'd like to have my gun over there. It's a better position." He spit. "You see where that spit is. You put that gun right there! I'll shoot you. You're in a combat condition! You do what I tell you! You put the gun right there!" It is not a good--it is all coral. I told guys, "Take out the axes. Cut off the recoil of the gun. You're going to fly back." I said, "Get some sand! Got to get sandbags! Put some sand in there!" Two guys laying in the rear trail so we shoot off, the gun is going to roll all over. You can't fight in the coral. Coral is hard as heck, you know! So, we're shooting. He says, "Charge one!" In the shell, there's a charge one, two, three, four, powder bags about as big as your fist, semi-fixed ammunition. You've got the shell here, and the number one bag is tied to the bottom of the primer, and you got charge two, three, four. This gun shoots about three miles, 105 shoots about five miles. So, the Japs were so close, we were shooting charge one only. So you take four, three, and two out. It's on a string. They're stamped. You rip it off and throw that powder on the side of the projector in there. And the gun is ready. You throw the gun in the shell projector into the gun, and you shoot charge one. Well, we were shooting around two hours now. According to the manual, the Army says the rate of rapid fire, is six rounds per minute. We were throwing off fifteen and twenty rounds a minute.

Wow.

The Japs thought we had automatic artillery. Oh, the gun never got a recoil there. Instead of going back with a recoill, it stayed here. We're shooting. Well, we broke up the attack, broke them up, and we had--

Did the cruiser ever knock out the light tank?

No, I don't know. I don't know. I'm gone.

What happened after that, yes.

That don't meant nothing. So, now, we got a break there. The gunnery sergeant comes around. He says, "Take all your powder." We had a lot of powder, three, four, and five powder bags, and four guns. "Take them all together. Put them in sandbags and throw them in this gun placement," which is maybe twenty feet away from my gun, see. And we kept throwing sacks, gunnery sacks full of powder in there. But it starts taking off. We didn't examine it, you know. There was fire inside the Japanese gun position. And the admiral and the general in there, out there on the ship, they could see it from the shore with their binoculars. They said, "Did you hit an ammo dump, one of our ammo dumps?" It started going off all over, fireworks all over! I took my gunsights off. I said, "Hit the deck!" I took the gunsights off the gun, so nothing happened to that. That's optical, you know. And we all took off, and laid down, and then the beachmaster came running up to me. And the gunnery sergeant was there, and the beach officer says, "What happened there?" I says, "Well, Sir," I says, "there must have been some Japanese ammo in there." I says, "The infantry was supposed check that out, but evidently they didn't do that, and

we didn't have no time. That was a Japanese ammo dump with powder." Now, the gunnery sergeant was there. I could have nailed him to the cross and said he told us to do this. We would have had an investigation, see. And then that battle was over with, and they recommended the gunnery sergeant and the first sergeant to go stateside. They were long enough. Who did they recommend for gunnery sergeant, Third Gun Charles Matz, gunnery sergeant!

About three weeks later, a promotion comes down, platoon sergeant, one rocker. Three weeks later, another promotion comes down, gunnery sergeant. I made gunnery sergeant. You think I had enough trouble? Oh, heck, I could have more trouble than that! Now, I get to get to be gunnery sergeant. Oh, my God, you never heard of anything you want in the whole world to be gunnery sergeant. I'm in charge of eighty men, almost one hundred men, because there's guns, a machine gun section underneath my control, too. But I get the four guns. And a machine gun section, I had a machine gun sergeant. "You take care of your own." I tell them I want a gun here, a machine gun here to protect us, because we're busy with artillery. If they got here, the Japs break through, or something like that, the machine gun sections got to protect us, you know. That's the way it works.

And then it's really funny--

So, when you were in Okinawa then, you were there--

No, later on now, we were going up to Okinawa.

Yes.

Later on, a little later on.

End of story. Too long?

No, this is wonderful. Were you able to write home at all during this time?

I wrote very little, very little.

See, I talked to a lot of Marines and they said, "It's incredible what you went through." This is only the tip of the iceberg what I'm telling you. Now, we know a B.S. artist when we see one. And these guys know when you are shooting the breeze and when you're lying like hell and when you aren't. "How can you do all that? All these different things you did? It's unbelievable!" You know all those things I went through in between there, oh, I could tell you stories you wouldn't believe! You'd laugh like hell. Lying on a gravestone, singing. And we were in North Carolina on a weekend, you know. Well, we were drinking. This was stateside when I was still there, stateside.

It was like '42 or '41?

Yes, something like that.

`42, yes.

Well, we were drinking. You couldn't get no whiskey, but you could get wine and beer. Well, we were pretty well loaded. We were in a small, little town. Every little town's got a cemetery, right. So, we go in the cemetery, and each one of us lay on top of a grave. We start singing the Marine Corps hymn, and we're all half drunk, you know. Well, the locals don't really like that.

No, I would imagine not.

But they think the world of the Marines. Oh, my God, the Marines are everything! So they take us and they lock us up. Well, we could have got busted there, you know, for doing that, but these guys liked us. They said, "You guys sober up." We sobered up. They took us to the USO. They pressed and cleaned our uniforms up. We washed up, and shaved, and everything. The only real, real trouble I had was there. I thought I was going to be busted for sure. But they really liked us.

Same thing happened in Australia when I was in Australia. Me and this other Marine, they had double decked buses in Australia--

Yes.

I loved Australia. Oh, the people, they loved you! They loved you!

Yes. Well, MacArthur stopped the Japs, right?

Yes. Out there, we were there, me and this other Marine, we were on this double decker, they had taxicabs and buses, they ran by charcoal. I don't know how they did that. In the trunks, they had charcoal. And they had no gasoline. How they did that, I don't know. We can't do that now.

But we were on this bus and we kicked everybody else off the bus, this other Marine and I. He drove. He had his girl down there, and I was on the top deck with my girl, and we drove out in the country. I was carrying my girl down the steps, the winding steps in the top deck in the bus, you know. They have in England, double decked buses, a little smaller scale, though. And I fell and I cut my knees, my pants, and everything else. We ran out of gas. We were out in the country someplace. I don't know where we were at, so small, we don't know. We were drunk, you know. So, the townspeople took us in. "Come on, Yanks. Take your pants off." They sewed our pants, pressed our clothes. They did everything for us. Oh, were they nice! Oh, the nicest people in the world! Oh, I really liked that. Australia was good.

They had steak and eggs. They had little round cups you put the egg in. It had to be perfect. It runs, then they throw the egg away. Two nice eggs right on top of the steak. Steak and eggs, everything was steak and eggs, steak and eggs, unbelievable!

Now they were short of men, the young girls were. They were young, very human. They'd get in heat, you could go downtown, they thought the world of Marines. You go downtown, you see a girl coming along, say, "I want you." I says, "I want you." She drops her two girlfriends and she goes with you. I come home with her. She takes me upstairs. We go in her bedroom. The next morning, her mother knocks on the door. "Hey, good morning. Good morning, Yank." Holy Christ! I'm in bed with her! She says, "What would you like to have for breakfast?" Young girls, they know they wanted to get married to somebody. And a Yank, that was a good thing. They'd go stateside. And I got in good with her. I went to the PX and got her a box of lollies. Lollies in Australia is candy.

And I got the old man a carton of cigarettes. I never smoked in my life. I brought the cigarettes. I was in with the family there, man! The old man with the cigarettes, the old lady with the candy, and I had the young girl. Oh, Australia was nice!

Was that around Melbourne or--

Right outside of Brisbane.

Outside of Brisbane, yes. Queensland, yes, yes.

But--oh, I liked Australia! It was really wonderful, all the stuff that happened. I could tell you stories that--

Are you in touch with that girl? Did you write to her or anything?

No. I don't know--the Marines, we got a girl in every port.

So there were some good times in there?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

It wasn't--

In boot camp, I got in trouble in boot camp, too. I am always in trouble, see! So, they put me in MP, on kitchen duty, KP, KP. And I got an officers' quarters in this duty, which is the best duty you can get, because the officers only don't have no breakfast. They're home with their wives.

Yes.

I'll just change this side here on the backup. Okay.

See, the officers, they only have like lunch. Suppertime, they all go home again. They only got a few officers, so we had it easy. And on, you always have inspection on a

Friday, this was stateside where we were still training and everything else. The war was on and everything, of course, but you get your Saturdays and Sundays off. And then the head sergeant, the mess sergeant, would say, "I'm leaving to Long Beach. I'll take three guys with me. You each got to give me five dollars now." That was a lot of money. Them guys there, they spent all the money on cigarettes and gambling. I didn't do that. And he says, "You go with me. We leave right after inspection on Friday, and we got to be back here Monday morning on roll call, six o'clock. You miss, you're AWOL." He says, "But I want five dollars a head, give me five dollars a head," of each one of us. We open a trunk, he put in big hams, big loins of pork. He was stealing stuff out of the mess hall, selling them to the civilians, to the restaurants. This guy, he had a thing going. All these guys got a thing going. That's the way it is in the Service. One hand washes the other. So, he made money with all the food he brought in there. And then we each gave him five dollars. That was a lot of money, you know -- and I was ready to go home one time. It was on a weekend. We had, second or third week there, I had mess duty for six weeks, something like that, I got penalized for that.

And I met a nice girl. I picked her up. I put her in a hotel room, and I said, "I got to leave now." And I said, "I'll pick you up next week," but, when I come back next week, I don't know what hotel I put her in, but she might have took off, too. I mean, she might be a whore, too, I don't know. But she took off. I couldn't find the hotel. I paid money ahead of her for a room. I said, "Here you are, honey." I thought she was a poor girl, you know, and all that stuff. And I could never find her. I never found that girl again.

So that weekend that you were out with that officer, and he was selling Marine base food to the restaurants, right?

Yes. Yes.

What did you do that weekend that was so great? Why did you want to-- what did he take for--why, what was--

It was good.

To get off base, or something, and go on a trip or--

Because in Long Beach, I could go in a bar. I am a young kid and I take a shot of booze. And all these Army guys, sergeants and Army guys, they were thirty, forty years old, they're old guys, and they're dripping out of their mouths for that booze! But they can't have that. The Army General says no hard liquor to the Army, but he doesn't control the Marines and the Navy, see. And the MPs will get them. So, I take a shot just to aggravate the hell out of them!

This is in Long Beach, California?

Yes.

I take a shot of booze and throw it around there. And these guys, their tongues are hanging out. This aggravates the hell out of these guys, I'm telling you! It was just one of these things, you know. I like Long Beach. It was real good, you know. I did-- got hold of another girl, yes, because, a woman, actually, and she could tell by my haircut, I had white walls, you know, they give you a real short haircut when you come out of boot camp. And I'm, just before this here, she gets me. She says, "My husband is a Marine. He went overseas." And he's in Guadalcanal, where he was. And she says, "I'm lonely. Would you be my boyfriend?" She says, "I know you got to be clean. You got to be clean," and so forth. She says, "Because you're out of boot camp, you have no disease, and nothing like that." So I had a shack-up job there. So that's the way it is. War does strange things to you, oh, strange things to you. See, where are we now, on Peleliu. We come back.

We are getting ready for Okinawa.

Later on, yes.

Yes.

So we go--now, I'm a gunnery sergeant. We're training. We go to Guadalcanal. Quite often, we shoot up in the hills, because it's pretty hard. That's nice practice for artillery to shoot up in the hills, you know. And we go up there, and we go in convoy. And they say fire mission. Then we break apart, A Battery, B Battery, C Battery. And A Battery is always first. And my captain, that was a feather in his cap. "Hey, my gunnery sergeant!" I train my guys good. Then the other guys, they holler, "Well, A Battery is first in line, that's why!" So, the colonel says, "I have to be fair. I'll put A Battery in the back. I'll have B Battery, C Battery, and A Battery. When we go in convoy with your permission, A Battery, ready to fire!" "They're cheating," the officers at the meeting, you know, they says. The colonel says, "Alright, I'll have an officer from B Battery, an officer from C Battery, go to A Battery and see when you get ready to fire." Mission, you got a gun, the sight's got to be in there, you got to be ready to throw a shell in there, you are in ready position. "See, you guys are cheating! You're not ready." So, he says, "Have an officer from B Battery, C Battery, check A Battery, see when they say they are ready to fire that they're not cheating." Okay, they checked us out. We were ready to fire! "Oh," my captain, "Hey, I got a good gunnery sergeant. I got a good gunnery sergeant."

We were shooting one time, practicing, and, all of a sudden, a runner comes over, and an officer comes over from C Battery, "Can I borrow your gunnery sergeant?" to my captain. "What for? You've got your own gunnery sergeant." "Now, no, we got a problem," he says. "We got a round, a hot round stuck in the gun." See, it's semi-fixed ammunition, projectors here, a shell here, when you open a breach you throw it in. There's lands and grooves there, you know, a smooth thing, a shotgun is smooth, a mortar is smooth, but a rifle, you've got lands and grooves, that's what gives you accuracy and your distance, see.

That's a howitzer or a--

That's a howitzer.

Yes.

All good artillery is that.

Yes.

So when the guy threw it in, the projector came out of the shell and it got caught in the lands and grooves, and they couldn't get it out, see.

And they says, "Your gunnery sergeant is supposed to be real good." I said, "But you got Sergeant Young, Gunnery Sergeant Young." I says, "My buddy!" We're gunneries. We all stick together, gunnery sergeant, first sergeant, everybody sticks together, you know. I says, "He's very good. He's my friend."

"No," he says. "He can't get it out. He don't know how to do that. And we don't want to go to all the trouble with division and the investigation. We want to keep it among ourselves. Can your sergeant take care of it?" My captain says, "What do you say about that, Gunnery?" "Yeah, I'll take a crack at it." I says, "I want two volunteers." I had two volunteers. A little Mexican, Martinez, all Mexicans are named Martinez, a little, skinny, little kid. And then Pot Ponders. He was an old guy. He would have been at least thirty-eight years old. He had three or four kids. How he got in the Marine Corps, I don't know. We called him Pop. Pop Ponders. He says, "I'll volunteer." I had two volunteers.

I says, "Okay." I take a fire axe, and I got a big tent pole, an eight and a half tent pole about three inches big. I threw that in a jeep. We went over there, and I elevated the gun, and I put the tent pole down in there. I says, "Martinez, you catch the shell, okay. I'll open the breech. You catch the projector." He said, "Won't it go boom?" I said, "It won't go boom! You sure it won't go boom, Mr. Sergeant!" I said, "I know, Mr. Sergeant." I said, "Catch the goddamn thing and shut up!"

I says, "Pop," and I come with the axe, and I hit the thing, you know. The lieutenant came running over. "What are you doing, Gunnery? That's going to fall! You'll blow-- the whole goddamn thing is going to come apart! You're going to die, and there will be such an investigation! Oh, my, we got more trouble than we started with!" I said, "Lieutenant, you asked me to help you, and give me one more crack at it." I says, "Get out of the area, just the three of you." I said, "Pop, you're not holding it firm against the tip of the shell projector. Hold it firm! I'm going to whack the hell of it with the fire axe. Martinez, catch that!" "It's going to go boom!" I says, "Shut up! It ain't going to go boom!"

I hit the sucker as hard as I could. It come out and he caught it. "Martinez, hold that in your lap! Pop, take my jeep, go to the shore, go as far in the water as you can, and throw the projector all the way out as far out as you can!" I says, "Lieutenant, write in your

report that you shot that shell. Nobody will know it.” That night, there was a quart of booze in my tent, compliments of C Battery. I call my sergeants together, my first sergeant, and platoon sergeant, and we all had the bottle floating around two or three times!

So how did you know how to get that projector out?

Well, that’s what the officer asked me. He said, “Why didn’t it go off?” I said, “Well, if you study your artillery, you’re hoping the woman who made the artillery piece made it right. See, there’s safety factors in there. You’ve got the cone and you’ve got a wrench. Most of it is, you don’t have to touch it, when you hit the shell, then it goes off. But you also have delayed action, you set the timer where it goes, penetrates, say in a big bunker, then goes three or four feet, and then it explodes. Or you can time it, air burst, you know, and then it bursts up there, and the shell protector breaks apart.” But I never used that. It’s hard to do it. You got to know the humidity, the air current.

But hitting it directly on the nose like that--

No, I’ll come to that. I says, “If you know your artillery,” I says, “the way it works, if you hit the tip, it goes through a channel, and it goes through another channel. It hits the main thing and then it explodes.” I says, “But with safety factor, centrifugal force, you got-- the channels are all different ways, one this way, and this way, but when the gun goes off the centripetal force lines, the cap goes right though it, so it can, from here to here. Otherwise, it’s like this, so if you hit this, it won’t go off. But the centrifugal forces, it’s got to go three and a half times out of an artillery piece before it goes off. So if you can hold your gun in your hand in front of the artillery piece, it shouldn’t go off. Six feet, it should go off. It’s a safety factor built into every artillery piece.” It’s in there, but the officers don’t study all that stuff. Maybe you read that. He didn’t know and understand. But I read. I say, “I always read,” so--

But if Martinez hadn’t caught the shell, would it have gone off then?

No, it still wouldn’t have gone off, because you need centrifugal force to line these two things up. See, a channel goes here, and a channel here. These channels got to be lined up so the centrifugal force brings this one over.

It triggers it off.

Then it goes from here to here to the main charge, and then it blows up.

So if you just knock it back out--

Yes.

There’s no centrifugal force to it.

No, no. You got to have that. See, theoretically, you're supposed to have a bell. They call it a bell. That fits over the nose so you don't hit the nose. But nobody has a bell. Maybe the division's got it. But then we'd have to ask the division. There'd be an investigation. That's what the officers didn't want. They wanted to keep it in-house. We wanted to keep it among ourselves. Nobody had a bell.

So this--

I was guessing. I was just gambling. If they didn't make it right, we all would have been killed.

So there wasn't-- Did this happen very often in the Service?

No. It's very rare.

Very rare. So then--

The officers know nothing about it. They didn't even know what to do.

So it means like it's somebody made a mistake or--

No.

It just happened?

No, what happened is when the guy threw the shell and the projector, and he's supposed to put it all together, but he had the brass shell with the big powder to throw the projector in his hand, and the projector, the top of the bullet that goes in, and the casing is here, well, that's up in the gun, but he's got the shell here, see, it's separated.

He didn't load it right?

No. Well, he threw it too hard. The shell come out of the projector, come out of the casing into the gun, and it locked itself into the lands and the grooves. You couldn't get it out. You'd elevate the gun. It wouldn't fall out. So, we had to pound it out. And the only way you do it is pound it out. But, see, I studied artillery real good, and I figured, if it was made right, no matter how hard I hit it, it would be a fizzle. But the two things had to be lined up, centrifugal force aligns the two channels together, and make the charge go off.

Wow.

He didn't know that, see.

What kind of whiskey was it?

I don't know what the hell kind of whiskey it was! It was good whiskey. It was always that way.

Oh, the last thing-- I know when this other captain says, "Gunnery, what am I going to do with you?" that would be the end of my story. That comes later on in Okinawa.

Yes.

But these are things that happened to me. Now, we're going to-- we're in training. We're going to go to Okinawa, but we don't know it's Okinawa yet, you know. We know we are going to blitz. But we don't know it's Okinawa, yet. It's hush-hush.

And we're-- , after five, after chow, you could do what you want. We were resting.. Every guy visited his cousin in a different battery or a different company. And you'd go to the movie. Some guys want to do this. You want to go to the beach and swim and do whatever you want, you know, after that. So everybody was scattered all over. There was five guys in my camp, you know. So, I was going to go to the theatre. I wanted to watch the movie. They got big coconut trees, you know. Big lines of men going all the way up watching the movies.

And a runner comes at me and he says, "Gunnery, Major Moffat wants you." Major Moffat, he's from Chicago and from Lawrence Avenue and Broadway. He's a broker, a millionaire. He's a real Marine. He hates officers. He loves enlisted men. All the officers are afraid of this guy. He's a big lawyer guy. And he's a nice officer, a real Marine officer. He's a Marine officer!

He calls me and he says, "Gunnery," he says, "I want you to get eighty men in twenty minutes." He says, "There will be twenty trucks out there. I want you to get those eighty men out there right now," he says. I says, "Major, I can't do that! I don't have no eighty men in the camp. I got five men. And these other men, they'd tell me to go to hell! I grab this guy, and I grab-- go after another guy, this guy would run away! I wouldn't know how can I get eighty men!" He says, "Come to attention!" I come to attention. "Now," he says, "I gave you a direct order. What do you say, Sir! What do you say, Gunnery!" "Aye, aye, Sir!" "That's better. Relax. I'll give you what the situation is," he says.

"There's an LST coming in." And he says, "We need supplies. You know we're going into combat. No secret. Next three or four days, we're going to leave. And we need this supply. It's very vital that we get these supplies. And it's coming in. high tide, the LST's a big ship, it opens up and it drops a ramp. "You got to empty that thing right away in two hours, because the tide goes out, and that ship's got to pull off of the shore. And the ship is needed! It's very essential! So, we've got two things. The captain's got to get that ship off , and you've got to empty that thing." And he says, "You got two hours time maximum before the tide changes." I says, "Well--." He says, "I gave you an order, Gunnery. What did you say?" "Aye, aye, Sir!" He says, "Do it!" I says, "Permission to talk?" "Talk." "Have I got your permission, Major, to mention your name? Have I got your backing?" "You got my backing, exactly. My ring is 322." See, you got the

telephone. You ring it three times, two times. That was his phone, 322. "You tell any officer that gives you a hard time to call me. And you tell them I'm in a very, very bad mood!" Now, what would you do?

Yes!

See, well, I think. I'm fast on my feet! I go down to the theater. I says, "Where's the O.D., the Officer of the Day." He's back there, Captain's over there. I come. "Hello, Captain." He says, "What do you want, Gunnery?" "I'd like about fifteen or sixteen of your MPs." He says, "Who the hell you think you are!" "Because you're a gunnery sergeant," he says, "you come to my office and say you want fifteen or sixteen MPs!" "Let me explain to you, Captain," I says, "Major Moffat"-- when I mention his name, "Oh, him!" "Yes, him!" I says, "There's a ship coming in, Captain, and we've got to unload that thing. I need eighty men." I says, "How am I getting to get eighty men." I says, "They're right out there." I says, "I want fifteen to sixteen of your MPs to take one section. And all these guys are marched to the road where those twenty trucks are pulling up already." I says, "Everybody goes. Corporals, sergeants, everybody but staff, and C.O.s. Gunnery sergeants, platoon sergeants, first sergeants, they don't have to go. But everybody's a working party, I don't care who the hell they are, corporals or sergeants," I says, "and the MPs got to guard them, so they don't run away." "So very good. Okay, I'll do that." Otherwise, call Major Moffat. "I don't want nothing to do with him!" he says.

So we get the MPs. The whole section come over there. Eighty men come. I says, "Hang around there until you guys are in a truck." And we go get on a truck, the MPs, okay. And then we took off. We went to the ship. We unload it.

At the end of two hours, who comes in a jeep, Major Mofatt. Now, this is the kind of officer he is. He looked at me. "Gunnery, very, very good. Call all the men around here." They come all the way around. He says, "Men, there is ice cold beer in the jeep. Every man gets two cans of beer!" That's the kind of officer he was. Major Moffat. I don't know what happened to him. He was one heck of an officer. Unbelievable what this guy was! Boy, I could have worshipped that guy! He was a real Marine Corps officer! And I ran into a lot of rotten officers.

Now, we're getting ready to go. We hit Okinawa. I think it was April the first. April Fools' Day. Easter Sunday, we hit Okinawa. We walked in and it was nothing. Later on, it really hit the fan. Now, we had -- they took the 75 howitzers away from us, because we were going on a bigger island. Japan itself, they were suicidal. We knew we were going to lose thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of people. They gave us 105s instead of 75 howitzers. So, we were in training in there. So, we're training in there, and we got filled in with our casualties, too. So we got this new first lieutenant. Was he a nice guy! You ever see a movie, Tyrone Power? A real, he brought us pictures. He was originally in Guadalcanal. He got wounded. He went stateside, and he got married. He brought us pictures of his wedding where all the officers had all the swords across, you know, when they come out of church, beautiful bride. He got dress blues. Was he a

handsome guy! A first lieutenant. He was only with us three days. He was-- we really liked that guy. So, this was in Okinawa. And we were just doing nothing important, just shooting a shell here and there to keep the Japs off track. And him and the first sergeant was walking around the perimeter. Now, the first sergeant was a tall guy. He was like six two, six three. And this officer was another real tall guy. And we got-- a notice came out that the Japs were infiltrating our lines. They were dressed like gooks. We called them gooks. And they would have explosives just like this suicide stuff today. You had that in World War II. They'd find where the headquarters were with officers and they'd run in there and blow up the whole place. So, we said, "Look out for these Japs," because they were posing as civilians. And they were dressed like them and everything else. So, he was new. We had a lot of other new guys. And this young kid was on the machine gun section, young kid, 17 or 18 years old, he came out of boot camp. Only we needed people like you wouldn't believe! People, we were losing like heck. And the first sergeant and the officers were looking around and checking the perimeter, okay. And it was a bright day, bright moon, August day, like you could read a book, almost, by it. It was so bright and this kid's, "Halt, who goes there!" Well, the first sergeant heard a click, he pulled a, he got a chamber in the machine gun. And he hit the deck. The new officer didn't. The kid opened up, brroom, about eight or ten bullets right across the first lieutenant. He was dead before he hit the ground.

Friendly fire.

Yes. Well, the kid, he should have said, "What's the password?" He should have waited for the password, but he hit the gun right away. And the first sergeant hit the deck. He fell and went down right away. And the officer didn't. He was going to holler the password. And the kid opened up. He killed our first officer. We had him three days. That's how long he lasted. Beautifulest guy you'd ever see. Poster Marine Corps picture, that would be him. What a guy. Three days, three days, unbelievable. Holy God.

Now we're going to get-- we get new officers. Now, our battalion rates only a lieutenant colonel. A lieutenant major's got a gold oak leaf, a lieutenant colonel's got a silver oak leaf, a full colonel's got an eagle, eagle he's entitled to, four stripes like a Navy captain. He got four stripes on his sleeve. But our guy then, after a colonel comes a general, brigadier general, major general, lieutenant general, full general, so this guy comes in. We get a new officer. He's a full colonel. Oh, boy, our officers are all excited! They're all apple polishers. They all want to kiss his ass all the time. They all kind of get next to the senior, our new commanding officer. He's a full colonel, holy God! Well, he wants to have an inspection to check his new men, right, naturally. So, we got our sea bags in the meantime. I didn't see my sea bags, everything in there, six months or a year, I think. I didn't see that. Now, we had Army cots. We'd never had Army cots or anything, but the war was over in Europe, now, see, in June. And, now, we are getting all the supplies from the Army. The Marine Corps gets nothing. We get shot at, you know. So, I call all my sergeants together. I said, "We're going to have inspection. The colonel's going to inspect all of us." So I said, "I got a good idea. In your sea bag, you have shoe polish." I said, "We're going to polish our shoes and take your khaki," because we have battle greens, we're going to have khaki, the Army had that, that was the dress for the day for

inspection, I says, "Take your khaki and put it in your cot, your blanket, and kind of press it, sleep on them, and press the khaki pretty good, and polish the shoes." So, the next day, the inspection is in there. The colonel's calling C battery, B battery comes. Around to us, he sees A battery. All my sergeants and I wear polished shoes. And I'm there, the platoon sergeant, the first sergeant, we're all there. "Oh, very, very good, A battery, very good."

Oh my God, this captain, I call him the spitter, I hate this guy, he comes there. The runner comes in, "The captain wants to see you." He is mad. He's spitting. He's spitting. He's mad. He was a nervous guy. He's red in the face. He's spitting. He's this kind of a person, a very nervous guy. He comes in there. "Gunnery, whose smart idea was that to polish your shoes and dress up like you're in a-- didn't you have no dress blues, too! What's the matter with you!" I said, "What did I do?" He says, "You don't know what you did!" "What did I do?" I says, "Didn't the colonel say it was nice?" "Yes, but you made us officers look like asses! We've got all wrinkled clothes, dirty combat boots! And you guys are standing like you are on a parade!" He says, "You embarrass an officer! You don't embarrass an officer! What am I going to do with you, Gunnery! What I am going to do with you!" He's spitting all over. Big deal!

We go have our lunch. The runner comes to my tent. "Gunnery, go up to the Officers' Country. The captain wants to see you. He's mad! He's spitting all over!" Okay, I go up to his tent in Officers' Country. He says, "Come on. We're going to see the colonel." Oh, he ran me up! He's going to bust me, court martial, that chicken guy! What the hell's the matter with him for a little thing like that! He's going to get mad at me. "Come on. We're going to see the colonel." He's mad.

I come and see the colonel. "Colonel," he says, "this is the gunnery sergeant that we're talking about, the other officers, you know." "Oh, very good, Gunnery," the colonel says, "Very good." "Glad to meet you, Gunnery," he says, "I want to get something straight." he says. "Now," he says, "I don't know artillery, and I want to know. When I'm running something, I want to know about it." He's a good officer. He says, "I was a 90-millimeter anti-aircraft officer all my time in the Marine Corps." "So," he said, "I know 90-millimeter anti-aircraft, but I don't know artillery." So, I told him. He says, "Where can I learn it? I've only got two or three hours for this. I've got to know all my officers, my supplies." There's a lot of red tape he's got to go through. And he said, "I don't want to have an embarrassment in front of the men or anything else. Can we have something? What would you suggest between you and me?" And I says, "Well--." He says, "Take the gloves off, now. Tell me what you want, Gunnery." I says, "I have a gun hooked up, and you and I will go out in the boondocks." And I says, "Just you and me, we'll send the truck driver away." "Very good." So, we hook the gun up to a truck, pull the gun out there. I told the truck driver, "Pick us up in two hours. Get out of here." He got out of there. Then the colonel says, "Take your shirt off, Sergeant," I took my shirt off. "I take my shirt off. Your stripes are off. My eagles are off. Man to man. Boy, you know your gun!" I told him every nut and bolt. How you lay the battery, how the FDC, the fire direction center gives our command, why we do this, how we do this, the gun does this, it goes so far, turns around so many times. Holy God! He says, "I'm an officer. Tell me, they don't know. I'm an officer. I don't know nothing. Very, very good!"

After the meeting, I go back to my tent. A runner comes to me. "He's at it again, Gunnery. Captain wants to see you. He's spitting. He's spitting!" Now, what the hell did I do? He comes on. Oh, he is mad! "What is the matter with you, Gunnery!" This is the last thing. This is the end of the story. "Now," he says, "What am I going to do with you, Gunnery!" "What did I do?" "What did you do? You don't know what you did!" "No, what did I do?" "You shook hands with the colonel." He says, "An officer, an enlisted man does not shake hands with an officer! Don't you know protocol," whatever they call it. "Now," he says, "don't you have no manners! Don't you know what you are doing! My officers, half my officers, don't shake his hand. My second lieutenant didn't. There's a few captains, and majors, and a couple first lieutenants, and you shook the colonel's hand! You don't shake the colonel's hand!" Big deal! He's spitting. He says, "What am I going to do with you!"

Then, the next day, they dropped the atomic bomb, and I knew the war was going to be over. Two days later, they dropped the second atomic bomb. And they says, "Gunnery, you're one of the first ones to go home." I was getting Asiatic. I had twenty-seven months overseas. That's a long time, two years and three months overseas. I was getting goofy in the head. I was getting-- I mean, I wasn't half goofy. That's a long time to be overseas, you know, in combat most of the time. Especially the Infantry, that really wore the hell out of me, that really wore the hell out of me!

But I can still remember the last words he said, this captain, spitting all over, "What am I going to do with you, Gunnery!" And I thought, Boy, I'll tell you what I want to do with you!

But you only shook hands with the colonel.

Yes.

He wanted to shake hands with you.

I assumed, you know. What's the big deal? The colonel didn't mind it. He didn't take--

That was after you shook hands?

At the theater, when he said, "Well done." But he was there.

Oh. When he came back, yes.

Yes. Yes.

It was a natural thing, too.

Yes. It was a natural thing. I don't know. This guy gets all shook up. You know, we had good officers, bad officers.

Had you ever thought of making a career of the Marines?

No, no. I'm too little. If I was a six foot six guy, I would say yes. Yes.

So you got to kind of look the part?

Yes, yes. Now, guys look at me. "How the hell can you be gunnery?" I never in my life dreamed to be a gunnery sergeant! Holy Christ! I wish I would have taken, gotten the Purple Heart, though. I could have had the Purple Heart two times. I'm sorry I never took it. I had too much respect for people with the Purple Heart. See, now, I go, benefits when I go to the V.A. in Great Lakes, the guys with Purple Hearts, they get, I'm in class 5, you get in different classifications for your medical stuff, I would be able to get a lot more medical stuff, if I'd had a Purple Heart.

When was the first time you could have gotten a Purple Heart?

We were-- I was in Infantry there. And we were like on a hill, and I was a sergeant. We had this lieutenant there. What's his name, Virgil? He was from Evanston. I don't like that guy. He was chicken. He was there, a corpsman was there, and there were about four of us. We were on the top of this hill. We were about two hundred yards behind the very, very front lines. We were looking at the front lines with binoculars. And the Japs must have seen us, too. They got binoculars. And they-- mortars or shells were coming at us, and we slid down the hill. The hill was all coral, see. When you're sitting on a hill, it cut the heck out of your uniform, your pants, your legs, you're all cut up! The corpsman says, "Well, come on to the tent." He says, "I'll put merthiolate on you, so you don't get an infection." So, we all dropped our pants, and he put merthiolate on us. And then the doctor comes in. He says, "Hi, Lieu." The lieutenant says to Doctor John, "I want the Purple Heart." No, then, the first lieutenant asked the corpsman if he can get a Purple Heart. He says, "No, Lieutenant, you're not entitled to a Purple Heart." He says, "That's not enemy action." He says, "It's just one of those things that happens. You get hit by enemy fire itself, per se." He says, "You can't get that."

When the doctor comes, the lieutenant says, "Hey, John," or whatever his name is, "the corpsman won't give me a Purple Heart. I want a Purple Heart." The doctor asked the corpsman, "How about it, corpsman? What about it?" "No, Doctor, he doesn't deserve it." He says, "He just slid down, all these guys are all cut up from the coral, sliding down from the hill." The Japs thought we were big shots or something up on top of the hill. We were stupid for doing that. And "Oh, come on, John," the lieutenant says. "I want that Purple Heart. It will look good on my uniform." He says, "But you're not entitled to it, Lieutenant." "Oh, come on. You owe me a favor, Doc. Come on! I really owe you! Come on! Give me a Purple Heart!" The guy says, "Oh, come on, corpsman, write him up." The corpsman said, "Rest of you guys, you want it?" We don't want it. We don't deserve it.

Yes. Was that on-- was that on?

That was Cape Gloucester. I could have got the Purple Heart. He got the Purple Heart.

Yes.

We had too much respect-- for people with the Purple Heart.

Yes.

Another time we had, I could have got a Purple Heart when we were having a duel with artillery back and forth, and the Japanese artillery hit our guns, ricochet, and I got cut couple, three places with their shells. I was entitled. The corpsman said, "You want me to write you up?" I says, "Forget about it. Patch me up. Forget about it." But I'm sorry I never took that Purple Heart.

The second one.

Yes. I deserved it. I could have had it, but I was a fool. The first place, I thought I'd never come out of the Marine Corps alive. In the Infantry, I says, "I'm going to be in a body bag. I'm going to be in a body bag. I know I'm going to be in a body bag." I never, never in my wildest dreams thought I was going to come out of the Marine Corps, never thought it. But, oh, so many things happened to me. I would never give up my experience now from the Marine Corps. I went all over the world in that. Now, coming back, too, I went to Hawaii. I went to, two or three times, I went to Canada. I went to Hawaiian Islands. We went to Europe. England, Scotland, Wales, the wife and I, we travelled all over and everything else. But what are you going to do?

Yes. So you returned -- you were discharged from the Service then in--

Great Lakes.

Great Lakes, in, what was it, in 1945, yes.

In four years, I did all that.

In December of '45.

Yes. Yes.

Did you have any difficulty readjusting to civilian life?

No, I didn't get that. I had a malaria attack. I was-- I wanted to get a driver's, chauffeur's license, you need a chauffeur's license to drive a truck, you know. I was downtown, National Avenue, 3100 block, you get your examination done for driving a truck. And I start shaking all over. I mean, I was shivering and shaking, and this Army lieutenant sees me. He says, "You got malaria." I says, "Yes." His wife, he took a fur coat off of her and wrapped it around me. "Come into my car," he says. "We're going to Hines." He

says, "You've got malaria." I went to Hines. And I was there four or five days. Just before Christmas, I wanted to get out. I said, "I want to go home for Christmas," you know. I was thinking about December 21st. It's hard to get out of Hines! Couldn't get out! I had to go before a board. I said, "I have malaria. I don't worry about malaria." What the hell! I had yellow jaundice, too, which is hepatitis, you know. But they didn't even know that. I didn't tell them about that. I didn't care about that. And they finally let me go. I hate Hines. I ain't going to Hines! I'll go to Great Lakes.

So did you come--Your parents must have been happy to see you.

Oh, yes. They never thought I'd come out alive.

And all your buddies.

Yes.

And then were you able to go back, no, your job was gone by then, was it, four years--

Oh, yes. I don't want to go back. I went into the milk business.

That's when you went to work for Borden's?

Yes.

How long were you with Borden's, then?

Eleven or twelve years.

Yes.

So--

Now, I'm in appliance service. I went to appliance school. I fixed washing machines, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, everything but TV. Top of the line. I worked for Montgomery Wards, I worked for JC Penneys, I worked for Whirlpool, so--

But then you must -- you have mechanical aptitude?

Oh, yes. I can look at something and fix it right away.

When did you realize you had that, in grammar school?

I don't know.

Or high school?

I don't know. I just could look at something and fix it. When they, the kids buy a toy, they had directions. I threw them away. "Give me the picture." I looked at the picture. I could put it together. I can just picture it together. I'll tackle anything!

Yes.

I just do that when I'm fixing air conditioning, too. Everything just comes natural to me. I worked with commercial--now, I did residential. In between jobs, I worked for Certified of America. It's a commercial outfit. Now, I had to join that union there, too. But I was only an apprentice. I didn't know nothing about commercial stuff. I was a gofer. Go for this, go for coffee, do this, bring this, do all that stuff, you know! But I did know refrigeration. Air conditioning, I did know that, but not commercial stuff. So, there was a candy shop on Western Avenue near Pratt. It was like a Fannie Mae candy, but not Fannie Maes. But, oh, beautiful white in there, and all these chocolates and everything else. And this company I worked for, they just hired me. I only worked for them about a month or two. And they had trouble. They put a whole new unit in there, all new air conditioning and everything else. And the guy's chocolate would melt. They couldn't understand why. And the guy was raising heck. All this expensive stuff like Fannie Mae stuff. And they went over everything. They said, "What's wrong?" And they sent their best men. They looked at everything. There's nothing wrong. Why is his chocolate melting? They send Charlie. What the hell does Charlie know! He's a gofer! So, I go there. I go--"I know what your problem is." I says, "There's a Chinese laundry right next door."

Now, they had a water condenser on the roof. The water goes over and cools the Freon, and it comes back in there. And this guy, when he did a certain laundry at a certain time of the day, he had the air vents blow the hot air, and go over by the water, and heat the water. And it wouldn't cool the Freon, and that's when the stuff melted. I said, "You got to go in a certain time when the Chinamen is doing all the steam work, all the steam is coming there, and going in the air conditioner, and that's why the thing is melting." God damn, we should have thought of that!

You didn't get a bottle of whiskey that time.

No, no.

Yes. So, you didn't have too much difficulty readjusting to civilian life?

No, it didn't bother me none.

You're happy to be home.

I had more dreams and all that stuff. But I can get malaria any time of month. If I booze it up, I don't have a lot of sleep, I drink a lot, I don't eat a lot, I don't get a lot of sleep, I start shivering and shaking. Then my wife comes, put two or three blankets on me. She

makes me hot tea with a couple shots of booze in there, three or four aspirins, and I sweat like a pig. The bed is wringing wet. And I get rid of my malaria.

But it's still in your system?

You never get rid of it. It lays dormant, same as a person has syphilis, you never get rid of it. I know a guy with syphilis. And the death certificate: syphilis. It stays dormant in your body. When your resistance gets low--

It gets you.

It comes right back again.

Did you meet your wife after the war?

Yes. I met her, yes, after the war.

Yes.

I come out of the war. My sister belongs to a woman's club because, during the war, there's no men. And all these girls get together and they would have their get-together during the war. And then after the war, I was dating off and on there. And my sister said, "I got a nice girl in that club." And she said, "Well, you want to date her?" "Yes. Okay, I'll take her." So we went downtown. My sister just got married. And then my wife, now, we went downtown, we danced, and whatever it was and that. And we come back home. My sister said, "How did you like her?" "Ah, she was all right." I didn't pay enough attention. A couple months later, I said, "Maybe I'll give her a call." I called her up. After that, that was it! Boy, I had stars in my eyes. That was her!

You were awake, yes. Yes. Yes. That was back in the forties?

Yes. I got married in '47.

Yes. Did she ever see you in a uniform or anything?

No, never saw me in a uniform.

And did you stay in touch with any of your buddies from the Marines?

I got one guy I correspond with now. I'll bring you his picture. You won't even recognize him. He looks like Frankenstein. Now, when he was in the Marine Corps, picture of a Marine! Beautiful guy.

What was his name?

Maurice Crumery.

Crumery?

Crumery.

Yes.

He's in San Diego. He went out in-- twenty-seven years, he stayed in the Marine Corps. His wife is very sick. He comes up and visits me sometimes up here.

Yes.

Yes.

So did you join the VFW?

I belong to Marine Corps League in Arlington Heights. I belong to the VFW in Niles 7712. I belong to Morton Grove Post 134. American Legion. I belong to all of them. I belong to the Elk Club and I belong to the Moose--

You're in the Marines! You're in everything!

Yes.

I bowl two or three times a week. I golf. I do everything. For ninety years old, I think I'm doing pretty good!

Fabulous. You've got a university named after you.

Yes.

The shirt says Matz University.

That's what they have in the magazines where they have that, too, where it's printed on there. Everybody gets a kick out of that.

So when we come to the end of an interview, we always ask these kind of questions, how do you think being in the military affected your life? Your military experience, how did it affect your life?

Well, it didn't affect me mentally. You know, a lot of guys can't stand war. I like war stories and everything. That don't bother me. But it broadened my mind going all over, how people live so differently, the way they think. I wouldn't give up my experience in the Marine Corps for the world, if I knew now what I knew then, or something like that! But the war didn't affect me. But, like now, I think the war is senseless. And how about Truman using the atomic bomb? The best thing they ever did is to use the atomic bomb.

The Japanese were fanatics. We went there, we would lose a million men at least. Sure, we bombed two different cities like that. But what did we do? Germany bombed England, didn't they, the British cities and everything else. What did we do? We did the same thing with the Germans. We bombed them mercilessly. The same thing with Japan. We fire bombed the whole Tokyo. And what did we do with the atomic bomb? Cities, nurses, hospitals, schools, innocent people, they were killed, yes. But there was only a few thousand, a couple hundred thousand. The allies allies, they would have lost over a million men.

Yes.

So Truman did the right thing with that bomb. I don't care what anybody says. The Japanese were fanatical fighters.

Yes. Most of the-- the vets all say that.

Yes. Yes.

And the one man said, he said, we were expected to invade Japan.

Yes.

And he said--

Yes. I probably wouldn't be here.

And he said, "My luck would have been up."

Yes, me, too. My number should have been up a long, long time ago. Why, I don't know.

That's what he said.

Our guys getting shot here, guys getting shot here, and I ain't getting shot. Why, I don't know. The Japs come in. We're talking about a carbine. Well, we had a rising gun. That was no good. The Marine Corps got rid of that. It had a wire stock. And a rising gun, it was something like a machine gun, but it rises. You couldn't control it. Then they gave me a carbine when I was in combat. And the Japs are coming at me. And bam, bam, bam, I hit him about three times in the chest before he fell. That was too late. The carbine has fifteen shells in a clip, see, where we had, the Marine Corps, we had the old threes, the Springfield bolt action. We didn't get the M1s until later on. The Army got everything first. The United States figured they wanted to fight the war in Europe first, win that. And Eisenhower got everything. And then, later on, everything would go to the Pacific after they fought, which was good strategy. But we had a bunch of old stuff, so then they gave me the carbine. That was good, too, but not enough fire power.

So, then, I went back to the-- I could carry a machine gun, but I had a drum machine gun. They were too clumsy. I had, shooting Japanese there, I shot the top of his head off, the whole top of his head, brroom, and he was still kicking, moving. Unbelievable the reaction your body has. You think the guy is dead, and they're not dead.

So, when I was on patrol, I would always have my Springfield. But then they were coming at us. And then we got the M1s, finally got the M1s. That eight in the clip. See, the Springfield had a five in the clip only, and you had to go bolt action. And M1, you had eight in the clip. You pushed it in there, and eight rounds in there. It's automatic, gas fed. Boom, boom, you pull the trigger as fast as you want, see. And we had that the Japs were coming at us. "Fire power! Hit them! Hit them!" And bam, bam, bam! I would shoot. I opened and tripped on my pocket in the cartridge belt. I don't want that again. I tried to pull a clip off. I couldn't do it. Clip in an air pocket. Couldn't pull it off. The web shrunk. In the jungle, it rains all the time. You're always in rain, and mud, and dirt, and filth. War's wholly different between Europe and Pacific. So, I said, "Never again will I have a cartridge belt!" I had my cartridge belt with two cans of water, yes, and my first aid pack. But I had a bandoleer. It comes in a silk thing. With bandoleers, it's all silk. You take the clip out, one, two, three. I had, just like you see in the movies, that's what I had, two clips here. To heck with my cartridge belt! Because the Japs were really coming at us "Come on! Fire power! Fire power! Let's go! Let's go!" These guys couldn't pull the clip out fast enough.

Yes.

So I said, hereafter, I'm not going-- I'm going to rely on the bandoleer.

Yes. Mr. Matz, how do you --the last question we usually ask the vets is how do you think your experiences influence your view of war today?

You don't really achieve anything. What happens with the war, it starts off good. They leave the generals win the war. But, later on, the politicians run the war. The war should be run by the generals. Let them win the war. That's what MacArthur wanted to do with Russia. We had ten million men under arms. We could have kicked the hell out of Russia, but they backed off of Russia. But MacArthur was wrong with Truman, of course, when Truman relieved him of his command. But, normally, the politicians stick their noses in there. They don't know nothing. So, leave the servicemen be, within reason. You got to keep them underneath your control to a certain extent, but don't direct them, don't tell them what to do. You want to make peace. There is no such peace. We haven't won a war since World War II. We were in Korea. What did we do? We didn't win that war. We were in Vietnam. We didn't win that war. We are still goofing off with that. We have been in war in Iraq, Afghanistan, now, for eight years. We won World War II, the biggest war there was, in four years. Here we are, eight years, and we are no better off when we started. Now, we have no business in there. Because we want somebody come in this country, tell us what to do with our religion! You want a democracy. Maybe those people don't want it. Thousands and thousands of years, leave them have their own country. We have no business. Get out of there! That's why those people hate us! We're a

bunch of snobs. We think everything we do is right. They've got their own country for thousands of years. Let them have their country! But there's pros on both sides.

Yes. But--

But everything reverts back to money. They make so much money, now, these guys, millionaires being made overnight with all these manufacturers and all these guys going overseas. These guys, you know, suppliers and everything else. They're making so much. Money is going out. We're spending ten times as much we ever did in a regular, big war. Why? Why do we need such a big Navy? Who are we fighting? There is nobody but the Navy. So why do we need a five billion dollar aircraft carrier with five thousand people? There's nobody to fight. We have nobody. Russia, their fleet is all rusted up. They got nothing. And the Japanese ain't got nothing. We're fighting guys in black pajamas, actually. And these guys are kicking the hell out of us, and they haven't got anything. We got Air Force, we got artillery, we got bombers. We got everything you can think of, and those people ain't got nothing, and they still fight the war. They're fighting us toe to toe, and they got nothing, because the politicians are sticking their noses in there. They should stay out of there. They don't know nothing. Within reason, but there's pros and cons, and everything. I understand that. I'm broadminded enough to realize that. I don't know everything. I'm just one little baldheaded guy.

Well, Mr. Matz, you know a lot. You've seen a lot.

Oh, the stories that I can tell!

Is there anything you didn't say that you want to say now?

Oh, there's all kinds of things.

Yes.

Everything I could think of, but it's unbelievable what happened to me! And I talk to my buddies, we go over beer, and drink for hours and hours. They laugh. They lay on the floor! When I joined this here Marine Corps League out in Arlington Heights, we rent the hall from the American Legion there, it's only a small detachment of Marines there, and when you join the Marine Corps League up there, you got to give your experience over there. And, usually, at one meeting. It took me two meetings to tell my story. And they were laughing, they never heard anything so funny in their life. Holy God. These guys are all veterans. They know B.S. when they hear it, you know. But I got kind of mad at them. I dropped out of them, the Marine Corps League, because what happened is, I was doing service in refrigeration and so forth. I went to Great Lakes as a civilian, of course. And there was a Marine captain up there. And that was when Glenview was still there. You know, he was at Glenview. And he was a fighter pilot or whatever he was. And I was fixing his refrigerator. And I told him I was a Marine. He says, "I'm being shipped out." He says, "I want to give you that plaque." It was a Marine Corps plaque, all red with a gold Marine Corps emblem on there. Beautiful red velvet with this gold frame.

Beautiful thing. Oh, it was foot by foot. He gave it to me. "This is for you," he says. "I'm being shipped out," he said. "It will probably get busted anyway." He gave it to me. So what I did when I joined this Marine Corps League out here, I went to the undertaker. I says, "You got one of them flower stands, you know, with the flowers?" "Oh," he says, "Come in the garage. Take all you want. I've got hundreds of them." He says, "Take a flower stand," so I took a flower stand. I brought it to the Marine meeting, and I put that thing on there. I said, "When a Marine dies, you put that next to the casket."

Beautiful.

It would look wonderful, right. I have very-- a lot of good ideas. Nobody knows what happened to that. Somebody stole it. Here, I give it out of the goodness of my heart, give this plaque to the Marines. I says, "When a guy dies, you could put it there. It would look beautiful." Better than the flowers, right! It was a beautiful piece. And somebody took it. They probably got it in the bar in the basement or something. I says, "I quit this outfit." I says, "You know, anybody who would steal something like that from a fellow Marine! You don't do that to a Marine. Once a Marine, always a Marine, and you stick together!"

Why is that-- once a Marine, always a Marine?

They drill that in your head right away. We never leave our bodies. We don't leave nobody. We get you. We don't care who you are. We will still get you. It's a spirit. You got to stick together. You stick together. It's like the police department. You get shot. You're a civilian, right. When a policeman gets shot, what happens?

Oh!

They go mad. They go in everybody's house. They don't need a search warrant. They don't need nothing. They go bananas. They got to stick together. There's only a few of them. There's millions of other ones. So, you got to stick together, strong. And the Marines, we think we are better than everybody else. That's why I never wanted to go in the Army. The Marines are the best. But I met a lot of good Army people. They could be better than some Marines. I know they were just-- they're good and everything. Everybody is good.

But you went into the Marines, though, because you liked them. You didn't want to go into the Army. Why didn't you want to go in the Army, because it was--

Ah, they take all the riff. They take everything, everybody. They take everybody.

Yes.

The Marine Corps is more selective. They weren't taking anybody.

And you could have been in the Raiders!

Yes. If I didn't gone to that chemical warfare school first.

Yes.

That saved my ass. I really got saved there, yes. It was-- just one of those things, yes. You were in the wrong place in the wrong time, whatever. Oh, things that happened to me! Oh, I don't know!

Mr. Matz, that's a wonderful interview.

Oh.

Thank you very much for coming in.

I could keep talking and talking, but--

If there's something, you know, when you read the interview, if there is something that you think, oh, I got to get this in there, we can add it, you know. We can add to it. But we got about an hour and forty-five minutes now.

Oh, yes.

That is good. This is wonderful, wonderful, very descriptive. And you have such a wonderful memory.

Well, sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

Lots of times, I've got to ask a lot of questions, but you just roll. It was wonderful.

Like diarrhea. Say you don't get diarrhea or seasickness. I got seasickness twice. I had diarrhea real bad twice. What happened, we were in California in maneuvers there by the Chocolate Mountains. That's in California by Imperial Valley. And that's when I had this KP duty. I got in bad with the first sergeant, of course. And then we were in maneuvers. We come out. It was two o'clock in the morning. We had to pull out. Emergency. Go right out, make believe something happened. So we went out into Imperial Valley. They call that in there by the Chocolate Mountains. And we stopped there. That was where we going to be at home for the next two weeks. Now, we weren't cooking. Our guys weren't cooking. We got in these big steel containers, ham and eggs and stuff for breakfast. And, all of a sudden, boom, everybody started getting diarrhea. The guy dropped his pants. You'd hold him. And, boom, you'd drop him, dig a little sand hole, and you'd have to go. Diarrhea, everybody had diarrhea. So what did they do? They call all the doctors and nurses, everybody around the whole area in Imperial Valley. That's near El Centro. That's where they got your fruit and your vegetables in there in El Centro. That's one of

the big cities there, towns, whatever it is. And the first thing they gave us was some kind of oil, something like olive oil, something to get rid of that.

Flush it out.

Yes, flush it out, then we get bismuth and paragoric., something like that. We had to go from corpsman to corpsman, from desk to desk, to doctor, and you had to take that. And then the last desk, you get opium regular opium tablets. Because they didn't want to lose no men. They want you to relax, get dopey, you know, sleep it off. Nature would take over. The next time I had diarrhea was-- the whole outfit was in the East Coast in Camp Lejeune. I was going to learn to be a truck driver. I wanted to get a license to drive a truck in the Marine Corps. Now, you do that, you got to drive a jeep. Then you got to drive an ambulance. Then you had to drive a one ton truck. Then you had to drive a ten wheel truck, the big ones. The last thing you had to drive was a tractor, you know a regular tractor, like a farmer has a tractor and everything, you had to pull an artillery piece. Well, I didn't. We had to break for lunch before I went for that. I passed all the other tests. So, we all went to lunch. We ate in this mess hall where we have ham and eggs and stuff like that. We come back. I got on a tractor. I start weaving all over. I fall off the tractor. All of us got diarrhea. Now, this was a beautiful camp, Camp Lejeune. Beautiful grass, the hospital and everything else. All the nurses come out. All these guys were pooping all over in the grass dirt and all over. It was unbelievable. It hit you just like that! Somebody could have threw a bar of soap in there. It could be sabotage. It could be anything, I don't know.

Everybody got it?

Everybody got it. Well, you got 280 guys eating in one mess hall.

Yes.

The only two times I had it.

So did you have to do the olive oil and the--

No, I didn't do that. I don't remember what we did in North Carolina.

Yes.

It was just one of those things. I had different officers. When I was training there in Camp Lejeune, we had this one guy. He was punch drunk. He was a fighter at one time. He got hit in the head too many times. I felt sorry for the guy. He was a nice officer. We were training. We would go in these Quonset huts. And guys would hit the stove like a bell. And he'd jump up in boxer stance. See, he was so goofy in the head.

Yes.

He took us on marches every day. The other guys didn't. The other companies didn't do it. Our outfit, "You got to be physically strong to kill those Japs like nothing!" He didn't last too long. He got transferred or something. We got a Captain Lombardo, like Guy Lombardo, the orchestra leader.

Yes.

He was a small little Italian guy. "You don't fight them with muscle. You fight them with your head. You got to use your head! Brain! You got to be smarter than the other guy." He wanted to fight just the opposite. Every Quonset hut was different. This, you had to know map reading; this, you had to know first aid; this, you had to know communications; this, you had to know this. He says, "Brain power, you will fight them better, smarter, than have all the muscles. Muscles don't mean nothing!" Just the opposite. See, this is the way it is. Day and night - every officer, a different officer. Some officers you got to worship. Some officers, well, they can't all be good.

Yes.

So, what are you going to do? That was funny, there. See, I got-- when I got in the first trouble, when I was still in California out at boot camp where I got the KP duty, me and this guy named Applebaum, a young Jewish guy, it was the funniest thing! His name was Applebaum and he came from Appleton, Wisconsin.

Wow. Yes.

Well, his dad was a dentist. Now, he got money, and I always got money. My parents always sent me five or ten dollars in an envelope, you know, when I was in camp. This was a lot of money. In the Depression, you have a dollar or two, that was a lot of money. Well, we didn't-- we were kind of spoiled, we had the money, the other guys didn't have the money, we didn't eat the food. We went to the PX, got ham sandwiches, cookies, cartons of milk, and then we would go to the show, watch the show at Camp Elliot (*about 15 miles north of San Diego*). Well, they had a formation. They called out, but we weren't at the formation. They had a formation to tell you, every day you got to have different uniforms, greens, and khaki, all khaki, that was the uniform of the day. Well, we wore the uniform of the day. We went to the PX, and got our cookies and ham sandwiches, went to the show. When we got out of the show just before taps, before ten o'clock, and all the lights were on, the taps were gone, no taps, all the lights were all on! "We're moving out! Emergency! We're moving out!" We come in the barracks. "You guys are in trouble! The first sergeant, is he mad at you and Applebaum!" "What did we do?" "We're moving out! We're moving out at three o'clock in the morning! You guys weren't here! See the first sergeant!" "You guys are on KP duty six weeks. Now, I got to bring you to the supply sergeant. Now, he's got to open up the supply hut! He's got to give you leggings! He's got to give you this, give you that! We're moving out, and, you guys, where were you guys?" "We went to the theater." "You weren't here at the chow call?" "No, we missed that." "Oh, we are going to fix you!" That's when, the first time, I

got in trouble with the first sergeant. Now, I was on KP duty for six weeks, me and Applebaum. Oh, God! And we got in that desert when we were coming out on this here maneuver, and we were on KP duty. Well, it gets real hot in the summertime, in the wintertime, I mean. When we get nightfall, it gets real cold. Him and I were sleeping together. We had our blankets together, our dress greens, a poncho over us. It was still cold.

Yes. Yes.

And we had to be there. We had a certain tent, because then the guard would come over and wake us up at 4 o'clock in the morning because we were on KP duty. We had these garbage cans cut in half and had water. One water was soap water and hot water, hot water. We had to start the fires. We were what you call pot whallopers. When the cooks get through with the pots, we got to clean the pots. They don't do that. We were suckers. We got to do the flunkey work.

That was the KP business?

Yes, KP business. Oh, we kitchen police, we had rotten jobs that way! But then we had a break after ten o'clock. We would wash our underwear and what not and take the tobacco stains out. They call it tobacco stains in your shorts, you know, little poop.

Oh, yes.

You start to soak and you brush it. You put that on a cactus. It bleaches it white, beautiful, beautiful. Then you look like an old time Marine because, the uniforms, you put them on sagebrush, and the sun bleaches them, now, almost white. Now, you're a China Marine, an old time Marine, see. I remember we were in Camp Elliot the one time. Another gunnery sergeant, he was a real big guy, too. He was a China Marine. He was actually in China for years and years, in the Marine Corps for a thousand years. Great big guy. He would make coffee on an oil stove, a pan of coffee. Half of it was coffee and water. He would put iron on there if the coffee wasn't strong enough. That's how strong it had to be. So, he was telling us, we all gather around him and listen to B.S. stories, so he's telling us all kinds of stories. And he was telling about all the beer he was drinking. And this young corpsman was going to go on liberty, see. And he stopped to listen to the gunnery sergeant. And the gunnery said, "Oh, I drank five, six, seven beers." The guy pops up. He says, "You couldn't do that." He says, "Your kidneys wouldn't hold it." He says, "Who the hell are you talking to?" The gunnery sergeant says this to this young corpsman. He was a young kid just come out of medical school. He says, "The human body can only hold one quart, blah, blah, blah, ounces and so forth, milligrams," whatever it was. He says, "Baloney." He says, "You don't know what the hell you're talking about!" The guy said, "Listen." "Come on. Go get me a urinal." He got a urinal. "Now, you sit down." He says, "Put that urinal behind your legs." The guy's in his dress uniform. He's going on liberty. The gunnery sergeant took out his wang. He peed. "Don't you move!" He filled that urinal. It went all over the guy's pants, all over his shoes, all over. He was going and going and going. He says, "That shows how much you

know, you smartass.” He had to go home in uniform. That gunnery sergeant, I can drink a lot of beer like that, too. You’d be surprised how much your body can hold. But once I go, I got to a lot.

Oh, yes.

But the first time, I can drink a lot of beer. This gunnery sergeant, I had to laugh. This poor guy didn’t know what the hell he was doing.

That’s a good one.

His whole uniform is all full of urine. He told him, “I’ll smash you right in the face.”

Yes.

Now, you know so much. You think you know everything because you went to medical school. It was funny. I mean, it’s funny. I can tell you stories. They just don’t come around.

Yes.

Then we got-- once in a while, we go with our officers, but they take their bars off. You see, they can’t associate with the enlisted men. Officers can’t, see.

Is that a good idea? Is that a good policy?

Yes, because you lose respect for the officers then. He might have been a soda jerk or he might have been a chemist sometime. But he didn’t finish school, or college, or something. You’re an enlisted man. Now, he’s an officer. He’s God. You know what I mean.

Yes.

It ain’t right, but that’s what you do.

It’s better for the organization, yes.

But they taught us a lot of college songs and everything. Like they say, “Here goes number one. Drink it down. Here goes number one. Drink it down. Here goes number one, and we’re out to have some fun. Here goes number one. Drink it down.” And then we all drink, see. Then you sing--well, I’ll skip number two. “Here goes number three. Drink it down. Here goes number three. Drink it down. Here goes number three, and we’re out on a spree. Here goes number three. Drink it down.” Then you drink it down. “Here goes number four. Drink it down. Here goes number four. Drink it down. Here goes number four, and we’ve got her on the floor. Here goes number four. Drink it down.” Now, it gets hotter and hotter as you go along.

Yes.

But I forget all about it.

Yes. That was a college drinking song. The officers taught it to us, you know.

Yes.

I remember up to eleven, now. I forget them. I know three or four of them, but I forget all about it. But we had a good time. We had some good officers. We had real good officers. Now, Camp Elliot there, this first sergeant that we had now, a tall, thin guy from Montana or someplace, Oregon, up in there anyway, and nobody liked him. He was really a strict guy, you know.

This guy's name is First Sergeant Graham. And Friday's organized grab-ass day, so you got to do athletics all day, and then get ready for inspection for Saturday morning. Then, you go on liberty and that. Ordinarily, grab-ass, you play basketball, football, boxing, wrestling, anything for sports, to keep you physically fit, you know. And this guy, this first sergeant, was a boxer.

Oh!

And we said, "Boy, we're going to get him!" Everybody wanted to get in the ring with him. These great, big Marines, "I'm going to kill that so and so!" They would--he'd hit you. He was a pro, from Catholic Youth Organization, which they had that years and years ago.

A big thing. Yes.

He was so fast. I went in there. I lasted about two seconds. I was going to hit him and bam, bam, I was laying down! Was he fast, this guy was! Oh, everybody wanted to kill him, but they were so anxious to kill him they left themselves wide open.

Yes.

He'd come right in there and knock them right down. He got to-- he went to OCS. He went to Officer Candidate School, you know. He was going to be an officer. He'd be an officer. But I lost track of him. But he was a fast officer, a good first sergeant that way. He was fast! We had a lot of good ones, a lot of bad ones. What are you going to do?

Yes.

That's the way it is. But, oh, so many things happened. Oh, I'm telling you, unbelievable, unbelievable!

I won't take up any more of your time.

So, I think this spring on television, I think on HBO, they're going to have that series on the Pacific.

Oh.

It's supposed to be like the Band of Brothers they had for Europe. They're going to have the same thing for the Pacific, the same kind of idea.

Oh, yes.

Based on a couple of Marine outfits. Following a Marine unit. That will be really interesting.

Yes. See, the war in Europe is altogether different. It's more like civilian war. War is hell no matter where you are at.

Yes.

But in the Pacific, you have the temperature, to go, the bugs, and snakes, and everything else. I'm sitting on a throne, two or three pots here, the Marines are sitting on a toilet. And a big snake comes by. You don't move. It goes away.

We were in combat one night there. And three guys were sleeping together. This one guy, his name was Corporal Regal, and the two communications guys. Well, they put the ponchos over together. It was raining, of course. And they were there, and a branch broke off a big tree in the jungle, everything is rotten, everything is rotten in the jungle, you know, and fell off. Hit this guy right in the back. He broke his back. And this guy was a nice Marine. "I'm going to kill fifty Japs. I'm going to do this!" He would volunteer every working detail. And he was the best Marine you'd ever seen. Never seen action. Never seen action. The tree broke off. He was sleeping in the middle, a tree hit him. The other two guys weren't hurt. A big tree hit him right in the back, somehow. And the corpsmen, they had to carry him away. What happened to him, I don't know. But that's the way things happen. You never know who it is.

Yes.

Because like that first lieutenant got three days with us, and he was dead.

That was on Okinawa?

Yes. That was Okinawa. That was Okinawa, yes.

Yes.

It goes on and on and on like that. You also go on maneuvers. You go down on the nets. You got a lot of cooking. You got the helmet, your weight of all the ammunition, your backpack, your shovel, canteens of water, and you slip. You fall in the drink, you go down. It's hard. You're supposed to be able to flip it off. But you don't make it. You always lose four or five men in maneuvers, always. But they say, I don't know what they say to their parents when they get them, you know, tell them they died. They died in action, or died, how they died, I don't know. But it always happened.

They probably drowned, right?

Yes. See, when I first went in combat, went in, of course, I was a sergeant at that time. But this gunnery sergeant, this other guy, I don't know who he was, he came along beside me. We crapped out there. It was at night. And he says, "You want a drink?" I said, "I got my own water." "I asked, you want a drink?" I tell him I have a canteen of water. He pulled out, a gunnery sergeant, booze.

Yes.

Boy, I needed that! I looked at his name, Obchinski. I says, "I was in boot camp with a guy, Obchinski." He said, "That's my kid brother."

Wow!

See how I meet everybody! "What happened to him?" I says. "He went in the Raiders. He was all shot up. He just got discharged from the Marine Corps." He said, "I'm staying in. I'm a thirty year man." I said, "I remember your brother. He carried the flag. He was the top guy carrying the flag, pennant, or whatever it was, in the boot camp." And the top guy always got that. But this guy was Marine Corps happy, kind of like his brother, you know. I didn't know my left foot from my right foot on that. The way you meet up with guys, with different guys like that!

Yes.

I had so much fun in the Marine Corps, the songs, and singing, and we go in the slop shoot. Slop shoot, that's beer hall, you know, and buy a couple of cases of beer, and you had to either tell a joke, or sing a song, or do something, or else we'd take the beer out of your case, see.

Oh.

Take it out of your case. And you mark your name on there and put it on the side. The sergeant would keep it in the beer hall for you. We could put away a lot of beer. Boy, with the beer! And you had to come up with a joke, a decent joke, or a song. "Well, I don't know anything." "Take your case. Come on!" Everybody takes a bottle of beer. Hey! You come home pretty happy!

Yes.

We had a lot of fun in the Marine Corps. When we first went in the Marine Corps, you'd sit at a table and the other boots would serve you chow, big platters of sausage, eggs, anything you'd want. You'd be served with big pots of coffee, cartons of milk, fresh fruit, everything. Then, later on, they knocked that off. Everybody starts coming in. They couldn't do that, individual. There was like ten people on a table now. We got those metal trays, and you go through the chow line, and they slop the stuff at you. Not appetizing. Not appetizing. When we first went in the Marine Corps, too, you could come out, take a shower, you could throw your money on your bunk. Nothing was lost. It was there. Now, later on, when the draftees started coming in, the riff-raff, we call them, the riff-raff, you put it in a locker with a lock on there, they'd break it and take your money. Lot of thievery that goes on there. A lot. Some good Marines, most of them are real good Marines. But you also get guys, they're different. They come from, well, you don't know where they come from, different parts of the country, and maybe they come from a very bad area. That's the way they had to make a living. Dog eats dog, you know.

Yes. A lot of the vets, when they joined the Service in World War II, they met people from all different parts of the country that they had never encountered before. It was an eye opener.

Yes, it was an experience you'll never forget. You wouldn't want to give it up, either. You wouldn't give it up, knowing what I know now. What are you going to do? But it's over with. 65 years ago. I can't remember everybody's name. Some names, I don't remember.

But you have fresh, vivid memories. I mean, it's wonderful. It's great that you were able to come in today and speak at length on this. It gives an eye opener into battlefield conditions.

Oh, I could tell you more stuff. I can't think of them right now. Maybe if I had a couple of drinks, I would be able to tell you!

I don't have permission for that. I would have to check with "the colonel," yes.

You're an Irishman. A drink, good Irishman, old Paddy would turn over in his grave, find out you turned down a drink!

Did you bring any with you? Anyway, I think we will stop here.

I think that's about it.

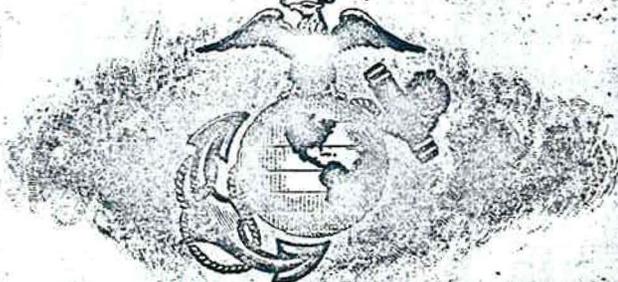
Thanks very much.

Reader's Note:

The following 4 pages include Mr. Matz's Honorable Discharge documents, a scan of a photograph while in uniform, and a helpful copy of a Wikipedia map showing the invasion of Peleliu, remembered by Mr. Matz as being intense.

Honorably Discharged

SEMPER FIDELIS



FIDELI GERTA MERGES

from the

United States Marine Corps

This is to certify that

Charles Albert Matz *is* Gunnery Sergeant

is Honorably Discharged from the Marine Separation Center NavTraGen

Great Lakes, Illinois *and from the United States Marine Corps*

Reserve *this* 2nd *day of* December 1945

*This certificate is awarded as a Testimonial of Fidelity and
Obedience.*

[Signature]

Captain USMC

XERO COPY

XERO COPY

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XERO COPY XERO COPY

Enlisted at Chicago, Illinois on the 30th day of December, 1941, to serve duration years Born 18 April, 1919 at Chicago, Illinois When enlisted was 67 1/2 inches high, with Blue X eyes, Lt. brown hair, complexion Ruddy citizenship US Previous service: None

Rank and type of warrant at time of discharge: Gunnery Sergeant (TW) Weapons qualification: Rifle M 7Feb42

Special military qualifications: Information unavailable

Service (sea and foreign): Asiatic Pacific area 1Jul43-6Nov45

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Aberdeen, MD

Wounds received in service: None Battles, engagements, skirmishes, expeditions: Participated in action against the enemy at New Guinea, 11Oct43-24Dec43; Cape Gloucester, New Britian, 1Jan44-4May44; Peleliu, Palau Islands, 15Sep44-29Sep44; Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, 1Apr45-21Jun45

Remarks: Att: II #1108, dtd 21Aug45. Paid \$100 MOP. HS button delivered. Due to war conditions information on this discharge certificate is incomplete.

Character of service excellent. Serial number 339517 G.M. DANES Captain, U. S. M. C.



Is physically qualified for discharge. Requires neither treatment nor hospitalization. I certify that this is the actual print of the right index finger of the man herein mentioned.

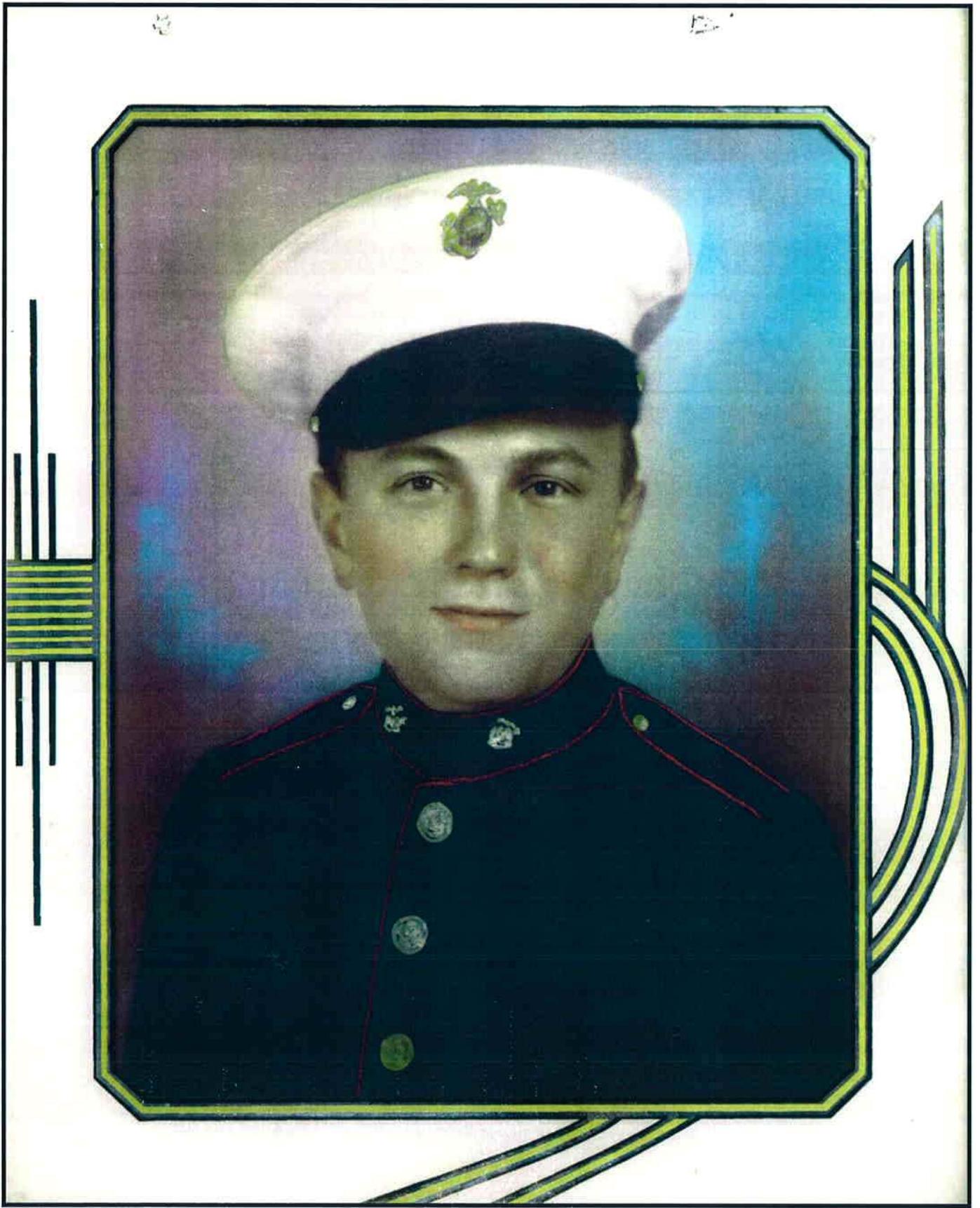
W.L. MC KINNEY Lt(jr)(MC) and Medical Officer, U. S. N.R.

Monthly rate of pay when discharged - One-hundred nineteen dollars and seventy cents. I hereby certify that the within named man has been furnished travel allowance at the rate of Five cents per mile from Great Lakes, Illinois to Chicago, Ill. and paid \$795.54 in full to date of discharge.

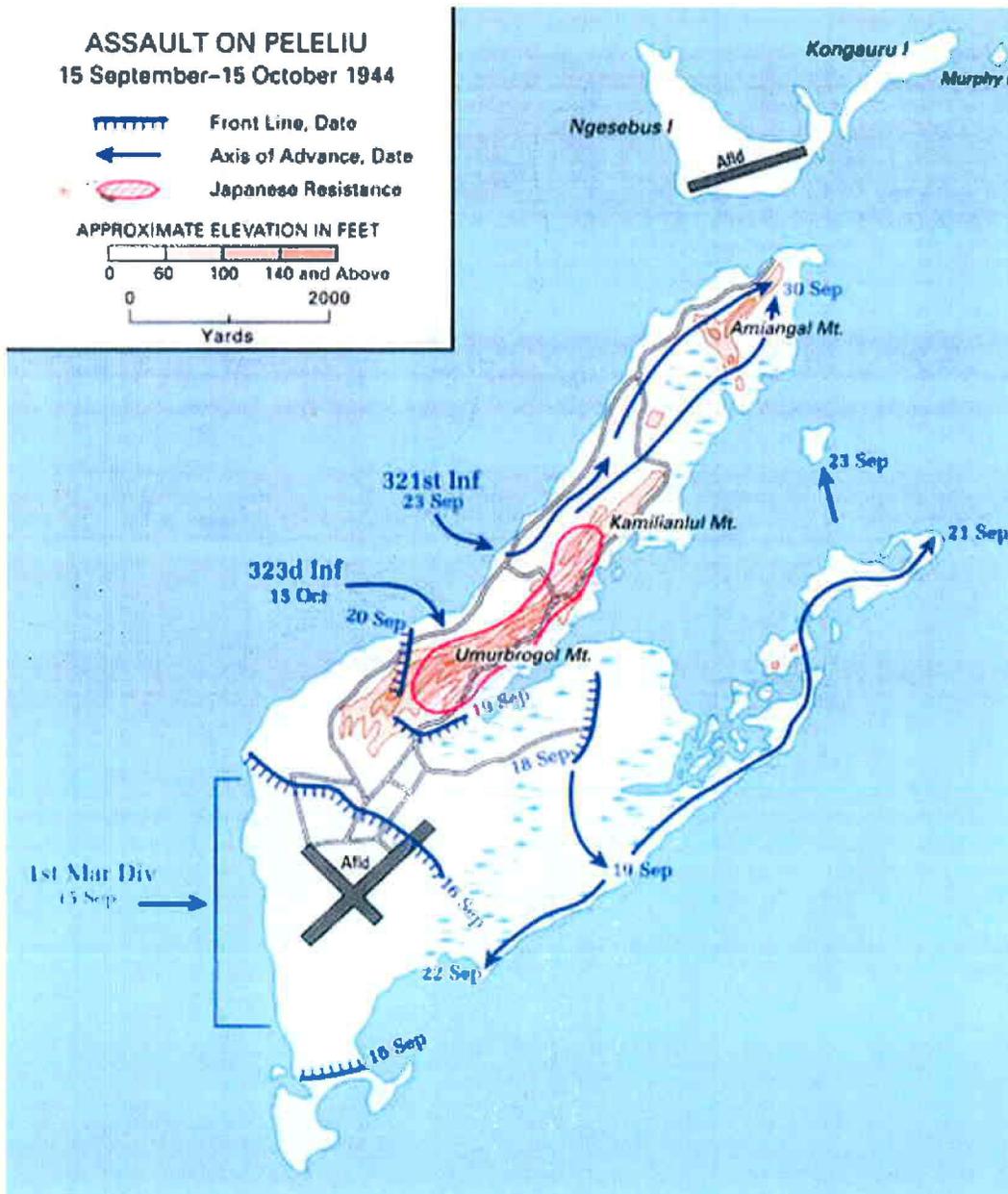
Charles Albert Matz (Signature of man.)

G.M. DANES Captain, U. S. M. C. Commanding Officer.

Vertical stamp: DATE OF... FOR... M/S... SSNO... GORD... 45...



Scan of photograph provided by Mr. Matz , taken while in the service



The **Battle of Peleliu**, codenamed **Operation Stalemate II**, was fought between the United States and Imperial Japan in the [Pacific Theater of World War II](#), from September to November 1944 on the island of [Peleliu](#). U.S. Forces, originally consisting of only the [1st Marine Division](#), but later relieved by the [Army's 81st Infantry Division](#), fought to capture an airstrip on the small coral island. Major General [William Rupertus](#), commander of 1st Marine Division, predicted the island would be secured within four days. However, due to Japan's well-crafted fortifications and stiff resistance, the battle lasted over two months. It remains one of the war's most controversial because of the island's questionable strategic value and the very high death toll. Considering the number of men involved, Peleliu had the highest casualty rate of any battle in the Pacific War.^[1] The [National Museum of the Marine Corps](#) called it "the bitterest battle of the whttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu ar for thhttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu e Marines"

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu