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Jack Eddy
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AB

Interviewee: Jack Eddy

Military Rank:

Interviewer:

Date: January 30, 1992

First 00:01:31 cut due to noise, add this time to all time stamps

Today is January 30, 1992. Could you please state your name and age?

Jack Eddy: My name is John J. Eddy. My age: 71.

Q: Jack, can you recall the accounts of what it was like for you out there [unclear] on July 21st?

Jack Eddy: Sure can. Would you like me to elaborate?

Q: Yes.

—00:01:54—

Jack Eddy: Well, it was a pretty decent day, as I recall. We had come up here from Guadalcanal on a troop transport. I used to be able to remember the name of it — President Jackson. And we were deck-loaded into Higgins boats — they're called LCVPs — maybe you're familiar with the term. And —

Q: Cut.

Jack Eddy: But —

—00:02:31—

Q: World War II in the Pacific; Mr. Jack Eddy; 92-20; take 42.

[MARK]

You were talking about being on the Higgins boats.

Jack Eddy: Yes. As I mentioned, our unit was deck-loaded into LCVPs and lowered down into the water so we didn't have to climb down rope. And we formed up in the typical formation of an amphibious group heading towards a beachhead. We came in to, within, I believe, about a thousand yards of the reef. Then we transferred from the LCVPs down into the LVTs, which are amphibious tractors. And it was quite a difference in height. And that was interesting, doing that out at sea.

—00:03:21—

Anyway, we got into the LVTs, and then headed for the landing area. And about that time, we could get a good view of exactly what was goin' on, on the island and on the reef. And the Japanese were very active. They were firing mortars, artillery fire, at the units already ashore, ahead of us; and also on the amphibious tractors as they cross the reef.

—00:03:53—

We made it up on the reef and across it with no problems; some near-misses that got the adrenaline flowin'. We couldn't land in our designated landing area, which is over close to the Asan Point, the ridge. That area was under heavy fire. So they shifted our unit off to the left, down towards this little river you see back there. The way, actually, we landed in the 21st Marine area, not in the Ninth area, which of course was our unit. So consequently, we had to come across and get back into our own area after we got ashore. And the nice, beautiful grassy area you see out there now was at that time a rice paddy; and it was under fire from just about every direction, I guess.

—00:04:54—

Up ahead of us was K Company; and I, bein' in F Company, was supposed to follow up and snug in right behind K Company, and then pass through their lines, and continue the attack.

We got across with minimum o' casualties; and got in place behind K Company; and waited until things could get organized, and the company could move out as a unit. We had to cross the river. And down there — I can show you — that little old bridge is still there, that we were able to get across, and stay dry, on.

—00:05:38—

And we got up into the heights over here, and then headed down towards Piti Navy Yard. We were stopped short the first day, and asked to pull back into, oh, somewhere around here, this side of all that housing. I'm not quite sure where that was anymore. Because the left flank had a much more difficult job than we did, and they couldn't get up off the beach up into the hills, so consequently we had to pull back to keep from overextending our lines.

—00:06:14—

Should I keep goin'? Okay. All right. Okay. And this area, we are standing, which is such a beautiful overlook; of course, this provided the high ground to the Japanese for their observation, for their forward observers, for heavy guns. But this particular area right here, believe it or not, was occupied by units from the 21st Regiment. And I'll never understand, to this day, how they got through all the Japanese and made it up on top of this hill. But they did get up here, and they stayed there. And this area wasn't continually — I shouldn't say continually; I meant continuous line — it was strong points up here. These positions were maintained by the Marines, and they never had to pull back down.

—00:07:15—

Our unit made it down into Cabras Island the next day. We didn't go out over the island, we held up at the causeway leading over to it, right where the USO is today. And K Company made an amphibious landing on Cabras Island. We served as a blocking force.

About three days into the campaign, the unit I was in, which was the Second Battalion, was relieved of its frontage over on the right flank, and we were moved over to bolster the attack on the left flank. We became a part of the Third Marine Regiment now; an attached unit.

The company I was in, F Company, took the place of A Company, Third Regiment. And we were involved in continuing the attack for the high ground, which of course is off to my left rear, which in those days was known as Fonte Plateau. Today it's known as [ComNadNore?]. It's now the headquarters for our navy in the western Pacific. And back in those days, it was the, that area was the headquarters for the Japanese General in charge of Guam.

Can I take a break?

Jack Eddy: Well, the area was being subjected to artillery and mortar fire. And as I said, there was a battalion ahead of us, and it gave the, I guess, the Japanese a opportunity to get their sights adjusted. So as we came across the reef, it wasn't very prudent to stick your head up. But of course, some of us couldn't resist it. And what we were headin' for looked pretty grim, actually. And fortunately, you have so many other things to think about that you, you don't dwell on, you know, what the future might hold for you; you kinda concentrate on the immediate task at hand. So you have a tendency to, you know, not to look at things other than with maybe rosy glasses.

The thing that was happening to us was that we were gonna have to slide off to the left. The beach we were intended to land on was under such heavy fire, they felt it would be prudent to not land us there, to move us down. Which of course was welcome news to us, 'cause we could see what was goin' on. And unfortunately, ahead of us there were Marines, so you had to be very cautious. If you went into action, started firing, just, you know, what was your target, and make sure it wasn't one o' your own units up ahead of you, or off on the flank.

That ridge, Asan Ridge, was very heavily defended. And there was quite a bit o' firing going on there. And apparently, I guess when the Japanese weren't busy firin' at the people immediately in front of them, then they'd raise up their sights, and sweep the rice paddy that we were tryin' to get across.

We made it across in fairly good shape. I know people — wonder, or, or whatever, about, you know, casualties. Well, casualties are what it's all about. That's the idea o' war, is to kill each other. So — it's not — and you expect to see people killed. And you hope you don't, but you know you're going to. So it really didn't make much of a — an impression, because, you know, that's the way it's supposed to be.

Q: Oral history, War in the Pacific, Mr. Jack Eddy; take 44. [MARK]

Jack Eddy: Yeah, well, when we — made our landing here in 21 July, I was at that time 23 years old; first lieutenant; and the platoon leader of the Second Platoon of F Company, Ninth Marines. Cut that?

Well, where should I go from here?

Okay, we were — see, I covered that. We moved from the right flank over to the left flank. We took the place of A Company, Third Regiment. And we made an attack onto Fonte Plateau, which was the remaining high ground. It was imperative, of course, that we cover all the high ground to get the Japanese observation of our beach head eliminated.

We made the attack, it was the Second Battalion, Ninth Marines, operating as a unit within the Third Regiment. And the attack was made with the units from the Third Regiment and the, if my memory serves me, also with 21st Regiment on our right flank.

Attack was made late in the afternoon. And it was partially successful in our area, which was F Company. E Company and G Company were not able to reach their objective, due to heavy enemy resistance. F Company did reach the objective. And then it became a real free-for-all, because — nobody knew it at the time, but the Japanese had a plan to counterattack that evening, right in the area where we had launched our attack, up onto the ridge. So here we were, sitting right in the area that the Japanese had assembled troops for and planned an attack. And so they launched their attack.

Second Battalion, Ninth Marines was — battered. I have no recollection of what the casualties were. I knew at one time. Japanese attacked with all they had, 'cause they knew that unless they broke through, that the island, for all intents and purposes, would be lost. Unless they could get down to our beach, back here, and disrupt our supplies, our communications; possibly wreck our artillery; that they were done for, 'cause we were on the high ground in force now.

The Japanese did get down to the beach here. They came down through, I don't know exactly where, in this area. In the area back here, just this side of Flag Circle, there's that big draw, and that's where they came down. And they went all the way down, they got into our division hospital, they got into our artillery. It was a — it was a very wild night.

We, in the meanwhile, were sitting up on top of the hill up there, with the Japanese attacking up at us for a change, which was — good, in a way, 'cause we'd been attacking uphill for four days also. We were able to maintain our positions. We had to pull back a little bit to give us a little bit better field of fire. But we were able to maintain our positions. The Japanese were not able to break through the area of the Second Battalion, [Ninth]. And we lasted through the night, although we did get down to — virtually no ammo. And our — the number of went in the company was reduced, oh, down to, from 226 down to somethin' like 68. So we were — almost out of manpower and ammo.

However, the Japanese, their back had been broken. And even though we weren't aware of it, we had won. And the balance of the fighting then would be almost a footrace to get up to the north end of the island. The Marine tactics were to pursue as rapidly as possible, to keep the Japanese troops off balance; to keep 'em runnin' towards the north, and not give them a chance to set up a big last defensive line so they could, you know, do the same type of thing they had done on other islands, notably Saipan.

We got up to the bluffs of — I got up to [Patty] Point; that's where our unit ended up, on — I guess it was the 10th of August. And of course, in the meanwhile, we'd gone through, oh, all the jungle I guess there is on Guam — at least it seemed like it. But that ended the campaign, as far as the active part was concerned, and then our unit went over to by Ylig [Pago] Bay — area between Ylig [River] and Togcha [Beach] [Agat] was our camp. It's now a beautiful Japanese country club, with a huge golf course.

Well, that was the Ninth Regiment's base during their stay on Guam.

From out o' there, we ran patrols down through the island, seeking out Japanese stragglers. We stayed here until sometime in February, reequipping, new equipment; a whole bunch, o' course, of replacements. And then we left Guam for Iwo Jima.

X: Sound is rolling.Y: CameraZ: Rolling.

Jack Eddy: Oral history, World War in the Pacific; Mr. Jack Eddy; take 45. [MARK]

Jack Eddy: The attack on Fonte Plateau took place on the afternoon of July 25th. And it was late in the afternoon before the attack got of. A number o' things just — oh, it's the fortunes o' war. We could use tanks up there, very handily, but unfortunately, the tanks couldn't get up the hills. And we called in a air strike, and they struck us. Then, when we started the attack, apparently we got short rounds from our artillery. So we'd received fire that caused casualties before we really started the attack.

The attack up onto the plateau was different for different companies, depending on your distance from the cliff; the vegetation; et cetera.

The platoon that I was in had, well, two caves facin' us, but we'd taken those under fire, with machine guns. And we had a pretty short distance to get to the face of the cliff. And it was open terrain, which meant that, o' course, if we lingered, we'd be in harm's way in a hurry.

So we made a mad dash. As soon as we knew that our artillery preparation on top o' this ridge was finished — we knew it by the rounds o' white phosphorus, when they went off — we just made a mad dash for the top o' that hill.

And I'm convinced we caught the Japanese by complete surprise. See, they had no way of knowin' what that white phosphorus meant, if they even saw it. And if they saw it, believe me, they were duckin' down, because I don't know if you're aware o' what white phosphorus, or what phosphorus will do to the human body. So actually, we were over and in their positions before then even knew that the attack

had started.

Now that was our unit. We were fortunate. We were able to sweep right through 'em, and get to the objective.

Other units had much more difficult terrain to get through. So consequently, the Japanese had the chance to recover from the artillery preparation, and then hit those units before they reached their objective. And as I said, then they didn't reach their objective.

Our unit was — well, I thought we had G Company on our right flank. Well, it turned out it was the Japanese Army on our right flank. Which made us wonder just, you know, exactly what was goin' on. We got an attack from our left front, which should have been Marines from F Company, or G Company, one of the two. But it was the Japanese again. So it gave us reason to wonder, again, what was goin' on. We didn't know that the other units had not been able to reach their objective. Because, you know, when you're in a platoon, your, your concern is just what's immediately around you. You, o' course, should be aware o' what's goin' on on your flanks, but sometimes it's almost impossible, particularly when it's in the heavy brush. You hear firin' over there, so you think, well, all is well. Well, it turned out all was not well, and we were — well, we'd really stuck ourselves into the center of a beehive. And darkness fell. Troops tried to get up to join us. Some were successful. I had — well, the Second Platoon —

Q: Sound rolling. Oral history, World War II in Pacific; 92-22; Mr. Jack Eddy; take 46. [MARK]

Jack Eddy: The Second Platoon, in its attack up the ridge, up to the Fonte Plateau, had lost the platoon sergeant, who was killed; and two of the squad leaders were wounded. The other squad leader, which is three squad leaders in a rifle platoon, had been wounded the first day down here, out about where you see those beautiful houses down there.

So consequently, the Second Platoon was down to running on people assuming charge of the squad; taking charge of the flamethrowers. Our personnel had started out with 46 when we got aboard ship at Guadalcanal; the 46 Marines, plus a platoon leader, who was me.

After the campaign was over, up there on — up on Fonte Plateau, there were seven, and myself, left; uninjured. The rest had become casualties in the preceding five or six days. So for all intents and purposes, the Second Platoon was — about a half a squad.

The same kind of — of losses occurred in the rest of the company, and in the other companies in the attack up onto the plateau. However, when all was said and done, the Japanese losses in that particular area, as I recall — I'm goin' off the top of my head now — but they exceeded a thousand. And this is a thousand dead. So if you look at it that way, it — it appears that our losses were — you know, not too bad. But — when you lose a friend, and a close — companion; a guy you've worked with for — you know, through other campaigns, and out here; right, and you know, it's — there is no such thing as acceptable.

We went on, and up through the north of the island, but I've covered that, right? Okay, good.

Q: Oral history, Mr. Jack Eddy; take 47. [MARK] [unclear] what happened during wartime. What would you like to say about it all? What would you like to say about World War II? What would you like to leave as part of our history?

Jack Eddy: Well — looking back through the years, almost 50 years; if I had it do over again, of course I would. I'm sure everybody feels the same way. I am really proud that I was able to be a Marine. But looking at this place right now; how beautiful it is, how peaceful it is; hard to envision that it was a site o' such, you know, bloodshed; violence.

And I guess the world is just that way. We'll always solve our problem by killin' each other. But — unfortunately — it's always the wrong people bein' killed. You know, kids that you look at today, 17, 18, 19 years old, and you call 'em young punks. Well — those guys were your fightin' Marines, back during World War II.

Okay.

[END]

