

# National Park Service (NPS)

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Jose Soriano Reyes  
Unknown

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Interviewee: Jose Soriano Reyes

Military Rank: Guamanian Civilian

Interviewer: Phyllis Frey

Merizo, Guam

Date: Unknown

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The island of Guam stood peacefully helpless and undefended. Its strategic location made it vulnerable in a Japanese dominated ocean. It would become a target caught in the crossfire of a war that had no equal in its devastation and its brutality. While Japanese pilots dropped bombs on Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Guam, which stood east of the International Dateline, was attacked on December 8<sup>th</sup>. The frightening thunder of bombs exploded on the island as Japanese dive bombers attacked. The indigenous Chamorro people who had already suffered three centuries of colonial domination were no match for the repeated bombings and 5,000 shock troops that swarmed the shore. The raising of the flag of the rising sun on Guam began three and one half years of Japanese occupation. Three and one half years of terror, death, indignity and horror for the Chamorros.

Once on Guam, the Japanese captured the Chamorros and forced them to dig caves, build roads and carry their supplies. Concentration camps were built to contain the villagers where they lived under harsh conditions. Men, women and children were forced to grow food for the Japanese troops and were given little for themselves. People died from malnutrition, lack of medical care, torture, beheadings and mass executions. During the final days of the Japanese occupation period of Guam during World War II, and immediately prior to the recapture of Guam by U.S. forces on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1944, the Japanese command made a decision to annihilate all of the residents of the southern village of Merizo. Some of the worst mass executions of Chamorros took place here.

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As U.S. forces neared Guam, Japanese behavior deteriorated into a reign of terrorism across the island. Women were repeatedly beaten and raped, public beheadings and bludgeonings

occurred, and approximately 500 Chamorros were killed due to atrocities, far more than the number killed in the crossfire of combat. But nowhere on the island was the suffering and needless killing felt more than in the tiny village of Merizo on the southern coast of Guam.

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Today, I am in the village of Merizo standing next to a monument that's been placed in memory of those who died in massacres at the caves of Tinta and Faha. These people once lived in peace along the shores of this seaside village where they fished and farmed for their livelihood. Their names etched in stone are a silent testament to the grim reality that in wartime all too often it is the families caught in the crossfire of war who suffer most. The senseless and unnecessarily brutal execution of these innocent people has not been forgotten. The bodies of these martyrs who were murdered in the caves are still in the caves on the far side of this ridge. Sadly, they were left behind never to be rejoined with their friends and families.

The needless loss of lives in this brutal mass execution and the cruelty, to which his own wife was subjected, resulted in a retaliatory effort led by just one man, Jose Soriano Reyes, and a small gallant band of loyal followers. Angered by the killings, Mr. Reyes refused to accept the injustices inflicted upon his people. Though pitifully under armed and with few people to help him, his raw courage and leadership led to a successful uprising against the Japanese. His brave deeds carried out in the face of insurmountable odds and almost certain death saved the lives of many and liberated his village from the imperial forces.

Join me as we visit Mr. Reyes at his home in Merizo today where he recounts his remarkable story.

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Q: Okay. I'll turn on the camera. The camera is rolling. Hello, Mr. Reyes. Let's begin by turning the clock back over 50 years ago during the Japanese occupation of Guam; in your village of Merizo where you and your family once lived a peaceful life, the year was 1944. On

July 10<sup>th</sup> something happened here in Merizo. Can you tell me what happened on that day?

Reyes: On July 10<sup>th</sup>?

Q: Yes.

Reyes: My wife told me that they were to be executed with a couple of ladies. So that made me worry about her.

Q: Yes, it made you worry about her.

Reyes: Yes.

Q: And that made you angry. What was your wife's name?

Reyes: Laurice (ph) Cruz Reyes.

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Q: So the women were held by the Japanese and your wife was one of them that was threatened, is that right?

Reyes: Yes.

Q: And when she told you about it, you got really angry and upset.

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Reyes: Yeah, and really upset. I first told her that I can do it right there, but I can go and see what I can do about it, to pressure [unclear] there's a better way.

Q: That's right. Well, were the women finally set free and they didn't hurt them? The

Japanese let them go?

Reyes: No, the reason why they let her go was because the dog fight with the U.S. plane on top of the place where they are, so that's why they let them go and they tell them to go inside the building.

Q: Oh, okay. So if the dogfight hadn't happened, then they might have been executed.

Reyes: I think so.

Q: She must have been so frightened. Is this when you decided or came up with a plan that you wanted to do something about the Japanese?

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Reyes: Since that time, I start thinking what to do next. But then we—they took that 15 people, I mean, 30 people to Tinta and Faha. I mean, no, what do you call it?

Q: To Tinta?

Reyes: Tinta. Tinta. And I'm in Agana working for the Japanese people, of course I'm working on the—heavy equipment operator. When the on the 15<sup>th</sup> of—

Q: Fifteenth of July?

Reyes: —July the Japanese airplane stripped down the airfield and so everybody is going, "I have to go." [Laughs]

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Q: Oh, so you were running from—

Reyes: Running from—

Q: —Agana.

Reyes: —Agana to Merizo. [Laughs]

Q: Right.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: That's about 20 miles isn't it?

Reyes: Yeah, it looks like. [Laughs]

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Q: Yeah.

Reyes: But I don't feel it. [Laughs]

Q: Yeah, you were running. [Laughing] Oh! But—

Reyes: [Coughs] Excuse me.

Q: But you were not injured? You were not injured?

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Reyes: No, I'm not injured.

Q: But you made it back to your village.

Reyes: I made it back to Merizo. I get to Merizo [laughs]. So at that time when I get home, my wife told me that the Japanese soldier—all of the people in Merizo to go to one place, to the place and not even sure that they're going to—I don't know what they're going to do but that's what my wife told me. So I told my wife go head and take care of the children and now get the younger one that they can take care of my main daughter. So we stayed there until maybe 4:00, 4:30 when we started going back to the place where there was 30.

When I get back there, before I get to the place where I'm supposed to stop, you know, they got my family in there, I heard about three shouts from the ocean and I thought it was from the ship, but it was from Tinta where the Japanese were killing the Merizo people, the 30 people and Laurice. I don't know whether it was 30 people that they were going to kill. I don't know anything. But that's the time when I know it.

Q: But you heard the sound—

Reyes: The sound.

Q: —of the explosions—

Reyes: The explosion.

Q: —of the hand grenades.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Is that right.

Reyes: And I told you that ship—

Q: When you saw it.

Reyes: —what do you call ship who was shooting inside the island. I'm not—

Q: No.

Reyes: —that didn't take place.

Q: So on that day, on July 15<sup>th</sup>, the Japanese gathered up the villagers, 30 of the villagers, and what did they do?

Reyes: They throw hand grenades on that place in Tinta.

Q: Yeah, in the cave at Tinta.

Reyes: In the cave at Tinta.

Q: So they executed 30 villagers and you heard those shots of the grenades.

Reyes: I heard those shots and then some of them survived.

Q: Some of them survived.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: So how did you find out about what had actually happened in the caves, who told you about that?

Reyes: Oh, my sister is cooking in my cousin's house, rice, and my cousin whispered to her that the people and even the husband of my sister was killed already.

Q: The husband of your sister was killed in the cave?

Reyes: Yeah. That's what he told my sister.

Q: Oh.

Reyes: So since that time I really go back and always do something to—what I can do, you know, and think something.

Q: You're thinking that you want to do something.

Reyes: What to do something.

Q: You're thinking of a plan now.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Now some people did survive in the cave. Were there—how many people survived?

Reyes: I think there's like—I don't know exactly how many survived but there was some survived.

Q: Okay. I think—

Reyes: And they run away.

Q: I think the record shows that there were 14 of those 30 people. Now they weren't killed by the hand grenades but the Japanese went back to the caves to see if the people were dead and the people that survived did they hide?



Reyes: They bayonet them

Q: Yeah, they bayoneted them. I see. And the people who survived they hid under the bodies of others.

Reyes: Yeah, some of them hid because some are injured but those people—the first people when my sister knew that they were killing the people, not her because pretty soon the water over the cave and that's why doesn't they couldn't get out easily.

Q: Yes. Because they couldn't come out until nighttime is that right?

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Because the Japanese—

Reyes: [Unclear] a lot of rain.

Q: A lot of rain?

Reyes: It's rain, rain that time. The Japanese run away from the place where they are, you know. So they go to a build, to a ranch for shelter. So that's why a lot of them that are not really hurt, come out and run.

Q: Were able to come out. All right. So now it's the following morning of July 16<sup>th</sup> after the massacre in the Tinta cave. And what happened that day?

Reyes: And that day, you know, before 12:00 they come again and they ask for people to help deliver the stuff for the Japanese to the north and they select again another 30.

Q: Another 30 people.

Reyes: Thirty people to go to work delivering the Japanese stuff to the north. Now that's wrong idea. [Laughs]

Q: Wrong idea. So there's another cave involved now this is the Faha cave.

Reyes: This cave is Faha cave. They were told to go inside because the Japanese—I mean, the plane coming.

Q: The planes are coming. The American planes are coming.

Reyes: Coming. So what they did they go inside and they got killed by the Japanese [laughs].

Q: The same thing again.

Reyes: The same thing.

Q: Another 30 people.

Reyes: Another 30.

Q: Another 30 people died.

Reyes: And that's the 30—30 of them die.

Q: And no survivors, hey.

Reyes: No survivors.

Q: Yeah. So now, there are 46 Merizo citizens who have died this way in these caves.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And now later that day there was a group of villagers and they were forced to do what? Were you moving supplies somewhere?

Reyes: Yeah, we moved the supplies from the place we all stayed the night. We moved it to the jungle. So the first place we stopped is Tintinghanom.

Q: Tintinghanom.

Reyes: Tintinghanom.

Q: So you were moving Japanese supplies.

Reyes: Supplies.

Q: Oh. You and your family, too?

Reyes: Yeah, everybody. Everybody got to move.

Q: You were all carrying—

Reyes: Their stuff.

Q: —heavy things?

Reyes: No, not really heavy but just [unclear].

Q: Yeah. Like the Japanese needed.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So you got there about what time of day at Tintinghanom?

Reyes: At Tintinghanom, we get over there in the evening. [Laughs

Q: In the evening!

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: So you marched much of that day.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Okay. On July the 18<sup>th</sup>, what did the Japanese soldiers start doing on that day? They started digging?

Reyes: No, we stay in Tintinganom for one night.

Q: For one night, okay.

Reyes: And then the morning we have to move to Atate.

Q: Atate.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Oh, that's where the concentration camp was?

Reyes: That's where the concentration camp and the—so we move again. So when we moved to Atate, they said well four Japanese or five or six Japanese guarding the Tintinganom place because that's where they are—where they have their belonging.

Q: Oh, yeah, their supplies.

Reyes: So we moved to Atate, we start carrying their stuff again to take it up to Atate then we camp in the—when we get to Atate everybody has got to get up again and had to stand around the camp of Atate.

Q: Okay. You had to stay at the concentration camp there.

Reyes: Yeah. And me I always want to be near this Japanese thing, you know, so that I can hear or what they're doing.

Q: Oh, you're trying to listen to see what they're—

Reyes: I tried to listen. I want to get what they're trying to do. So the first night there in Atate, the Japanese asked for some people to help them to—and they're all ladies, girls. They want girls to come and massage them [laughs].

Q: The young girls.

Reyes: The young girls [laughs].

Q: Okay. Oh, dear.

Reyes: So by nighttime, you know, and then the girls left and they told these girls to take a shower and to come back again [laughs] the next night. So the next night is the 19<sup>th</sup>, the next night is the 19<sup>th</sup>, so I know that the Japanese people when they want to enjoy themselves, the bonsai, you know.

Q: They bonsai, you know.

Reyes: They bonsai.

Q: Yeah.

Reyes: And that means trouble later. [Laughs]

Q: Yeah. They only celebrate the bonsai when they're committed to battles and death, right.

Reyes: Yeah, that's right.

Q: Now what about this hole?

Reyes: This hole?

Q: Had they—did—was there—did they dig a hole, a big hole down there?

Reyes: Yeah, they dig a big hole and it was big for people.

Q: So they made all the workers dig a big hole.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And what did they tell you?

Reyes: That that's for the dog.

Q: For the dog?

Reyes: Yeah. [Laugh] But that dog—a lot of dogs can fit in there. [Laughing]

Q: [Laughing] So you realized what?

Reyes: That it's time for the bonsai.

Q: Time for the bonsai.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And you think that hole is for—

Reyes: For the people of Merizo.

Q: —for you and the people of Merizo.

Reyes: Merizo. The people of Merizo.

Q: So you're—now you're running out of time and what about your plan, did you start your plan?

Reyes: My plan is to see what I can do. Is to—so when they told us to go back and pick up the stuff for them, the Japanese, because they're going to bonsai that night [laughs], so I—we don't go back to pick up the trash, I mean, the stuff. We go back to kill them.

Q: You go back to kill them.

Reyes: So that we can get some arms.

Q: Did you have anyone to help you?

Reyes: No. It's only—there's six people that are supposed to help me there.

Q: Well, did you have trouble getting people to help you?

Reyes: No, because these six people I already asked them. We have to get together. But most of them refusing me because they want to run away. So I told them, "If you run away it's no use for you people. We have to stick together and help and get—to help me because I need help.

Q: So you were giving them courage.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And giving them a reason and telling them they must.

Reyes: It's just the same if you leave now maybe you're going to get killed. If you don't leave, maybe we fight and we can save our people. So—

Q: So now—

Reyes: When we left the Atate camp to get this stuff for the—that's the last load, the last load was to—we made the first load already. But we don't—we just stopped on the hill when they followed the people of Merizo in the hills, are awaiting, they're tired, you know, because they have moved things. So a lot of them are—I see a place where they have food, you know. I said, "I'd like to have some of that food." So when I get some of that food, you know, with the Japanese [laughs] the people say, "No, no, they're going to kill us." "No, never mind. Never mind about killing. Go ahead help yourself." I give it all to the people. I got the food from the guard that was taking care of it, so I said, "Come on have, this is ours, this is ours here now. We have to go ahead enjoy yourself." [Laughing]

Q: Okay. So you got food for the people.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: From these soldiers. Now tell me about this Springfield rifle. Did you have a rifle hidden somewhere?

Reyes: Yeah, I have a rifle but that's the—the rifle is back on my ranch. I didn't have time to go and get it. [Laughs.]

Q: You don't have time to get it, yeah. But this is a rifle that you had hidden.

Reyes: In the mango tree.

Q: In the mango tree. Okay. And so each morning what would you do with the rifle?

Reyes: And I'm just like I think I'm putting up the flag and lower it down. [Laughing]

Q: Because it was on a rope. You had it tied on a rope.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And you'd take this rifle and do what, send it up in the tree?

Reyes: In the tree where they couldn't see it because of all the leaves, you know.

Q: And then that—you'd hide it when in the morning?

Reyes: No. In the morning, I put it up before the sunrise. So in the evening, again I'd take it down.

Q: Take it down and keep it where?

Reyes: Near my bedside.

Q: Close to your beside. Well, so in a way, the rifle was like a flag wasn't it.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: It was like a symbol of freedom everyday.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: You raise it and lower it. A sign of hope somewhere.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. So that was something that you had on your ranch.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And what would the Japanese have done to you if they knew you had that rifle.

Reyes: They'll kill my family.

Q: They would kill your family.

Reyes: I know they would kill my family. But I still have one gun, a big gun. So the people said that if the Japanese come I'll show him that one.

Q: You were very, very smart.

Reyes: That's why [laugh]—

Q: You really were thinking all the time.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: I think that's miraculous that you were able to keep your family, protect them—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —and thinking about the people in the village.

Reyes: And the Japanese where they led the people were this close—belonged to us, the land.

Q: The land was yours.

Reyes: Yeah, because—

Q: But the Japanese made you work it.

Reyes: Yeah, make us all work.

Q: Made you work.

Reyes: Everybody got to work.

Q: Grow food.

Reyes: Grow food, vegetables, everything.

Q: So now your plan is coming along and you've rounded up six boys.

Reyes: Got six boys already.

Q: Okay. And you're going to—they were going to help you now.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And so there were two boys that were first to help you. What were their names?

Reyes: John Angulta (ph) and Pat Tidyron (ph).

Q: Pat Tidyron. So when did the fighting start, what did you all do?

Reyes: No, this war, you know, four refused because they're afraid and they want to run away. I said—I did talk to them, "If you run away, you don't have a chance."

Q: So now, I think that you all were very brave to do this. Now you told me earlier that you had—you were the first person to go after a Japanese guard.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: You were the first.



Reyes: That's right.

Q: And where did you hit him?

Reyes: I hit him on the skull, I mean, his—what do you call this?

Q: Forehead.

Reyes: Forehead.

Q: Yes. What did you hit him with?

Reyes: I hit him with my hand.

Q: With your hand. What happened to him?

Reyes: He wobbled forward. I told them we're going to wrestle him but not unconscious. He's already unconscious so I hit him right then and make a crushed his forehead.

Q: And crushed his forehead.

Reyes: [Laughs]

Q: Yeah. And then Jose and Pat what did they do?

Reyes: They battered him with the rest because they're hitting in the wrong side. They hit him on the arm, they hit him on the legs.

Q: But the guard fell down unconscious now, right?

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And you all had to leave but you told Pat and Jose to do something with these guards.

Reyes: Yeah, the rest of the boys because they all gathered with us at that time, all the six.

They come and they don't have a chance to run. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughing] So the Japanese guards that had been wounded were they dead?

Reyes: They're dead because I told these boys to make sure that the Jap are dead.

Q: Make sure they're dead.

Reyes: So when I went back to see where they are, they're all hanging on a split.

Q: They're hanging?

Reyes: They're all split on their belly.

Q: They're hanging from the tree.

Reyes: Tree.

Q: And they had their stomachs split—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —to make sure they were dead.

Reyes: Dead.

Q: Because if they hadn't been dead then they would have come and gotten you again.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. So you made sure that they were dead. So then, another Japanese guard approached you and you had a gun, right?

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And what did you do?

Reyes: No. After we finished killing these Japanese on the Tintinghanom place, we went forward to where we travelled and I watched the other people that are coming.

Q: Oh, on the trail, coming on the trail.

Reyes: [Coughing] Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And what happened?

Reyes: There's a Japanese come up first on the place, because that place you had to try to jump up a little because there's about maybe four feet high, the road to the other road, because the road is higher on this side and it's lower down there. You have to hold yourself and jump up to get up.

Q: Is that where you were hiding?

Reyes: That's where we were.

Q: You were hiding.

Reyes: Hiding right behind what do you call the—behind the tree, you know, the name is—

Q: The banyan tree.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

Reyes: So the first time he got up I wanted to go up further so I can make sure that I hit him

right.

Q: Yes.

Reyes: So when I shoot at this Japanese, these two jump up in the back and the bullet of one—bullet from the gun goes straight through the Japanese to the two men. One in the hands and go through to the stomach on the other one. So two people there. The Japanese died already.

Q: All right. So now, you've killed several of the Japanese, the four guards that you killed—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —and took their weapons.

Reyes: Yeah, we took their weapons. So we got a weapon now [laughs].

Q: All right. And so now I believe you found about 50 or 60 people of your group that were helping you now.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Is that right about 50 or 60 people?

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And you gave them what to fight with, what did they have to fight with?

Reyes: I told some boys, you know, that I can go out with a machete and get the foot of the—there in the sticks so that they can hit somebody.

Q: So you just had some sticks really.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And rocks maybe?

Reyes: No. No, rocks.

Q: No rocks, just the sticks.

Reyes: Just the sticks.

Q: And those were weapons that you were fighting the Japanese.

Reyes: That's where—and the gun that we have.

Q: And the guns.

Reyes: From those four Japanese I got

Q: Yes. So you weren't exactly overly armed I guess.

Reyes: No.

Q: No. [Laughs]

Reyes: We're not really over—you know.

Q: Well, you came to where, to some Japanese along the river that were bathing. What happened there?

Reyes: Oh, some of the boys, you know, throw rocks to these people.

Q: Throwing rocks, okay.

Reyes: Because I'm not there already but the first bunch of boys that I taught to go forward because I didn't want to be in front. I want to be in the back because they refuse they say, "You cannot" —maybe if I'm in the front they all run away. [Laughs]

Q: Yes.

Reyes: Runaway from me. [Laughing]

Q: That's right.

Reyes: I always tried to get them—

Q: To go.

Reyes: — to keep going.

Q: To go.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Yes and fight.

Reyes: Because it is too late if we don't do anything. And then Japanese get there portion then there's no chance for us. That's why I stayed.

Q: So you were the brave one and a few more who were willing to help you do this. One of the Japanese in the river, I believe, fired at you, is that correct?

Reyes: No.

Q: No?

Reyes: The one in the camp got a gun and get out from the camp, because that's where the Japanese gun is in the camp. So this Japanese guy come out and while I'm teaching the boys, you know, the way to shoot the gun, they fired at me. [Laughs]

Q: They fired at you.

Reyes: That's right. It was right next to me ear! [Laughs]

Q: Right by your ear!

Reyes: Yeah, my ear. So I look at this, you know, where the fire came from and he's trying to—because the Japanese gun is just like the old American rifle. You had to cock it and push it out again. So before he cocked it, he's cocking it and he tried to shoot at me again, I aim him and I shoot right on the—

Q: Oh, thank goodness.

Reyes: [Unclear] place so I can—

Q: Yeah, you hit him in the chest.

Reyes: I hit him on the chest so he cannot wake up.

Q: Yeah. That was close. That's where you almost died. Were you not afraid of dying in all this?

Reyes: About this, I'm not afraid.

Q: Not afraid.

Reyes: I'm not afraid.

Q: So your group of volunteers and recruits were growing in number and you all proceeded north armed with your clubs and swords and you must have had a few rifles and some hand grenades that—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —maybe didn't even know how to use very well, right.

Reyes: Yeah [laughing].

Q: You just had them. [Laughs]

Reyes: We went to guard, you know, after that and we went out, you know, to a place and close to the door we have to guard. Those people doesn't know anything. So I'm not—I don't get mad about it because I know.

Q: Yeah, they're just—

Reyes: I understand.

Q: Yeah. They're just afraid. So you surprised Japanese guards at the concentration camp and you went onto a supply depot. So by now, you've killed quite a few Japanese I guess.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Any idea how many so far?

Reyes: Oh, I hit a lot of Japanese.

Q: A lot of Japanese. On July the 19<sup>th</sup> I believe there were two boys that came along with a note, they were carrying a note. What happened?

Reyes: Now these two boys, you know, because I always be the last one in the place where we are. I want everyone to move up. So I trying moving to another area so that—in case

something is going to come, they won't find us.

Q: Yes.

Reyes: So these two boys from Inharajan they came and they said they're going to give the note to the Japanese people in Merizo cemetery. So I know already there is some Japanese over there. That's the guard that killed the 30 of the Merizo people.

Q: Oh, he was the guard that killed the 30.

Reyes: Thirty.

Q: Oh, okay.

Reyes: That killed the 30 of the people from—

Q: Faha.

Reyes: —Faha. He's close to the cemetery. Because that night I went out and looked for them and I found them over there, because I go out at night myself.

Q: Scouting around.

Reyes: Scouting around.

Q: And getting information as to where the Japanese are.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: What they're planning to do.

Reyes: Yeah. So this is the only way we can do things right.

Q: Yeah.

Reyes: So—

Q: So you took these boys.

Reyes: I took these boys, you know.

Q: As prisoners?

Reyes: No, I don't tell them that they're our prisoner but for me I treat them as prisoners. So I told the guard that night who's guarding all the people of Merizo in one area. I told them, "You don not let these boys to go back to Inharajan or go alone with what they're trying—their plan," because I know already that this plan is to get some Japanese soldier group. So I told the group to take care of the boys.

Q: Yeah. So you know that the Japanese are planning to kill all the villagers.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: That's their plan.

Reyes: That's their plan.

Q: And if these boys had gotten away, they could tell them where you were.

Reyes: Where we are.

Q: And so did you tell your friends to shoot the boys?

Reyes: The one that are taking care of people, you know, because I got some, a couple, maybe around four or five guys, you know, stay their with guns to take care of the people, because I always go around.

Q: So you're organizing everyone and making sure that the people are safe.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And as you move from place to place you're making sure that you leave no—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —no clues for the Japanese so they can't find you. So did you tell them to shoot these young boys if they tried to get away?

Reyes: I told them already don't let them go away. If they want, tell them that I'm ordered to shoot you if you go away. So these two guys stayed and then we go to Agat together.

Q: So you went to Agat.

Reyes: Agat together where the invasion came in, you know.

Q: Where the invasion came, right. So something happened that night. You sent some of your men somewhere.

Reyes: I called my brother-in-law because my brother-in-law is the one taking care of the Japanese fishing. So he got an outrigger and the outrigger can take about six people to go out en route for outrigger, because I know outriggers because I've been fishing, too. So I told him to take these five people and go to the ship and tell the operator of the ship, the commander, that the Japanese are moving north. So—



Q: Okay. Right. So they left that night in the outrigger canoe.

Reyes: Yeah. That's on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Q: On the 19<sup>th</sup>. And who was the man that you—

Reyes: The man responsible?

Q: Yeah.

Reyes: Tony—

Q: Tony Leon.

Reyes: -Guerrero (ph).

Q: Okay. And he had inside information about the Japanese perhaps, because he had been taking care of boats for them.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Okay. And you—

Reyes: He's been fishing for the Japanese.

Q: Yeah. And you told him to tell the Americans where—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —where the Japanese are.

Reyes: Tell the captain of the ship or the admiral that the Japanese are moving north.

Q: Moving north. Okay. So they took off at night in this outrigger canoe. There were six of your men.

Reyes: And then, you know, the tide is really low.

Q: Oh!

Reyes: And they have to carry the canoe maybe 300, 400 feet from the—where the canoe is hid. They have to carry it out to where they can put it down and start the engine.

Q: I understand. So they took the canoe over the shallow areas and once they were in the water, they went out to Cocos Island?

Reyes: Cocos Island.

Q: Cocos Island. About how far is Cocos Island away, do you know approximately maybe?

Reyes: From where they started is not too far because it's closer to Cocos Island because it's

on the south of Merizo.

Q: Okay. So when they got there, were there any Japanese on the island?

Reyes: No, they're really scared because there's something like a machine gun, you know, that the Japanese put out [laughs]. The Japanese put out something on Cocos Island.

Q: Yeah. It was coconut trunks or something that were made to look like guns.

Reyes: Yeah. The guns [laughs].

Q: To fool the Americans, maybe, huh.

Reyes: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: Oh! So they were really afraid.

Reyes: Afraid.

Q: Yeah.

Reyes: So they're not even talking [laughing].

Q: So they're being really quiet.

Reyes: Quiet and tried to get out. When they get out in one place and they found that they went to the other side and go down farther.

Q: They're being very careful.

Reyes: Careful.

Q: Yes. But they stopped on the island to get some coconuts.

Reyes: Yeah, they stopped.

Q: Because they needed some—

Reyes: Most of them get coconuts.

Q: Needed something to drink, right.

Reyes: To drink and eat, you know, the coconut.

Q: Yes. Yes. All right. So then, they left Cocos Island.

Reyes: They left Cocos Island to the ship.

Q: And went out into the ocean.

Reyes: Ocean. The first ship that they [laughs] saw, they keep on going the ship moving to get away from them.

Q: Oh, gosh. Oh, really!

Reyes: So they really go out to the rough water [laughs].

Q: Oh, so they really had to go out.

Reyes: Yeah, they have to go out but they keep on going. So this ship that go out, the first ship that they saw, keep on going out and they never turned back. So they went for another ship because that's the way when they go to Agat for the invasion.

Q: Ah, so they were—the Americans were starting to arrive in Guam.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And the ships were patrolling offshore then.

Reyes: No, they're not patrolling. They're going down to Agat.

Q: Going on their way to Agat for the landing for the Marine invasion.

Reyes: So it goes this way.

Q: Oh, yes, right, right. So the ship picked them up, right.

Reyes: The ship picked them up. The next ship picked them up but they're still—they get scared because [laughs] there's lots of machine guns pointing at them now [laughs].

Q: Yes. Right. Oh my goodness! And when they got on the ship then they told—they—

Reyes: They told the captain of the ship and they got the—they got welcomed.

Q: And so they told the Americans where the Japanese were, is that right?

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: And then they led the U.S. Marines. As scouts and guides, they led the Marines.

Reyes: Yeah, the guides.

Q: Through Agat.

Reyes: Through Agat, yeah.

Q: And Merizo.

Reyes: Merizo.

Q: So these people really played an important role in helping the—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —U.S. Marines during the invasion. Okay. And in the meanwhile, you had stayed with your people, is that right?

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: You were taking care of your people. And—

Reyes: Now we're moving to Agat, too.

Q: You're moving to Agat also. Okay.

Reyes: After there we—there was a couple of Marines came with some Guamanian, you know. That's the time when we moved to Agat.

Q: But you had taken your family to a safe place in the jungle for the time being?

Reyes: Yeah. My family is there in one place, night and day.

Q: And you had to go out still—

Reyes: Go out.

Q: —looking for Japanese.

Reyes: No, we're guarding the—

Q: Guarding the place.

Reyes: I lost some people. That's why I said I know I traded my cow for a box of dynamite.

[Laughs]

Q: You traded your cow for a box of dynamite.

Reyes: Yeah. Because that's what the—it used to be a Commissioner of [unclear] something like—

Q: Okay. Commissioner of [unclear]. Yeah.

Reyes: A Commissioner [laughs]. Because I know they went to the ship, you know, and they stole some dynamite. I know. And I said, "Will you please trade me some dynamite or I'll buy it." They said, "No." "I'll give you a cow if you want." So they took the cow [laughing].

Q: So you traded your cow for dynamite.

Reyes: Yeah, one cow for dynamite. [Laughing] So I got more ammunition.

Q: Now you've got more ammunition.

Reyes: And I know how to fix that up good.

Q: How did you know how to use that dynamite?

Reyes: I used to work with them because I worked for the Navy for a time and the Navy are doing it for the war, wartime.

Q: For the Cabras—

Reyes: For Cabras. Cabras.

Q: —power plant.

Reyes: So I—

Q: Yeah. Okay. So you knew how to use it.

Reyes: I'm working with the people that—destroying the rocks, you know, in the Cabras.

Q: Yes.

Reyes: And—

Q: So you knew how to use this dynamite very well.

Reyes: And those people are all right because both of the Cabras are dynamite people. I know it's a good friend of mine because I'm taking care of the road from Cabras out to the—to where the ships come in. That's my job.

Q: That was your work.

Reyes: That's my work.

Q: Yes. Yes. So now, you have two boxes of dynamite and were you hiding them somewhere?

Reyes: No, I had them on my ranch but it's no use, I don't use it.

Q: Oh, so it was back on the ranch and you couldn't get to it.

Reyes: Couldn't get to it.

Q: Oh, boy, I bet you wanted to though didn't you [laughs].

Reyes: Oh, yeah.

Q: You could really have used that dynamite.

Reyes: Because dynamite, you know, I can use it and it's just like a gun, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.

Q: It's almost like a hand grenade, hey, can you throw it?

Reyes: Yeah, I mean, it's only about six seconds.

Q: Six seconds on a hand grenade.

Reyes: Hand grenade. And dynamite you can go less than six seconds.

Q: Less than six seconds.

Reyes: Or—

Q: Or more.

Reyes: Or more. Or a group.

Q: Oh, I see.

Reyes: A group of people. If you got a big [unclear] that's for a group.

Q: Oh my goodness. Could have really done some defending—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —with that dynamite. Yes.

Reyes: Yeah, I know it's worth it for me because that's what I'm doing. Right then it's taken care of.

Q: So your dynamite was back on the ranch but you still had a few guns and when the U.S. forces invaded to liberate the island, the scouts that you had sent out were helping them and in the meanwhile, you were also fighting with the villagers in the jungles for the last few Japanese that were left.

Reyes: The Japanese are scattered around.

Q: You were going up in the jungles and hills.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Trying to find them and getting them out. Phew. So, you know, Merizo, you liberated the village of Merizo and it was the only village on Guam that was actually liberated by its own people—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —and you led those people and organized those people. It sounds like in some cases gave them the courage and the determination to stand up and fight.

Reyes: Yeah, fight. That's right.

Q: That's incredible. Were you afraid—not afraid to die?

Reyes: No, I'm not afraid.

Q: What was your thinking, what did you think?

Reyes: I'm not afraid because I like to save the people.

Q: You wanted to save the people. That was your primary thought—

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: —was to save your people. Well, today the heroic citizens who fought with you in the face of almost certain death and you saved the lives of untold number of Chamorros, you and the people who helped you are no strangers to honor. I noticed that in the paperwork that you gave me in resolutions adopted by the Guam Legislature in 1972 and again in 1989 they expressed recognition and commendation. And I quote them as saying, "To the loyal, patriotic and heroic band of Guamanians organized and led by Jose Reyes assisted by the following people: [unknown spelling of names] Vicente Munoz, Patricio Tye Jerome, Nicholas Chardwilla, Dwan Naputi, Jose Nanquata and Mariano Nanguata, gallant residents of Merizo who released their fellow Guamanians from the Atate Concentration Camp." And now you were saying that out of those people, those who went to Cocos Island and assisted as scouts and guides for the U.S. Marines what were their names?

Reyes: Tony LeonGuerrero, got that?

Q: Yeah.

Reyes: Tony LeonGuerrero, Mantui (ph)—that's the nickname.

Q: Mantui that was his nickname?

Reyes: Yeah, Mantui.

Q: Okay. Who else?

Reyes: [Unclear] Martinez.

Q: Right. Was it Nuan Manoz (ph)?

Reyes: Juan, John, John.

Q: Oh, Juan Manoz (ph).

Reyes: That's John.

Q: I'm sorry.

Reyes: John Manoz.

Q: Okay.

Reyes: [Unclear], Sam Torres and Juan Cruz (ph), Banjo. So these three here, Joe Torres was working at the—

Q: The University.

Reyes: —University at Merizo. You saw him?

Q: I sent—I gave him a letter yesterday.

Reyes: Yeah.

Q: Yes, Mr.—

Reyes: John Cruz, Banjo—

Q: And they—

Reyes: —he's still alive.

Q: They're the only two of all these people that are still alive.

Reyes: He's still alive.

Q: That helped you.

Reyes: And I'd like them to be recognized.

Q: To be recognized.

Reyes: Now, not later [laughs].

Q: And not later.

Reyes: Before they die. [Laughs]

Q: Right. Right. And so they will be. And so they will be if I can do anything about it. From this brave group of men, Dr. Jose N. Torres and Juan Cruz, Banjo, are still alive. Further honors have been presented to Mr. Reyes by the governor's office for his valor and heroism. Other organizations expressing appreciation are the Guam Civilian Scouts, the JCs, the Chamber of Commerce and numerous military commemorative ceremonies throughout the years. Fifty-four years after the end of World War II and the liberation of Guam, Mr. Reyes modestly recounts his actions during the Japanese occupation. His slight frame, kind eyes and soft voice belie the enormous bravery that once came from within him. His gentle demeanor seems to convey an outlook of calm resolve. At age 78, pops Reyes remembers when he was only 20 years old and rose up with his Springfield rifle to free his people. It is with certainty that they will remember him. Thank you Mr. Reyes, I'll leave you in peace. Thank you, sir.



Reyes: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]