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Al George
July 18, 1994

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Interviewee: Al George

Military Rank: George Company of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Division

Interviewer: Chuck McManus

Hilton Hotel, Guam

Date: July 18, 1994

--00:00:03 AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Narrator: Al George is a Caucasian man with glasses wearing a light blue button-up shirt with white stripes on the sides. Behind him is palm fronds, and a floral pattern wall.

--00:00:18

Q: My name is Chuck McManus and I'm at the Hilton Hotel in Guam on July 18th, 1994 at 2:45 PM to record an oral history interview with Mr. Al George, who served with the 3rd Marine Division during World War II. This interview is being made by the National Park Service War, War in the Pacific National Park in conjunction with Guam Cable TV. Mr. George, I understand that the National Park Service has your permission to make this recording and to retain all literary and property rights deriving from it, is that correct?

Al George: Yes.

Q: For the record, would you please tell us your full name.

Al George: My full name, uh-Chuck, is Joseph A. George, but I've never gone by the Joseph even in my family life. I've always gone by the name of Al. And so George is the last name.

Q: And how do you spell the last name?

Al George: G-E-O-R-G-E. That's like King George or let George do it. [Laughter from both]

--00:01:21

Q: What unit were you in during the Guam campaign?

Al George: I was in, interesting enough, in the George Company of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine.

Q: Now, we're gonna to go back a little, and what was the date and place of your birth?

Al George: I was born in Iowa, a small little town in Iowa, in fact 750 people uh-counting the cats and dogs my wife's had. Um, Farley, Iowa and, ah, March 1, 1924.

Q: Did you go to school there?

Al George: Yes.

Q: Okay. Did you spend your entire early life there?

Al George: I spent the first 12 years of my life there, going to uh-a Catholic school, being taught by nuns. I didn't know there were anyone but nuns teaching people until I got into college. [Light laughter from both]

--00:02:06

Q: When did you join the service?

Al George: I joined in uh-July of 1942. Um-I joined in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and, um-I joined... because I won a bet. Um, another guy and I were working during the summer months in a little service station in Dubuque, Iowa and Red tried to join the Marine Corps and he came back and said they wouldn't take him because he had hurt his knee playing football in Loras College and, ah-we commented about it, kidding him about it, and he challenged us. He said you guys, little guys, would never be able to make it, because Red was about 6 foot 2, 6'3" and so we bet him 5 dollars we could make it. And we drove to Cedar Rapids, volunteered, and they took us and that was July 17th 1942.

Q: Now while you were working in the gas station were you going to school?

Al George: Yes.

Q: College?

Al George: Yes.

Q: Studying?

Al George: Studying liberal arts at that time, yes. [Laughter from both]

Q: Now- you have already answered the question, what motivated you to join and it was purely \$5.00?

Al George: Ah, purely \$5.00, right.

Q: Oh...

Al George: And the fact that, of course, there was a war going on and we-we had a little bit of-of, you know, patriotism going on. [Laughter from both]

--00:03:25

Q: Now did you have any interesting experiences during your basic training? Oh, where did you take your basic training?

Al George: Oh, took basic training in San Diego, California which is where I reside now. And yes, I guess the interesting experience I remember from basic training is, ah, one of the young guys we had in boot camp and, ah-he could never do anything right. He was a guy who always had to dry shave in the morning because he did something wrong; a guy who, ah-wore his shoes down on the inside; who was always in trouble one way or the other. We kind of felt sorry for him but he just couldn't seem to keep out of the DI's, off the DI's list. And um-interesting thing about him is the day we got out of boot camp he was shipped out and was immediately sent to Guadalcanal and he was wounded in Guadalcanal and the last

time I saw him he was in a hospital in New Zealand when we were there. So, ah-he was an interesting individual that, ah-had a very short career in the Marine Corps.

Q: Tell me about your DI, how was he?

Al George: Um, pretty, you know, typical DI. They swore a lot. If you did anything wrong you put the bucket over your head. If you called your rifle the wrong term, ah, you put the bucket over your head and walk down, this is my rifle, this is my and so on. And, ah-um, but he wasn't too tough. If you lived by the-ah-his laws you were okay.

--00:04:51

Q: What was his rank?

Al George: Ah, he was Sergeant. Yeah.

Q: Career, obviously a career Marine?

Al George: Career, yes. With the little brown hat [Unintelligible -- Cross-talk]—

Q: With the flat brim? Campaign hats, weren't they?

Al George: Yes.

[Brief pause]

Q: Was he a father image to the unit? How many were in your unit for example that he had control of?

Al George: I think there were 60 in our platoon...

Q: Ok.

Al George: ... as I recall, 60 and somewhere in that range. No, I wouldn't call him a father image. He was a, ah- the image we-the guy we wanted to hate.

Q: Okay, was he fair?

Al George: Oh, yeah. He was fair.

Q: How do you feel about him now?

Al George: I feel he did what was right for us because he trained us in a way that we-we have a discipline, I think, that we otherwise would not have had if we hadn't had a guy who, ah-we could hate, so to speak.

Q: Okay. You don't hate him now?

Al George: No. Not at all.

--00:05:44

Q: Were you assigned to any other unit before you got into the 3rd Marines, 12th?

Al George: Uhh-I was in the-ah-headquarters and Service Engineering organization for whatever reason in communications. Um-oh, prior to that I went to communication school in San Diego and, ah- then went to Camp Elliot and we left from Camp Elliot and I was assigned to Headquarters and Services Battalion—H&S we called it—Battalion in the 19th Marines, which was the engineering side of it.

And I stayed in that one until, because of my, um-communication, ah-in the communication outfit I oftentimes had to answer with my name George and because of it, at least this is what I was told later, because of my last name being George they eventually moved me over to George Company in the 3rd Marines and that's how I got into the 2nd Battalion 3rd Marines.

Q: Anything unusual happen to you in your communications school?

Al George: Um, no. Nothing unusual in communication school.

Q: How long?

Al George: Ah, I think it was, in there about 8 weeks, somewhere in that range.

--00:06:49 AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Q: Ok, and you left from Camp Elliot?

Al George: We left from Camp Elliot. Yes.

Q: Aboard?

Al George: Aboard the U.S.S. Boom Fontane [Phonetic], which was a Dutch ship which we had been told, ah-was used for transporting sheep and we believed it. [Laughter from interviewer]. Ah-there were probably about 3,000 of us on that ship and, ah, we got, ah, two meals a day if we were lucky and most of us slept up on deck because the guys who got sick were below deck and it was better up on, up on deck.

Q: Okay. Did you go to Honolulu, or Hawaii from Camp Elliot?

Al George: No-No. We went straight from San Diego to New Zealand. We didn't stop in Honolulu. We were 16-18 days, somewhere in that range [Unintelligible -- Cross-talk]—

Q: [Unintelligible -- Cross-talk]—

Al George: —in New Zealand.

Q: Were you in a convoy?

Al George: Ah, yes. Very small convoy. We had one or two destroyers, I understood, who were there just for protection.

Q: Okay. Were you the only troop ship?

Al George: Yes.

Q: Or the only ship in the convoy?

Al George: Only troop ship, yes.

Q: Auckland, New Zealand.

Al George: Auckland, New Zealand. Right. We, um, stayed in what I call Wackaracky Park, but there was another name for it. We talked to New Zealanders, ah, a few days ago and they had another name Wykaroo, or something like that, but we call Wackaracky Park, which was a soccer field, and we pitched our tents in, in the soccer field and stayed there—trained and, um, as I understood when we were there, they sent the Marine Division to New Zealand because all of New Zealanders had been sent to Africa and there was no one there to protect the island because they were concerned that if the Japanese won several battles that they might come down through the New Zealand area and we were there in case that happened. But when it didn't happen then, ah, we were sent on from New Zealand to Guadalcanal, and we got into Guadalcanal, I guess in... July, August—no, we left New Zealand in May and so we went straight up to Guadalcanal. And we were there, of course, after the Battle of Guadalcanal. And we lived in a coconut grove and deep in— in the island. I remember one of the things that I remember most about that island was that they issued us boots that we wore because the water was so doggone deep and our, we had to lift our cots up off the deck because the, ah, water was that deep in the coconut grove when it rained. Ah—some of—some of the interesting things there. We—ah—we had one guy who—ah—put his boot on one morning and a scorpion had been in the boot and had bit him on the foot and he was in the hospital for 8 days from that one little, one bite, because of the bugs and stuff that were in the area.

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Q: Does the Admiral Nimitz parade bring back any memories?

Al George: Yes, excuse me?

Q: The Admiral Nimitz parade?

Al George: Ah, the one that's here, you mean?

Q: No, the one down in Guadalcanal.

Al George: Um, there was no Admiral Nimitz—

Q: We'd- We'd heard stories about them cleaning off an area and having the Marines standing in the mud waiting for Admiral Nimitz to come by. Just curious if you were there at that time. No problem.

Al George: Ah, no, I don't remember an Admiral Nimitz parade. [Laughter] The one thing I do remember about Guadalcanal, kind of an interesting situation, is we had been there, we were there kind of as a reserve for whatever, and one day they—because we weren't too busy they made a decision that somebody had to go down and clean up the beach and, um-we went down to the beach and this wasn't good duty. We didn't particularly care for this duty, and they said we want everything thrown into that bonfire over there. We want this beach clean. So we, we threw everything into the bonfire. We picked up cases of 50 caliber machine gun shells and we put them in the bonfire. And they were going off and popping [Laughter] and, and—they finally came out and decided that it wasn't such a great idea. But we cleaned the beach. [Laughter from both]

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Q: Beautiful. How long were you in New Zealand?

Al George: We were in-we got into New Zealand in February and we left there in May.

Q: Okay, did you have any close contact with any of the civilians in there?

Al George: Yes. We had some close contacts with some of the civilians, in fact, ah, there were some people we met in New Zealand, girls of course, um- and one of them took us, took me over to an island and introduced me to her parents, and they had traveled a great deal in the United States and they could tell where I was from by the accent of my voice and I was amazed at that. Because, ah, being an Iowa kid I had no idea that people would travel to that extent. But they-they could, they could tell. I took a couple of my buddies with me and then identified them from Michigan and another one from the South, of course, South was easier, but they identified the state.

And, um, the people of New Zealand were great. They treated us like we were kings and, ah, the only thing I couldn't quite fathom is the milk bars in New Zealand, and they would, the milk bars, [small chuckle] would be open from like 1 to 3 and then everything would close from 3 to 6 and then the bars would open again at 6 and then you could go from 6 to 11 or something like that. But it was a whole different lifestyle than that we were accustomed to in, in, ah, the United States where you could go into a bar anytime almost.

Q: Did you sail from Auckland to get to Guadalcanal?

Al George: Yes, we left Auckland, and went from Auckland to Guadalcanal.

--00:12:20

Q: How long were you on Guadalcanal?

Al George: Um-let's see. We were in Guadalcanal May, somewhere along in there, and we trained in Guadalcanal for the Bougainville Campaign and um-we trained on a little island. We'd go aboard ship and make landings, um-mock landings on a ship, on an island rather, that was similar to the terrain and conditions of Bougainville and then we came back to Guadalcanal and we were only there for a week or so. Went back aboard ship and landed on Bougainville on-ah-Tarogato Point-Tarogato Point, somewhere in there and we landed right

into the heart of a Japanese 75 millimeter, ah- a weapon that they had on the beach. Anyway, we landed there and we were on Bougainville November the 1st. And I'll- I'll tell you an interesting story about that. November the 1st, being Catholic, is All Soul's Day and it's a special day in our religion, and about two weeks after I was there I got a letter from my mother, and she said, "I knew you needed extra prayers. I went to church three times today to pray for you." Now how this extrasensory perception worked, I don't know, but she knew, on that particular day, there was no way I could communicate part of that, that we were in that part of the world or anything of that nature because everything was blanked out if we wrote about it. But anyway, I was there from—to answer your question—from November the 1st until after uh-Thanksgiving and they took us off after, I think we were there 28 or 29 days and they took us off, took us back to Guadalcanal where we recouped and, ah-then got ready for coming to Guam.

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Q: Did you ever have an inkling that you might be going to a New Ireland, Kavieng?

Al George: Ever have a?

Q: That you might, your next activity might be in Kavieng in New Ireland?

Al George: Ah, no. Had no indication there.

Q: Now did you actually-train for the Guam invasion?

Al George: Yes.

Q: Doing what? Same little island?

Al George: Uh-we trained, no-we trained in Guadalcanal, in very deep, ah-grass, and more jungle conditions and so on, which, um-ah-somewhat similar to the Bougainville which, ah-we trained in jungle conditions there, but it was a different terrain altogether. In other words, I, I think our people were wise enough to know that we needed to know the kind of

terrain we were going to be in, or terrain, in the kind of terrain we would be in and that's what they did. And I always admire the people who staff this out ahead of time and prepared us. This was one of the things you look back on now and you say those guys knew what they were doing. Yeah.

--00:15:12

Q: When you boarded your ships and you sailed for Guam, did you know that Guam was your destination?

Al George: No. We didn't know at the time. Uh-they wouldn't, ah, let us know where we were going until we got out and we couldn't pass the word on to anyone, you know, for obvious security purposes. Um-but when we left Guadalcanal we came up to Guam and we were scheduled to land on Guam on some day, I don't remember which day. But because of the, um-Naval battle in the Philippine Seas, which I didn't know at that time it was the Philippine Sea's Naval Battle, but they told us uh-that we would sail east by day and west by night so we were always at about the same point in the water. Because if we had lost, the Americans had lost the Battle of the Philippine Seas they would not have landed us on Guam because we would've been exposed without any support. So we-we were on board ship for 30 days um-during that period because we lost our-our sharpness I guess you might say, our battle sharpness. We went aboard, we went ashore at Enewetak and ran around the island-exercised, did some things. Then we went down to the New Hebrides group, which was one of the most beautiful islands I've ever been on and did a lot of swimming and exercising and-and preparing again. And then we came back aboard ship. And then we came to Guam and, ah, when obviously the Philippine Sea battle was, you know, our, in our favor and we landed in Guam.

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Q: Did you have any inkling that you might have been heading for Saipan?

Al George: No. We knew of the batt-of Saipan. We knew Saipan had already been invaded and we had a pretty idea-an indication that Saipan was, ah, adequately reinforced with Marines and Army people; that we were not going to Saipan. About this time, after we got

aboard ship we got a little 8-1/2 by 11 maps showing where we'd land, what we could expect to see and so on. And I still have some of those in my-my uh briefcase. Um, but they were kind of interesting because they were, um, done with the old, ah, system. Somebody scratched out a face of an island and they put tank here, reinforcements here, and so on and they had all this, ah-um- staffed out for us so we had an idea what we would be facing when we-we came ashore. Um. And, ah, again, it's another one of those things, you look back and you say, hey, somebody prepared. Somebody, ah, was, ah-knowledgeable enough to know so that we were as well prepared as possible.

Q: Tell me about the comparison you made of your maps and the map that appeared in the San Diego Newspaper.

Al George: Ah, you know, the map I was showing you? Oh, that was the Los Angeles Times.

Q: Ok.

Al George: Um-the map we had was a very little section, just our beaches, where the map I have from the Los Angeles Times was colorful, it had many of the little, ah, places on it that, ah, of the whole island, the little trails and so on. Ah, probably one of the, ah, nicest looking maps, um, I've seen of this island. In fact, even better than some of those I've seen lately of the island, because they had color, they had the, um, mountains and the, ah, what you call mountains here. Um- then this was a map I, I think I mentioned earlier, that um-I received from somebody back home a week or so after we were here and because it was so detailed, much more detailed than some of our maps, that we had when we landed, that our officers asked if they could use it and I gave it to them and they returned it to me-oh-a couple weeks after that Guam was secured and I still have it. And I kind of enjoy looking at it every once in a while.

--00:19:18

Q: You mentioned when you came out of Camp Elliot to Auckland on this Dutch cruise ship, that you spent a great deal of time sleeping on the hatches as opposed to below. Now when you were doing this wandering on the troop ships prior to the invasion of Guam did

you also sleep out on the deck?

Al George: On occa—yes. Yes. We, that was not uncommon to sleep up on deck because it got pretty hot down in the holds and, um-again, we had all our gear, all the gear that we were going to carry ashore and so on and usually we kept our gear with us, most of our gear that we had to carry ashore, and that made it pretty crowded. So yes, we slept on, on deck quite often.

Q: Okay. What was your arms at the time? Were you a rifleman, a BAR, or 45, or what?

Al George: No, we-we carried, um, the-um, ah-carbine, because we were in communications, and we had a lot of extra gear. We had radios, telephones, um, all the gear that we had to carry ashore and we were given a lighter weapon to carry. Um- for a while we had what was called a bounding automatic rifle, not, not—excuse me—not the B-A-R, it was a, it was made by the people who made the juke boxes, um, back in the United States.

Q: Wurlitzer.

Al George: Huh?

Q: Wurlitzer.

Al George: Yes. Wurlitzer. Yes. And they were, um, fold over stock and they were 45's, very short barreled, and they gave them to us because they were light weight and they thought they were more firepower but they were so bad as a weapon [laughter from interviewer] that they ended up by taking those away and, um-giving us the carbine, which was a nice neat little weapon. Very neat. And, ah-had pretty good fire power.

--00:21:04

Q: Okay. Umm-now when you got back aboard ship with the New Hebrides, after doing your training down there, how long before you actually invaded Guam? How long were you aboard that ship?

Al George: Oh... I would say we were aboard ship maybe six—four or five days, ah, aboard ship from New Hebrides up to this location.

Q: So you just came right up and invaded. You didn't hold off anywhere?

Al George: Oh, no. No. Once we got the word, apparently in New Hebrides, we-we came right straight in.

Q: Any privations? Any problems aboard the ship? Did you run out of water, run out of food?

Al George: No. Not aboard that ship. On the Boom Fontane yes. [Laughter from both]

Q: You'll never forget that one.

Al George: No, Boom Fontane there was nothing. In fact, if you had a friend who was a cook and we tried to get our guy, our buddies to volunteer to be a cook because if you had a friend who was a cook you could at least get an apple once in a while or an orange or something like that, [laughter from both] and he would sneak them out of the, the mess rooms and bring them into the groups and, yes. That was, that was one of the things we, ah-we tried to do-get somebody to volunteer to be in mess, [Chuckling from both] on board the Boom Fontane.

Q: Did you have any contact with the enemy prior to the invasion of Guam?

Al George: Oh, yes. On Bougainville.

--00:22:23

Q: Okay. No-no, I'm sorry, I should have said from New Hebrides when you went to Eniwetok, anything like that?

Al George: No, no.

Q: Any snooping? Submarines?

Al George: No. No. Not that I know of. In other words, we-we had a pretty large convoy coming in because all the troop ships and the battleships and some of the battleships that er-came here with us, and then, of course, there were some here before shelling the island, but we had uh-pretty good protection coming up.

Q: When you got here, how long were you aboard the ship before they told you to head for the beach?

Al George: I would say we pulled in here somewhere in the middle of the night, as I recall. And we, ah, headed for the beach. We went over, we went over the side in nets.

Q: At night?

Al George: No, no. Early in the morning. Very early in the morning. Probably we went over about, ah, 6, 6:30, somewhere in that range we went over and we went into the, into Higgins boats. And it was pretty rough out there on the Higgins boats, because the Higgins boats were coming up and down like this and we were coming down and some of the Higgins would come up and you were not ready to move into the boat, but the boat was ready to take you [laughter from interviewer] because it came up to get you so to speak. And, ah, we had some guys fell into that and hurt, hurt themselves, you know, leg, hurt their legs, or sprained themselves and.

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Ah-then, after the Higgins boats we shoved off. In other words, when everything was loaded, you know, we, um-rendezvoused in an area and circled around until we got the word to go in...to the beach; in other words, there were signalmen on the beach, apparent-oh, not on the beach but on, in this, the Higgins boat, signaled okay, ready to go. Well, when, we left the-got to a certain point in the Higgins boat then we had to move from the Higgins boat to

the Amtrak because the coral reefs that you see out here right now, there was no way a Higgins boat could come across those and get us to the island. There was no way we could go from the coral reef in because there were too many holes, and um-so we transferred from the Higgins boat over to the Amtrak and then we lost a couple guys because the Higgins boat was doing this, the Amtrak was doing this, and a guy missed and went down with 80-90 pounds of gear and that was it. And anyway, we moved over, we came in on the Amtrak across all the coral and then the Amtrak dropped us on the beach and we came on in. And, um, we-we landed on the beach, I'd guess you'd call it...

Q: ASAM.

Al George: A-S-A-M is what I recall. Asam Beach, Red Beach 1. And as I recall—I haven't seen it since I've been here, but I'm anxious to get there—there's a wide open space until we got to a cliff and our objective the first day was to move from the beach to that cliff and to, ah, because we-the main objective was to get off the beach because we were sitting ducks on the beach and, ah- so we moved to that area as quickly as possible. The sad part about it is there, the Japanese, at that time, had many snipers tied in trees. We found out later they were actually tied into trees and they were, ah-they were good shots. Um-I went back to the beach to get some gear because we had to have some gear and another guy and I-I asked another guy to come with me, and we were running up toward this cliff and, ah-they picked him off, right, ah, he-right square in the middle of the forehead. I didn't know whether-why they picked him rather than me. Never will know that, but um-they did. And that was, ah, one of those things. They had sharpshooters that did that to quite a few of our people. Apparently, I read lately, in a book called *Return to the Mariana's*, that they had to pull some of their sharpshooters out of Mongolia troops and brought them in here and they—the primary objective was to pick those people who they thought were leaders or were officers and so on. So they were, ah-officers were, in particular, in jeopardy under the circumstances, of those circumstances. So, um, we- we did achieve our first day goal of getting up to that point and getting into the woods that-I would call woods anyway-and then, on the second day, we cleared the area out and we walked through Agana which, at that time was a narrow road, and probably one and a half cars today wouldn't make it and I don't recall it being, ah-it was grav—paved. It was only a gravel road at the time. The buildings were all blown apart because it was-we had shelled the, the beaches, you know,

for some time and we walked through Agana and then up into the, um-the northern part of the island where we, ah-we continued to move on and we were, as I understood it, and I remember, we were moving to the south where the Japanese and the, ah, other Marines and Army were coming from the, ah, from the south.

--00:27:50

We were coming from the north and we were to squeeze the Japanese in between. That was the objective and that was what we achieved. And we ended up on the east side of the island when, ah, when the island was secured. I guess it was about 20 or 30 days after we landed. [Brief Pause]

I don't remember the exact number of days. But, we had some interesting experiences during those periods. I lost some of my buddies and, um, two of them who are going to be here, ah, were wounded on the second day and, ah, they will be here. [Crying]

There were days when it wasn't much fun but, um- I was lucky. We survived and we tell about it today. I guess one of the saddest parts was, ah, one of my good friends in my group, ah, in New Zealand, was put in the brig because he had gone liberty when he wasn't supposed to and he had a girlfriend in New Zealand, and I couldn't blame him. She was a beautiful girl and Wally was a heck of a nice guy. And we, while we were here in one of our maneuvers we had here, we got out front of our organization when, late in the afternoon and we couldn't get back. And the major made a decision that we should stop there. And we literally stopped in a camp that the Japanese had just left. There was still rice being cooked in the camp. And we pulled in and they had dug the foxholes for us. We didn't have to make many foxholes. And it was our job to, um- in communications to make sure our outpost, OP were, had communications, wire communications. We went out to bring the lines back to headquarters so we could communicate with them; they could communicate with us. And we, all the guys had dug in while we were doing all this and when we came back they had everything pretty well prepared for the night. And they asked me to get in the foxhole with them because I was- I usually had food and water. Being an Iowan, I guess I was conservative. And, um, ah, I got into their foxhole. My friend and the other guy, so there were three of us out doing this. They got into the other foxhole that was there. During the

night they dropped a mortar in that foxhole and we carried them out in pieces. And, ah- this [Becomes emotional] was this guy who, ah, had—was put in the brig in New Zealand. Six months later he was gone. [Crying]

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Not supposed to do that. You look back on things like that and you say it might be my mother praying. Why was I in that foxhole? What if go to the other one? Things like that and um, makes you wonder sometimes that maybe there's a reason. Maybe I-I guess I'm a fatalist since then and the sad part of my life is because of the exposure to that sort of thing-the guys who were wounded, the guys who were killed-I have become more callous about death and I-I really shouldn't be.

Um-memories of the family and so on so forth... I-I don't have the same remorse that I-I think I should have but, eh-that's, I guess, life. So, that was the, ah-we, that particular night, ah-we realized that we were not going to be able to survive if we didn't get out of there, and the major made a-made a decision that we should move out of there in the middle of the night. And at 3:30 in the morning we passed the word, whispered to one another, "We're moving out," and, um we picked up all of our gear and, ah, we—there was a tank, Japanese tank, sitting right there waiting. We could see it. I mean, we knew it was there just waiting for daylight, and, ah-we walked off through the woods and, ah, I often wondered what the Japanese thought next morning when they were all ready to, ah-ah- kill off the battalion of Marines and we weren't there. And, um, but, ah, we walked out of there carrying our wounded in, in ponchos and, um-back to where we-where we should've been-we, we would've been if we hadn't gotten out front on that particular day.

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Q: So back again, for a minute, to the actual invasion itself and the Higgins boats. Now how long were you on the Higgins boats before you transferred over to the Amtraks?

Al George: Oh, probably less than 15 minutes because the ships were sitting off shore, ah, probably, as I understood, they were just out of range of the-of the shore guns, ah, the sh-re weapons, 75, ah, millimeter weapons the Japanese had and they tried to stay off, off far

enough.

Q: How long were you on the Amtraks?

Al George: Oh?

Q: How long were you on the Amtraks?

Al George: Um-oh-ah-probably less than 5 minutes.

Q: You were probably very close to the first wave, then?

Al George: We, I-I don't remember but it seemed to me we were in the second or third wave. I don't recall which wave we were in but it was close enough that, ah, I didn't want to, you know, yes. It was close enough.

Q: Okay. Were you pinned down on the beach for long or did you move right out?

Al George: Ah, we were pinned down for, oh, maybe 20 minutes or so and then we moved out and, ah, we scattered out and moved up toward where our goal that we were headed for.

Q: Okay. Were you on the left flank?

Al George: Oh, the left flank, yes. We, we landed, ah, we could see Adelup Point just to our left in, in that particular area.

Q: Do you remember the banzai charge, what they referred to in the book as the last banzai charge?

Al George: I-I don't remember any of them being known as the last banzai. We had, during the time we were here, we had several charges that were banzai charges but, ah- nobody numbered them 1, 2, 3, 4. [Laughing]

Q: This is just the title of the book the major banzai charge that came through, when they broke through and into the field hospital down at the beach.

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Al George: Oh, we were up in the hills at the time, and some of the guys who had been wounded were in the hospital and, ah, they were killed in the hospital. You recall, or some, some of my friends have said that there were more of them killed there than there were in, you know, one or two days of the battle. Um-no. I was, we were back up in the, in the hills at that time, but we'd heard about the-the charge on the, ah-on the hospital. But was that known as the last banzai charge?

Q: The-this is, well, you're supposed to be talking, not me. But this is the invasion of Guam was where the Japanese changed their tactics. They no longer went with the banzai charges but they allowed the people to get on the beach, Iwo Jima.

Al George: Oh.

Q: See, just that was a tactic. They let you come on the beach and then hit you by attrition, rather than try to prevent the landing, and this is the last organized Japanese banzai charge of the war. And that's why the title of the book.

Al George: Oh.

Q: You are telling me things that I've read about.

Al George: Okay. Well, um- one of the, the things that I, another one of the things that we were in an area, and I can't recall what the area was, but it was at night time and the, we knew, because our forward observers had told us that the Japs were, ah-ready to, ah-charge the next day. And um, we ah, had the Minnesota, which was our support ship, and we communicated with the Minnesota and said, hey, ah, we need some fireworks up here. And we would lay out by grid, S2, S22, or whatever. We'd call the grid and notify the Minnesota and that night they laid their 14-inch shells into areas and that was one of the nights I

remember because the shells would go over. When they whistled you knew you were okay. When they started fluttering you just hoped [laughter from both] that they had reached the right elevation and they-but they did a great job, boy, I'll never forget the way they supported us on that particular day. And then the next day we moved out and they had, ah, pretty well decimated, ah, a lot of the Japanese troops that night and made it easier for us the next day. But, um-that was one of the other things that we, ah-fortunate things where the Navy supported, supported us in-in great,yeah-yeah, great depth.

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Q: Do you remember the air support that you got from the Navy? Was it really close air support? [Clears throat]

Al George: Ah- we didn't have as much air support. I don't remember why we didn't have the air support. Ah, I—not like we'd, you know, we'd heard about in some of the places and I don't know, don't remember the reason we didn't get the air support here. Maybe, ah-we were, I don't know the reason.

Q: Now when you moved up the coast of Guam going north did you come by Tumon Bay here?

Al George: Of course, I don't remember what they, what they were called at the time.

Q: I'm just curious. We've heard stories about some Marines that had, for example, one had his shoes on for 10 days and he came here to Tumon Bay and took his shoes off and took all his clothes off and went swimming, and he said the best swim he'd ever had. Were you involved in any of that?

Al George: Well, we were- we were in a, in a bay area and we went swimming in an area that was absolutely fantastic. Ah, we didn't have snorkels, obviously, at that time, but it was a beautiful area for swimming and this was after the island was secured, though. It was not during the campaign...

Q: Uh-huh.

Al George:... because there was no swimming during the campaign.

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Q: Now, you moved north up, I guess, the Marine Corps moved north to clear out the area. Do you remember any major battles or skirmishes up at the north end of the island just before it became secure?

Al George: Ah, we had-ah- scrimmages, ah-as we went on but I don't remember any major ones so to speak other than the one that when we went into the Japanese headquarters and we had a major scrimmage there before we went into the, broke into the headquarters camp. And when we broke into the headquarters camp, ah, again there was things there that they had just taken off and they left food, they left a lot of their little canned fish, and we'd been on C-rations for days and we opened the canned fish and that was the first time I ever had rice wine. [Laughter from both] And I'm not sure I'll ever have it again. But anyway we had some of the rice wine, but one, we—they had left a safe that, ah, they had left there that they obviously couldn't take and we broke the safe open and we had all kinds of Japanese yen and I still have some of it somewhere, but I presume it was, ah, wartime issue, ah-yen from the Japanese. I'm not sure it would still be accepted as money. And, um-we picked up a lot of post cards that they had that they would send home with the Japanese-beautiful Japanese ladies on the card, you know, and places to write on the back of it. But we overran that one and, ah- as I say, we, ah- I don't remember what the name of the scrimmage was, it was just another one of those skirmishes that we had.

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Q: In your working around the island and securing the island did you have any contact with the local people?

Al George: None at all. The only contact I can recall is after we had secured the island and were just a day or two afterwards, ah, we were wandering around near our camp, because

they alerted us not to wander too far because there were still Japanese coming out of caves and, ah-things of that nature. Um-we did run into some natives and they baked some bread for us in one of the urns they had, the thing that came up out of the earth and had a kind of a pointed top to it, and ah, they baked some, what I remembered, papaya bread or something like that. Fantastic stuff, because that was the first food we'd ever had other than C-rations. But we didn't get to know them other than just to meet them and thank them and so on, and they were very-very cordial. Great people. And, but there were only a few of them because we weren't-they didn't want us to associate too much with the, with the natives at that time, of the island, because whatever reason. They had good reasons, I'm sure.

Q: When the island got secured what did they have you doing?

Al George: Um-we, ah-set up camp on, as I recall, on the other side of the island, on the east side. I guess-are we on the east side now?

Q: No, we're on the west side.

Al George: Oh, west side. Well, on the east side of the island we set up camp and our division, um, set up our tents, ah-we got our radio communications over there and we-um, we were training and, ah-as I recall, we were training for [unintelligible], we were training for the next maneuver which was to be Iwo Jima. And again we trained out in an area that was bare land: and no weeds, no grass, no jungle or anything of that nature and we trained for that. And, um-and we did-we stayed in that area, ah, for that entire time until we boarded ship and went on up to Iwo.

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Q: We're going to backtrack a little here because I'd like to, I'd like once again for you to tell me about wiring your camp for sound.

Al George: Oh. Well, um, we-we were fortunate. We had a large piece of radio equipment. I don't know how we acquired it, but we acquired things every once in a while out of necessity

because we needed some of the finer things in life, I guess. Anyway, we had a large piece of radio equipment that, um, we strung an antenna between the palm trees, and it was a large antenna, multiple wire antenna, and at that time probably state-of-the-art. And we were able to tune in on, get ah-stations from the United States. We could hear music from Columbus, Ohio. We could hear music from Los Angeles and it was the greatest thing we ever thought we could ever have. Well, when we-we had some speakers, certain number of speakers that we had, and we could rig up our telephones to, ah, communicate somewhat. We wired our, the tents for our, some of our officers, ah, so they had music in their tents. Well, we decided this was a pretty good idea so the enlisted guys should also have it, especially those in our communication group. And so we, ah- went out, wired, ran wires down from the tents, from one tent to the other and because of the distance and the cheap—no, I shouldn't say cheap wire, the steel wire we used at that time—the steel wire we were using, we um, ah- the load drop, ah, the resistance in the wire, was so great that we finally had to do something, and we decided we needed what they call loading coils and, um-we went to another camp of the, ah-I won't mention the branch of service, but it was another group and, um-they had these loading coils on their telephone lines. And we thought they had too many of them. So we decided to relieve them of a few and we cut them out of their lines and brought them back to our camp, put them in-our lines came up the coconut tree, we run the wire up to the, the loading coils, which was up in the palm fronds which you couldn't see, and we had it fixed in such a way that you'd have to, you've got to be right up top of them to know that they were there. And by that means we were able to boost our power down to our tents and we could hear the music without any problem. And, ah, [Laughter] we-we ah, had, you know, good, good facilities from that standpoint and, but the people from the other camp came over one day and they knew that, pretty sure that we had, ah, um-relieved them of some of their equipment and in the course of this we, they looked all over the camp but they could never find the loading coils, and they finally went away, swearing that we had it but, ah-not knowing it for sure. But, ah-we, you know, we had to take advantage of some of those things every once in a while. [Laughter from both]

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And, ah-I guess-no, there was another interesting thing, from my standpoint, interesting is, again we were, when we overran the Japanese positions, the Japanese always had foxholes.

They had saved us digging foxholes.

[Brief pause]

And we overran another one of their places and we had foxholes. And the Army had brought some gear in and they had some, um, hammocks. And I don't know whether you've ever seen any of the Army hammocks, oh, they were nice. They came down like this and they had a mosquito net over, and the whole works. I mean, they were great. And again, they had too many of them so we had to relieve them of a few of them. [Laughter]. And, um-we-I had a hammock and, ah, we, we—because of the foxholes we, we could string them from one end of the foxhole to the other and we could sleep in the hammock, and we could usually get two guys in them. Well, one night the Japanese start shelling us and, um-we got out of the hammock because the hammock is up a little higher and we got to the bottom of the foxhole. Well, an interesting thing happened. When I got back into my hammock I was lying in the thing, because it swoops down like this, and something was down there. I reached down and I picked it up, and when daylight came I looked at it and here was a piece of shrapnel had come through the hammock, right exactly where my head would've been, the, the hole in the hammock was just ripped and the, this piece of shrapnel. I still have it. I've carried it for years, this piece of shrapnel which was about, oh, maybe the size of a, a little larger than a 50 cent piece, had come through the head of the hammock and landed in the, in the bottom, stopped in the bottom. It was bent as it came through. Well that was one of those cases where we relieved the kind of gear that we really didn't need. But it made sleeping easier because they had mosquito nets.

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Q: Many mosquitoes here on Guam then?

Al George: Did what?

Q: Many mosquitoes here on Guam?

Al George: Many? Oh, yes. Yes. I think—I don't know whether there still are mosquitoes

here but at that time we had a lot of problem with malaria, a lot of problem with hepatitis. Um-in fact, I had one, again, one of my buddies who probably weighed 190-200 pounds, ah, got hepatitis and we, he went to the hospital and he was in the hospital two weeks when I got hepatitis and I went in the hospital. And we were in a big, field hospital. Nothing but a big tent, and, ah- while I was in there, and I was only there for about a week, ah-we had a hurricane or whatever they call it—

Q: Typhoon.

Al George: Typhoon came through and all of us who were in halfway decent condition had to get up and try to hold the tent down. We didn't, we held part of it down, most of it, but I got out, of the hospital and he was still there and he was down to 122 pounds and I don't know whether he made it or not. I never did know for sure because, ah-we went on doing other things. But, yes, mosquitoes, hepatitis were pretty-pretty common. Also we had a problem with water. If they guys drank the water they got some kind of a cholera or something like that. They warned us about that, about drinking the water. But, ah-we survived.

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Q: You trained here for the invasion of Iwo Jima?

Al George: Yes.

Q: Were-and you did invade and did land at Iwo Jima and survive that one?

Al George: Yes. And we, when we—we weren't there very long. We came back here and when I came back to Guam we, um, we ah- were training again, as I—we understood for landing on Japan, that was our understanding. And then they passed the word that all of us who had been overseas for more than two years were to go back to the States, and I'd been out here overseas for 27 months. And, ah-so we were all scheduled to go back. But before-before that I had signed up for what they call Officer Training School, V12 courses, in the United States and I had been accepted for that. And another one of those interesting

things is, I was sitting there with my sea bag packed waiting to go back to the V12 courses and uh-get off the island and my guys were all training. All of a sudden all the guys came back from training, because the word was anybody over 24 months went back to the States. So I had my sea bag packed and I was ready to go with them and the Captain came down and says, "George, you can't go. You signed up for V12, you've gotta go on V12. You don't go with those guys." And so here I watch all the guys in my tent leave, all the guys in all the tents, the guys who had been around for two years or more left. And I was sitting there. About three days later, ah-they came and said, "Okay, George. Go down to the Apra Harbor and board ship." So I went down and I got aboard ship and lo and behold I got aboard a baby carrier, and I don't know whether you remember the baby carriers or not, but there were 200 of us from the South Pacific Marines were going back to, ah-ah- OC school or V12, and anyway, we got aboard the baby carrier. We had three or four basketball teams, the Navy had two or three basketball teams, the officers had basketball teams. We played basketball on the hanger deck. Everything on the flight deck. We stopped in Honolulu, ah-for a couple days, went on to San Diego for R&R in San Diego. I was in San Diego two or three days when the group who left about a week before I did came in. They had gone all the way from Guam to San Diego on LST's. They were the saddest looking people I have ever seen, and I-I felt sorry for them. But, that was, you know, the way of life and. But, ah-that was one of the other interesting.

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Q: Were you here for any of the B29 operations?

Al George: We, um-they-yes. B29's were flying off of here. In fact, that was one of the other interesting things. Um-I don't know, you, no you weren't a B29 pilot then, that was before. B29's were flying off of here and one of the best things about the B29's flying off of Guam was the pilots on weekends, when they weren't flying, would come around to our camps with bottles of, um-liquid. Ah, and um-we would trade our souvenirs for the bottles of liquid and I, I—we thought we were getting a good deal at the time but they ended up with the best deal. But yes. They, ah-they did fly B29's off here.

Q: What was your career after the war? What did you do after you got out of the Marines?

Al George: Well, after I, I went to college and after college I went back to San Diego and I, um, went to work for San Diego Gas & Electric Company and I was in the engineering group, electrical engineering, and I worked for San Diego Gas & Electric Company managing a group of engineers, technicians, ah- doing all of the overhead electric distribution facilities for the entire county of San Diego, which was a million 200 thousand people. And we watched San Diego grow from a little community of 300,000 to a million 200 thousand and we knew about every development going on because we were, that was our job to engineer the facilities for those developments. And I retired from San Diego Gas & Electric Company two years ago after 45 years with San Diego, ah, with the company.

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Q: Did you maintain a contact with the Corps?

Al George: With ah...?

Q: With the Corps?

Al George: Ah-no. I didn't because I got active in other things and until about three years ago when one of the friends who was wounded here on the second day, Bill Neal, ah-we call him Red, um, ah-got in touch with me in San Diego because the 3rd Marine Division was having a reunion in San Diego and I didn't even know that there was a 3rd Marine Division group until that time. And so we got together and, ah-I've been communicating with him since then. He and another guy by the name of Bill McAllister, who was also wounded on the second day here and so, I've been in touch with those guys since then. And probably when I get back I'm going to join that group because, ah-I'm less active now than I was when I was with the company, but the company kept me so busy going to meetings and traveling and so on that I just didn't have time to do many other things.

Q: That should just about wind it up, Al.

Al George: What's that?

Q: Appreciate very much you spending the time and putting this on tape for us.

Remarkable experience. And on behalf of myself, the other Al, and the Park Service, thank you.

[END OF SESSION]

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