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Guy Gabaldon
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Interview conducted by Daniel Martinez
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Interviewee: Guy Gabaldon

Military Rank: Regimental Intelligence, 2nd Division, USMC

Interviewer: Daniel Martinez Marianas, Saipan

Date: June 16th 1994

--00:00:00 - 00:00:15

[Audio Description] Guy Gabaldon is a hispanic american man with a mustache wearing a maroon button-up shirt with white printed designs. Behind him is a black background with a palm leaf.

--00:00:16 - 00:00:38

Q: The following oral history interview was conducted on June 16th at 10:00 in the morning by the National Park Service, American Memorial Park in cooperation with Marianas Cable Vision. The subject is Guy Gabaldon, veteran of the Marianas campaign. The interviewer is Daniel Martinez, historian for the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii. Good morning, Guy. How are you?

Gabaldon: Good morning, Dan.

--00:00:39 - 00:00:57

Q: For the record could you state your full name and middle name as well?

Gabaldon: I'm Guy Gabaldon, I don't use the middle name.

Q: Never had one?

Gabaldon: I don't use the middle name.

Q: Could you spell your last name for us?

Gabaldon: G-A-B-A-L-D-O-N.

--00:00:58 - 00:01:21

Q: And where were you born?

Gabaldon: Los Angeles.

Q: And what was the date on that?

Gabaldon: March 22nd, 1926.

Q: And your parent's names?

Gabaldon: Pete and Amada.

Q: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Gabaldon: Well I was raised by a Japanese family in Los Angles, a foster family and there were five of us.

--00:01:21 - 00:02:35

Q: Can you explain to me why you were raised by a foster family?

Gabaldon: I was more or less a waif in the streets of East Los Angeles and the barrios and I was fascinated by the Japanese people, their customs and their honesty and their diligence and anything they undertook. They were always A students and all and I just naturally gravitated towards the Japanese and the Nakano family took me in and I was certainly glad of it. I learned quite a bit of their customs, their ways, their language.

Q: Were they there in East LA as well?

Gabaldon: Yeah.

Q: And how old were you when that happened?

Gabaldon: Oh, I was ten and stayed with them until they were evacuated and sent to concentration camps when the war started.

Q: So that was in 1942 when they-

Gabaldon: Right.

Q: What did you original parents think of all of that? Was this something-

Gabaldon: There was no conflict there. I was well taken care of by the Japanese family and it turned out for the best.

--00:02:35 - 00:03:17

Q: What was life like in Los Angeles when you were growing up?

Gabaldon: In the ‘30s there was- they said we had a- we were in a poverty era, but I didn’t know that. It was a fun era and everyone was alike and financially there, so I enjoyed it very much, every summer we could go to, we had a Model A Ford and maybe ten of us would jump in it and go to Long Beach or Santa Monica, and started ditching school maybe in May when it would start warming up and go on to the beaches and it was a good life.

--00:03:18 - 00:04:08

Q: Did you go to a private school or a public school?

Gabaldon: I went to a Catholic school for my first six years and then I went to a public school.

Q: Where did you go to high school at?

Gabaldon: In Los Angeles, Andrew Jackson High.

Q: And did you go with your foster brothers and-

Gabaldon: To school? Yeah.

Q: And you ran around with them?

Gabaldon: Yeah, certainly. We used to deliver Japanese language newspaper. There was the Rafu Shimpo and I got to know just about every Japanese family and mostly in the East Los Angeles area.

Q: Did you pick up any of the Japanese language at all?

Gabaldon: Yeah. That's what I say. I learned a lot of their customs and basic Japanese. I wasn't fluent. It helped me later on in life.

--00:04:09 - 00:05:20

Q: Your heritage is Mexican American?

Gabaldon: Yeah, my people are from the state of New Mexico, the Albuquerque area. My mom was a postmistress in Grants. Grants, New Mexico. And my grandfather on my dad's side was a Pony Express Rider. He was a- also a teamster from Kansas City to Santa Fe.

Q: He worked on the Santa Fe Trail, is that right?

Gabaldon: That's right. My people have been in what is now the United States for 480 years.

Q: Did you know where your first people landed, what would they do?

Gabaldon: There was a lieutenant, so I have been told, there was a Lieutenant Gabaldon, this is the correct pronunciation, and he settled in the Albuquerque area and that was the start of the Gabaldon clan.

Q: He was a soldier as I understand it?

Gabaldon: He was a lieutenant, yeah.

Q: And, I think, what they call *conquistadors* right?

Gabaldon: That's right. Right on.

Q: So the family starts in New Mexico, and you eventually, your family gravitates towards the California area.

--00:05:20 - 00:05:57

Q: What- that's an amazing experience that you were raised by a Japanese American family.

Gabaldon: Well, I think I'm very fortunate to- see when the war broke out, there were less than one hundred people, one hundred Americans, that knew the Japanese language and I was one of them. And it was to have been a great help here on Saipan during the campaign. Although I wasn't fluent, but with my basic knowledge and then I picked up here on Saipan, why, it helped

tremendously.

--00:05:57 - 00:08:28

Q: Now these were two minority people, the Japanese American and being Hispanic American or Mexican American. Was Los Angeles tough on that or did you encounter some incidents where there was prejudice?

Gabaldon: You mean racism?

Q: Yes.

Gabaldon: No, East Los Angeles, in our neighborhood, there is Mexicans, Russians, Armenians, Japanese and we didn't know what racial prejudice was. There was a Jewish family, [unintelligible] Max Factor, Pancho Arduno[sp?] and the Nakano Japanese and so, no, there was no racism. We didn't feel it.

Q: How about when you left the neighborhood? Did you ever encounter that or is it just something that-

Gabaldon: Not in the Los Angeles area, no.

Q: Have ever been back to the old neighborhood? Wasn't that Boyle Heights?

Gabaldon: Yeah, as a matter of fact, about four years ago I bought an airplane in Monterey, California and while they were getting the aircraft ready, I went down to Los Angeles and saw my old neighborhood, and let me tell you, things have changed. I couldn't get out of there fast enough. It was a- it's a rough neighborhood today.

Q: Is your house still there, that you lived in?

Gabaldon: Yeah, it's still there and it was, it was old back in the '30s and so it looks kind of rundown but the neighborhood hasn't changed too much.

Q: What was the addre- Do you remember the address of that place?

Gabaldon: It was on First Street. It was next to the Japanese Hospital. The Miyako Florist Shop was owned by the Nakano family.

Q: I see. What happened with the Nakano family? Do you ever keep in contact with them or-

Gabaldon: Not recently but they, like the rest of the American Japanese, were shipped off to concentration camps.

Q: Did they go to Manzanar?

Gabaldon: Part of them went to Manzanar, then they went to Chicago. See, many of the Japanese were allowed to leave the concentration camps if they left the West Coast. And the Nakano family went to Chicago, others went to different cities back east. Some went to Idaho to work the beets. I don't know how they pick them, but they were picking beets and others were sent to Arizona to Park, Arizona. I think there was a concentration camp there.

--00:08:28 - 00:09:24

Q: You used the term concentration camp-

Gabaldon: Purposely.

Q: The term that the- that was used at that time was "relocation center." Do you wanted to elaborate a little on that for me? I suspect you have a pretty strong opinion about that.

Gabaldon: Well, yes I do. If you're locked up against your will and you are an American citizen, you are put behind the barbed wire. How can that be called anything but a concentration camp? These were Americans. They were not Japanese. Incidentally, I'm married to a Japanese gal and she says- she was born in Mexico, and she says the only time she realized that she has Japanese blood is when she looks in the mirror. So they don't feel Japanese, you see. Yeah, I call them concentration camps although they were called relocation centers back during the war.

--00:09:26 - 00:10:30

Q: There was some controversy surrounding remuneration given to Japanese Americans and many cases they never covered the losses of businesses and homes.

Gabaldon: Twenty thousand dollars is what they got just a few years back. That couldn't possibly even start to cover losing their homes, their farms, their businesses and the embarrassment of being herded like animals into buses and trucks and shipped off to a concentration camp. Twenty thousand dollars, especially twenty thousand dollars today, couldn't start to cover it, no.

Q: A formal apology was issued by the Congress to the Japanese peo- Japanese American people, and one Japanese American that was in a camp at Manzanar said, the money to him wasn't the issue but the apology in their culture was what they were looking for.

--00:10:30 - 00:10:57

Gabaldon: What do you mean by their culture? They are Americans.

Q: Right. Culturally he said, this is his words, that that was important to him.

Gabaldon: Who apologized?

Q: The American government apologized for incarcerating them.

Gabaldon: What, from the Presidency?

Q: Right. Right down. It was an executive order.

Gabaldon: I wasn't aware of the apology.

Q: Yeah, there was a formal apology that was given.

Gabaldon: Yeah, well, certainly an apology was due.

Q: Right.

--00:10:57 - 00:11:52

Gabaldon: But I think a lot more compensation was due. Reparations- [cross talk]- and two hundred thousand would not be sufficient, but you know what, the Japanese always carried their heads up high, no matter what. I'm talking about Japanese Americans, my people, my family. They never lowered their heads. They were proud people and as I say, and I reiterate, they were and they are Americans. That was the most highly decorated outfit in the United States Army in World War II was composed of Nisei, Japanese Americans.

Q: The 442 and 100th Battalion.

Gabaldon: That's right.

Q: Yeah, regimental combat team. I have interviewed some of those individuals.

Gabaldon: Is that right?

Q: I know them in Hawaii and they- you are right, they are very proud. They are very proud of their contributions.

--00:11:52 - 00:15:03

Q: As Hispanic American or Mexican American, and we talked about this briefly yesterday, you are very proud of being an American of that ancestry and whether you know it or not, you have become a role model to a lot of Hispanic Americans because of your bravery and because of what you did in the Marine Corps. Are you aware of that and-

Gabaldon: No, I was not aware of that at all and I don't feel anything but American. What is an American? Hispanic, Japanese, Russian descent, Jewish? We are Americans, first and foremost, as to, you said bravery, I don't feel that I have ever done anything that any other Marine would have done under these circumstances.

Q: Well, that, I think, Guy, I think, correct that the Marines are extremely brave and I met many of them here, but there are people that show extraordinary bravery and you have been cited for that. So I point that out as part of the historical fact and being Hispanic American, Mexican American myself, I mean I told you this and a number of [unclear] when we studied Word War II, we look towards people of our background for heroes and you are one of those reluctant heroes that- you will never admit it I think, you told me, I'm not different than anybody else.

Gabaldon: You know, Dan, there are 4000 heroes here. 4000 young Marines, for the most part in their teens, that made the supreme sacrifice. They are heroes. I don't know what their racial background, their ethnical background was, I don't care. They were killed here and they are the heroes. Hey, I'm enjoying- I'm enjoying life and I have always enjoyed life. Consequently, I feel that I should never be put in that category. I enjoyed what I did here on Saipan. That isn't to say that I enjoyed killing anyone. I killed 33 here. I was machine gunned here twice and that's not enjoyable, but as an eighteen year old Marine, I was- they tell me it was the first time in Marine Corps history that a private, I was a PFC at that time, worked freelance. I went over the hill the

first day on the island. We landed June 15th 1944, came to shore about 9:00 am and I went over the hill in the wrong direction. I went over the hill into Japanese territory. Came back with a couple of prisoners and my commanding officer, Captain John Schwa, he said, hey, this is teamwork, don't ever do that again. He says, if you do I will court martial you. And-

--00:15:04 - 00:15:53

Q: Well, let me stop you for a moment. Why did you go, so called- you go over the hill to get out of action. You went over the hill to get into action.

Gabaldon: That's right

Q: What prompted you to do that?

Gabaldon: That's what we were here for. We came to kill. We came to take Saipan, and we did it. We took Saipan. We didn't negotiate it. And to do so, we had to wipe out almost every Japanese soldier. We killed over 30,000. So I think the answer to your question is obvious. We came to take Saipan, the only way to take it was to kill and so I went over the hill to- into Japanese territory. I say "over the hill," that's being facetious. I just- I went. That's all, and-

--00:15:53 - 00:16:12

Q: What comp- You were assigned to what division and company then?

Gabaldon: I was in intelligence, Regimental Intelligence, 2nd Division. 2nd Marine, 2nd Division.

Q: And what is that job? What is a job description on that?

Gabaldon: My job was a scout- to be a scout and observer. That was my classification.

--00:16:12 - 00:17:06

Q: Some books have listed you as an interpreter.

Gabaldon: I was not an interpreter.

Q: That's wrong.

Gabaldon: Very wrong. I was a scout and an observer and after the campaign, I transferred from Regimental Intelligence to Division Intelligence, then I became an interpreter- as a matter of fact, I don't think my classification was changed then. I got- I was shot then, this was seven months after D-Day. I was machined gunned on [unclear] and I was sent back to the States and I was sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to teach Japanese and that is when my classification was changed from scout and observer of Intelligence to interpreter. But here on Saipan, I was always called an interpreter, and I was referred to as an interpreter, but no, I was not officially an interpreter.

--00:17:06 - 00:19:32

Q: So when you got back and you got kind of admonished by your captain, I think you continued to do that. How did you finally convince him?

Gabaldon: Well, he says, I told you, he said, don't ever do that again. He says, that is not the way we work. And so I say, yes sir, okay. And that evening I loaded my pockets with ammunition with clips. I would get the little boxes of 50 rounds and put 15 rounds in each clip and loaded my pockets with them.

Q: What kind of weapon were you carrying?

Gabaldon: A carbine, much to my regret, one of the worst weapons ever made. I was issued an M-1 garand, which was a very good weapon and the first dead Marine I saw with a carbine, I threw my M-1 away and I grabbed his carbine. They die hard when you hit them with the

carbine. Anyway, I went into Japanese territory that night and the next day I came back with about 50 prisoners and Captain Shwabe, my commanding officer, says, he says, well, let the little jerk go, he's getting results. So after that, I was on my own. I worked as I pleased throughout the island. I would go into Japanese territory, I would come back with prisoners into whatever company or outfit happened to be there, whether it was 2nd Division, 4th Division or even 27th Army Division and I would give them my prisoners and maybe catch a half hour's sleep and get some more ammo and back into Japanese territory. As I said, it was a fun thing. Never before had an 18 year old private worked on his own. And I didn't know, I didn't care. That wasn't the reason I was doing it. It was- I was choosing where I wanted to fight, where I was going to fight, how I was going to fight and I also realized that- see, when we were coming to shore, I, like the rest of the Marines, felt kill all the dirty Japs, they are- although I knew they weren't monkey's hanging from the trees by the tails as the Marines were told. And I think it takes somewhat of a hatred to build up that [unclear] to go in there and kill, but my-

--00:19:32 - 00:22:22

Q: People have written about this, but they said that in order for- to motivate people to be part of that process of killing, you dehumanize the enemy, you break them down to where they are less than human. Is that fair?

Gabaldon: I think that is the proper way to do it. If I form an army of 1,000 men to take down to Nicaragua to fight the Sandinistas, and I interviewed each and every person, I wanted no mercenaries, and no one got paid for it, and these volunteers were very dedicated American anti-communists and they hated the communists and communism, and therefore I had a good group of men, I have men from the Air Force, the Army, Marines, pilots and anyway, getting back to the Saipan-

Q: Well, you were talking about this motivation and that is what you were saying, that your experience has been, is if you are going to go into combat, you are going to be in a situation, make sure that the men are motivated and understand what they are doing.

Gabaldon: Absolutely. However, I didn't have that hatred, you see, being that I had lived with Japanese and- when I start capturing, I figured, you know, in a way I was let down, Dan, because as a kid I was told about the [Japanese name], this is a- three Japanese soldiers in Manchuria when they fighting in China, that this Japanese unit was held up by barbed wire and this is a whole mess of barbed wire, along the line. So three soldiers carried a Bangalore torpedo into this wire, ruined themselves up, and as a consequence, their fellow soldiers were able to cross the lines and win that particular battle. And this always remained with me. The Japanese are die hard, good soldiers and when I started capturing them, I was- I was let down. I wanted the prisoners, but they would talk. You would take a Japanese prisoner and, you know, I would ask him, [speaks in Japanese]. I would say, "Any snipers in the area?" And they would tell me. I would say, what outfit are you in and so on and they would give me all this information. And I was disappointed in the- that the Japanese soldier was not living up to the Bushido code, you see. And- but on the other hand, it was good information. It saved a lot of Marine lives.

--00:22:22 - 00:23:41

Q: What would have happened to Guy Gabaldon if the Japanese had captured you and they asked you questions?

Gabaldon: Well, they would kill me immediately. There are many cases of torture and there- two doctors were hanged in Guam after the campaign because they would get pilots who had been bombing say, Truccia or wherever, and they would cut them open and, with no anesthesia whatsoever, and take parts of their leg off and insert in their stomach. Experimenting. And these pilots were screaming, begging them to kill them. And that is not hearsay, they were hanged. These doctors were hanged. There is another incident on Iwo Jima where they got a pilot and cut his liver out and they ate it. You know, you hear things like that and you say, oh come on, that is an exaggeration. Well, they were also hanged, so that is no exaggeration you see. There were a lot of cases of torture. We never tortured. I never tortured any of my prisoners. I killed, but I never tortured. I was against that. And so you asked what would have happened if I had been

taken prisoner. I ended up a prisoner one time for the Japanese here on Saipan.

--00:23:41 - 00:24:58

Q: How did that happen?

Gabaldon: Well, I captured 800 in Marpi Point, right where Banzai Cliff is. And when I had the 800, I was milling around among the 800, who was a prisoner? I mean, really if I had talked them into surrendering and I would point to the ships offshore and I convinced them that they had no alternative but to surrender. Or they would be wiped out. These were survivors of the [Japanese word] suicide attack, which was the *gyokuzsai* banzai attack at the Tanapag, San Roque. And-

Q: Were there women and children also in this group or just soldiers?

Gabaldon: Some. Mostly military and civilians of military aides. You see the civilians pose as much threat as the military did here on Saipan. And so I ended up with 800 prisoners and every minute I was milling around among my prisoners, I was always thinking, all it would take is one guy to jump me and then-

Q: To overpower you?

Gabaldon: Not so much overpower me, one guy would set it off. So, who was the prisoner?

--00:24:59 - 00:26:20

Q: Yeah. Let's just page back a little. Why did you decide to join the Marine Corps?

Gabaldon: I did not, really. I was working in Alaska, I went up there when I was 16 years old and always had a desire to join the Navy. I wanted to be a submariner. You know, this young teenage kid has these wild dreams of glory in a submarine.

Q: You were 16 and you went to Alaska?

Gabaldon: Yeah.

Q: What did the Nakano family think of that?

Gabaldon: Well, they were in a concentration camp.

Q: Oh, they were in the camp already.

Gabaldon: Yeah, I went up in 1942 to Alaska. A great place.

Q: How come you- and we'll get back to Alaska. How come you didn't go in the camp?

Gabaldon: Because I'm not Japanese. You had to be part Japanese. I wanted to. As a matter of fact, I wanted to go to Manzanar and I was not allowed to go.

Q: There was a case of a married couple, they were an inter-racial marriage and they did go, but I was just wondering, in your experience, I mean, that must have broke your heart.

Gabaldon: Of course. First of all, I thought my government was doing the wrong thing in sending my family away like that. But as to why did I join the Marine Corps, I came down from Alaska to join the Navy and-

--00:26:20 - 00:28:41

Q: What were you doing in Alaska, by the way?

Gabaldon: Everything. When up there to work in the cannery in a place called Tyee. T-Y-E-E.

Beautiful, it's on Baranof Island and a big inlet there. It is just so beautiful. It's all green and a lot of bear and, the largest bear in the world are there, the brown bear, which are related to the Kodiak. And it was a great life. From there I went to- I worked at Juneau and then onto Sitka and Japonski Island. There was a manpower shortage back in 1942. First of all, I couldn't get to Alaska with a construction outfit that I had signed up with because I wasn't of age. So I got the bright idea of registering for the draft. And I did and that gave me an ID card that showed that I was 18 years old and with that, I-

Q: But actually you were 16.

Gabaldon: I was 16. Yeah. And so with that I applied for a job with a cannery in Seattle and they grabbed me. There was a man power shortage, they would grab anybody and off I went. That is why I ended up in Alaska. Great country, great experience. But I came down to Los Angeles to join the Navy on my 17th birthday and I had a perforated eardrum. I had done a lot of boxing when I was a kid and-

Q: Where? Down at the Main Street Gym?

Gabaldon: Yeah, on Third and Main. That's-

Q: Art Aragon and all those people?

Gabaldon: Oh, way before Art Aragon. Oh, Art Aragon is after the war. But no, I was just a kid. I was shining shoes when I was ten years old on Skid Row and the Third and Main Street Gym is right on Skid Row and I would hang out there and I became kind of a mascot of the [name?], Jack Johnson. Jack Johnson had hands the size of a ham. Great guy. Anyway, he let me punch him as hard as I could and so I boxed a little.

--00:28:41 - 00:29:32

Q: Now, Jack Johnson. Was he Black American?

Gabaldon: He is black, married a white gal and that destroyed him. Went to France and-

Q: This was the man that was referred to in the film The Great White Hope.

Gabaldon: I didn't see it.

Q: Wonderful film, you should see it.

Gabaldon: I didn't see it, I've heard of it.

Q: He is a modern hero to Black Americans, Jack Johnson and you knew him. He was a terrific fighter.

Gabaldon: He was the world's greatest. I think he and Joe Lewis- no one will ever meet their ability.

Q: You said he had big hands?

Gabaldon: Oh, enormous. He was a giant of a man.

Q: He was what, 6'4", 6'5"?

Gabaldon: I think he was about eight feet tall.

Q: And you would be down there and you would -

Gabaldon: I used to beat him up.

Q: You would beat him up, huh?

Gabaldon: Yeah, when I was ten years old.

--00:29:32 - 00:31:59

Q: You know, I know what it was like when I was ten years old in Los Angeles and going around and I had my adventures, but I don't think they equaled. Where did you get all this independence, Guy, to do these things?

Gabaldon: I don't know, I think we are born individuals, and we are born the way we are. I believe that more and more every day. I think we are born with a certain personality and it's lived out all your life. I thought it was only normal for a 12-year old kid to hop a freight train and go to Las Vegas. I didn't know that it wasn't the ordinary thing to do.

Q: And Skid Row, that is a rough section of Los Angeles. You had a lot of street smarts.

Gabaldon: I would hate to see a 12-year old kid, 10- year old kid on Skid Row today.

Q: I have the sneaky suspicion that if you were there, you would be okay.

Gabaldon: I don't know, today, a bunch of weirdos around. Back then there was no problem. You know, I look back and there are wonderful memories and Skid Row- I would go into bars and shine shoes, you see. I made a little wooden shoe shine box and- with a leather strap and I would hop on the street cars- they call them trolleys back east, I guess. And Los Angeles had street cars all over the city at that time.

Q: Had the big Red Cars too.

Gabaldon: The Red Cars were something else, Red Cars went from downtown Los Angeles to the- yeah, to Long Beach, I remember. No, the street cars were local and they had cow catchers and it went in one direction and that cow catcher would be down and when they came back, they would lift that one up and the other end would have its cow catcher. So when it was raised, I would run behind it and jump on the cow catcher and catch my ride all the way to town, you see.

Q: What did the conductors think about that?

Gabaldon: Every now and then they would stop the car and run back and kick me off and it was kind of a game because when he got back on, I would jump on the cow catcher again and go downtown and that is where I would apply my trade. You see, I was quite a capitalist. I was in business for myself.

--00:31:59 - 00:33:23

Q: What was a shoe shine worth in those days?

Gabaldon: Ten cents. Oh, you played it by ear. It's worth whatever you could get. And I would- the bartenders would let me go in these big bars there on Main Street and although it was a depression area, but you would always get some hillbilly come in and try to put on a dog and show the B girls he had a lot of money, so he would call the shoe shine boy over and I would get maybe a five cent tip and it was quite a life. I got to see the life as very few other ten year old kids could see it.

Q: I would say so. For those listening to the interview, the term B girl has dropped out of our vernacular. What was a “B girl”?

Gabaldon: Oh, has it? I didn’t know that. The gals that work in the bars and sit with a guy and play him for all that they can and buy ‘em drinks, usually a Coke and for a tremendous price.

Q: Which still goes on today.

Gabaldon: Yeah, I didn't know the term B girl had died. I don't go to bars.

Q: You only went when you were young, right?

Gabaldon: Well, I was ten years old, yeah.

--00:33:28 - 00:36:30

Q: Were you living with the Nakano family then, or was this before?

Gabaldon: I lived with the Nakano family and with the [unclear, Japanese name] family. Several families. [unclear, Japanese name], these were close buddies. [unclear, Japanese name] and I were about the same age and-

Q: Did you have a little gang of- a group of guys you ran around with?

Gabaldon: They weren't gangs as you know them today. Gang today is a dirty word.

Q: No, I'm thinking more positive, like-

Gabaldon: Yeah, we had our group. It consisted of [unclear, Solomon?] Max Factor and, Max Factor, same name as the movie, cosmetic man, he- later during the war, he lost an eye, he joined the Navy and it was Harry Marsh and the Nakano brothers, myself. It was people of all races, just kids.

Q: Sort of a little "our gang" in the more positive sense.

Gabaldon: There were no guns, there was no narcotics, no drugs back then. And our fights were

just- you beat a guy up, you stand up and you shake his hand and that was it.

Q: Let bygones be bygones. That must have been a great experience too, to run around.

Gabaldon: Yeah, it was fun.

Q: What did you guys do? Would you go all over the town? Maybe go down-

Gabaldon: Yeah, we were, I guess, as a matter of fact the Japanese mothers would call us [Japanese word, *yourei*?]. [Japanese word, *yourei*?] is a tramp, a bum. Quite being the [Japanese word, *yourei*?].

Q: Did you ever go to Olvera Street? Or anything like that? Go down and have tacos or-

Gabaldon: We went all over. Olvera wasn't quite the street then as it is today.

Q: Yeah. More touristy today.

Gabaldon: Yeah, now there is a bunch of stalls, tacos and burritos and so on. We hit the old places there like Philippe's. Yeah, that was- it was there then. That was back in the '30s. And it's still there.

Q: The world's best French dip.

Gabaldon: Yeah, the French dip and Vicki's was the original burrito on East First Street. And we would have matzo balls at the [unclear] would come up with.

Q: How about Little Tokyo? Did you go down there and get some-

Gabaldon: Always. We used to get sushi at, I think it was fifty cents a box, a big box like that.

Q: You could feed a lot of guys like that.

Gabaldon: Pardon?

Q: You could feed a lot of guys.

Gabaldon: Oh, yeah. But the rest of America didn't know anything about sushi. It was just weed and Nisei and we enjoyed it. So we had a taste of all kinds of foods. Russian, I married a Russian, we were married for 19 years. She's passed away. And so I had my share of borsch and borsch coming out of my ears. And I learned to speak a little Russian while I was at it. So we were a mixture of all types and ethnic background.

--00:36:32 - 00:37:49

Q: You joined the Marine Corps in what year?

Gabaldon: On my birthday, March 22nd, 1943.

Q: You were 17?

Gabaldon: 17.

Q: Did anybody have to sign you in?

Gabaldon: Yeah, I got my big sister to come and sign me in.

Q: Which big sister was that?

Gabaldon: Well, this was from my real family.

Q: Your real family. But you refer to the Japanese, the Nakano family, as your family. That is interesting

Gabaldon: Yeah, they were wonderful people. I'm so indebted to them. They were moral people. I learned a lot of good things from them and I also learned many good things from my real family.

Q: Some of us are lucky to have family. You were lucky, you had many families, it sounds like.

Gabaldon: I did, yeah. Yeah, as you say, I was just bumming around and I had that independence and I loved what I was doing.

Q: You had a real- well, you still do, my experience with you has been this person that just loves life. You really love it to the fullest.

Gabaldon: Well, I'm still young, you know, might as well enjoy it.

Q: How young are you right now?

Gabaldon: 60.

--00:37:50 - 00:40:39

Q: You joined the Marine Corps in 1942. Why did you choose the Marines?

Gabaldon: 1943. As I say, the Navy- I was going to join the Navy, and I had a perforated eardrum, so naturally they turned me down. And I was going to go back to Alaska and then it was suggested I try the Marines and they also were turning me down, because see, the Marine

Corps has no doctors of its own- they had Navy doctors. And I was turned down and I said, well, I speak Japanese. And wow, they grabbed me and that was it. I didn't speak that much Japanese. Even my Nisei brothers did not speak that much Japanese. I knew basic few words and- but that led, you know.

Q: You wanted to get in the Corps.

Gabaldon: Well, you met Bob Sheeks. You interviewed Bob Sheiks, I believe.

Q: Yes, sir.

Gabaldon: Bob Sheeks was a lieutenant on Saipan when I was a PFC and he and the rest of the interpreters had come out with little booklets, raise your hands, I will give you food and water, and so on. I memorized this, you see. I was not an interpreter. In fact I was turned down after I joined the Marine Corps, or rather they accepted me because they believed I spoke Japanese fluently and ended up with the 2nd Marine Division in Hawaii on the Big Island and I was interviewed by a Captain Boardman, I believe. He was one of the language officers and he says, you don't know enough Japanese. So I was sent back to Regimental Intelligence, that is why I say I was a scout and observer. When I landed here, I was a scout and observer. And here I learned a few phrases from the books that Sheeks and a few other officers had written and that got me through. And then I, having this background, it came to mean, it was a natural- It was something that perhaps I had heard as a child. There were- my daughter, our youngest daughter, is an island girl, she has been here all her life. And my wife and I speak Spanish, my wife is Japanese, born in Mexico. And we speak Spanish and my daughter has never spoken Spanish, but every now and then when we say something, my wife and I, my daughter understands it. So it's a natural, whether you speak it or not. And Japanese came to me in that manner.

--00:40:40 - 00:42:11

Q: What was basic training like for you?

Gabaldon: We called it boot camp.

Q: Boot camp.

Gabaldon: Basic training is in the Army.

Q: That's right, I apologize.

Gabaldon: I'm being facetious.

Q: I know how you Marines are, you are protective. Boot camp. They called it "boot" as I remember. What was that like for you?

Gabaldon: It was- I loved it. It was- I like discipline. You know-

Q: Why do you like discipline? You-

Gabaldon: Go back to, you know, we're born with a certain personality. And I really believe it and when I was a young kid, I would read about the Lost Patrol. That was my favorite movie, the Lost Patrol.

Q: World War I film.

Gabaldon: No, I don't think it had anything to do with World War I, Wallace Barry, I believe, way back in the Sahara Desert, French Foreign Legion and I don't think it had anything to do with-

Q: No, I was thinking of Fighting 69th. Go ahead, though.

Gabaldon: Anyway, these things, I think really molded me, My way of thinking, and so-

Q: So Hollywood kind of influenced that vision?

Gabaldon: Yeah, and regrettably today it's influencing kids in the wrong direction. Anyway, this is what brought me to capture and kill.

--00:42:12 - 00:45:38

Q: So you had this vision of what it was going to be like, this Hollywood vision. Of course it's much different when you get in the field and such, but you join the Marine Corps, you like the discipline. Did you like your drill instructor? Do you remember his name? What's his name?

Gabaldon: I have it written down, as a matter of fact, it's in my book. I had to do a little background research to get his name, so I have forgotten it. We had two drill sergeants. One is the drill sergeant and there is a corporal, his assistant. And I liked the drill sergeant, he was tough but he was the John Wayne type of a Marine, tall and never smiled. He was a bulldog. And back then-

Q: Did he growl at you once in a while?

Gabaldon: I think- I don't think he could speak, that's all he could do was growl. But you know, back then the discipline was so tough that when the drill sergeant said to you, you are a little SOB, you said, yes sir! Today they say that, you write home to Momma and she gets a hold of your Congressman and pretty soon that drill sergeant is fired. I think we need that discipline. We need that toughness. Work them, work them hard from say 5:00 in the morning to 10:00 at night. I mean, back then boot camp was only seven weeks. They had to grind them out, send them out here to-

Q: Getting them ready for the toughest war ever fought.

Gabaldon: Now I think it's a little longer, but boot camp- I look back at boot camp as something that was absolutely necessary to mold a Marine.

Q: Now, you would probably stick out in a company of Marines, I would suspect.

Gabaldon: I certainly did. I was 5'4" and everybody else was six foot tall, so if that is what you mean.

Q: Did the drill instructor from time to time use you as a lesson of discipline?

Gabaldon: You read my book.

Q: Well, I read a few things about it.

Gabaldon: Yeah, when we first went to boot camp, were lined up, we have to turn in our civvies, you know, and we are being issued our Marine clothes, our GI clothes and we all sat there naked, big room, must have been 50 or more guys in there and as I go down this counter, they hand you a t-shirt and socks and so on and shorts and these are the big boxer shorts that I always wore the tight shocky shorts and anyway, grab the stuff and you put your civilian clothes in a bag and you start putting your GI clothes on. And the shorts they gave me, I think they were made for Jack Johnson. I stood there, they were hanging down below my knees, you know, and everybody got the biggest charge out of that and I'm just standing there, I'm a young kid, holding them up. So yeah, they, you know, I was-

Q: Did you ever get the right sized shorts?

Gabaldon: Yeah, certainly. That was done purposely.

--00:45:40 - 00:57:52

Q: When you were at boot camp, of course, the sergeants could get your attention and when you are lined up in formation, they might come up to Private Guy Gabaldon and get your attention in a variety of ways. What were some of the ways that a drill instructor would get your attention?

Gabaldon: Well, I think they take your TV license away if I was to tell you what they said. You see, but they would let you know that you were out of step, so to speak. It was discipline, just plain ordinary discipline. No, not so ordinary, it was discipline.

Q: It was discipline. But they would occasionally shake you and give you a good pat on the rump if you needed it, right?

Gabaldon: The threat was there. Which didn't mean anything. I mean, go ahead, take a swing.

Q: For people listening to this, Guy, that are outside the military, sometimes they don't understand why this is all done. What is the purpose of that? What is the drill instructor trying to get across when he might rough you up or shout at you? What is the whole purpose of that?

Gabaldon: Discipline. You know, I believe, I believed it more when I was a teenager, a teenage brain, that when that sergeant says, take that hill, you take that hill, you see. And you may die in doing it, but you don't question. You take that hill. And this is what it takes. There is no let's take a vote on it. No way. You get up there and you do as I say. I still believe that that is necessary. I say, give me 50 Marines, good dedicated Marines and like, what did Lennon say? Give me a handful of dedicated men and I will conquer the world. And that is the way that I feel about the Marine Corps. Dedicated Marines that are willing to give their lives for God and country and the Marine Corps. And you can't lose. No way you can lose.

--00:47:53 - 00:49:02

Q: You have very strong feelings about the Marine Corps. You have a lot of pride about that.

Gabaldon: I love the Corps, yeah.

Q: What do you think of today's young Marines? Yesterday we were over on Tinian. I saw you looking at those guys and I couldn't help but feel, and maybe I got the wrong impression, that you had tremendous admiration for them as well.

Gabaldon: Yeah. You are very observant. I didn't know you were doing this. But, yeah, I was looking them over and they looked like pretty good material. I think they are as tough as any Marine has ever been. And I don't know what the discipline is in the Corps today. I was talking to General Rawlings yesterday morning and I admired him and I think he's an enlisted man's Marine. An enlisted man's [audio cuts] and I like that. I think the Marine Corps is a good [audio cuts]

Q: An enlisted man's general, what is your definition of that?

Gabaldon: You can talk to him, he is down to earth.

Q: Approachable.

Gabaldon: Approachable, yeah. And he speaks the enlisted man's lingo. I was very impressed with Rawlings.

--00:49:03 - 00:52:50

Q: When you got out of boot camp and- where did they send you next?

Gabaldon: Went to Camp Elliot, which doesn't exist anymore.

Q Right.

Gabaldon: And I was- I told them in boot camp that I spoke some Japanese so I was assigned to a Japanese language school in Camp Elliot. And I was there for a week or so, and Los Angeles was off limits then because of the Zoot Suit war in Los Angeles.

Q: Explain that.

Gabaldon: There was a group they called Zoot Suit because they wore these ankle choker pants and their dress.

Q: Big hat. Broad rimmed hats and chains. They were Chicanos, right? They were Mexican Americans.

Gabaldon: For the most part, yeah, yeah. They were Chicanos. And so it was off-limits to the Marines and I said, well, what the hell? I mean, that is my home, I'm going to go to LA. Offense or not. And I would go to LA.

Q: Because there had been clashes between the military and the-

Gabaldon: Yeah, now the story goes that the Zoot Suiters were jumping the uniformed sailors or Marines and, never heard any Army boys being jumped, but this turned out to be a big, fat lie. A lot of sailors would come in and there was this rumor that the Zoot Suiters were jumping the sailors and Marines and I know of instances of the sailors and Marines had jumped the Zoot Suiters and the bad part about this was a lot of Zoot Suiters had been wounded overseas and they had come back and they weren't wearing their uniform anymore, they were wearing clothes that they- leisure clothes that they liked. And so here were uniformed men, jumping on guys that had been wounded overseas.

Q: In some cases, yes.

Gabaldon: Isn't that horrible? Anyway, it was off-limits and I went to LA this one time and I got in a fight with a Zoot Suiter and got my jaw broken, it was- I didn't realize I had broken it, it was dangling on my chest and I was fighting him and I realized I couldn't close my mouth. So I grabbed this guy, we went down and I banged his head on the concrete and then an ambulance from the Navy hospital in Long Beach was called and they picked me up and took me to Long Beach Naval Hospital. I was there for two months. Good duty, beautiful duty. I got to go home every evening and they wired my jaw shut. And then when I finally was sent back to Camp Elliot, I reported to the language school and found out that I had been thrown out of it. I was no longer in Japanese language school. I was sent to 81 millimeter mortar, which, I weighed 126 lbs, and my job was to carry that big base plate. I could barely pick that thing up.

Q: How much did that weigh?

Gabaldon: About five hundred pounds. I don't know, it was pretty heavy. But anyway, from there I was sent to Camp Pendleton, joined a replacement group and sent to Hawaii to the Big Island and joined the 2nd Marine division, which was then at Camp Tarawa, Kamuela. And from there, came to Saipan.

--00:52:50 - 00:53:31

Q: Was that your first time in the Pacific?

Gabaldon: Yeah.

Q: What did you think of Hawaii?

Gabaldon: I liked the Big Island. Yeah, I still like it. I just flew my plane over here, a couple years ago, from California. I ferried it from California to Saipan and I stopped at Hilo. California

to Hilo, Hilo to Madrial, Madrial to Saipan. And I stopped at Hilo and stayed there overnight and it's still laid back.

Q: It's a nice little town?

Gabaldon: It's a nice town. It brought back a lot of memories. First time I had been there since the war. This was about three years ago, thereabouts. Yeah.

--00:53:31 - 00:54:54

Q: And they staged you there, what was your first campaign you were involved in?

Gabaldon: Saipan.

Q: And did you leave from Hilo or did you go to Pearl Harbor and board a ship there?

Gabaldon: Oh boy, that was- we went from Camp Tarawa to Hilo. We boarded a ship there and went to Maui for maneuvers and then from Maui we went to Pearl and they moved us from Pearl to the Aloha Tower and we were at the Aloha Tower when there was a big explosion. They say there were LSTs, I think six LSTs exploded right where we had been docked in Pearl.

Q: May 21st 1944.

Gabaldon: You have a good memory. From there -

Q: Six were lost, you are right.

Gabaldon: From there we went to- I'm always right. From there we went to [unclear], we rendevouzed at Enewetok. We were coming to Saipan. And I was amazed at the size of that lagoon. It seemed that there was hundreds of ships in Enewetak Lagoon. We rendezvoused there,

I believe the 2nd and the 4th division and I was reading later that troops were coming all the way from South Pacific, coming this way, to join us. Then we came and hit Saipan on June 15th.

--00:54:55 - 01:00:06

Q: What was the Naval bombardment like that morning?

Gabaldon: Oh, the night before, the 14th, before we landed, it went on all night long. It just lit the skies. We had several wagons here, battle wagons and then the cruisers and all- but you know, you mentioned the bombardment, the shelling. When we hit the beach, we dug in. We had foxholes where Joe Ten is now, all the way from Joe Ten to-

Q: What beach was that? Blue?

Gabaldon: The red one, two and three.

Q: Red one, two and three.

Gabaldon: And we dug in there and I was so amazed at the shelling. I will never forget, this one ship, it must have been a battle wagon, three shells would be fired at one time, it was a barrage of- you'd see the flash from the ship and then as the shells came overhead, you would hear boom, boom, boom and as they went back and hit the mountain, you would hear the explosions again. And this went on all night long. Never let up. And I wondered, where did they keep all that ammunition? To this day I just can't visualize all that ammo in one ship. And they were big 16 inchers.

Q: Sure. You must have watched this aboard ship, you probably felt, who could live through this?

Gabaldon: No, aboard ship- no this shelling, this barrage was- we were on the beach.

Q: Oh, you were on the beach.

Gabaldon: Yeah, we were already dug in. It was that night, D-Day night and D plus one night.

Q: There had been a pre-bombardment.

Gabaldon: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: One of the guys said to me, he says, I don't know how anybody could live through that. But they sure did.

Gabaldon: It doesn't kill.

Q: Right.

Gabaldon: The shelling does not kill. Certainly there are bodies all over the island, but I don't know if they amounted to 1% of the 30-some thousand of Japanese that were here. But you know, those bodies- aboard ship, just the other side of the reef, you could smell a sweet stench, it was sickening, putrid stench and as we came to shore and the alligators, it took the alligators to get over the reef, you see, the LCVPs could not come over the reef, naturally. And as we came ashore, the stench became more pronounced and after that it was for a whole month and it increased in strength. The shelling and the strafing and the bombing was taking place three or four days before we landed, so consequently there is bodies all over the island and no one has buried them, naturally the Americans weren't here, and even when we did land, we buried our own, we certainly didn't bury the Japanese. And they were rotting. In this hot, tropical, humid weather, it didn't take long for the- the stomachs would bloat and they would burst and then you would see the maggots in their eyes and throughout their bodies, wherever there was any wounds. And this is what gave off that putrid stench.

Q: The Hollywood movies depict it and, you may see something graphic in, portrayed in the violence of the death of someone, but there is no way to show the other sense of smell, because other people said, it was just unbelievable.

Gabaldon: Yeah, Hollywood naturally can't. They made a movie of my life, Hell to Eternity, and I think you can see the resemblance in Jeffrey Hunter and myself, he portrays me. He's blond and blue eyed and stands six foot two. But in one scene there, they decapitate a buddy of mine and, the Japanese, and uh, David Janson portrays that buddy of mine.

Q: Did that actually happen?

Gabaldon: Well, we tried to get David Janson to really do it, and he objected.

Q: No, I mean, did the incident happen?

Gabaldon: Yeah, there were a lot of decapitations there. That incident was symbolic of many-

Q: But it didn't actually happen to your friend?

Gabaldon: No. Not in that manner, no. There were other friends that were killed. One, Wolcott, [unclear] there was Wolcott and Walshaw, both from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Walshaw, he didn't get in much of the fight, right on the beach as we landed, one leg was blown off, later the other one was amputated. And a horrible sight. As he would lift that stump up and the flesh was hanging on the bone, protruding and he hollered, "Kill the bastards!" Walshaw is long gone now, but we did it, we killed the bastards.

--01:00:08 - 01:03:55

Q: One of the things that a lot of people, when they read about war and I have read so much and

there is no way that I will ever be able to experience what you experienced, there's no way- so we rely upon you that witnessed it, but when your friends that you know get injured or killed or wounded, how did that affect you personally?

Gabaldon: I have been asked that many times. It left no lasting effect. The only thing that I look back on, that did leave an effect, is the women tossing their babies off the cliffs and being that I spoke Japanese, I got to talk to these women and I would tell them, [speaks Japanese]. I would tell them, believe me, we will not harm or kill your children, don't do it. And this one in particular, she looked at me and tossed her baby off and then she jumped. And you know, Dan, the sorry part of this is that, the cliffs aren't that high. When they hit down there, they would often times just break their bones, they would not immediately die. So many occasions where women would be reaching out for their babies and could not move with broken legs, broken backs. And I saw many Marines with tears. We couldn't get down there for another day or two. There was nothing we could do to help them. I saw, I hesitate to say this, but I saw Marines shoot some of these people that were just all busted up and they would be dying within a matter of hours, blood just pouring out and be laying there moaning and groaning. Maybe that is playing God, I don't know, but I don't feel that wrong was done by killing some of these people, although my religious belief says that only God can take life. Naturally, a soldier shooting at you is something else, but these are women and children, babies. In my movie, it shows this woman toss her baby off, in the movie [audio and video cuts] tossing my foster brother off, I guess about ten years old, but it was actually a baby in her arms.

Q: Was there a parallel there? Is that how you felt?

Gabaldon: I don't know, that was Hollywood. They wanted to- it doesn't take from the truth, the mother killed her child and the mother jumped and killed herself. There were many of them, but this one incident-

Q: Did you ever flash back, though, to your family when you were out in the Pacific, thinking

about them?

Gabaldon: I thought about them, but it wouldn't break me up in any way. Certainly I thought of them.

Q: I went out to those cliffs and-

Gabaldon: You know where the monuments are- forgive me for interrupting.

Q: No, no. You're not interrupting.

Gabaldon: Where the monuments are today, that is not where they jumped off. Beautiful site, I guess so.

Q: Where did they jump off?

Gabaldon: Just south of there, maybe about a hundred yards. There is a shelf down below the rocks. You can jump off right now where the monuments are and swim away. As a matter of fact, Arakaki did that, who is now a very good friend of mine. He jumped off and that is how he saved his life. He jumped off, dove down, and swam back into the caves. But-

Q: Arakaki. Who is this gentleman?

Gabaldon: Oh, what a story, what a story.

--01:03:56 - 01:06:57

Q: Let's just digress to that story in a minute. I went down to south of it, where the ground turns, and you can look back up towards where the monuments are. And from my memory of looking at photographs, that area where there is- it's not that high, and there is a shelf down below, is that

the place?

Gabaldon: Yeah. Where the shelf is, that is where they hit. That is where they would break their bones, break their bodies. But right where the monuments are, the big monuments, you can dive off of there.

Q: Right. I saw some rocks down below, but I tried to think that my memory was that they hit rocks down below and there didn't appear to be that description there. There were some big rocks that are there, but unless they hurled themselves, there was no way to hit the rocks. They'd hit the sea.

Gabaldon: Yeah, no. But you know, now that we are on that, the monuments here- we are all so proud of what took place yesterday, the 50th anniversary, the monument and all, but you know, I still hang my head in shame. 50 years went by, Dan, without one monument in honor of the 4,000 young Americans that died here, in honor of the veterans who returned yesterday. Nothing. A little plaque, a little 18 inch plaque maybe here or there, hidden in the bush some place. And the Japanese with their beautiful, enormous big ornate monuments. Hey, what a shame that these 4,000 were forgotten by Washington and naturally the average American knows nothing of it. Hey, he wasn't appraised of it, so I blame my country, my government, my nation for-

Q: For the neglect?

Gabaldon: For the neglect and for not informing the average American.

Q: Is it because Saipan is so remote from the United States? For instance if this battle had taken place maybe in Hawaii or somewhere, what is the reason for that?

Gabaldon: I had never thought of that, but who cares? I don't if they died on the moon. They were 4,000 of the cream of our youth, gave their lives here so that you and I could be sitting here

today, you see? Here on Saipan. And otherwise we'd all be dead or slaves if Japan had won the war. These kids died for that and they died willingly. I mean, no one wants to die, but they knew when they came out here, that they might be giving their lives to this. And not a monument, until yesterday, so I can't be all that happy about what we had yesterday. Certainly I'm glad that it's there and I'm glad that finally someone has done something. There has been a lot of effort that has gone into this.

--01:06:57 - 01:09:49

Q: I watched you yesterday and I looked at you and it was- it seemed to me that you were taking the ceremonies, it seemed a little bittersweet.

Gabaldon: That's right.

Q: Where other people's eyes were aglow, yours was one of resigned satisfaction. Is that correct?

Gabaldon: How observant you are. I had no idea that anyone would see that.

Q: I watched that and I was- it took me back a little and I wanted to talk to you about it today. What, in your view, needs to be done from this point on? Where do we go from here in regards to Saipan? And American Memorial Park?

Gabaldon: It's been done. Yesterday it was done.

Q: Does the museum need to be built now?

Gabaldon: The museum, we have a small museum there. I think we should have many more artifacts donated, there are- they are scattered all over. They are in museums in the States, individuals. I have a machine gun at home, I will be donating to the museum and we need a lot of this. We need photographs of during the campaign. You know, one Japanese I killed had a

camera and as I said, I was a kid, 18 years old and I grabbed this camera and Intelligence, D-2, gave me all the film I wanted. So I took a lot of pictures during the campaign. I have many of them at home. And I would have pictures taken of me with this camera. And one photographer, a division photographer, says, hey, this is a Carl Zeiss lens. I said, what's that? I had no idea. He said, this is a good little camera. So I have a bunch of pictures.

Q: Do you still have the camera?

Gabaldon: No. You know what, oh boy, I had no idea the worth of that camera. Even during the campaign, as we were going north, the ships would come into what is now Charlie Dock and unload supplies. Submarine tenders were there and I would go aboard and I would take a saber or a flag or a pistol I had taken off a Japanese I had killed and I would go aboard and they would give me fried chicken, ice cream and pie. This is during the campaign. And I traded my camera there for a bottle of booze and I don't drink. I have never been a boozer. But I was going to be a good guy with the boys, you know? What was it, Waterfill and Frazier? Whaterhill and Frazier? Whatever, but I do remember that and I traded the camera for that and I have been kicking myself ever since.

Q: Wow, that would be a terrific artifact to have now.

Gabaldon: Oh, boy. Yes, it would.

--01:09:50 - 01:13:29

Q: But to get back to our point, what in your view needs to be done from this point on? The memory of those men is something-

Gabaldon: Start all over, let's go to war with Japan.

Q: Well, seriously, what do you think needs to be done?

Gabaldon: Well, you hit upon something good there, the museum. What else can be done to the memorial there? They are going to inscribe the names of the 4,000, that's great. I have the names, I compiled the names.

Q: Some of the Marines suggested that there needs to be more community support for the American Memorial Park. That people need to get involved. For instance, the fellows that are running the museum, they are now heavily committed and involved to provide a first class museum for the park. Is that the kind of thing that you envision or do you envision something else?

Gabaldon: I don't think we are going to get the- that type of support. And I don't think at this particular time I should go into that. I think it would be detrimental to the cause for me to expose what has happened and what will not happen. But we won't get the support that we should have and even, I will say this, that monument, that American Memorial Park thing, has become such a political thing, that is why you say you saw a little something in my face that showed a little bitterness yesterday. This was not done with all volunteer work. There was some big money that paid some people to do this and that to me is wrong. It's wrong to buy an American to help construct a memorial for 4,000 young kids that died. I can go much deeper into this, but I don't think it behooves you or the cause for me to go any further into this right now.

Q: So it's obvious you have some strong feelings in this area and the cause for you is the memory of those 4,000 men.

Gabaldon: That's right. 50 years went by before they were recognized. 4,000 young kids. And I keep emphasizing the 4,000. Hey, that's a lot of blood, Dan.

Q: That's a lot of blood.

Gabaldon: I saw this one kid, another teenager, about my age, by the bunker where the train is, the little locomotive. If you notice, there is a little shack, a little house, a concrete building. It's small. That was a Japanese police substation during the war. And we had come to that- there was a little ravine, which has been filled now, just south of that station at that building. And there was Japanese in there with machine guns, they were firing away and this one guy in our group stands up and runs at it. And I said, oh my God, he will never make it. And he runs at it, and tosses in a grenade and they must have hit him with 100 shells. And he went down and bleeding in all directions and they kept pumping in him. We all yelled at him, hit the deck! But he gave his life. He knew he was going to die and- who cares?

--01:13:29 - 01:14:50

Q: Where do men get such courage?

Gabaldon: I think you are born with it. Love of the country, patriotism. Patriotism.

Q: Yesterday we were in the reviewing stands, and you came by, you were the Grand Marshall yesterday and you saw the crowd respond. You are pretty much admired here and of course in the United States as well, as being part of the commonwealth of the United States. But I think one of the moments that was so touching, was watching those, your fellow Marines and Army and Navy and Airmen, walking down the main drag of Garipan and being cheered wildly. And the pride these guys had and the guys that couldn't walk and the buses and stuff- that was a tremendous moment I think, in this whole commemorative observance, and to me that was the essence of that moment. What was for you the- how did you feel about the commemoration and seeing these fellas come back? How did you feel about it?

Gabaldon: All that kept going through my mind is, at last, 50 years. At last, the 4,000 are getting a word of thanks. That kept going through my mind over and over again. At last.

--01:14:50 - 01:19:01

Q: It's these 25 year and 50 years that become the benchmarks of observance and do you know what happened here 25 years ago. Was there a 25th anniversary?

Gabaldon: No, I have only been here for 14 years.

Q: Did you hear about anything?

Gabaldon: No, but it's obvious that not much could have been done. There are no memorials, Dan. And so I say, just total neglect and I attribute this to, I don't want to name groups. I do want to, but I think it might embarrass you and- anyway, there are, there were many liberal, ultra-liberal Americans that came here and destroyed these people. And almost told them, hate the United States. They didn't say it in so many words, but they brought marijuana here and taught the local people how to grow it and smoke it and said, get up off your knees, the colonial United States, the imperialistic United States owes you food stamps and welfare and so consequently, a lot of damage was done and the 4,000 were forgotten. You know, recently, I have been asked in the last six months or so, I have been asked to speak at several schools here. Regarding the war, regarding the Marines. And I'm shocked at the lack of knowledge that these kids have regarding Saipan and the war and the battle of Saipan. These are not only Saipanese. American kids are in these schools. I say Americans, we're all Americans, but the haoles, and the questions they ask me after I give my talk and show some films. I have some good Navy footage. Very gory stuff. And the kids will ask, what nations were fighting here? You know, there is only the United States and Japan. And things like, is war enjoyable? Kids asking this. And I can see where they get that, where you see these shoot 'em up things on TV. And-

Q: Rambo-type films.

Gabaldon. Yeah.

Q: But, Guy, I can tell you from my experience at the USS Arizona Memorial, where we have

over two million visitors a year, that is not uncommon. I have had people come up and ask who won the war. So I think that-

Gabaldon: But, we all know that Japan won the war.

Q: Well, maybe some of us do and some of us don't, but some of us don't even know who the combatants were. And I think that is a problem and part of what our challenge in the National Park Service, here at American Memorial or War in the Pacific, or at the Arizona Memorial, is to be a center for learning. So that both kids of the United States and perhaps kids in Japan, come there and have an opportunity to hear our side of the story. And what you bring up has been brought up by many, many veterans, because sometimes when they come to the memorial they say, why are those brochures in Japanese? And they are offended. And we explain to them, they are in Japanese so that we can tell our side of the story. So that they can come away because most kids in Japanese schools and even those who get American history lessons in American schools, don't have the background. They don't even know who won World War II and it so deeply affects their lives.

Gabaldon: But the memorials here, though, Dan, I keep going back to 50 years with no recognition whatsoever. These people were in the war. The average American didn't see battle. These people saw it, although those that saw it are about my age, and so there are very few left. But even back then, for the past 50 years, no one-

--01:19:01 - 01:23:28

Q: So is what you are saying, that what is important is that we don't lose this memory and you feel that here in Saipan, that memory has been lost of these 4,000 men and their contributions because it took so long to get the memorial built. Is that the essence of- of what we are talking about?

Gabaldon: Oh, well that would be sour grapes. That would be kicking a dead horse.

Q: No, but that is the problem as you see it, that this history is slipping away and it took 50 years for that memorial to be built and how much has been lost-

Gabaldon: Yeah, but here on out, it is going to make that much difference, it's over, it's gone, but certainly I feel bad about the past 50 years and maybe that is kicking a dead horse, but you know, there is an inscription at Banzai Cliff. One of the latest memorials there and quite large, a big rock-like with a smooth face on it. Take a look at it. It's a Japanese memorial and it says, the brave soldiers died defending their country. That is a big, fat lie. I feel like getting a satchel charge of dynamite and blowing that thing up. They were not defending their country here. This was not Japan. This was stolen, a stolen island. And it makes them seem like heroes, like victims. The cruel Americans came here and I have heard local people, one time this guy here, he was a Congressman and I write some pretty tough stuff and the newspapers would, the editorial page would print. They don't anymore. They think I'm too radical, but as a consequence of the things that I have written, one legislator came up to me and says, you know, we didn't invite you Marines here. I said, of course not, you weren't born when I came here. And I said, as for inviting us here, I said, the people here were Japanese nationals. I said, you ought to get on your knees and say thanks to the Marines, to those that liberated Saipan. You know, on the 4th of July, when they have the celebration here, it's not the 4th of July as you and I know it, Independence Day. It's liberation from the American concentration camp. Where could we have put these people, Dan? You see, the [unclear] government was paying for several years to bring a guy, he's a PhD from Chicago, he's a Puerto Rican, Dr. Patanzas, I think his name is. He would write the speeches for the 4th of July for these senators, uh, he was the Speaker of the House at one time. PTL. Let me tell you, when I hear that. I heard it on the radio as I was driving to the parade grounds and I thought that was written in Moscow. As anti-American a speech as I have ever heard. I believe I'm telling you things that you are not aware of, Dan.

Q: Maybe, and that is fine. The flavor of the speeches, however yesterday by the governor and such were very supportive of-

Gabaldon: Beautiful, wonderful speeches. One who gave one of the best speeches, he was standing up there and he praised the Marines and the liberation and all. I've got copies and you will see it in my book, I've got copies of his editorials, where he said the cruel imperialist Americans came here and put a gun to my father's head and said, you forced him to be Americans, and this goes on and on every week.

Q: Do you think maybe perhaps that-

Gabaldon: Why that 180 degree?

Q: I don't know, I just- maybe I'm suggesting, maybe this is a new beginning for all of you.

Gabaldon: I hope so. Do you think they are born again? Could be.

Q: All of us grow and change.

Gabaldon: Could be. This particular guy, his MC there yesterday, very intelligent. This guy can do a tremendous amount of good, but he was hitting the US week after week in his editorial. And I mean, viciously. You will read it in my book and I quote verbatim.

--01:23:28 - 01:26:29

Q: Let's talk a little bit about some of the things that happened in your life. Of course your exploits here have been recalled in film, Hell to Eternity. You have been honored to be on This is Your Life, of which we are going to have a copy of this program shown after your interview. You have been on quiz shows, national quiz shows. And you are, you will never admit this, I know, because you are a very humble man, but you are an American hero and your exploits have been an inspiration to many Americans and I told you, when I was a kid, I wanted always to meet this Guy Gabaldon, and here I am, interviewing you here.

Gabaldon: That blond, blue eyed, tall Marine?

Q: No, I just thought you were part of my cultural background and I identified strongly with that. I am very proud of it.

Gabaldon: Thank you.

Q: And we had an opportunity yesterday to fly over to Tinian and you and I stood there and looked at where those atomic bombs were assembled. It changed the course of human history. Not our history, human history. And it was a powerful place. It was very powerful. Both Lieutenant Shick and I were there and you have been over there so many times.

Gabaldon: Sheek.

Q: Sheek.

Gabaldon: Major.

Q: Major. He was a lieutenant here, that's right. I have demoted him. Major Sheek, and it was an experience that I will never forget. Yesterday I spent it with two veterans who 50 years ago were on the beaches there and trying to survive and trying to take this island.

Gabaldon: We need more Americans like you, Dan.

Q: Well, I'm not saying this for my own benefit-

Gabaldon: No, but I sense that you feel this Americanism spirit and this is great.

Q: I have a sense of history and certainly a sense of American history, which I studied in college and that was, yesterday, was a real powerful moment. Today, of course-

Gabaldon: But you almost killed me there, you know.

Q: Well, they are not going to know what that is, but we had to start the plane, but good thing I had good instruction from you. We are looking back now, 50 years and a part of an oral history is to record your thoughts. When you think of the Saipan campaign and you are around it everyday, is there anything that flashes immediately to the forefront as kind of, this is how I remember Saipan immediately. Is it going through those jungles and trying to get those guys?

Gabaldon: No, I don't know, maybe, maybe I'm just different. I hear so many guys say, oh I don't want to talk about it. And I say, I want to talk about it. It's an experience you can't buy for millions of dollars. There is just no way. And it's interesting and I like to talk about it. Oftentimes it's taken wrong, as arrogance.

--01:26:30 - 01:28:52

Q: Do you think sometimes people misinterpret you?

Gabaldon: I think so. When I first came back to Saipan 14 years ago, I got off the plane here and I can't describe to you what I felt in that I'm back where it took place. This is Saipan. I can't believe I'm back on Saipan. I would come up to somebody and say, hey, you know, I was here during the campaign. And they would look at me, you know. I would say, aren't they interested? Not me, not anything I may have done, but I'm back here. Do you know so and so, Mr. Sablan, Mr. Tenorio and I would describe them. I know these people, I knew these people. And I get a blank stare and no one cared. It took a while. And pretty soon, I said, nobody wants to hear this. Not hear what I may have accomplished, what I may have gone through. Just the fact that I was here. And it took a while. And I made enemies because of that. I was called arrogant, that I claimed I won the war by myself. I didn't, this was- it was like a kid with a new toy. And this is

what a lot of these guys felt yesterday, they came back and they had tears in their eyes. And a lot of people misinterpret this. If they don't have tears in their eyes, they say, I've heard guys yesterday, the day before, the last three or four days, coming to people and saying, hey I was here and I remember 14 years back. That is sad. It was so sad for me. I have gotten over it. I have gotten bitter, I guess, but then I was hit in the paper by different people, this guy claims he won the war by himself. He's living in the past. And it- this is such great history, this Saipan. And it was taken out on me. It was- now I just fly my airplane and I just- just lead my life and that is it.

--01:28:52 - 01:32:17

Q: Well, I think that a lot of people look up to you and I think that you being chosen as Grand Marshall is reflective of a lot of people's attitudes.

Gabaldon: I'm grateful for that honor. I think that honor should have been given to others. There was a guy there with one arm. Another guy there with one leg gone. I think they should have had that honor. But they gave- I gave nothing. I enjoyed what I was doing. This is what I was trying to get over to you. I gave nothing.

Q: But you-

Gabaldon: Why that honor? I lost nothing, I gave nothing. I absorbed. I got a lot out of this, you see? I hadn't thought of that. I hadn't thought of that before and now that I mentioned this guy with one arm. They gave. Now all of a sudden I look back and I say, what did I give? I gave nothing.

Q: It isn't what you give, but maybe what you risked.

Gabaldon: What did I risk? I was laughing while I was running-

Q: You risked your life.

Gabaldon: You know, one night we went into Japanese territory and it was the scouts and snipers. They were tops in the Marine Corps and everyone respects them. They are tough guys and it was 19 in this one group. There was Sergeant Hoot Gibson. His name was Gibson and every Gibson is Hoot automatically. So he came to our headquarters, the Regimental Intelligence and he says, Captain Schwab, have you got a man I can take? He says, anyone that understands Japanese? He said, we are going on patrol tonight into Japanese territory. And I said, hey, I will go. And Hurley, this close buddy of mine, he says, I will go with you. So there is Lloyd Hurley and myself and we meet this patrol down by the lines- do you know where the Seventh Day Adventist Clinic is? That was our lines at the time. All the way across the island. And so it had big sandbags and all, and machine gun emplacements, and so we lined up there, the scouts and snipers and then there was a corpsman and then Hurley and I took up the tail end and it's getting late, it's about, I don't know, about like 9:00 at night and we are laying there and I reach over and I say, Hurley, I says, find out what is happening. When are we leaving? Hurley reached over and taps Sculley, the corpsman, and Sculley goes to reach over and no one is there, they were gone. See, they are so independent. They work so closely, so as a team that they, I guess they forgot that they had three other guys with them and so they shoved off, they were in Japanese territory. I says Hurley, I says, man, they are going to call us chicken. I said, let's get down to the line, we'll go look for them. So we get down and talk to- there is a young lieutenant there, and I said, I asked him, where this patrol is. He says, they are gone, they are in Japanese territory. So I said, we are gonna go look for them. He said, you are crazy, you can't do that. Nighttime going into Japanese territory, I had been doing this right along as an individual. So we jump over the barbed wire and all and we get way in, going towards Garapan. That is a long ways off. We're in what they call the San Jose area, and so we go and go and we don't find them. [video jumps back to telling same story]

--01:32:20 - 01:33:28 [repeated story]

Gabaldon: We're leaving there, and I reach over and I say, Hurley, I says, find out what is happening. When are we leaving? Hurley reached over and taps Sculley, the corpsman, and

Sculley goes to reach over and no one is there, they were gone. See, they are so independent. They work so closely, so as a team that they, I guess they forgot that they had three other guys with them and so they shoved off, they were in Japanese territory. I says Hurley, I says, man, they are going to call us chicken. I said, let's get down to the line, we'll go look for them. So we get down and talk to- there is a young lieutenant there, and I said, I asked him, where this patrol is. He says, they are gone, they are in Japanese territory. So I said, we are gonna go look for them. He said, you are crazy, you can't do that. Nighttime going into Japanese territory, I had been doing this right along as an individual. So we jump over the barbed wire and all and we get way in, going towards Garapan. That is a long ways off. We're in what they call the San Jose area, and so we go and go and we don't find them.

--01:33:28 - 01:35:08

Gabaldon: So we are coming back and coming close to the lines, it's a farmer's field, it's furrows there and we had a whistle. I will never forget, the password was whistle twice and then you would be challenged. So I whistled and when I did, every machine gun and BAR and M-1, every rifle and grenades, and all, opened up on us. So we hit the deck and we get in these furrows, that is the only thing that saved us. These guys are just spraying the whole area. And I'm like, oh my god man, we are dead. We are dead. We can't run back that way, that is Japanese and these are Americans shooting at us, our fellow Marines. So we lay there and wait and wait and then I whistled again and they opened up and Sculley started crying. That doesn't take away from this man's bravery, he says, we've had it. I says yeah. I says, I am going to run. So I got up and I ran. The hell with the password, I just ran. I said, don't shoot, don't fire! So they held the fire and I jumped over the bags and I said, you bunch of bastards, what are you doing? So I explained to them and this lieutenant says, but the scouts and snipers are back already. So they thought we were Japanese, you see. So I hollered at Sculley and Hurley and they come running and jump over the barbed wire. They almost wiped out a few Marines there.

Q: They were upset?

Gabaldon: Oh, were they upset. Sculley wasn't crying anymore.

Q: His temper was up a little?

Gabaldon: What- how can- this is impossible. You can't fire back, you see. But anyway, we didn't -

--01:35:08 - 01:37:46

Q: Was that the closer you ever got to getting knocked off?

Gabaldon: No, I got shot twice. I was hit with frag one time. It's a weird deal, it was Marpi Point, right near where the Banzai Cliffs are. We had two prisoners sitting down and there were a bunch of Marines around and I'm talking to these guys and one Marine says, hey Gabby, hit the deck! A Japanese is coming up from the cliffs, come on over the cliff and he had this green shirt and a green helmet. They weren't all that shape and that color and so I says, [speaks in Japanese], raise your hands! And he raises his hands and then he puts his hands down, he had grenades on his belt, puts one hand down, I says, [speaks Japanese] once more. Raises his hands, puts his hands down and I shot him. I let go all 15 rounds and he blew up. He blew in half.

Q: From the hand grenades?

Gabaldon: Obviously, I hit a detonator. I mean, I can't think of anything else. So these two guys here, they got up and they started running toward the cliff and I said, [speaks in Japanese], I said, halt, I said, stop! I don't want to kill you! But they kept running. What I think is that they must have wondered, what kind of bullets does this guy have? Blowing people in half, you see. And so they- I had to kill them, just before they went over the cliff, because once down the cliff, they would come back, killing Marines, you see. So no, that wasn't the closest I have come. The closest I have come to getting killed by our side, yeah. Friendly fire, they call it.

Q: You must have encountered a lot of that. If you are going out there scouting, they don't know who you are.

Gabaldon: No. No. Friendly fire? No, one night up in the hills, it was my fault, I mean, that friendly fire. I was caught in certain areas at night, the sun had gone down, I figured, well, I can't go back. It was pretty hot that night, firing. So I got down in these rocks and just so happened, unbeknownst to me, that was a target area that night. And they started lobbing them in just all over and one, if one had come right where I was sitting, naturally it would wipe me out. There was occasions of friendly fire, but you know, in all of the times that I brought Japanese back, no, usually I would bring them back in the day. I would have my prisoners at night and the early the next morning, I would come back and I would have them waving t-shirts and the whole bit.

Q: And you would trail behind them?

Gabaldon: Sometimes alongside. Alongside or behind.

--01:37:46 - 01:40:40

Q: For your service here, you received what medals?

Gabaldon: I was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor and [audio jumps] of the citations in my book and I ended up with the Navy Cross, which is the highest medal in the Navy.

Q: That is correct. Your last one took you back, literally out of the war, eventually back to a couple hospitals.

Gabaldon: I was really sad about that. I got shot in the hand and shot in the ribs and they were going to cut my hand off.

Q: Is that the scar from-

Gabaldon: Yeah, that is the machine gun one. And what teed me off is that they shot my watch off and [audio glitch] I have the watch at home, the bullet went through the band. It was a [Japanese word] for runner to the Seiko. I've got that in a case at home.

Q: Do you still have good use of that hand?

Gabaldon: Yeah, well, I don't have the motion I have in the other hand, but yeah, it's strong. I can still fight a little bit. I almost died that night because of the operation on my hand.

Q: How is that?

Gabaldon: Well, the one guy picked me up and threw me on his shoulders and they had gotten my watch and ran down Mt. Tapochau and there was an Army field hospital, see Marines don't have hospitals, and it's, you know where the Esco store up on, that was the hospital then, field hospital. And they took me in there and they- the bone was sticking out of my hand, had come back against my arm. And the doctor put the- they had me on a table and this one doctor put a piece of carton, of cardboard between my face and my hand so I couldn't see. I says, are you going to cut it off? And he says, just start counting. So I guess he hadn't decided yet. I said, tell me, are you going to cut it off? And then I started counting and I went to sleep and I woke up the next morning and I had a cast from here to here to here and I could move my fingers. And I said, I've still got my hand! And this, I will never forget this Army nurse, Miss Kennedy, beautiful young gal, I says, hey, I've got my hand. And she says, you know, you almost died. She says, you went down to your last heartbeat and I says, loss of blood? And she said, no, don't ever let anybody give you morphine. She said, you are highly allergic to morphine. She said, we almost killed you last night. She said, you went right down. She said, you scared us. So years later I was in the hospital for another incident and they gave me Demerol and that damn near killed me. So I can't- anyway, as a consequence of that wound, I went down to the last heartbeat.

--01:40:40 - 01:41:42

Q: Geez. I suspect, Guy, that we could go on for hours and hours, but I think maybe the This is Your Life, will give another perspective and such. And so I just want to thank you for sharing what's been almost an hour and a half.

Gabaldon: Thank you very, very much for having me here. I hope I have enlightened somebody or those that are on the island as to what really happened here.

Q: Well, I think that that is part of your mission and I wish you well in that, because-

Gabaldon: Let's never forget the 4,000.

Q: I don't think they will ever be forgotten, thanks to a lot of things that you have done, and you and your fellow commemorative people have done an outstanding job here and I know that they are always on your mind, because every time I have met you, you have mentioned it. So on behalf of the National Park Service, we would just like to thank you for having this interview today.

Gabaldon: Thank you very much. Thank you Dan.

Q: Wow, what an interview.

[END OF SESSION]