

# National Park Service (NPS)

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Mariana Islands Wartime Experience through Oral Histories Fellowship  
(WAPA 4170)  
Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship Program



John Eardley  
June 15, 2004

Interview conducted by Rose Manibusan  
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508 compliant version by Michael Faist

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This digitization was made possible through the National Park Service by a grant from the National Park Foundation through generous support from the Mellon Foundation.

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Interviewee: John Eardley

Military Rank: 2nd Marine Division - 2nd Division HQ

Interviewer: Rose Manibusan

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Saipan

Date: June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004

**--00:00:00 AUDIO DESCRIPTION**

Narrator: The frame opens with a closeup on Eardley. He is white, wearing a green Marines T-shirt, and a gold and leather watch on his left wrist. Behind him are yellow curtains, with white diamond pattern overlay.

\*please note John does not always speak clearly.\*

Q: The following oral history interview was conducted by Rose Manibusan, Chief of Interpretation at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Saipan, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at 12:05 to record an oral history interview with John Eardley, who served in the United States Marine Corps, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division during World War II. This interview is being made by the National Park Service for the American Memorial Park. For the record, could you please state and spell your full name?

John Eardley: John M. Eardley. E-A-R-D-L-E-Y

Q: John, I understand that the National Park has your permission to make this recording and to retain all literary and property rights deriving from it – is that correct?

John Eardley: Yes-Yes.

**--00:01:03**

Q: John, could you please tell us where you were born and the date of your birth?

John Eardley: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1922.

Q: And did you grow up there?

John Eardley: Yes. I had a twin brother.

Q: A twin brother?

John Eardley: I'm better looking though.

Q: [Laughter] Did you go to school there?

John Eardley: Yes, graduated there.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your family.

John Eardley: Well, let's see. We had a great time when we were kids, during the Depression, you know.

It was hard to get some food, sometimes. So my mother put Jim and I in an orphan's home for about five months to get food you know... But they really – they were Catholic, but they were quite strict and you know, so you couldn't go outside the gate or anything. And I saw a sparrow went flying outside the gate and I said, Mom, he's free. I wish I was a bird. She said, that's it, I'm taking you out of here. We'll starve together. Well, we did okay. And then she died when she was 49 and I still had a year of high school to go and so I went to live with our grandmother and lived there for a year until we joined the Marine Corps, till I graduated and joined the Marine Corps.

Q: And what was your mother's name?

John Eardley: Cecile. C-E-C-I-L-E. Um-she was married – my Dad got a divorce and remarried again and then he got a divorce again and – I don't know.

Q: And your dad's name?

John Eardley: Bern. Bernie. Bernard.

Q: And you said you have a twin brother.

John Eardley: Jim, James.

**--00:02:47**

Q: Could you tell us where you were and what you were doing when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked?

John Eardley: We just got home from church, it was a Sunday and I never heard of Pearl-Pearl Harbor, I couldn't believe – I was only 18 or so, I didn't think much of it. Gee, Pearl Harbor, what does that mean now? I didn't think much of it at the time.

Q: So when did you join the military service?

John Eardley: Right after high school in 1942-July 1942.

Q: And how old were you when you joined?

John Eardley: 19.

Q: And what motivated you to join?

John Eardley: Well, to be truthful, I saw a picture with a Marine and all these good looking nurses and everything and uniforms and I said, boy, that is for us! Jim and I both said, that's for us! And not only that, uh-but we heard a lot about the Marine Corps, there was something special about it, I thought. And I said, I don't know if we can do it or not, because it's pretty tough training. Jim said, aw come on, you can do it. He was more like the aggressive type. I said, well, if you are going to leave me, I will go. Trouble is, I think – I would probably look good in a uniform too, I said. And so we joined up.

--00:03:56

Q: Can you describe your basic training experience as if you were telling young man, joining the military?

John Eardley: I would tell him not to join. No, not really. Well, they didn't – I was really homesick. Jim wasn't quite that bad, I was homesick. And...

Q: So you joined together?

John Eardley: Yes, right out of San Diego. And well they treated us like we were non-entities. And gee, I was really mistreated and strangers all around and it got to me, I was really homesick. And we had huts at that time and Jim got in a different hut. I had to trade with another guy, so I could be with him. We had smokers every Monday night and had celebrities come to the stage and entertain us and believe it or not San Diego was really cold. July and August was really cold. So I took my green coat on and I sat next to this guy and he said, "God I'm cold," he says, "can I share your coat with you?" I said, I guess so, you know. I let him and he said, I'm really freezing. So I said, why don't we just go home. Where is your hut? I will take you to your hut. He was kind of limping along; I took him to the hut. Put him down and he had [unclear] meningitis and he died about three days later. And I was walking along, marching along and I could hardly move, my legs hurt so I could hardly walk. And they have sick bay in the morning, but they have long lines and I said, I don't think I can stand up long enough to be in that line.

If I can last till Sunday, Sunday is our day to do whatever we want to do, I said, then I can sleep all day. And so I got through Saturday somehow and that night I got a terrific headache and I said, geez, I'm burning up. So I ran over and I took a shower and I had to crawl back, my legs hurt so much. I got in my bunk and I vomited over the guy underneath me, my buddy. And they took me to the hospital and I had meningitis. And... so anyway, to make a long story short, they sent me home for 30 days and I didn't have any money and I had to see the Chaplain and I'm a Catholic, but the Jewish Chaplain, a beautiful guy, he said, do you have enough money? I said, yes sir I have. But I only had about five bucks and an apple. So I wanted to go home for sure. So anyway, I went home and I got the train and

I was talking to a civilian guy, come on, eat with me! I said, oh I'm not hungry, I already had dinner.

He said, come on you can sit by my anyway, we will talk. I said, okay. He bought me the whole dinner and then I got home and nobody was home. I was like geez, there is nobody here. And I got to – I could hardly wait to get back because I read about the Marines on Guadalcanal. My grandma made pancakes me in the morning, she said, "Jack, eat these." Grandma, listen, I got to take it easy, you know. I can't eat all that stuff. But anyway, I could hardly wait to go back and I never got homesick after that. I could hardly wait it get back and I had to repeat boot camp – part of boot camp, because Jim was already through. And um-anyway, I finally got through the rifle range and all that stuff, you know, graduated. Never had to take tests for school and Jim and I made a compact, Jim said – my mother said, Jim, take care of Jack. He said, I will. And I said, when we get to telephone school, flunk the radio test. And we get to the telephone test and pass that and we will get a job at the telephone company after the war. He said, okay, I will flunk the radio test.

So he had taken it before me and I came back and I flunked it, now you. I went in there and – hey, put down something! I said, yes sir. The next day I go to radio, radio – radio – I said, you got the wrong one – telephone! He said, radio. So we got separated that way. So we didn't really get together that much after that.

**--00:07:44**

**Q:** What do you remember most about boot camp?

John Eardley: I remember how it finally got to I really liked it. I used to run a lot in high school, every morning you had to run around the whole compound and if felt so good running and I just loved that, but what I remember most about it-the sergeant was that he was always that way a kind of a grouchy guy. And he called me – everybody names, I wouldn't repeat to you what names they called. Anyway, I always walked with my hands in my pocket and so he said, hey, put sand in his pocket – sew 'em up. So I had to go through boot camp with sand in my pocket, so I wouldn't put my hands in my pocket. I remember that about boot camp.

Q: And what was your first assignment after basic training? After the camp?

John Eardley: We had to go to radio school. That was 12 weeks.

Q: 12 weeks?

John Eardley: Yeah I guess I did pretty well on the test, because they sent me to San Francisco and I was there for ten months and that was the deal. Well... In fact I was in charge of 19 other Marines going up there, I couldn't believe it. A lot of guys were older than me. So I went to the guy and said, I wanted to go overseas, I didn't come to spend the war in the city. He said, boys, we need you here too. We need you here too. He said, you will probably all be married within the month, there are all women here you know. So after I got used to it, then I met my wife and I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay there. But then the BAMs came in - Broad-assed Marines they called them. Women Marines. And they - the lieutenant said, "John, do you still want to go overseas"? I said, well, okay sir if you want. You are going to Camp Pendleton. I got on the Camp Pendleton train to go overseas.

**--00:09:28**

Q: And then what was your rank and your military branch that you served with.

John Eardley: Private First Class... I got that when I got out of radio school.

Q: And what were your duties?

John Eardley: Well, in San Francisco we had to check radios and make sure they were clean and they operated efficiently because they got sent overseas you know? They checked them and dropped them and all that; they took all kinds of banging to make sure they worked right. But it got you would go to work and the civilians go with you and I had a deal at the YMCA and got assistance, what a deal that was. I thought I had it made for the rest of the war. We had to test the radios and all that stuff.

Q: And what was your first um-Pacific campaign?

John Eardley: Campaign? Saipan.

Q: Can you describe in detail what it was like as you prepared out at sea before the invasion of Saipan?

John Eardley: You mean training and all that?

Q: No, what it was like to be on the ship.

John Eardley: Oh, when I was on the ship. We had a beer party first – well, I joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division as a replacement for the [unintelligible] in Tarawa, they had Camp Tarawa there and we trained there, went on a ship and had a beer party and we [unintelligible] between rank, the officers were just like us, we drank when we got on the ship. She didn't feel that little bit stoned a little bit until a guy says, okay Marines, head up on the bridge, we are going to head to a place that I'm sure you guys have all heard of, Saipan. Saipan? Where the hell is Saipan? He said, "well, they've got terrible things, they've got elephantiasis on it, they have bloody diarrhea and all that stuff. You are going to invade and conquer the island of Saipan. " So it was no big deal, we thought. And it took 30 days to get there. And we just ran around ship and practiced [unclear] on stuff. And we got there, took about 30 days and we woke up one morning just surrounded with all the ships from everywhere. You could just see ships all over the ocean.

And we got there and you could see this island, all burning red. And that's Saipan. Gee, nobody is alive I'm sure, there. You know? But what else?

**--00:11:37**

Q: Do you remember the services before the actual assault? The services that were given to the men aboard the ship?

John Eardley: Oh. Give me a minute.



[crying]

The Chaplain said, "Okay men, let's get up on the deck here... I'm sure you know that by this time tomorrow, a lot of us won't be here." So he led us in a prayer. And a lot of Marines around me and I a little bit, I said, well, there are a lot of Marines here, I feel secure all together. It didn't bother me that much you know but... I was okay after that.

Q: Can you describe what your first impression of the island was?

John Eardley: From the ship? I just-I just said it was burning.

Q: And then you got off the ship into [unclear] boats or -?

John Eardley: Yes, we had to line up, and uh-to get the landing, everybody had their position by the landing and they said, okay, you guys go, you guys go. And this guy and I were both radio men, he was my buddy. And we got in the net and he looked around, he looked at me and our team and [unintelligible] hmmm - like that. But we weren't really afraid; we were just going on an adventure. And sometimes that landing, it's- it's kind of tricky because the boat goes like this [motions hand back and forth] and it was kind of a windy day, as I remember, some of the guys would break their leg against the side of the ship. We had to jump up into the Higgins boat. The sergeant says, "okay you guys," he said, "protect your radio, whatever you do. If you get hit, put the radio up out of the water. Keep the radio. Keep the radio dry, because they are not expendable, you are." And I thought, what a thing to say! And then I realized the guy was right, they need the radios. And that is where he went there. Then we got and went in – we circled around all night, because we couldn't get in. So the guy the lieutenant general, Holland Smith, and they had to call him Holland Med because he took [unintelligible] you know. And he didn't want us to go in, he said, there is too much confusion on the beach, I don't want any more dead people if possible.

I learned that later. So we circled all night and the beach – we could hear plop, plop, the shells coming in. So we hear the amphibian tractors that crawl along, all go like this – on this side, blew up, this blew up. I thought, geez, you know.

[crying] [unintelligible talking]

I think about that - you are bringing up memories I don't want to think about. And we got to the beach okay. And then I lost my [unclear] like an idiot that night. A Japanese plane came out, shooting at us and I ran and dropped in fox – a little hole there, a foxhole, and there were two other guys there and I looked up and I saw a plane coming through [unintelligible] and I could see the pilot and I'm looking at that son of a bitch, right in the face. I'm sure I'm going to die, but he's going to look at me. And then he flew off above the ocean and started shooting at the other ships [unintelligible] but that was a brave pilot. One lone Jap through all the ships and nobody brought him down. He was probably full of bullet holes, but that was a brave guy. We had some confusion because AMTRAK drifted down this way a little bit where they should have been over here, but then I picked up a rifle and we finally got [unclear] in forward position so we were doing okay. But it was so hot – God it was hot. We had a canteen of water and I would drink it and I couldn't feel the water, it was so hot. It would just roll right out. It was so hot.

And I remember we had those land crabs, I couldn't stand those land crabs – a buddy and I took a foxhole, and put shelling, shell cases around the foxhole to keep the land crabs out. But you heard them scratching against the doggone thing. We tried to sleep but I woke up one night with one on my face. That did it for me. So he had a cigarette lighter and he flipped the light and I had a bayonet and I hit those things, and by morning it looked like shish kabob on that bayonet you know? So the next night I wouldn't sleep in the foxhole. I would rather sleep above it on the foxhole. The sergeant said, John, you better get in that foxhole. He said, there is a lot of dead guys down there, if you go to sleep above, I'm going to put you down there wake among the dead guys, you don't want to do that. I said no sir, I don't. He was killed two day later and we put him down there. He said, I would never go to sleep there, if I go to sleep there I'm gonna get killed, and he got killed by one airplane.

**--00:16:25**

Q: And who was that?

John Eardley: I remember his name, John – God what was his name – he got the Navy

Cross in [unclear]... I can't think of his last name right now.

Q: Can you describe in detail your personal battle experience from that day on?

John Eardley: Compared to other guys, it was nothing.

I remember they had a tank attack that night, but I think some Marine dropped some grenades on a Jap tank and they were blowing it up and they saved us that way. I was on the radio all the time. We made it kind of humorous – I was on the radio by myself and my buddies were all around me, and it was quiet and all of a sudden something hit me, smashed me in the back and I went like that – and it was a chicken. Poor little chicken. But I never told anybody because they would call me Chicken Marine.

[phone rings x3]

**--00:17:30**

Q: You were talking about your personal battle experiences on Saipan.

John Eardley: Okay, we had a tank attack that night and it saved our CP and the Japanese had these flares they would send up, they would come down, they looked like parachutes and they [unclear] you are not supposed to move, so we knew they were near us. So anyway, the tank attack was stopped that night, we had to move out, move up toward Garapan you know? And we saw these Japanese attacking – this one Japanese guy was hanging off the tank, he had this beautiful uniform, sword, boots, braids hanging through his nose, you know. I stepped on something; I think it was a hand – Jesus!

[crying]

It was Japanese, but still a human hand. And then – okay, then the Kimono people – the Japanese Air Force had leaflets] they dropped so that the Kimono could see them stand Garapan, but the Japanese made the Kimonos move out of Garapan. So we bombed a lot of Kimonos unintentionally. But they came down toward the beach and my buddy and I were

moving up and we saw this girl – a nice young couple with a couple little kids, one was a girl and one was a boy. And so I thought I would give them some food, you know?

So we gave them some food and they gave it to the boy. And he would eat it all and they didn't give it to the girl. We said, how come? And so we took [unclear] and pushed him aside and said, come here you little girl, you eat that, you eat that. So we gave her the food. And I never cared what kind of kids I had, but at that time I kind of preferred a girl because they always had the backseat. My buddy said, we want girls, we want daughters. But anyway, they were happy they came out.

**—00:19:14**

Also, that evening, underneath a tree, there were a couple Japanese soldiers and the captain had a Japanese interpreter with him, I guess and he says, you are going to have to come out or we are going to throw the flame thrower on you. And, I guess they wouldn't – well, the first guy tried to get out and the other guy kept pulling him back. He says, "I will count to 20 and when I turn it on, you are going to be dead." And so he counted to 20 slowly and again, the guy kept going, but he kept pulling him back. So he threw the flame thrower on them and they were burned toast. That was that. And also, we had – we were assigned to, my buddy and I, we had [unclear] on the radio, sometimes we had to do some other kind of work too. So we had to burn down a supply house and so we burned it down and you could see the Japanese dead were laying around and I picked up a wallet and looked at it [laugh] – there was a picture of a beautiful Japanese girl. What a beauty. The Japanese laying there was probably her boyfriend or husband. I thought, Jesus. [crying] I hate to do this, you know? Ruin all their food and everything. It kind of bothered me, so...what else can you?

**—00:20:30**

Q: So what was the objective fighting in Garapan?

John Eardley: Our objective was to go to the top of Mount-Mount Tupuchu...

Q: Tapochau.

John Eardley: ... Tapochau. And we had to go through Garapan, it lead all the way up the mountain. It was rainy and then cool – geez.

Q: I understand that Garapan...

John Eardley: Pardon me?

Q: I understand that Garapan was the first hand to hand combat in the Pacific up to that time?

John Eardley: Well... luckily I didn't have to do that. I was on the radio constantly. The radio would slip off my – I would grab – slip on that sugarcane you guys have here. Why don't you get rid of that sugarcane?

Q: So were you with the tanks with the radio?

John Eardley: No, I was in the infantry.

Q: You were in the infantry.

John Eardley: Yeah. Yes, I was in communication with the forward battalion and all that stuff. They had to report to me every ten or 15 minutes about how things were going. And it was pretty – but we got up to the top, that was our objective. We finally – it took about 25 days to get to the top there.

**--00:21:29**

Q: Can you explain what it was like trying to get up to that mountain?

John Eardley: You got through all that stuff, you know, the other guys did, I just had to take the radio, I had a lot easier job than most of those guys – those poor guys. You had to struggle up there and it was raining and a couple times it was a quiet night and the guys would light a cigarette – the cigarettes were blowing, going all through the mountain and I said, you better get out those cigarettes, or get them unlit right now, [unclear] so click, they

went out just like that. Those guys didn't get it – they would say, you bastards! They would cuss, you ain't going to stop us. And it was rainy and cold and my buddy got killed.

I can't tell you anymore.

Q: What was his name? Your buddy?

John Eardley: I can't think of his name. I wish to hell I could. I can't think of his name. He got shot in the groin and he bled to death. [unclear] got hurt, I was the only one, really the only guy around that wasn't hurt. I said, how come I'm not hurt, and everybody else is? You know, everybody got hurt. I looked over and saw the Pacific, on top of the mountain, God, I couldn't believe it. It was our objective. We had to go back down on one of the ships for three or four days to go to Tinian, you know. We had to climb up that ladder, that is kind of tiring, that is kind of hard climbing up that ladder, you know, with all that gear on and stuff, you know. I hadn't changed socks in 25 days. I think most of us were really smelly. I couldn't stand him and he couldn't stand me. [laughs]

Q: You said it took days to get up to Mount Tapochau?

John Eardley: It took days, yes.

Q: It took days to get up to Mount Tapochau?

John Eardley: Oh yes , oh yes, it was over – when we got to the top of Tapochau [unclear] it was over for us and I was on the island for 25 days. So it must have taken us 25 days from the landing to get there. Then we had to go back to Tinian for three or four days rest, I mean, on the ship.

Q: Once you got to the top, what were your thoughts?

John Eardley: Oh God, oh look at that beautiful ocean. I said, there is some beauty left in the world. We all broke down. [crying] [unclear] just sat down and prayed. And then went back down to the ship and we were so happy, God, we were singing, really happy.

Also, something else- another thing I forgot to tell you. We had a duty –we had to volunteer to pick up the wounded. And so we picked up some of the wounded guys – I never picked up any dead men, but there were some, you could see a Jeep truck with a dead man in it and it had a top over the fellow, but you could see their dungarees and the book sticking out of their back pocket. Oh God.

Anyway, the wounded guys, I guess they thought I was a medic, they were all dirty, I said, “you are going to be okay, buddy.” He says, “am I bad?” I said, “you are going to go back to the States pretty soon, I have no doubt you know.” But I don’t know what happened to him. Dirty, bloody. That was really – oh, another thing I forgot to tell you. They needed a radio man to go and set up a command post up on the hill, I forget where it was. We had to spread out markers, colored markers is what they called em’-where - so the planes come over and drop rockets.

**—00:24:53**

And so they had these Japanese wells and I would drop my helmet down and pull up some water and wash up somewhat, you know. And the sergeant said, any volunteers to go up there and put those markers out? I will do it sir. He said, but John, it’s your first battle, I want somebody more experienced. And so this is the guy who told me to get in the foxhole and not stay on top. He says, I will go, I am the top man here. He was a sergeant and a corporal went with him and another guy and they went up there and started setting out the [unclear] and a helicopter comes over and I was taking a little bit of a rest and I saw, geez, those rockets are awful-awful close. Next minute, this one guy comes up covered with blood, he says, my God, they are all dead, they are all dead. They cut down – our own plane cut ‘em down unintentionally. I guess a lot of that went on more than you realized. What a shame, he was going to go home after Saipan; he got the Navy Cross [unclear]. It shook me up. But anyway.

**—00:25:48**

Q: Did you encounter um-any of the local population?

John Eardley: Did I meet up...

Q: Did you meet up with any of the local population? You mentioned the girl and the boy -

John Eardley: No they were the only ones. There was one woman that I saw, the captain was talking to her, she was shaking, just like that. I thought geez, just shaking. We said, calm down, calm down. Of course she couldn't, she didn't know what was happening. But I didn't really have any other contact other than that.

Q: How was the battle of Saipan different than the battle of Tinian?

John Eardley: Well, it was much easier. I think Tinian only took nine or ten days. Tinian had problems too, it was raining so hard, but nothing-nothing compared to Saipan. I think it should be compared to D-day, my own personal opinion, but then I don't know what D-day was like.

**---00:26:42**

Q: If there was one thing you could say about your battle experience on Saipan, what would that be?

John Eardley: [crying]

It made me a more compassionate man. More prayful man, more forgiving man. I guess that is about it.

Q: What direction did your life take? Did you go on to another campaign after Saipan and Tinian?

John Eardley: Oh no, we did Tinian and uh, and it was raining like heck and I had this - I didn't like c-rations, I did like the candy - did I tell you that yet? I ate the candy and I was losing weight. And my pants were falling down because I had to take those - they looked like uh-cat food cans, you know, and so I threw it out, I had the radio and it was just too damn much. I was sweating and losing weight.

So I would just eat the candy and - oh that's good. In Tinian it was - I got transferred to



another Company because a Navajo got killed, somebody got killed so I got transferred to take his position and I had the best sergeant, a really neat sergeant and he and I were alone and uh, it was raining like heck that night and I was on duty till about 12:00 and I couldn't copy on the – I couldn't sign the paper, it was too wet, and the mortars were pointed right on us, our own mortars and we were trying to tell them to raise their mortars. I said, "raise your mortars! Raise your mortars you guys, you are firing on our lines!" And he said, okay, take a little rest, John. So I didn't have time to get [unclear], I was wet, so I slept in my poncho and I guess I'm kind of a jerky guy, I put my helmet on my head and I said, boy, just like rain on a tin roof. And I tried to think of something positive about it, and I started laughing a little bit, but the rain is running down my neck. And he said, okay, get on the radio, the next morning, getting on the radio John, right away, I need you on the radio. Sarge, I just can't – I can't handle the radio. What's the matter? I feel lousy. Go up and [unclear] and he took my temperature and it was 102 or something. So he said, go down to the aid truck so I got on the Jeep and a lot of the guys were wounded and I was the only one sitting up and I really felt guilty because they were laying down and I wasn't even wounded.

So I got down and tried to get out of the – the Jeep and they took the other guys to the airport first because they were wounded and I wasn't, so I lay down and I started passing out, in and out of consciousness. And so they looked at my thing – dengue fever, not too bad. But I did have dengue fever, they put it on the side of my thing, you know. And it was up to about 6:00 and the last guy, they took me you know, on the plane and I was sick but I wanted to see what Tinian – what Saipan looked like anyway. It was just about a five minute ride or something like that and I got up and I was so stinky and my watch – I had a leather watch my brother gave me for my birthday and I had sweat through and I had my pocket [unintelligible] picked up my wallet and they had a Navy guy [unintelligible] I-I just cannot do it. I sat down and the Navy guy said, here, eat this Marine. I said, okay. I vomited it all up. Next thing I knew I had an IV in my arm, they burned my clothes, burned my wife's picture and my brother's watch that I had. And I was in the hospital for quite a while and they finally sent me back to Hawaii. That's about it.

Q: And what happened [unintelligible]...

John Eardley: Pardon me?

**--00:30:30**

Q: And what happened after Hawaii?

John Eardley: Well, I was in Hawaii for a while and the doctor says, well, why don't you get up and walk, just help yourself along the wall. So I said okay. I got in the bathroom and I could hardly recognize myself – a beard, looked terrible, you know? And anyway, also when I was back in the hospital in Saipan, I will go back to that, we were supposed to have any water. And so that night the Corpsman – the Corpsman are hard, but they are good guys. I didn't think so at the time. And he came over and I said, "you bastard! Give me some water, you son of a bitch! Give me some water!" He said, you call me names, you are not going to get it. I was really mad. He said, why don't you try to take a walk, take a shower, it will probably help you out, because you need it. All I had was an Army blanket, he took all my clothes and a hot Army blanket was all I had. I said, okay. So I went down to take a shower and I got out of the shower and I couldn't – my legs wouldn't move, I couldn't walk back, I had to crawl back.

So the Army came in, they took me to an Army hospital and the nurse had a nice clean bed and I said, don't put me in a clean bed, I'm too stinking – the nurse said, don't worry about it, I will take care of it. The funny thing about it, you probably won't like this, anyway, she said, we have to give you bath. She washes and she said, can you wash yourself from here on – I said, yes I could, I should have said no. [Laughter]

But anyway, the doctor said, John, I think you can make it back. I said, well, I hope so. But anyway after a while the doctor said, John – they put me on a whole bunch of medicine, they thought I got bitten by a rat or something. But then they found I had yellow jaundice and then I went back to the hospital in Seattle. My wife, my girlfriend, wanted to come up to see me and I didn't want her to see me. I said, if you see me like this, you are not going to like me very well. She came anyway. I couldn't walk off the ship. A lot of people come with their arms open for their boyfriend. I got like this, everyone went right past me, my girlfriend wasn't there. Kind of funny though. Then I got on a bus and went to the hospital.

And I wanted to take my wife, my girlfriend out, she came to see me with her mother, unfortunately, she had her mother with her. I was kind of weak anyway, but – anyway, I asked the doctor if I could have the night off and he said, well, how do you feel? I said, I feel good, but I don't have my uniform. He said, well, there is a sergeant right there by your side, why don't you ask him about it. He had me wearing his sergeant stripped marks and I got a couple salutes and I didn't deserve a salute. But I felt good about that. So then I said to my girlfriend, I got to go back, I don't really – I feel weak right now, but good seeing you. She went home. And then the guy next to me said, why didn't you ask her to marry you? I said, she wouldn't marry me because I wouldn't go to school. I can't- I don't have enough money [unintelligible] and so well, I got married and she works and I get a compensation from the government and you should ask her or somebody else will get her. I said, gee, maybe you are right. You know?

So I wrote her a letter and I asked should I drop it or not? Oh, she is going to say no – I can't stand rejection. But she said yes. That was that. I got transferred to Greater Heights Hospital in Chicago and I got home for Christmas and the first time I had been home in 26 months.

**—00:33:55**

Q: And when was that? What year was that?

John Eardley: It was '44. My brother had been hurt in Guadalcanal. He was there too and we were together for the first time in a long time.

Q: And was that your last campaign?

John Eardley: Yes. And then I got sent down to Philadelphia, I went to high speed radio school and I graduated there and [unintelligible] I thought I was going to get sent out somewhere, but the war ended. And then I went back to California [unintelligible].

Q: Did you work with any of the Navajo code talkers?

---00:34:17

John Eardley: No, I didn't, but I saw one. I didn't even know about it – I knew about it, but I didn't know what they did. I saw one, I think he was killed or hurt; he had a big gash in his neck and whether I replaced him or not, I don't know. But he was face down and that is the only time I ever – I think I heard them on the radio sometimes, but I didn't know what they were talking about. I never was in with one, so I don't know about that.

Q: Wh....

John Eardley: We sure needed them, that is for sure.

—00:35:00

Q: Where were you when the war had ended?

John Eardley: Where was I when... I was in Philadelphia at the Marine barracks down there. I'm telling you, we were so happy, I couldn't believe it. There was yelling – geez! What a time. I was in the parade on 4<sup>th</sup> of July and I couldn't get in touch with my wife, I wanted her to see me in the parade, but I couldn't get in touch with her, and we were all tour guys so we were walking down in Philadelphia and it really felt good. All the little kids, my brother, my sister's girlfriend, my sister's boyfriend is a Marine – [unclear] they were kind of cute.

Then after the parade we went down to get back on the bus to go back and all these women down there and gee – I said, sorry, I'm married! My wife said, I bet you said that. [Laughs]

Q: How did you feel about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

John Eardley: Well, for me, I think I would say that it solved problems for American lives, for me, I thought it was okay. I thought it was okay, because a lot of American guys would have died. Japanese guys too. But I was pro-American and it was fine with me because – I was ready to go again. I felt really good then, I was ready to go. I was a high speed operator, I knew the code very well, and I was ready to go. And they dropped it – it was fine with me. Fine with me.

**—00:36:29**

Q: Today marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle for Saipan, what are your thoughts this morning?

John Eardley: [crying] I thought of my buddies. I thought of the services. Poor guys. [unclear] blowing up on the side of me, why didn't I get hit instead of them, you know?

All the dead Marines – God it was terrible. Good guys. Also I had some heavy boots on [unclear] the island and they had these mud holes and I would go, oh I got these boots on, these mud holes, I can go through that – shooo! I went down up to my neck in a shell hole. You know? I could have drown in one those. That was kind of dumb. The clothes dried fast though.

Q: Can you share with us why you thought it was important to return to the island?

John Eardley: Why was it important?

Q: Why was it important for you to return to the island?

John Eardley: To come back now, you mean? Well, to be truthful, I didn't want to come back. I mean- I forgot all about it. My daughter is the culprit. She knows the attorney general here [unclear] and he told her about it and she said, Dad, you ought to go back. Oh God, Julia. I don't think I – that crummy, crappy place, I don't want to go back there. [unintelligible] And she said, maybe think about it. So I thought about and I said, well, I wonder what it's really like. It might be kind of fun to go back. Well, not fun, I think – maybe I can go where I can see where some of my buddies were. Anyway, I came and I didn't really want to. Reluctantly I came. I have never been treated better. I saw Miss Northern Marianas and gee – but when I get home I will still take garbage out, you know. I feel like a hero. I think I will get a shirt and put "hero" on it.

Q: Is this your first trip back since '44?

John Eardley: Yes, first trip.

—00:38:37

Q: If you could talk to young people today about World War II, what would you tell them?

John Eardley: That's a tough one, you know? If you have to go war, it's your country, it may not be perfect, but you have freedom here and you do what you want to do and sometimes you have to make a stand. You guys can do it. I did it. You can do it. Look at the guys in Iraq, they [unclear] as we were. Maybe even smarter. It's my country, right or wrong, as far as I'm concerned [unclear], I think you guys ought to feel that way too. I'm sure they do, when it comes right down to it. [unclear] smoking pot and stuff – [laughs] I'm sure they would go do it. I know that guy, I know you. It's a great country, nothing else like it. That's the way I feel.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add that you feel is important to document for history?

John Eardley: No, but I can say that I love the Marine Corps – I'm not a lifetime Marine but there is something about it. They never leave anybody behind and get a lot of buddies, they have a lot of common, you know. My buddies used to share our food together. We had dirty clothes, we didn't give a damn. We loved each other. But we had services every Sunday, believe it or not, on Sunday. No matter what happened. A priest would be there, dirty as hell, cross hanging – men, let's say the Lord's Prayer, to protect us and if not, we will be with you. There was about six of us – we just loved each other. Buddies. I don't know what happened to them. I hope they got through. And I can't think of anything else.

Q: I want to thank you for sharing your experiences with us and for -

John Eardley: I hope you don't think I'm a wimp.

Q: Not at all, not at all. Not at all.

John Eardley: Thanks.

Q: It's an honor for us to be able to meet with you and talk to you and to help preserve a part of history

John Eardley: Thank you, I'm glad I could do something. I didn't do much during the war actually. Most of the guys that fired the machine guns did more work than I ever did.

Q: You each had a role. Thank you John.

John Eardley: Thank you.

[END OF SESSION]

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