

# National Park Service (NPS)

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



Leo Farrow  
July 18, 1994

Interview conducted by Daniel Martinez  
Transcribed by Plowshares Media  
Coordinated by Dr Jennifer Craig  
Reviewed by Guampedia Foundation, Inc  
508 compliant version by Michael Faist

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WAPA Collections  
War in the Pacific NHP  
135 Murray Boulevard, Suite 100  
Hagåtña, GU 96910  
[wapa\\_interpretation@nps.gov](mailto:wapa_interpretation@nps.gov)

Interviewee: Leo Farrow

Military Rank: 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines

Interviewer: Daniel Martinez

Hilton Hotel, Guam

Date: July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1994

**--00:00:00 - 00:00:12**

[Audio Description] Leo Farrow is a Caucasian American man wearing glasses with a white button-up shirt. Behind him is a lamp and a beige wall.

**--00:00:21 - 00:00:22**

Q: [unclear]

**--00:00:22 - 00:00:26**

Farrow: 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines.

**--00:00:40 - 00:01:12**

Q: The following oral history interview was conducted at the Hilton Hotel in Guam on July 18th, 1994, at approximately 4 o'clock in the afternoon. My name is Daniel Martinez, historian for the National Park Service, USS Arizona Memorial. The interview is being made by the National Park Service, or the Pacific National Historic Park, in conjunction with KGTF Channel 12 in Guam.

**--00:01:13 - 00:01:47**

Q: The subject is Mr. Leo Farrow. Mr. Farrow served in the 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines. The subject matter today is his experiences prior to and during the Guam campaign in the Marianas. Good afternoon, Mr. Farrow.

Farrow: Good afternoon.

Q: Mr. Farrow, just for a legal qualification, you understand that the National Park Service has your permission to make this recording and to retain all literary property rights deriving from it. Is that correct?

Farrow: Yes, sir.

Q: Okay.

**--00:01:50 - 00:02:26**

Q: For the record, could you please tell us your full and complete name?

Farrow: Leo Arthur Farrow.

Q: And could you spell your last name for us?

Farrow: F-A-R-R-O-W.

Q: And what unit were you with during the Guam campaign?

Farrow: I was with the 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines. I served with that battalion practically my whole career in the Marine Corps.

Q: And where were you born?

Farrow: New York City.

Q: And what was the date of birth?

Farrow: March the 8th, 1922.

**--00:02:26 - 00:02:38**

Q: Now did you grow up in New York City?

Farrow: Yes, I went to school in New York City.

Q: And that was grammar school and high school?

Farrow: Grammar school and high school.

Q: Was that public or private school?

Farrow: Public.

Q: Okay.

**--00:02:38 - 00:03:37**

Q: And what was it like growing up in New York City?

Farrow: It was a lot better than today's New York City. We were- had nickel subways at the time. We traveled to high school by subway. And the people were always good, generous, and kind. I'm sorry to say that New York City is not that way anymore.

Q: Do you still live in New York City?

Farrow: No, I live north of New York City. I live in Yonkers, New York, which is a city just north of New York City.

Q: Does Yonkers retain some of those old values that you used to like so much?

Farrow: Well, I'm afraid it's changing like New York City has, you know. It has some urban places, and the conditions there are not as great as they should be.

**--00:03:37 - 00:03:57**

Q: What are your fondest memories growing up about New York and the things that you used to enjoy with you and your friends?

Farrow: Well, the schooling I enjoyed because by the time we got out of high school, it was almost equivalent to a college education.

Q: So it was a high degree of education?

Farrow: Yes, it was.

Q: Good teachers?

Farrow: Good teachers.

**--00:03:57 - 00:05:07**

Q: How did you, when you weren't in the classroom, how did you guys amuse yourself?  
Stickball or what kind of things did you like?

Farrow: We played stickball in the streets.

Q: Stickball is a lost, kind of a lost sport. Can you explain to me what stickball is all about?

Farrow: All right, you use a Spalding softball and usually a broomstick, which is cleaned up a little bit, and they throw the ball, not straight at you, but they make it bounce at one time, and then you're supposed to strike the ball.

Q: So you pick it up off the bounce?

Farrow: Off the bounce. And then, of course, you run the bases like you do in baseball.

Q: [unclear]

Farrow: No, right in the middle of the street. We sometimes just stopped traffic or diverted it someplace else. If it was an important stickball game, we did just that.

Q: How does a young New Yorker divert traffic? What would be a way to do that?

Farrow: Well, there were so many people there that traffic just had to go someplace else. And, of course, in those days, the traffic was not what it is in New York. And if somebody parked in our playing field, we'd ask them to move their car, and they did.

**--00:05:08 - 00:05:47**

Q: American young people grow up with heroes. Who was your hero when you were growing up?

Farrow: Well, Babe Ruth was.

Q: Did you ever see him?

Farrow: I saw him just once. I saw him once.

Q: What was that like?

Farrow: Well, of course, he wasn't- he was famous then, but he wasn't the legend that he is today, you know. Everybody thinks that he was the greatest, you know. And we had other good ball players.

Q: Now, were you a Yankee fan or were you a Dodger fan?

Farrow: I still- No, a Yankee fan.

Q: Great tradition, the Yankees.

Farrow: Oh, yes, absolutely.

**--00:05:49 - 00:06:44**

Q: After getting out of high school, what did you do?

Farrow: I wanted to go to college. And for a year, I attended City College New York. And I worked during the day. At 6 o'clock, I'd get up to the school, stay there until about 10:30, come home, study, and do my routine all over again the next day.

Q: And what year did you graduate high school?

Farrow: In 1940.

Q: So the clouds of war gathered across the Atlantic, and it looks not too promising. Excuse me, the clouds of war have already unfolded.

Farrow: Oh, yes, because I remember my friends and I discussed the war in Germany and the potential of the United States getting into the war. But we were kind of young, and we figured, well, maybe it would blow over.

**--00:06:44 - 00:07:27**

Q: In 1939, the war starts. So when you graduated, the war, excuse me, correct myself, it was only one year.

Farrow: Right.

Q: But the things were very, very tight in the Pacific. So did you think, you know, you're on the East Coast. Did you think much about what might happen out in the Pacific or?

Farrow: Well, no, we didn't think that Japan would get that involved with the Axis.

Q: Where were you doing on Pearl Harbor day?

Farrow: It was a Sunday afternoon. I took my girl to the movies. And right after the movies, the movie was over, they announced that the Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

Q: What was the moment?

Farrow: Oh, I can't recall that.

**--00:07:27 - 00:08:05**

Q: Who was the girl?

Farrow: Sally, yeah. And the first thing we said, Pearl Harbor, where the heck is Pearl Harbor? But at that time, I knew that we were destined to go, you know.

Q: When did you decide to enlist? And why?

Farrow: Well, I had left New York City, and I went up to Bridgeport, Connecticut, to get a defense job. They wouldn't hire me because I was of draft age. And so I worked for Columbia Records for a while.

**--00:08:05 - 00:09:16**

Q: What did you do for that?

Farrow: I edged records. A record would be made, and you know how smooth and round the edges were?

Q: Right.

Farrow: We used to kind of sand the record. And then I decided I was going to join the Army Air Force because I thought I'd make a good pilot. I went up to New Haven. I took a test. And a few days later when I went back, they told me I had not passed the test as well as about 30 others. They really required two years of college at that time. With that, I got a little angry with them, and I went across the street to the post office and joined Marine Corps.

Q: So you joined Marine Corps out of spite rather than out of-

Farrow: Well, I wanted to get into the fight because I wanted- I thought the Japanese had wronged us.

Q: Pearl Harbor and-

Farrow: Pearl Harbor.

Q: Latam-

Farrow: Yes.

Q: -and all these other things were coming. So how old were you when you joined Marine Corps?



Farrow: Well, it was June of 1942, and I was just 22 years old.

Q: Any apprehensions or fear that you might not come home?

Farrow: No, it never entered my mind.

**--00:09:16 - 00:10:05**

Q: So where did you go to boot camp at?

Farrow: Parris Island.

Q: What was that like?

Farrow: Well, Parris Island was the type of place when we got down there, we said, what the heck are we doing here? You know, it was an entirely different world.

Q: Explain what kind of world we're talking about here.

Farrow: Well, strict discipline. They made you feel very inferior. I have to watch my language here, of course, so-

Q: You just talk the way you want to talk.

Farrow: Well, they-

Q: Don't colorize anything.

Farrow: Most of the DIs were Southerners.

Q: Right.

Farrow: And when the New Yorkers went down, we had our own accent.

Q: Yes, you did.

Farrow: And they didn't like us very much.

**--00:10:05 - 00:11:19**

Q: Did they refer to you, maybe your background or preference?

Farrow: Oh, yes, they did. They were- prejudice existed then. I was of Italian descent, and I had an Italian name, of course. My name was Frugio. And they threw mail at me, and one of them called me Dago, which I resented very much. And we learned then that you had a- that there was discrimination, you know. We hadn't felt it before-

Q: Right.

Q: Because in New York City, we had blacks and Hispanic and everybody else in school with us. So it was pretty well mixed, yeah. So this kind of took us down a couple of pegs. And the reason for that is they wanted you to be angry, and they wanted to train you. They wanted to break your civilian habits, which they certainly did. And at the end of eight weeks, we all considered ourselves Marines, and we had more or less forgotten about the bad times that they gave us down there.

**--00:11:19 - 00:12:13**

Q: I understand the drill instructor, she has very colorful language.

Farrow: Oh, yes, they'd call us shitheads. One experience I had in boot camp, they- I had left my key in the lock- in my locker. And when we got back after training, I was accused of leaving the key there. And he says, well, I want you to get up on the table with a bucket over my head and yell, I'm an ass from Yamasee, I left my key in my locker, woe is me. And I had to keep repeating that while he went into his room. And he says, I can't hear you. And I had to keep repeating it loud. And my head was kind of busting with a bucket over my head.

Q: From the- from your own noise?

Farrow: Yeah, right. And, of course, I never left my key in the locker again.

**--00:12:14 - 00:13:14**

Q: After coming out of boot camp, what was your assignment then?

Farrow: I was kind of fortunate. They sent me up to Quantico, Virginia, and they sent me to school there. And I went to small weapons school, and we were there for about six weeks. And they taught us all about small weapons, how to take them apart, how to repair them, how to use them, and how to teach school on them.

Q: Now, when you talk about small weapons, for those that will be listening to this, that don't have a military background, what type of small weapons do you mean?

Farrow: Well, the .45 automatic pistol, the .03 and the M1.

Q: Both being rifles?

Farrow: Yes. And the BAR rifle, which was a semi-automatic rifle, and the .30 caliber machine gun.

Q: By Browning?

Farrow: Browning, right.

Q: Those are formidable weapons.

Farrow: Oh, yes, they are. And that's what we used in the Marine Corps at that time.

**--00:13:14 - 00:13:46**

Q: Now, what would a kid from New York know about weapons? Did you ever have experience?

Farrow: No.

Q: This was all brand new?

Farrow: It was all brand new to me.

Q: Pretty fascinating stuff?

Farrow: It was fascinating. And we had a great instructor, a lieutenant that had been in the Nicaragua campaign, and he was a real tough old Marine.

Q: This wasn't a fellow nicknamed Bigfoot, was it?

Farrow: No, his name was Petrie, as a matter of fact.

Q: Petrie.

Farrow: Petrie. It's funny that I can remember that after so many years, you know. But something's sticking in your mind, you know. And-

**--00:13:47 - 00:15:21**

Q: Well, after completing school, where did you go?

Farrow: After completing school, they sent me- well, I was in Quantico, and they told me I could go up to Sperry Corporation in New York. I didn't know exactly what they wanted me to do there, but I volunteered for that. I said, this is great. But one afternoon, I went on Liberty and I missed my call, and I never made it to Sperry. So with that, they sent me down to New River, North Carolina.

Q: You said you went on Liberty and missed your call. You mean you just happened to be off base when they called you?

Farrow: Right. I went into Washington, D.C. on a weekend pass.

Q: So what was it that you missed? Did you ever find it?

Farrow: Well, they had told us to stand by, and evidently I didn't. And this small group, I think we were five, they were going to go up there. Now, I don't know whether it was for

guard duty or to learn. They were making bomb sites at the time, so I never got that quite straight. But I was sent down to New River, and I joined the 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines, which was an artillery outfit.

Q: Right.

Farrow: And I thought to myself, I said, what is a small arms man doing in an artillery outfit?

Q: And did you figure that out?

Farrow: Well, they finally gave me a job. I was in ordinance. I was in H&S, and I was in battalion ordinance. And when people had problems with their weapons, they would come to me, and I would repair them, show them how to repair them.

**--00:15:21 - 00:15:31**

Q: You were a corporal at this time?

Farrow: No, I was a PFC. I was a PFC. I'm very proud of it. As soon as I got that stripe, I ran downtown and had the thing sewn on my shirt right away.

**--00:15:34 - 00:17:12**

Q: We didn't talk much about your family, so I'd like to just, if we can just digress. Were your mother and father alive at the time you went?

Farrow: Oh, yes.

Q: Children in your family?

Farrow: We were three boys, I being the older. So when I left home, my younger brothers stayed at home.

Q: How young were they when you left?

Farrow: Well, there were two years difference between us. One was 20, and the other one was about 18 1/2.

Q: Those were all draftable as well?

Farrow: Yes... No, as a matter of fact, when I left home, my youngest brother was 16 years old.

Q: I see.

Farrow: And I may get a little bit ahead of myself, but both of them went into the Army. My youngest brother wanted to join the Marine Corps, and I kept saying, don't join the Marine Corps. But he was- he finally went in, and he was killed in Germany a month before they surrendered. And this was while I was on Iwo Jima, and my other brother was in the Battle of the Bulge. So all three boys were in the battle at the same time.

Q: All in 1944?

Farrow: Yeah. So-

Q: You lost one brother.

Farrow: Yeah.

Q: And did you two survive?

Farrow: Yes, we did.

Q: That must have been very hard on your folks.

Farrow: It was. It was.

Q: Because at that time, families were very close.

Farrow: Oh, yes. My mother was very- and, of course, at that time, I didn't appreciate her feelings. But being a parent now, you can't appreciate that. Losing a son is a horrible thing.

**--00:17:12 - 00:18:44**

Q: Now, is your brother buried overseas? Was he in-

Farrow: He's in Epinal, France. That's where he's buried.

Q: Have you ever been there?

Farrow: No. We wanted to go there. We have never been there, but some friends have gone there, and they've taken pictures of his grave and sent it to us. But when I came home, my- an Army captain came to the house and asked my mother if she wanted the body moved, and I, being a soldier just back from combat, felt that a soldier should remain where he fell. And sometimes I regret talking her into that decision, but that's the decision we made.

Q: Well, that's very interesting and heartbreaking, of course, for anybody who wasn't part of your family. But, of course, the big adventure for you is still ahead, and that, of course, is after the training's completed. Was there any more training that you were, for your unit that-

Farrow: Yes.

Q: -in preparation for going overseas?

Farrow: They, from North Carolina, they took us to Southern California, and we were in the desert there in Nylon, and we were on a training mission. We stayed there until late January of 1943, and then we left for New Zealand.

**--00:18:45 - 00:19:28**

Q: And that was the first time you ever saw the big Pacific Ocean?

Farrow: Oh, yes.

Q: What was that experience like?

Farrow: Oh, I loved California. As a matter of fact, we had gone on maneuvers in San Clemente Island, and it was a mock invasion of the island. They gave us the training of getting on Higgins boats and landing on the island. It was a good experience. And I wrote Mom, and I said, right after this war, we're going to move out to California.

Q: Did you?

Farrow: Which we never did, no.

Q: A lot of New Yorkers did, though.

Farrow: Oh, yes, absolutely.

Q: The Pacific Ocean, that's the first time you ever saw it, right?

Farrow: Yes.

**--00:19:28 - 00:20:25**

Q: When you went overseas on the ships to New Zealand, did you get seasick at all?

Farrow: No. We were on the Mormon Port, New York. It was a Dutch freighter, and it was overloaded with Marines. We had 2,500 troops on that ship. We ate twice a day. The kitchen was slimy and sticky and stinky. The food was not good. And it took us 17 days without escort to go from San Diego to New Zealand. When we got to New Zealand, we got a tremendous welcome from the people and because they were always afraid that the Japanese were going to invade New Zealand and Australia, so they were kind of glad to have us there. So they gave us hero welcomes when we got there.

**--00:20:26 - 00:21:12**

Q: Once you were in New Zealand, obviously you were being staged for the retaking of the Pacific.

Farrow: Yeah.



Q: What was your first combat action that you were involved in?

Farrow: We- from New Zealand, we went up the Guadalcanal, which had been secured by the 1st Marine Division. However, every once in a while, we would get the Japanese to bomb us, and they would strafe us, not strafe us, but drop bombs at night. And we trained on Guadalcanal, getting ready for other campaigns. They finally decided to take Bougainville. So we boarded and went up to Bougainville, invaded Bougainville, and stayed up there a few months.

Q: Was that your first combat experience?

Farrow: Yes, it was.

**--00:21:13 - 00:22:27**

Q: Can you describe to me, looking back after 50 years, what that combat experience was like? Was it what you expected or was it different?

Farrow: It was what we expected because we knew we had to storm the beach and go ashore and chase the Japanese. Conditions were not always favorable, you know. We slept on our blankets. It was thick jungle. It was wet and very muddy. I do recall that that year, President Roosevelt had promised all the service people turkey for Thanksgiving. And by God, on Thanksgiving Day, they brought turkey. And we ate turkey for the first time, because we had been eating rations all along.

Q: Right.

Farrow: We only took a small part of Bougainville. I think it was a five mile perimeter. And then the Army came and relieved us, and we went back to Guadalcanal.

**--00:22:27 - 00:23:18**

Q: What's it like being under fire?

Farrow: It's scary. We were- I was in a two-man foxhole with my buddy, and we were manning a .30-caliber machine gun. And the Japanese found our location, and they came and they bombed us that night. And they ripped holes in our tents, our kitchens, and they ripped a couple of holes in my hole, and I was just fortunate to be missed, you know. But when I woke up the next day and we looked around, there were shrapnel holes along our blankets, you know. It's a little scary and terrifying. And as soon as they left, we got under the blankets and had lit up a cigarette.

--00:23:22 - 00:24:57

Q: Who was that best friend of yours? Who was your buddy?

Farrow: Thomas Burns.

Q: Burns?

Farrow: I haven't seen him since 1943.

Q: Is he still alive, do you know or have you heard?

Farrow: I have no idea. I tried to get in touch with him. I haven't seen his name anywhere.

Q: One of the things that they say is that war- when you're at war, you're not so much fighting- you don't think of so much as fighting for the Corps or fighting for your country, although that's there. They said you fight for your buddies.

Farrow: Oh, yes.

Q: Is that right?

Farrow: We were always conscious of the people around us and always willing to protect them. In the meantime, we're protecting ourselves, too. But in combat, I think you always have the feeling, you know people are going to be killed, but you have the feeling that somebody else will be hit and not you.

Q: It's going to be the other guy, right?

Farrow: It's got to be the other guy, yeah.

Q: Any time when you thought, well, maybe it isn't going to be the other guy?

Farrow: Well, I've had a couple of bad feelings, you know, being on patrol sometimes. I led a patrol on Guam here, and we were blowing up caves along the coast, and as I was leading the platoon, I always had the feeling that if I was going to get it, I would get it right here in the chest. But it never came so, so I'm thankful for that.

**--00:24:57 - 00:26:57**

Q: There's probably a lot of history we could talk about that leads up to Guam, but unfortunately, the tape- the time for taping can't warrant giving more time. But is there some highlight from Bougainville up to Guam that you'd like to talk about that maybe will help us understand a little clearer?

Farrow: Yeah, well, we boarded our ship in Guadalcanal with the expectation of invading Guam and Saipan. Now, Saipan was invaded in the middle of June, and we were floating reserve for the two marine divisions that went into Saipan, and if that- we weren't needed there, we were supposed to hit Guam immediately. But it didn't turn out that way. The high command found out that a Japanese fleet was coming out of Japan, and they kind of kept ferrying us back and forth between here and Kwajalein. So all told, we were at sea for 54 days, and that's not a good place to keep marines where it's so crowded, although the food was not bad. The Navy food is never bad, but the quarters were jammed, and being at sea for 54 days is a real long time.

Q: Yeah, I would say so. That's almost two months.

Farrow: So when we were told that we were going to hit the beach here on July 21st, we were kind of happy about getting off the ship and coming in.

Q: But you had heard that the Marine Corps had had a rough go at Saipan.

Farrow: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Q: So in preparation for this place, they'd made some changes, in particular the bombardment.

Farrow: They bombarded here.

Q: That's right.

Farrow: And there was a lot of precision bombing, I understand.

Q: Yeah, several days of bombardment.

Farrow: Yes.

**--00:26:58 -**

Q: Did you come- let's talk about Guam. What- I didn't ask this of anybody I've talked to so far. [BEEP]

**--00:27:08 - 00:27:37**

Q: Okay, we're going to start over again.

Farrow: Okay.

Q: Let me see, where did we leave off at? Oh, in preparation for Guam, you said you were at sea for several, several days.

Farrow: Yes.

Q: You finally get the word that you guys are going in. Can you describe to me what kind of a chronology of events that leads up to you getting into the invasion craft? What time do they have you up? What kind of breakfast do you have? Those kind of things.

**--00:27:38 - 00:29:41**

Farrow: Well, the night before, they gave us a great meal. I forget just what it was, but they usually break out some meat and fresh vegetables, and it's sort of a going-away meal because they know that after that, we're going to be living on rations. Breakfast was real early in the morning. They got us up about four. Everybody gets their gears packed, and of course, you're carrying everything you own on your back.

Q: What kind of things did you pack to make sure it was all there?

Farrow: Well, first of all, we had socks and underwear in our pack. We had a three-day supply of rations in our pack, and we had a blanket and a poncho, and the blanket and poncho are very important.

Q: Why is that?

Farrow: Well, at night, you used your poncho. You lay it on the ground, and then you sleep on it. As opposed to sleeping just on bare ground, you know. So that's an important item. We packed some toilet paper, and we usually put the toilet paper in our helmet, in the top of the helmet, where there is that space. And that's a necessity, too.

Q: And doesn't it kind of buffer the helmet from banging on the top of your head a little or?

Farrow: No, there's webbing in the helmet.

Q: There's webbing that keeps-

Farrow: Yeah, so between the webbing and the helmet itself, there's maybe three-quarters of an inch, so there's enough to store stuff for. And you check your gear, and you just lay around and wait. And in the Marine Corps, you learn to hurry up and wait.

Q: Right.

Farrow: And although you don't know exactly what time you're going to go over the side, you're kind of standing by. Everybody knows where they're going to go when the call comes.

Q: Because each platoon is told what staging area they're going to be in.

Farrow: Yes, we all have staging areas.

**--00:29:41 - 00:30:57**

Q: Do you remember what ship you were on during that time?

Farrow: We came on a President's ship at the time, and I don't- I can recall-

Q: Was it the Jackson?

Farrow: It might have been the Jackson. There were a couple others, but I don't remember the exact name. But it was a large ship, and climbing down that net was tedious and long. And when you got a full pack and you're trying to get down into the net, it's a long climb. And then when you get down to the bottom, that boat is bobbing up and down, so you sort of have to time it so that you hit the boat-

Q: When it's coming up?

Farrow: When it's coming up.

Q: It's about, what, 50 or 60 feet over the side?

Farrow: Oh, yes.

Q: How much, people don't know this, but how much weight was in those packs? How much total with your weapon and all of that? What were you carrying?

Farrow: Well, I would say a good 60 pounds, you know. And your helmet, when you go down the net, your helmet is not fastened under your chin.

Q: Why is that?

Farrow: The reason for that is that if you should fall into the water, your helmet will come off, as opposed to the helmet hitting the water and kind of choking you under the neck.

**--00:30:59 - 00:31:53**

Q: Did you ever see anybody fall down those nets?

Farrow: Yes, sir. When we left Bougainville, we went out to board ship, and now we had to climb up the net. And I got to the top, and another young man was struggling, and he was almost near the top, and he lost his footing, and he fell down between the boat and the Higgins boat. A young Navy lieutenant jumped into the water from the poop deck, took a beautiful dive, trying to retrieve the Marine, but he couldn't get him. He went down too fast, and we lost him.

Q: Just like that.

**--00:31:55 - 00:34:15**

Q: Was that the first man you ever saw die?

Farrow: No. I had seen a couple of fellows that I know die in Bougainville.

Q: That's hard.

Farrow: Yes, it is. My first experience with a dead person that I knew was Sergeant Stotlander. He was afraid of combat, and he didn't really want to go, and he let everybody know. It was no secret. When he got on Bougainville, he built himself a little trench, and he put coconut logs over, crisscrossing on top of him. But that bombing that I told you about on Bougainville hit his logs direct, and we found his body maybe 25 feet from where he was. And I and a sergeant had to retrieve the body, and I was a little hurt when this fellow, Joe Beninetti, who had been a state policeman, grabbed him by the seat- by the belt and flipped him over. And I said, Joe, I says, have a little respect for him. And he said to me, he says, listen Leo, when you're dead, you're dead. But he had a lot of experience with that, I guess, because he was a state trooper in New York. So that was my first experience with seeing somebody that I knew dead.

Q: What- May I ask, this is a rather personal question, but what religion were you at the time?

Farrow: Catholic.

Q: I'm Catholic as well, so I think I understand where you're coming from because in our faith we're taught this deep respect for the body. And was that the basis of where you were coming from?

Farrow: Yes, it was. I thought he should have been handled a little with more care, but like you said, it actually didn't matter. We had to move the body and get his personal effects from him.

Q: And, of course, as your military career proceeds, there'll be more and more of this to see.

Farrow: Oh, yes.

**--00:34:18 - 00:36:50**

Q: So you're in the boat. We're back, and you're in the boat, and it's bobbing. How many men are in that boat with you, approximately?

Farrow: Oh, I would say 40 or 50 men.

Q: Then once you're loaded, you cast off, and the Navy coxswains, they get all the boats into a pattern.

Farrow: Yes, we keep circling the boat until all the troops are down in the boats, and then you go in a line.

Q: Now, here at Guam, how was the water out there? Was it rough?

Farrow: No, it was not rough.

Q: So not many people get sick or any of those problems?



Farrow: No, no. But what I remember about the landing, we didn't come in with the infantry. As I said, we were in an artillery outfit, and we were reinforcing the 21st Marines, who landed in the middle of the beach. And the 3rd Regiment had landed on the left -hand side. And what I remember, as we're approaching the beach, I see these Marines running up this hill, and they're being shot down, and they're rolling down, and more Marines keep climbing that hill, and they're being shot. And I said to myself, what the heck makes them keep going like that? And we lost a lot of people there. It was a tough, I forget the name of the hill that's on the left-hand side of the beach.

Q: Would that be what they call Chirito Hill?

Farrow: I think so. I think so. There's a gas station on the corner there or something now.

Q: And it was a very difficult, steep climb.

Farrow: Yes.

Q: In fact, many of those men, as we're told in the history books, had to sling arms to climb up. They had to use both hands to climb up the area.

Farrow: Well, the Japanese were in caves up there, and they would come out, fire at the Marines, and then retreat back into the caves. And they finally dislodged them by going up around and getting them from the top. But that was my first experience with, you know, what makes these guys go? So I guess if I was in that position, I would be doing the same thing. But it made me wonder.

**--00:36:50 - 00:38:05**

Q: Now, once you get on the beach- now, were you D-Day plus one, plus two, or actually on that day?

Farrow: No, D-Day afternoon we came in.

Q: In the afternoon. When do your guns come ashore?

Farrow: Almost at the same time.

Q: And where were they positioned?

Farrow: Right on the beach. By that time, the 21st Marines had moved up into the hill, and since we reinforced the 21st, we were stationed on the beach.

Q: So now these batteries are set up so that they can be fired at the enemy?

Farrow: Right. We have coordinances. The Fire Direction Center sets them up. They have points of marking points, and they're told exactly where to fire, how many rounds, how much powder they put in each shell to give a trajectory.

Q: Now, this was set up on the flatlands of Asan Beach then?

Farrow: Right off the beach, yes.

Q: And you have a communications center that comes in so you can take all your fire directions?

Farrow: Yes. Communication Center sets up. Then we have a forward observer who's also with the infantry. They're up front, and the telephone lines communicate and tell them exactly where to fire.

**--00:38:05 - 00:38:34**

Q: So this is a rather elaborate, technical-

Farrow: Oh, absolutely.

Q: -military science you're using here. What caliber of guns do you recall?

Farrow: We had 75 pack howitzers.

Q: Okay. Kind of short, squatty guns, but extremely effective?

Farrow: Oh, yes. They- You put in charges depending on the range that you want, and it's more of a lob instead of a straight trajectory. It's a lob.

**--00:38:34 - 00:39:51**

Q: Right. When the guns are set up, what was your first target? Do you recall firing- where you were being called upon to lay down?

Farrow: I was on the beach. I was part of the ordnance set up. I went to a small arms school in Quantico, and so I was the man that would repair any small arms. We also had another man that repaired the sights on these guns and another man that knew a lot about 75 pack howitzers. We took our directions from the fire direction center, and we would fire in front of the infantry or wherever we were directed to fire. On the fourth day of the invasion, we were still on the beach, and the Japanese pulled a banzai attack on us. They started maybe 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning, and they broke through the lines of the 21st. And in some cases, our guns were leveled, so they would fire directly into the Japanese who were coming down the hill.

**--00:39:51 - 00:42:47**

Q: Now, in the Civil War, they fired canister, which was like a shotgun shell. Did you have that kind of shell that you could fire?

Farrow: Yes. It was- I'm sure it was a canister also. We would put in, I think, up to four packets of powder before the projectile so that it would give us the maximum range. When you wanted short range, we would put less powder in the shell and more or less lob them in. But in this case, during the banzai attack, they were doing some direct fire right at the Japanese.

Q: Point blank?

Farrow: Point blank, because they were coming down the hill. They had broken through the lines of the 21st who had thinned out quite a bit.

Q: Now, when I was talking with Mr. Frazier, it was incredible. He said that the amount of racket that is made during a banzai charge and the kind of insults that are being exchanged and those kind of things. Did you experience that as well?

Farrow: Well, no, we didn't hear them, at least I didn't hear them, because we were still on the beach. The 21st Marines were up in front of us.

Q: How many- Were they up a couple thousand yards?

Farrow: Oh, no, they were just over the ridge, not very far. But the lines on the 21st got thin because of casualties, and sometimes they moved one company from here to there, and the Japanese found a couple of holes to come through, and they figured if they would get to the artillery, they would drive us right back into the water.

Q: How close did they get to you guys?

Farrow: Well, we were firing blank, what am I trying to think of, point blank charges.

Q: So they got within yards of the perimeter, right?

Farrow: Yes. Then again, a lot of people had rifles also, and we used the rifles as well.

Q: It must be a pretty harrowing experience.

Farrow: It's scary. Yes, it is. Your whole body is kind of tense. But I think, at least I felt, and I think most people feel the same way, that if anybody is going to get hit, it's going to be another guy, not you. But sometimes it is you. I consider myself very fortunate. I was in three campaigns, and I was never wounded.

Q: It must have been that New York street sense.

**--00:42:48 - 00:43:36**

Q: The campaign here in Guam would proceed, and so with it, your unit pursued it once you broke the Japanese line here off Asan and moved. Did you move inland with them-

Farrow: Oh, yes.

Q: And began the pursuit of the Japanese forces?

Farrow: Yes.

Q: What was that like? From my readings, artillery was essential to this combat action.

Farrow: Oh, yes. Well, my battalion reinforced the 21st Marines, and when- after we met with the brigade who had invaded the island further south, along with the 77th Army, when we met with them, we turned and started making a sweep up to the north of the island.

**--00:43:37 - 00:44:52**

Q: Well, you strike me as a fair man, so let me ask you a tough question. In Saipan, there was a pretty famous incident in which Howard Matt Smith had an Army general replaced. What was the relationship between Army soldiers and Marines? Rather, Army infantrymen and Marine infantrymen. Was there much of a rivalry or?

Farrow: Well, there's always been that rivalry, but I think we always respected the other services. Inwardly, we always respected them. And then again, I had two brothers in the Army, so I thought they were great kids too, you know.

Q: Was there kind of, when you guys did make contact, was there kind of this kidding and ribbing that goes on?

Farrow: Well, I never made contact with any Army personnel here on Guam. The 77th was in reserve, but they did come in along with the 1st Brigade. They hid further south in the island. Then the plan was to meet, form a line across Guam, and then have a drive up to the north part of Guam, which we did.

Q: Right, and successfully brought the campaign to an end.

Farrow: Yes.

**--00:44:54 - 00:47:06**

Q: Is there anything about the Guam campaign that maybe we didn't have a chance to discuss that for you was certainly something you think about when you think about this campaign, or being back here in Guam is suddenly, this has kind of come to the forefront? Is there something we haven't discussed that you'd like to mention?

Farrow: Well, I remember one incident as we were moving up the mountain. There was a dead Marine, and he had a war dog with him, and he was the master of the dog. And now they tried to evacuate him, but the dog wouldn't let anybody near the Marine. And they finally lassoed the dog and pulled him away from his master, and then removed the body. And not long after that, as we were making our drive up, a very good friend of mine named Joe Mercer was laying telephone lines, and a sniper killed him. And I remember when they brought him down, his eyes were still open, and I'll never forget his blue eyes. And he was a very good friend.

Q: Those are pretty powerful images, the dog that stands his buddy. In other words, the buddy system again, the dog that won't leave his master. And a good friend of yours dies and comes down.

Farrow: As a matter of fact, two weeks ago I got a letter from his sister with a picture of Joe and a picture of a street named Mercer Street here on Guam. And she said, would you look the street up and see if it's still there? And this is one of my- the things I'm going to do while I'm here. I'm going to find out where that street is and take a picture of it. It was named after Joe. So he was the closest friend that I lost, really. We had other casualties, but this fellow and I were kind of close.

**--00:47:07 - 00:48:07**

Q: Just for those who don't know Joe, what was Joe's quality that you enjoyed about him, about his friendship? What was- what would we like about him?

Farrow: He was a kibitzer. And sometimes if we weren't in rank, he would come to the back of your neck and kind of blow wind on it, you know, with his mouth.

Q: Explain for the non-New Yorkers what a kibitzer is.

Farrow: Well, he'd come right here on your neck and he'd go, you know, blow a little air there and you naturally push him away, you know. But he was full of a lot- he was a lot of fun.

Q: Practical joker.

Farrow: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: And full of life. And yet-

Farrow: And a good man.

Q: -a young man like that meets his death here in Guam.

Farrow: Yes. He was with a corpsman at the time and they saw the Jap who was hiding when he shot him and the corpsman picked up Joe's rifle and killed the Japanese.

**--00:48:08 - 00:49:15**

Q: What's your feeling about the Japanese after these 50 years? You know, there's much said about that, but you're a combat veteran. How do you feel about all of this?

Farrow: I've always resented them and felt I didn't particularly like them. But in 1987, I came here to Guam for the first time. From Guam we went to Tokyo and then on to Okinawa. And when I was in Tokyo, I was very impressed with the Japanese, with their culture. They're very fine people. Not the people that I knew that were kind of shooting at us. But then I said, well, they had their job to do also. So they were trying to kill us the way we were trying to kill them, you know. But while I was in Tokyo, we ran around the streets. We went to their restaurants. The people were very pleasant. And-

Q: A much different Japan today than the one after World War II.

Farrow: Oh, yes. Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure.

**--00:49:16 - 00:49:57**

Q: Have you ever met a Japanese veteran?

Farrow: Yes.

Q: What was that like?

Farrow: Well, I wasn't too pleased with them, you know. But before we came here this time, we were supposed to meet with a Japanese delegation that were combat vets from this campaign. And I voiced my sentiments about that. And I said, I didn't think we should meet with them. Like I say, well, they were doing their job. But we did resent them quite a bit, you know.

Q: It's hard to put that memory away. Would that be fair to say?

Farrow: Oh, yes.

**--00:49:57 - 00:51:37**

Q: You fight a war with hatred. And you saw a lot of things here. Did you ever see any of the civilians that had been killed here? Any of that?

Farrow: I didn't witness it myself. But as we were driving up, first of all, when we landed, there were no civilians because they were all up in the mountains hiding because they knew the invasion was coming. But we heard that the Japanese had treated them badly, killed a lot of people. And we did, our forward patrols did find Japanese- Chamorros, with their hands tied behind their backs. And they were beheaded. And when I was here last time, just last year, a young lady I met at the wall, they had the wall here. She said, she told me a story that her grandparents were being executed. They were blindfolded and they were going to be executed. And they heard shots. And when they took off their blindfolds, they saw Marines. And when she told me the story, I said, are you sure about that? You're not making this up? Oh, she says, no, no. She says, I was brought up with this story ever since I was a little girl. So I had to believe her.

Q: So she was probably deeply grateful.



Farrow: Oh, yes. Well, here they make us feel like heroes. And I don't think we felt like heroes at that time. But with the history now, they kind of like us. And I'm glad for it.

**--00:51:37 - 00:52:01**

Q: So would it be fair to say that coming back to Guam in some sense is coming home?

Farrow: Yes. Well, I was here from July until the following April. So it was almost three quarters of a year that I was here outside of leaving here to go to Iwo Jima and then coming back.

**--00:52:01 - 00:54:26**

Q: When we record these oral histories, we do so to document your story and those of other combat veterans. What is the legacy of World War II for our young people? What do you think you'd like them to remember?

Farrow: Well, first of all, we were fighting for a great cause. We were trying to stop the dictators in Europe. And we tried to stop the Japanese dictators after they attacked us. We had no qualms with them before that. And, of course, you appreciate democracy a lot more now. And looking back to the way Hitler, for instance, had Europe all locked up and he made slaves of all these people and massacred so many of the Jews. If our story of World War II is told years from now, it almost sounds like fiction because of the atrocities the Germans committed. The Italians were also involved in that too, which is to say that I feel bad about that because I was of Italian descent.

Q: But you were Italian-American.

Farrow: Oh, yes. We had no love for Mussolini. And I had cousins that fought in Italy. And they didn't think about it at all, you know.

Q: So maybe the legacy that you would like the young people to remember is that this wasn't fiction. This was all true. And democracy was threatened to its very core.

Farrow: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They took over France. They closed the continent completely and made slaves of these people, you know. Now the Japanese were doing the same thing because they invaded Guam, they invaded China, they invaded a lot of places they weren't supposed to be at, you know.

Q: And here at Guam you weren't wounded.

Farrow: No.

Q: In fact, you made it through all your combat actions?

Farrow: Without being wounded, yes.

Q: But you had something ahead of you that was far uglier than Guam.

Farrow: Iwo Jima. But we didn't know it at the time.

Q: But you know it now.

Farrow: Oh, yes.

**--00:54:26 - 00:56:32**

Q: Iwo Jima, when you landed there, did you land on D-Day as well there?

Farrow: No. No, we were reserved. The 2nd and 4th Marine Regiment landed on the 19th of February. And I believe we landed on the 23rd or 24th. They were holding us as reserve. And when they felt that they needed us, then they brought the 3rd Marine Division in.

Q: Iwo Jima is certainly the hallmark battle of, you know, the Marine Corps. Its icon is the flag going up over Suribachi. But Iwo Jima is a nightmare for many that went there. How was it for you? What- was Iwo Jima a battle that you'd rather forget? Or does it have some kind of memory that you could-

Farrow: No, you want to forget it. I know we would lay in the foxholes at night, and the Japanese were shooting a shell over our heads, and it was directed more into Suribachi than to us. And we could hear this monster going over our head. And we learned that as long as you hear it, it's not going to hurt you. Right. But it was hurting somebody else in back of us. If I was the Japanese commander of Iwo Jima and saw- and got up that morning and saw the fleet and armada that we had around the island, I would have said, well, fellas, let's call it quits, you know, because they couldn't win. But they put up a heck of a battle. But the Japanese soldier was a dedicated soldier and he believed in his cause like we believed in ours.

Q: Right.

Farrow: So you can't fault them for that. But they would rather die than surrender.

**--00:56:32 - 00:58:04**

Q: Right. What's the most important thing you want to do while you're here in Guam? Find that street?

Farrow: Well, I want to find that street. I also have two photographs that a fellow sent me this week that he found in somebody's house. He was a radio man. He says they cleared the table to put their radio on there. And he found these two pictures and he says I put them in my bag and I've had them all these years.

Q: What are they of?

Farrow: One is a picture of a lady with two small children. It's an eight by, well, maybe six by eight photo. And the other one is a picture of a Mrs. Hawley, a white lady, surrounded by young men and young women, Chamorros. And on the back of it, she has a notation. And we have no idea what it means. I forget the notation right now, but he gave me the photos and he said, why don't you take them and show them around and see if anybody knows them or about them. So I'm going to get John Blas. I'm going to show him because he knows a lot of people here. And I may even show them to Governor Ada. And maybe he knows him. I don't know. The kids are big now. They're not small children anymore after 50 years. [BEEP]

**--00:58:05 - 01:00:31**

Q: Okay. We're going to relate a story. You wanted to relate a story to us about the death of President Roosevelt.

Farrow: Oh, yes. Well, we left Guam and we left a rear echelon here and we went up to Iwo Jima and we spent about a month and a half up at Iwo Jima. And when my outfit left, I remained on Iwo Jima with a rear echelon. And we left the island April 1st. And the reason I remember that is because the Japanese had formed, from Sarabachi, they formed a group. And, of course, they didn't know the island was secure. And they got to the airstrip number one. And when they were discovered, they killed a lot of Army boys in their tents, flyers, Army pilots. And we were boarding ship at the time. And I had my crew. I was a platoon sergeant then and I was in charge of this 21-man detail. We were loading our ship to go home or come back to Guam. And the Seabees came down. They're looking for O-1, O-3 ammunition. And we told them we don't have any. He says, well, he says, get your boys and come on up. He says, the Japanese are invading us again. And I said, no way are we going to go up there because we have had our time here. And as it turned out, they were finally stopped. But they did kill a lot of pilots in their tents because it was still early morning. And we boarded ship. And when we boarded ship, we heard that the Marines had invaded Okinawa. And that was April the 1st. I came back to Guam. And a day or so after that, I learned that, we all learned that President Roosevelt had died. But at the same time, I found out that my brother had been killed in Germany. So it was a very moving day for me. With that, I went to see the division chaplain. And he made arrangements for me to fly back home. But my outfit was already loading ships to go back home because we had served our time here.

**--01:00:31 - 01:01:14**

Q: And you weren't scheduled for the invasion of Japan at that point?

Farrow: No, I came home. And it was a bittersweet return because of the death of my brother. I was sent up to Quonset Point in Rhode Island. We were a guard company. And now we were going to get ready for the invasion of Japan. And we were scheduled to come back. So when they dropped the atom bomb there, I was kind of relieved. I said, well, thank God, I don't have to go back.

Q: It must have been amazing to come out of this world of the Pacific and go back to your home in New York.

Farrow: It was very traumatic.

**--01:01:15 - 01:02:44**

Q: Did you have trouble adjusting?

Farrow: Oh, yes. I landed in Oakland because I flew in, as I say. And I was kind of afraid of seeing civilians, especially women.

Q: Why is that?

Farrow: Well, we had been overseas for 26 months. And I think it was Mrs. Roosevelt that said that the returning Marines were not fit to associate with American girls. We always held that against her. But we were afraid. I was afraid. And I boarded a train from Oakland. I went down to San Diego, got my gear, got new uniforms and whatnot. And then I flew the rest of the way back to New York to a bittersweet reunion with my mother.

Q: Did sometimes people that have been in combat, loud noises or anything that's somewhat jarring, flashes back to memories in the jungle? Is that too generally an experience or is that true?

Farrow: Well, I guess that's true. I think it hurt my hearing a little bit, I tell you.

Q: The artillery fire?

Farrow: The artillery fire, yeah. But then I attribute it to that and the fact that I ran a dress business with a lot of machines after the war.

Q: Sure, those are loud.

Farrow: That's loud, too. So it all contributes to it.

**--01:02:45 - 01:03:15**

Q: When the war comes to an end, how long will you stay in the Marine Corps before you're discharged?

Farrow: The war ended in August, and I stayed in the Marine Corps until September of that year. And then I had a choice of reenlisting or going home. Well, by that time, I wanted to go home. And so-

Q: Had enough of the war?

Farrow: Yeah. So in September of 21st, I was discharged and I went back home.

**--01:03:16 - 01:04:08**

Q: In closing, can you summarize for me what the Marine Corps means to you?

Farrow: The Marine Corps has been a good part of my life. The training was helpful. It made certainly better men of us. It gave us respect. And I think it helped me in my business world. I've been extremely proud of my experience. I look back at it with a lot of fondness for the training that they gave me and for the travel that they gave me. I don't appreciate some of the other bad memories, but I think we have a tendency to forget the bad and remember the good, you know?

**--01:04:09 - 01:05:59**

Q: I suspect that the comradeship- and that's why you're here, aren't you?

Farrow: Yes. As a matter of fact, I have to relay a story. On the plane coming here, a young lady and I got to talking, and she says, well, my father was in the Marine Corps. And she says, you're going back to Guam? I says, yes. She says, so is he. And she told me her name. She said, his name is Paulie. And I said, could it be the same Paulie that I knew? And I said, was he in 2nd Battalion 12th? And she said, she didn't know. I says, was he wounded on Guam? And she says, yes. So when we got to the airport, now I see her and her father standing next to her. And I walked over, and we exchanged a few words, and that was my fellow. He was my first sergeant. And when we invaded Guam, he was hit in the leg, and he

was evacuated. And I never knew what happened to him after that. And here it is 50 years later, and I see he's got a metal cap in his knee, but he's back here.

Q: And you met him?

Farrow: Yeah, I met him, and he said he got out of the Marine Corps, became a lawyer, and he's been successful in his life.

Q: What was that first- did he look the same as you remembered him?

Farrow: If I had seen him on the street, no, I wouldn't have remembered him. And I don't think he'd remember me because we've all aged, you know. We've got wrinkles and gray hair and whatnot.

Q: Not 22 anymore, huh?

Farrow: Not 22 anymore.

Q: But what was that meeting like that day?

Farrow: Well, we got to talking, and we exchanged a lot of names and brought back a lot of memories. I haven't finished talking to him yet, but-

**--01:05:59 - 01:06:22**

Q: Well, on behalf of the National Park Service here at Guam and War In The Pacific National Historical Park, we'd like to thank you for this interview today. And we hope that your remembrances here on Guam will be not as painful as some of those in the past but rather take home good memories of your old comrades.

Farrow: I certainly will. Thank you very much.

Q: You're welcome.

[End of Session]