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Mariana Islands Wartime Experience through Oral Histories Fellowship
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Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship Program



Walter Bailey
June 13, 2004

Interview conducted by Rose Manibusan
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508 compliant version by Michael Faist

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Interviewee: Walter Bailey

Military Rank: 4th Marine Division

Interviewer: Rose Manibusan

Hyatt Regency Hotel

Date: June 13th, 2004

--- 00:00 to 00:19: Audio Description:

The frame opens with a close up on Bailey. He is white with a plaid button-up shirt, and thin-rimmed glasses. Behind him are yellow curtains with white diamond patterned overlay.

---00:00:19

Q: The following oral history is conducted by Rose Manibusan, chief of interpretation at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. June 13th, '04 at 3:10 to record an oral history interview with Mr. Walter Bailey, who served with the US Marines during World War II. This interview is being made by the National Parks Service American War Park. For the record, could you please state and spell your full name.

Walter Bailey: I certainly will as soon as you speak a little slower to me, you have violated everything I asked you. You want my name?

Q: Please.

Walter Bailey. That's my name.

Q: And could you please spell your last name for me?

Walter Bailey: BAILEY.

Q: May I call you Walter?

Walter Bailey: I didn't hear you, I'm sorry, you -

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Q: May I call you Walter?

Walter Bailey: Certainly yes. Shut the machine off when you do that. Yes. Just kind of yell at me, don't be afraid.

Q: Okay Walter, I understand that the National Parks Service has your permission to make this recording, is that correct?

Walter Bailey: Yes.

Q: Could you please tell us where you were born and the date of your birth?

Walter Bailey: Lynn, Massachusetts, USA, February 28th, 1924.

Q: And did you grow up there

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Walter Bailey: In Lynn, yes.

Q: And did you go to school there?

Walter Bailey: Yes.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your family.

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Walter Bailey: I had one brother and two sisters and a mother and a father.

Q: And your father and your mother's name?

Walter Bailey: I'm sorry?

Q: Your father's name?

Walter Bailey: Oh, Orange. First name, Orange.

Q: And your mother's?

Walter Bailey: Gertrude.

Q: I would like to take you back in time a little bit and ask you if you would tell us where you were and what you were doing when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

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Walter Bailey: I believe I heard it on the radio in my own home. It was a lot of news then.

Q: And how did that make you feel?

Walter Bailey: I was 17 and although I did read when I could, any – I liked geography and I liked history, but this was something that no one could comprehend. I could not comprehend it at all. I had no idea what Pearl Harbor was or where it was, as most of the nation. So you already have my answer.

Q: When did you join the military service?

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Walter Bailey: When did I - ?

Q: When did you join?

Walter Bailey: November 15, 1942.

Q: And how old were you when you joined?

Walter Bailey: Well, I was 18 then.

Q: And what motivated you to join?

Walter Bailey: [laughs] Actually I saw John Wayne, he had made a movie and that is what happened, really. It looked good. It didn't turn out good, but it looked good in the movie. That is about the only answer I can give you to that.

Q: Can you describe your basic training experience, as if you were telling it to a young man that was joining the military?

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Walter Bailey: It was the worst few days of my life. Period. There is no other way of saying it. The first few days – after that, anyone can get used to it. I gained about two and a half inches in height and I don't know about weight, because a diet at that time, in my house, wasn't very nutritious. Whereas the Marine Corps feeds you. And I'm not alone; a lot of other people did that.

Q: What do you remember most about basic training?

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Walter Bailey: The first day, the second day, I was told to – march in place and get the knees up. And getting the knees – I thought were up, but they weren't. And I wasn't a stay at home boy, I did bicycling, paper routes, walking, running, it wasn't enough, believe me. Just get the knees up. This is – not marching but – there is a word for it.

Q: Please tell us what military branch unit you were assigned to, your first assignment?

Walter Bailey: The rifle range at Paris Island, that is the first assignment. I was a boot about three days, teaching boots how to fire the rifle on the rifle range. It went like that.

Q: And what happened? What led you to Guam?

Walter Bailey: I'm sorry?

Q: How did you get to Guam?

Walter Bailey: Oh it was a long ways from that – things were moving fast, really fast those days and they asked – they said, they asked for rifle coaches up in Quantico, Virginia. You have heard of this, I would presume. So we went up there and then a little later on – I didn't last there long and then they said to me, would you like combat? And I said, yes. And that's all it took. Train across the country and Camp Pendleton, California.

Q: And then where did you go from Camp Pendleton?

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Walter Bailey: Well, we trained in Camp Pendleton, but they were building up the 24th regime. They were also building up the 23rd. They were building up many of them. From there, this regime went down to San Diego and they invaded the Marshall Islands. We landed on Namur. N-A-M-U-R. That was the first day. That was the first time.

Q: And what was that experience like for you?

Walter Bailey: Ah, there was no – it was different. People were shooting around and Japanese machine guns.

Q: Was there anything that you remembered in particular about - ?

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Walter Bailey: Uh, yes, there is, but I'm not about to put it on tape.

Q: How did you proceed before you came to Guam? What was your next -?

Walter Bailey: You will have to speak louder.

Q: Okay, where was your next location?

Walter Bailey: Well, they had set up a camp in Maui in the Hawaiian Islands and that was called Camp Maui and we went there for – from January until just before June and again we sailed – we sailed to Saipan and we invaded Saipan at that point.

Q: Can you describe, before we get into the invasion of Saipan, can you describe – what it was like for you as you prepared for the invasion of Saipan?

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Walter Bailey: No, nothing special. We knew we was in a combat outfit. We knew this, so there were no cry babies there. We accept the day to day training – it was training. We knew what we were training for. So the answer is, there was nothing special, really, that I ever remember. And no one else.

Q: Were you on the LST?

Walter Bailey: No, LST going over? No. We were on a troop ship, a [unclear] ship.

Q: What was that like?

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Walter Bailey: It was the second ship we had been on, so – it was again – what was it like? I can't describe it. It was – we were living – have you ever been on one then you would

know.

Q: No. Describe it to me.

Walter Bailey: You better knock the tape off till I think. We had to go by the Navy regulations regardless and the Navy regulations were, we thought, a pain in the neck to us. For an example, to be – to have shots in the arm before we went on the island, they would put a platoon or a group on – say the fantail, which is the rear, and block it off and make us go on one side of the ship and get the shot.

Q: And what was the shot for?

---00:10:08

Walter Bailey: Well, oh well, it was many things, stuff they didn't even know about at the time. It was inoculated just for – we had more in the arm that you will ever know. All troops had that. But the reason I say this, that is how they did it. So the whole group had to go here and then go right through – on one side of the ship was just a – you couldn't duck it, let's put it that way. And bang, bang, bang, as you walked by, two Navy Corpsmen would hit ya, one in each arm. That is one thing. You asked for it. And of course the food – you stand up with the food, you eat standing up. Not with the crew, the crew did a little better. They had a little better deal. But they set them up for troop ships and we slept five and six abreast, on top. You have probably heard that before. I'm telling you nothing new.

Q: Oh, but it's your experience, that is what's new.

Walter Bailey: We had the run of the ship most of the time so we could get up and especially in the evening, it was nice. We [unclear], we weren't alone, we had a convey, and it was nice to see it, the Pacific, you know, with the swells are perhaps 15, 20, 25, 30 feet, so you could see them now and then with a swell, they would disappear.

Q: Can you describe your first impression of the island?

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Walter Bailey: Yes, to describe it, I saw a battleship shooting at us. I checked out that, it was before dawn, just before dawn. Twilight, you know?

Q: And how did that compare to the Marshall Islands?

Walter Bailey: Say it please?

Q: How did it compare to the Marshall Island, Saipan?

Walter Bailey: Oh, much bigger. The Marshall Islands was an atoll. Atoll. Where as this was an island.

Q: Can you describe in detail your experience on the morning of W day?

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Walter Bailey: On the what?

Q: On W day. June 15th.

Walter Bailey: Yes, I – I tell you what – they must have told us and especially me, when and where we hit the beach, but not until about 25 years ago, or even later than that, we were held in – this regimen was held in reserve and they deviated us to the north to fool the Japanese, so we spent about four hours on the water, which is nothing new in the Marines at that time, as a landing force. So the landing, the initial landing on the first and second of the second and fourth division, was in and about 7:59 or something like that. Within a minute of what it was supposed to of. But we didn't go in until I think around 1:00. But even still, the Japs hadn't given up by then, so that is a thought. That answers your question, I hope.

Q: Can you describe the experience once you hit the beaches on Saipan?

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Walter Bailey: Yes, I can. I was asked by someone – I'm certain I was on LCDP, I'm not sure, but I think I was. I didn't get my feet wet at all. There are times when a lot of people got in the deep water. I didn't get my feet wet. And the person asked me, how did you feel? Were you afraid or fear? I said no, I just didn't want to get lost. I wanted to be in the right position in regards to my regime. That's all.

Q: And then what happened? You hit the beach.

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Walter Bailey: To me? Just kept going up. There was a mortar fire and artillery fire, which everyone here knows about that. And uh, we did advance.

END OF VIDEO.