

# National Park Service (NPS)

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Jack Eddy

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Interviewee: Jack Eddy

Military Rank: Platoon Leader of the Second Platoon of F Company Ninth Marines

Interviewer: Rose Manibusen, National Parks Service

Guam

Date: 1/30/1992

00:00:00

My name is Eddy. I currently live in Yigo and I am working for an advertising agency on the island of Guam.

As far as my reason for returning to Guam, they were many and varied. But I would say the underlying reason was to return to a place that was significant in that many traumatic episodes occurred to myself and my comrades in arms. As far as how long I'll stay, I don't know. I've been living here about 10 years now and I travel back and forth but this is my home.

I was the Platoon Leader of the Second Platoon of F Company Ninth Marines. I joined the Marine Corps on June the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942 and I landed in Guam on July the 21<sup>st</sup>, 1944. I was 23 years old.

Q: How did Guam look from the beaches to you?

Eddy: Well, [laughs] there wasn't much to see it was just all smoke and fire because the Navy was giving it a good working over. My view of Guam, of course, was from a LCVP, that's a little thing called a Higgins boat in those days, and we were landing on the beach on the right flank, which would have been called Blue Beach [Asan]. The Ninth Marines landed in a column of battalions and the Third Battalion was the first ashore followed by the Second Battalion and then followed by the First Battalion. So on Blue Beach [Asan] there were probably at least 1,000 Marines who had landed prior to when our unit landed.

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Q: What was your objective or your troops' plan after hitting the beaches?

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Eddy: Well, the objective of the Company, I was in F Company, was to go to that ridge right to our foreground. That's the first ridge immediately inland from the beach. However, our landing pattern had been disrupted due to the fact that there was intense fire right in this particular area where we're sitting. It was coming from this ridge behind us. There was a company of Marines in there and they were meeting very stiff resistance.

Q: The Asan Point Ridge?

Eddy: Yeah, right along here. Yeah, that's the Asan Point Ridge. So this immediate area right here was also coming under fire so they slid our unit down to the left. As I recall, I landed right by the banks of this first little river up here and then went across here. This was a rice paddy at the time. Went across there and went up to the base of that ridge so that I was right behind K Company.

Well, after our unit reached the base of the ridge immediately to our front, we were taken under fire from our left from large weapons that were up somewhere I guess right now where Flag Circle is. We were also taken under fire by weapons to our right rear, which was the Asan Ridge. We were in a position where of course we couldn't fire back because we didn't know where the other units were who were attacking those positions. So it was just a matter of well, sitting there and just waiting. Eventually, I think it was about noon-time—

Q: Same day?

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Eddy: Yeah, same day. Everything was organized enough that we could continue our advance, which was to cross the little bridge that we visited, go up that path and go up on top of the ridge. Then the Ninth Marine Regiment actually attacked to the west down the beach.

My particular Company was up in the hills overlooking the beach area.

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The first day the Ninth Marines made very rapid advances, because we didn't have severe terrain as the other units, we actually had to be pulled back into the Division perimeter that evening because we had overextended our lines on the right flank, much further than of course what happened over at the Adelup where they were under extremely heavy concentrated firing and real steep cliffs to climb.

The next morning, we continued our attack and we were down into Piti, right by the causeway leading to Camper's (ph) Island. As I recall, it was prior to noon and it was a manner there of just flushing out scattered resistance and not much happening.

I believe it was on the third day, which would be D plus two, the Second Battalion Ninth Marines was detached from the Ninth Marines and sent over to an area by Bundschu Ridge [Fonte Plateau] and put in Division Reserve. We spent the night there. The next morning, which would be D plus four, we replaced A Company, Third Marines and the Second Battalion Ninth Marines and actually became a functional unit of the Third Marine Regiment. We attacked up to the river, I mean, I'm sorry the road that runs from Adelup up to Mt Tenjo. We occupied that road oh, by 1:00 in the afternoon; we continued the attack about 3:00 or 3:30 in the afternoon and attacked all the way across Fonte Ridge.

The F Company was in a unique position. There the terrain impeding us was not as heavy as that facing the other units.

Q: So who was in command, who was in charge?

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Eddy: Oh, the Company Commander of F Company at that particular point in time was Captain Lewis Wilson. The Company on our right, which was E Company, had very, very

difficult terrain in front of them and consequently they weren't able to get a running start as it were when the bombardment ceased on top of Fonte Ridge, whereas F Company had a clear shot. So we were up in over the Japanese position before they even knew we had started our attack.

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As far as the details of the battle on Fonte Ridge, I can only, you know, recount what happened within my immediate area. This is all I really saw and all I paid particular attention to. But the Japanese did react very violently to our attack into their position and immediately started counter-attacking. The first counter-attack to hit my particular platoon was from the right flank, and that occurred within 15 or 20 minutes when we had moved into position. We winded them out. There was only about a squad of them.

Then the next one, as I recall, came from the left flank where I thought there was a company over there but as it turned out G Company on the left flank had not gained their position, E Company on our right flank had not gained their position and F Company was the only company to have reached the objective, which was the power line trail that runs across the top of Fonte Ridge.

On the night of D plus four, which would have been the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, the Japanese launched a series of night-long counter-attacks. They had a plan, which is all recorded now, to drive wedges in us and work their way down to the beach so they'd end up on the beach and we'd end up on the hills, which would be a complete reversal of the way things started on D Day. They were partially successful in that they did break through areas of the Marine lines that were not covered and there was no contact because of the terrain, the steep cliffs and the heavy brush where units could not actually make physical contact and had to try to cover the areas by mortar or artillery fire.

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As far as F Company is concerned, again, now I just really know what happened in the

immediate area of my platoon. But we were attacked, I think, about seven times, concentrated attacks by the Japanese infantry. And they were determined to push through us and fortunately, despite the fact that we lost a lot of men and ran extremely low on ammunition, we were able to maintain our position at the height, even though we did have to pull back from the power line about I don't know maybe 50 to 100 yards, and set up an alternate line where it was a matter of holding because there was no place else for us to go except over the cliff.

The fighting on Fonte lasted for another three days. However, my particular platoon had had the worst of it the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> and we were down to oh, about eight men left in the platoon. So consequently, we were fortunate in that we weren't used in any additional assaults. These assaults were used against the Japanese, remnants holding out in the Prince of the Depression for one and then some caves around where the General was. Within three days, it was pretty well all straightened out and the final beachhead line from Adelup all the way down to Nimitz Beach was now in the American hands and the Japanese, as an effective fighting unit, had been destroyed.

Well, about what I personally felt, I guess any Marine or I should say any soldier infantry troop is always extremely optimistic about his own survival. Anything bad is always going to happen to the next guy or the next unit and you never really think it's going to happen to you. So I came into Guam of course with a feeling of optimism and the only time I had any I guess wavering of my optimism was the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> up on the Fonte Hill, with the lack of ammo, our mortars had run out of mortar shells, we ourselves were extremely low and it looked like the Japanese were coming in unending waves. They were able to concentrate many more people in that area than we would. I knew that our unit had been the Division Reserves so there was nobody else to really come and help and it was a matter of, you know, hanging in there and surviving.

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That evening, or I should say early that morning, I was convinced that, at least where I was, my small unit, was due to be wiped out. And it did give me some feelings of anxiety, I guess,

maybe even despair, but it didn't temper my resolve to continue to hang in there. I know I had a Rosary that I used a lot. And fortunately, I guess the Japanese ran out of men before we ran out of ammo. So I'm sitting here 42 years later talking about it.

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After the final beachhead line had been established, and not only the Fonte area but the whole area was completely solidified, then it was pretty obvious to everyone the Japanese were heading for the north end of the island to make one of their traditional last stands. Nobody really knew for sure how many Japanese were left, or exactly where they were, so then it became a matter of pursuing them and hopefully pursuing them fast enough so they wouldn't have an opportunity to set up a real strong final defensive line and have another, you know, horrendous battle like they had up on Saipan.

So I was involved in running the points up Marine drive and patrols off into areas to pursue or to engage small units of Japanese. Oh, at the time, I guess I knew where I was but most of the time all I knew was what direction we were heading because when you get up into the northern area it became extremely thick and of course it was—I guess it was the rainy season. Actually, it was pretty miserable and it was almost, but not quite, as bad as the operations we had been through down on Bougainville in, you know, a real forest.

Our unit ended up by Pati Point [extreme east point of Guam] on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August and then the island was declared officially secured, although there were probably as many as 5,000 Japanese troops scattered all over the island.

The Ninth Regiment moved over to a camp between Ylig and Togcha Bay and from there we ran patrols up into now what is Windward Hills area and Baza Gardens area and also Talofoto.

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F Company of the Ninth Marines was sent down to Inharajan at the time that the island

sweep occurred, so we did not participate in that. I don't really remember if the rest of the Second Battalion Ninth participated or not, but I know weren't in Inharajan and we were in patrols out there and that gave me an opportunity of course to meet the local people first hand.

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Q: Was there anybody you got to know personally during that time?

Eddy: Yeah, I met a couple of people and I knew them personally. One was an extremely beautiful young CHamoru girl and her name was, as I recall, was Carmelita Duenas. I had a picture of her but after I got married, my wife was going through my [laughs] my memoirs and that picture disappeared. So I don't know whatever happened to her, where she went or anything like that.

But we spent oh, maybe six weeks patrolling the hills around Inharajan rooting out Japanese stragglers who by that time were getting into—oh shit, fire ants—

Q: Really!

Eddy: Yeah. They were getting into pretty bad shape. They were scrounging for food and their weapons were rusting up, but they would not surrender so it was just a matter of going out and finding them and killing them and reporting back in with your information on what had happened.

Q: Was this strictly your battalion or did you have anybody from the Combat and Patrol, [unclear] force guards with you?

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Eddy: Well, I know I've met these guys and they've told me about what they've done, but I don't recall ever operating with them. I don't, frankly, when I came back here to Guam and



they told me about that I was a little bit surprised because unless my memory is completely gone I had never heard of the outfit. But of course, you have to remember that we were busy not only running our patrols but we were also busy rebuilding our Company. Our Company had started out with about 245 or 246 men and it went down to something like 68. So we got in a tremendous number of replacements so were quite busy doing that, running patrols, training. Of course, we got involved into tactical maneuvers out in the hills, again emphasizing the use of supporting weapons, which would be infantry working with tanks, infantry working with close air support, things of this nature. We also undertook an intensive program on the reduction of neutrally supporting reinforced positions. We didn't know at the time but we were being geared up for Iwo Jima. So consequently, as I say, Guam combat patrols have been operated all around and I just probably never heard of it or never ran across them that's all.

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Q: When did you leave the island, do you remember what day you left the island? Did you go to Iwo Jima?

Eddy: Yeah, we went to Iwo Jima and I don't know what day we left. It's probably in the books. Probably maybe the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1945. Of course, that's a whole other story up there, which I'm sure you don't want to hear about, we're talking about Guam.

Q: Oh, yes, I do [laughs].

Eddy: Oh, you want to hear about Iwo Jima?

Q: Yes [laughs].

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Eddy: Oh, good grief.

Q: [Laughing.]

Eddy: Well, we—the Third Marine Division was a reserve, a floating reserve for the Fourth and Fifth Marine Divisions, and the word was out of course that there were only oh, I don't know, like 12,000 or so Japanese on Iwo Jima, a very small place, and the Fourth Division would wipe it out in anywhere from five to 10 days. Then the Third Marine Division would come in and pick up all the neat souvenirs and they'd get us on the island in preparation for the landings at Honshu, when we invaded Japan.

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Of course, it turned out Third Marine Division did operate on Iwo Jima. The 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment went in I think on D plus two. They would have gone in on D plus one, but I think the seas were too heavy. Then we came in on I guess D plus four and we replaced the 21<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment, which was part of the Third Division. We replaced them at the edge of the second airfield, which was called Motoyama #2. We attacked—the first day we attacked across the airfield and we were fairly successful in getting across, although we did—we suffered pretty good casualties and also the tanks operating with us, the tanks really took a terrible beating that day. It was a very difficult situation. Of course attacking across an airfield there's not a great deal to hide behind.

As I say, we made it across and that evening or that afternoon K Company again came—they went through our lines and continued the attack and they ran into a concentrated artillery and mortar fire. K Company got pretty well badly shaken up and then they withdrew back to our lines and all the way off to the end of the airfield.

We continued the attack again the next day into a bunch of hills. There was no vegetation. It was black coral or I should say black volcanic ash and in these hills, they were honey-combed with caves and pillboxes. We, of course, were exposed with no cover, no concealment and again we took a pretty good beating.

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As I recall, I think it was either that day, or maybe the next day, that I was wounded and that was the end of the Iwo Jima campaign for me. I ended up right back here on Guam and laid around the hospital here for I don't know how long, a couple of weeks, until they got together—they put together an evacuation ship and I ended up in San Francisco. From there, I was transferred to the, I forget what it is, plastic—or, I don't know, whatever. I was transferred to a ward at Great Lakes Navel Hospital and I was a patient there until June of '46. I spent a long time in that particular hospital.

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But I got to see a bunch of old comrades because Great Lakes also became a separation center and, you know, everybody was always looking out for everybody else to find out how they made out, what happened and, you know, if they were going back to civilian life because the war had been over for almost a year by then. So I had some real, real interesting reunions down in Chicago.

Q: How did World War II affect you personally, after you came back from the campaigns and you went back to the mainland?

Eddy: How did it affect me?

Q: Yeah.

Eddy: What do you mean, Rose?

Q: What did you feel, how did you feel after being through war and going through war and then going back to home, wherever home was?

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Eddy: Well, yeah. Well, of course, I was very sad about all the comrades who had not

survived the war. But then again, on the other hand, I was very thankful that I did. I couldn't believe it, frankly that I had survived it. Up on Iwo Jima I was pretty well convinced that I wouldn't survive that and then I knew if I did there would be another one down the road. I figured well, you know, the life of a platoon leader is—well, it's not something that anybody would ensure, so I was very grateful to have survived World War II.

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Q: How do you feel about the Japanese today?

Eddy: I love the women.

Q: [Laughing.] Do you feel any bitterness or any—what do you feel towards the Japanese today that you see today?

Eddy: I don't really feel bitterness. I feel a little bit of animosity. I certainly wouldn't deny that. I see, of course, what's going on in the world and how Japan is right now they're what number two in gross national products. Everything I own in Japanese, which you had to part-time convince me back in the '40s that I would end up driving a Japanese car or a Japanese watch and watching a Japanese television set. That's just a few of the items. I feel the Japanese are still waging war against us and every time I get in that Honda and bump my head I say, "Yep, they're getting even."

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Economically, they are doing an outstanding job. Here on Guam, of course, it's extremely obvious when you realize the extent of the property holdings and the hotels and I see Japanese tourists come here. They buy all their tickets, their rooms and everything, they pay for those in Japan so that money doesn't come to Guam. They come here on JAO Airlines that money doesn't come to Guam. When they leave the airport, they get on the Hino bus that was made in Japan driven by a Japanese driver and a little tour girl who is Japanese. They stay in a Japanese hotel and they go to Japanese restaurants. So, yeah, I occasionally do have feelings

of animosity.

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Q: The War in the Pacific National Historical Park was established to commemorate all people and all nations who participated in World War II. What would you like to see at the park? What would you like to see done at the Park as far as development?

Eddy: Well, I think what you and I discussed, Rose. I think the most valuable thing that could be done here, and I know there isn't any money for it, is to establish a, what do we call it, a relief map showing the Asan, Adelup area and the Agat area and then plot in there the positions, the known positions of the Japanese and also depict the landing beaches.

I've seen these things in the States and I forget what they're called but they are animated with sound, lights and the whole works. In fact, I live right by one of those and it's called—it's in West Chicago called Cantigny. And it was really the highlight of the whole exhibit and they had everything from the war in Europe there. This is what really drew the crowd because it more graphically—like this tape for instance it's very hard for anyone to get any rapport from this tape. Something like that to make it truly visualized and understand, you know, how—I don't want to use the ridiculous, but—how difficult it was to, you know, do what was done here in the Pacific. To have a bunch of young men, you know, land in a place like this. If you look at it now, it's a big saucer and you look at those hills up there and you wonder how in the world did they ever get up them. Then consider the fact that they were defended by a very determined and well-equipped enemy and it was, all the people that were killed here.

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You look at it now here we are walking down the street arm-in-arm with the Japanese. So I guess maybe it's a story of all people who participated in battles. You wonder why in the world was it necessary and where did it get us. We got back our land and we lost a hell of a lot of men, but the Japanese, you know, for all in tense and purposes they won.

Q: On behalf of the National Parks Service, I thank you for your contribution to our oral history projects.

Eddy: Oh, I appreciate it. I'm flattered that I could be a spokesman for a, you know, a bunch of Marines that I knew quite well who themselves, you know, can't be here for one reason or another.

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[END OF SESSION 1]