National Park Service (NPS)

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

Jack Kerins
July 20, 1994

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

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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WAPA Collections
War in the Pacific NHP
135 Murray Boulevard, Suite 100
Hagåtña, GU 96910
wapa_interpretation@nps.gov

Interviewee: Jack Kerins

Military Rank: Radioman, Regimental Headquarters of the 12th Marines, USMC

Interviewer: Steven Hower Guam Hilton Hotel

Date: July 20th 1994

Audio Description:

00:00:03 -

Jack Kerrin is a Caucasian American man with wire framed glasses, wearing a light blue button up shirt, and behind him is a white lantern and a beige wall.

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Q: My name is Steven Haller and I'm here at the Hilton Hotel in Guam on July 20th 1994. It's about 4:30 pm, and we are here to record an oral history interview with Mr. Jack Kerins, who served in Regimental Headquarters of the 12th Marines during World War II. This interview is being made by the National Parks Service War in the Pacific National Historical Park in conjunction with KGFT television. Jack, I understand that the National Park Service has your permission to make this recording and to retain all literary and property rights deriving from it. Is that correct?

Kerins: That is correct.

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Q: Thanks very much for being here today, I have been looking forward to doing this interview since I saw your book, so thanks for taking the time.

Kerins: It's my pleasure and honor, too.

Q: For the record, could you tell us your full name and spell it out for us?

Kerins: Well, my name is actually John Joseph Kerins, but everybody calls me Jack. My last name is spelled K-E-R-I-N-S. It's an old Irish name.

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Q: Where were you born?

Kerins: Well, I was born in Terre Haute, Indiana and that is where I live now. I was educated in Terre Haute. After World War II, I went back home and finished my college degree at Indiana State University and that is where I met my lovely wife and we now have three children and six grandchildren.

Q: Great.

Kerins: My wife was a speech and hearing therapist after, when she graduated from college and I was in the athletic and sporting goods business and back in those days, television was just coming into being, and it was all black and white in our area, no color, no taping, all live programs. And we were one of the- I started a little outdoor television show. A half hour once a week. And it went over pretty good. We did it for 21 years. Then I decided that when you get old and ugly and stupid all at the same time, you get off that tube and start writing books and that is when I wrote *The Last Banzai*.

Q: Great. Maybe we can just get into that, then.

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Q: What motivated you to write that story, besides, I'm sure you weren't old and ugly and stupid, but tell us the truth now, why did you get going?

Kerins: Well, my Company, or my Battery, I should say, the Regimental Headquarters of the 12th Marines, you know, we were like family, we through a lot. We- right after boot camp we all went

through our special unit trainings. I went to a radio school in San Diego and we all ended up in the 12th Marines, each one in respect to our own section. But we were together from the time the unit was formed down in Camp Dunlap, near San Diego, until the end of the war. We went down. We shipped out and went over to New Zealand, had some training there, we came up to Guadalcanal, had more advanced training. When we arrived at Guadalcanal, the island was declared secure, but we were receiving Japanese air raids every night, they were coming down from Rabaul, up in the Northern, around New Britain. And flew down what they called "the slot" and bombed us every night.

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Kerins: But then we went up and we, on November 1st of 1943, we hit Bougainville and it was a real rough campaign, the terrain and the living conditions there were probably worse than the Japanese battle. Anyway, after the Bougainville campaign, we came back to Guadalcanal, rested up a bit and went into training again for another campaign and got real serious about it, even boarded ships and were ready to take off and all of a sudden they called the campaign off. We were originally scheduled to go into Kavieng on New Ireland and they called that campaign off because they came up with the idea of bypassing a lot of islands. So we went back, went into, had a little more rest, and went into training again and we came up to the Marianas and we were a floating reserve for the 4th Marine- 2nd and 4th Marine Division when they hit the beach at Saipan.

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Q: Did a lot of floating, didn't you?

Kerins: We did a lot of floating because they didn't need us and we were going to come down and hit Guam three days later, to recapture Guam and that is when the Japanese fleet came out of the Pacific, out of the Philippines and took all of our escort and everything, so we were cruising around out there and it ended up we were 58 days aboard ship from the time we left Guadalcanal until we set foot on Guam. And I had a pretty good ship. I slept out on deck, our whole gang did,

because it was warmer there then it was down in the hole.

Q: What was the ship?

Kerins: The Dupage, the USS Dupage. But our unit, the 3rd Marine Division was scattered out through the whole fleet and there were several other ships. But some of those poor guys were on LSTs and you know, they have no facilities to amount to anything at all on there and when you live on one of those things 58 days, limited water, they had no protection other than their own shelter hats that they strung up and tied together. They had it pretty rough. By the time we hit the beach at Guam, they were ready to come ashore.

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Q: How did you pass your time on the Dupage?

Kerins: Oh, we played a lot of pinochle and everybody, they would get a magazine or something and they would read every word in it and then they would pass it on to someone else and trade back and forth. We did a lot of things. Playing, came up with a few chess boards and played some poker games. Some of the fellows didn't have any money, but we did it on an IOU basis and some of them came out pretty good too.

Q: Do you think they got those IOUs redeemed?

Kerins: I don't know. Some of them just never lived to redeem them.

Q: I guess that could be true. Well, let's see where shall we lead this. I guess maybe at the end of the interview we will go back to writing the book.

Kerins: Oh yes, I should do that.

Q: Do you want to pick up on that?

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Kerins: Sure. Since the war, when we first got home, we wanted to forget about the war. We wanted to get that behind us. We had missed too much and we wanted to put our lives back, our civilian life, back together again. And going to school on the GI Bill and - that brings up something too, I remembered, I mentioned the other day to someone. When all the GIs came back- see when we went into the service, we were just out of high school, so when we came back, all the young girls that we dated when we were in high school were already married and gone. So here we were, a bunch of ex-GI's, beer drinkers and so on, starting our freshman year in college or maybe going into our sophomore year, if we had a year before. And here was a fresh crop of young girls, right out of high school, right out of the chocolate malt shops, you know. And they- they became our girlfriends and eventually our wives. And I married a young girl from Gary, Indiana and her name was Eleanor Petyo, P-E-T-Y-O. And that is where we got the nickname, she has the nickname of Pet, her sorority sisters called her Pet.

Q: I see.

Kerins: But back then we did want to forget as much as we could and we got on with our lives. We got our educations. We got into professions and whatever fields our endeavors led us. And but later on and now that we are getting into our golden years, you get to reminiscing. You get to pondering on your past. And there is no doubt about it, World War II was the greatest adventure any of us ever had. I had a lot of adventures as an outdoor writer years ago. I made seven trips to the Arctic and making fishing films and living in tent camps with the Eskimos and I had some great times. But World War II was definitely the greatest adventure in our lives. And I was in the hospital recouping from a heart atta- coronary, and I got to thinking about the old days and making some notes and our unit started having reunions every year. I'm talking about just Regimental Headquarters, 12th Marines. There were a group of us that were together so close during those years, war years. Now we are like family. Our wives never knew each other, you

know, until we got started on these reunions and now the whole group is like family.

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The problem is, we are losing one or two men about every year. So yeah, we are getting to be a smaller group all the time. But we really enjoy these reunions. Still do. This year, for instance, in September, we are going to meet in Tulsa. One of our boys, Harold Match who was with us during the landing. He incidentally was here on the island for about 20 minutes before he got hit in the back with a mortar shell and he still carries the whole tail fin assembly of a Japanese mortar shell in his- he brings it to all the reunions. He has it, on this trip to Guam, he has it with him. It weighs 15 and a half ounces and they took it right out of his collarbone back here. How he lived through it, I will never know, but he still carries it and is real proud of it. But anyway, at these reunions, of course we all tell our war stories and our little bull sessions, I used to set my tape recorder out there and I picked up a lot of it like that. So I told the guys I was going to write a book and I had these notes that I had scribbled out when I was in the hospital recuperating and I got to looking through some of my old junk from World War II days. I accumulated a lot of stuff. My father saved about every clipping from newspapers and magazines that referred to the Marine Corps in the Pacific back in those days and I had all that from- I also had my old forward observer notebook, I was a radioman.

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Kerins: Private first class and served as a radioman out of Regimental Headquarters, 12th Marines, and we worked with forward observer teams, directing artillery fire. And I had my little forward observer notebooks that had radio frequencies and our call signs and all our shackle codes and such as that in there. And I would write some notes in there too and I even wrote some of the messages that I received, I had to write them down before I delivered them to the fire direction officer. And I saved those books. I wasn't supposed to, but I did and I found those and I found a diary that I kept and that was something else I wasn't supposed to do, but I think several of the boys did.

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Kerins: Then with the help of those items, and with the tapes that I made at our reunions, and then I started getting letters from some of the guys when they found out I was going to write a book and they went home after our reunion and they got to thinking about all this and they remembered stories, and they would send those to me. So we put it all together and we ended up with a book called *The Last Banzai*. Now, we took the title from the banzai attack that took place on the night and early morning of July 24th, 25th, here at Guam. It was a very hairy situation and part of the attacking forces came right down through our area and ended up- that's where we stopped them. The idea of *The Last Banzai*, where that title actually came from, that was actually the last banzai. The banzai attacks that were so well known down through the Solomon Islands and in places, some of the other islands of the Pacific, the Japanese used a banzai attack every time. It was a very hair-raising and chaotic attack and it drove- their idea was that they were going to drive us back into the sea. And it was an all-out effort.

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Kerins: The only thing was that they spent all their force upon that and once we stopped them and it cost us a lot of men and so on, but it always ended up in a defeat for them. And after that, practically all organized resistance was over. It was just a matter then of going in and cleaning up the small units, you know, until we secured the island. But the last banzai actually took place here on Guam. The three big campaigns for the Marines after that, Pelo, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, they didn't have any banzai attacks. They learned their lesson and their generals passed the orders that they were to stay in their very elaborate and very strong defense positions and made us come to them. And that was another reason why our casualties in those last campaigns were so high. And so this was the last banzai and I titled the book after that. Three main chapters in my book refer to the landing at Guam, the banzai and then the aftermath.

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Kerins: Of course, after the island was secured, we were out patrolling in the hills, because the- a lot of the Japanese were still hiding out in the jungles around here and we went into training for

our next unit, next combat situation, I should say. When we went into training, it was a real training session because we were out patrolling against an enemy that was firing back at us. And that campaign that we were training for was Iwo Jima.

Q: That's right.

Kerins: So we left Guam and went up to attack Iwo Jima and came back to Guam after that very well known battle and back here, our camp was located up at a place called Ylig Bay. And a very beautiful area there. And we remember Guam and we remembered what a beautiful place it was. After we got back, I can remember we were tired. We had gone through some hair-raising Guadalcanal. We went through all the hell of Bougainville and the terrible living conditions there and the casualties we had. And then the many casualties we had here at Guam and then at Iwo Jima, that was the worst of the lot. By the time we got back here, we just had given up hope, practically, of ever seeing our homes again.

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And one night, a USO troop came through our camp and they put on a good show and the star of that show was a girl, her name was Betty Hutton. Back in those days she was quite the girl. Quite a singer, quite a dancer, very good personality. And she carried on a great show for us and she had a standing ovation and she finished and she asked us if we would sit down again and she said, boys, she said, your commanding general-

[video cuts briefly]

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Q: Talk about the people you know, would be great. I wanted to ask you Jack, not only to continue with this story about General Erskine and the USO show at your camp at Ylig, but when we were chatting before the interview, you mentioned that you had just gone back and looked over the terrain recently, and I would be interested in hearing your reflections on that.

Kerins: Yes, we- There were five of us from Regimental Headquarters 12th Marines who came back for the 50th Golden Salute, return to Guam, you know. The government here gave us a, very graciously gave us, a loan of a van and we drove back to Ylig Bay, where we had our final camp and looked over, had the overlook. I shot some pictures up there. It looked very much the same from the top of the hill, overlooking the bay, but when we turned around to look where our camp was, it was all together different. Part of it was grown over with jungle, but there was a lot of private properties up there too, some homes. Right across the road from our former camp, we used to- we had built up a ball diamond, a recreational field, and that is where we had our movies at night. We had screens strung up between some coconut palms. And we had to build a little projection booth up there. And we would go over and sit there and wait till dark and we would have a movie. And we had it big enough that we had ball diamonds too. We had a lot of fun out there, but today that is just an all open area and it started growing over. We could tell where it was, but it looked nothing like it did then. We named it, by the way, we named it Roger's Field when we were here. That was after Lieutenant Rogers who was killed. He was our recreation and morale officer who was with Regimental Headquarters 12th Marines and he led a patrol up around to get- to get around behind some of the Japanese that were shooting at us from the hillside. And he was killed up there. In fact the only thing they found of him was a leg. It was a demolition charge. The Japanese ran out with a charge and they were both killed. One of the boys that was on that patrol was with us today. So we got to see part of that area. We actually landed- when we landed at Guam, we landed right near the mouth of the Asan River and moved straight inland and our old- our command post was right where the foothills began. And when the banzai attack took place, they just sorta, the terrain just kinda funneled them right down into our area, that is why we had so much problem there. But we got to see that area today and of course it was all, a lot of it is private homes and so on. The Asan River isn't much anymore. It's been channelized and it's more of a marsh down at the bottom than anything else. But we could tell the area by the horizon and the way the hills rolled in and we could tell where we were, so we shot some pictures.

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Q: Let me clarify, for the sake of the record, whether or not you had been to Guam since the battle?

Kerins: No, no. When we left here in 1945, in fact, we never expected to last until 1945, but when we left in, I think we left here in May of 1945 to go back to the United States, I never thought I would be back again. And like I said before, when the war ended, I was already back in the States and they were preparing us to ship us back overseas and we were to make the beachhead on Japan. That brings up a lot of things too, but we never expected to come back to Guam again. And when all this came up, after all those years, we got off of that plane and we saw the reception and there was a lot of tearful eyes, I will tell. It was very moving and has been at all the, practically all the activities here. When I said that brings a lot of other things up about the end of the war and about the plans for all of our six Marine Divisions were all to make beachhead on Japan. And of course the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and that ended the war.

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Kerins: There has been a lot of controversy since then over whether or not we should have dropped those bombs. But it is one thing, it ended the war fast and it saved a lot of lives, whether people believe it or not. Of course it killed a lot of people. Actually it didn't kill as many people as the fire bomb raids we had on Tokyo, but it was all a terrible thing. But if we had continued the war and had gone in and made those landings on Japan, the estimated casualties on our side was over a million and we can imagine how many civilians, Japanese civilians, would have been killed. So actually those atomic bombs were dropped, they saved a lot of lives. Even though a lot of people today say we shouldn't have dropped them. Maybe it introduced us into an atomic age that we will eventually wish it had never come, but still, at that time, it was a different situation.

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Q: One of the things that I think is valuable about having interviews like this, is to get people to

tell us what they were feeling at the time. It's no problem for us, 50 years later, to know what we think right now, but it's important for us to find out what history meant, what the events meant to people when they were experiencing it and that is why I'm glad you are telling us these things.

Kerins: And there is one other thing I would like to bring up. I don't believe our schools are teaching history as much as they should anymore. There are a lot of children today going to schools- my own kids, when they were in school, of course I didn't talk as much as I should have about some of my war experiences to them, because like I say, I wanted to forget it at the time. Now they all have copies of my book and they found out what it was about. But there are so many children today, you mention Guadalcanal or Guam or Bougainville or Iwo Jima, any of those places, they have never heard of them. I have a cap that I wore from one of our little company reunions, you know, we put out new caps every year. And across the cap it says, 12th Marines, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Iwo Jima. And I was standing and pushing a shopping cart through a checkout line at home the other day and there was a young boy there, he must have been about 15, 16, and he kept looking back and looking at my cap and he says, what are those things? I said, you never heard of it? He says, no. He had no idea what it was. And I'm afraid that we are not teaching our children. I know that they are not, in Japan. Those Japanese children are not, they never taught them much about Pearl Harbor, especially. They don't believe that they started that war. And they don't know anything about what had actually happened. And neither do ours, as far as that goes. And the thing that worries me, as years go by, I'm afraid that they are going to make, these new generations are going to be making some of the same mistakes that were made that got us into World War II. We may have to be right back at it again. I hope and pray that that won't happen, but that is what happened. That's the way I feel anyway. Getting back to this Betty Hutton thing, I wanted to tell you about that.

Q: Good, thanks for reminding me.

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Kerins: We came back from Iwo and like I said, we were tired and we thought, you know, how

many more islands are we going to have to take before we get to go home. And we were sitting over there that night and we saw that show and Betty Hutton I think was the first white woman that any of us had seen in two and a half years. And we had a good time and she put on a beautiful show and we gave her a rousing ovation and when she finished, she asked us all to please sit down and she had a special announcement. Our commanding general was Graves B. Erskine, that was the commanding general of 3rd Marine Division. The commanding general of the 3rd Marine Division when we landed at Guam was, oh boy, I don't know it off the tip of my tongue.

Q: Alan Turnage.

Kerins: Alan?

Q: Turnage.

Kerins: Turnage, yes, that's right. And he was a real gentleman, too. My commanding officer of my 12th Marines was John Bushrod Wilson. And he was a real gentleman. One of my favorite officers was our Regimental Operations Officer, was William T. Fermer [sp?] and we hadn't seen him since the war until one of our reunions a couple years ago and he came to the reunion and in fact he came to a couple of them and he was a retired brigadier, a retired major general, and ended up retired as commanding officer of the Marine base in Camp Pendleton, California. He died just a couple years ago and even his widow still comes to our reunions when she can, but now her health is going bad on her. But back to the Betty show -

Q: Come on, let's get this Betty Hutton story over with.

Kerins: She says, I have a special announcement to make. She says, I have the honor of announcing General Erskine says that the rotation plan is in effect and in the next few days, you will be going home. All of you that have had two or two and a half years overseas or at least

three combat landings, you will be going home.

Q: Now when is this? Before or after the Iwo Jima campaign?

Kerins: Oh, this was after, after we came back. And it was dead silent for, it seemed like an hour, but it wasn't. And then pandemonium broke loose, they couldn't believe it. But in a few days, why, we did. We came home. They had to split us all up going home, because they didn't have enough ships heading back to the States. Everything was coming out, mostly military ships. I know they lined us up and they asked us to count off and then they said, all right, all even numbers, go back your sea bags, you are going out today, the trucks are waiting for you. And they came down to Orote Peninsula over here, Apra Harbor, and boarded a ship and left. Well, I happened to be one of the other boys so I was sitting around waiting and didn't know how long it was going to be, but the very next day they called us out and we went down and we got aboard a ship called the Samuel Chase. USS Samuel Chase. The only thing that bothered, it had been around to Okinawa and it had run aground and when the tugs pulled it off, it ripped a 12 foot hole in the bottom. So they packed it and drove wedges into the hole and then got the pumps going and they got it back here to Guam and they checked it out again and they thought it was holding pretty well, so they put us and a lot of our wounded from Iwo Jima.

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Kerins: We started heading for Honolulu, they said, we will get you that far and then you may have to sit around until you get something else to take you into the States. So while we were aboard ship with a lot of our wounded in some of the staterooms and the mess halls, we- a lot of us volunteered to carry trays of food to these boys and it got so we would sit around and some of them didn't feel like eating, but we tried to cheer a lot of them up and we would just sit around and shoot the breeze with them. Two days out of Pearl Harbor, we got word that our President, Roosevelt, had died. We went on in to Pearl Harbor and we sat there, they wouldn't let us off the ship and we sat there for two or three days and finally they brought some inspectors on board ship and they checked our ship with the hole in the bottom and they decided it would be alright

to stay on there and go on in to the States. So we went into San Diego. That was a quick shot at our, my experiences anyway, in World War II.

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Q: What was the day, approximately, when you got into stateside finally?

Kerins: I'm trying to remember. Oh, it was about a week, I guess, after President Roosevelt had died.

Q: Okay, right.

Kerins: I don't remember the dates right now.

Q: Okay.

Kerins: I know it was a real great thing, the Marine band from- we went into San Diego, the same place we left to go down to New Zealand, and the Marine band came out from the San Diego Bay, meeting us there at the dock and we just couldn't believe we were home.

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Q: A little earlier in the interview, you mentioned you wanted to get back to some point about the invasion of Japan and since you got home, I assume you got some leave and then you were going to be reassembled for the invasion of Japan. I wanted to ask you, had you already made that point about the high potential cost of the invasion or did you want to make some other points about the invasion of Japan?

Kerins: Well, actually, we were, after we returned to the States, we were given 30 day delay and orders and shipped to new destinations. They asked us if we would list first, second and third choices where we would like to be stationed after our furloughs and of course I was from Terre

Haute, Indiana, which was only about a couple hundred miles south of Chicago, and I said Chicago Naval Air Station or some place like that, you know? There are a lot of Marine detachments there. And then down south of my home, only about 60 miles away, there was the Crane Naval Ammunition Depot and they had a Marine guard detachment down there, so I thought that would be a nice place. Close to home, I could get back and forth. So I signed up for those two places and I thought, I will be lucky to get one of them, at least I can get home every once in while.

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Kerins: So they shipped me to Philadelphia Navy Yard. I couldn't figure it out, but then when we got up there, I found out that all of the radiomen from our units were all shipped to the Philadelphia Navy Yard and we couldn't figure out why. Well, they put us in what they called a special combat radio school and we were learning to take and receive code at high speeds and under combat conditions where there were a lot of other frequencies on the same frequency we were. Button in, you had to pick out a tone and know that that was ours, while we were listening to this other stuff. And that was one of the preparations for us to go back into Japan, I mean, to make the beachhead on Japan, because you figured once that island- once we landed there and took over, that all facilities there would be obliterated. And that we would have to set up an international radio network of communications, and that is why they were training us, so that those of us that came through it, that we would be working radios on international waves. So we were ready to go back to Japan and that's- I'm standing in the chow line at the Philadelphia Navy Yard when the newsboy came by one morning. We were waiting for breakfast chow and he was waving papers and everybody was buying them and it said, "New bomb, which President Truman says, had the power of the sun". And I can remember that. And of course, everything folded in. The war ended just about as fast as it started.

Q: Do you remember getting the news of the end of the war?

Kerins: Yes, yeah, I sure do. When we were there, and tt was about like that Betty Hutton thing,

everybody went berserk.

Q: I can well imagine.

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Q: Well, we have gotten to the end of the war, let's go way back here now closer to the beginning and let me ask you what motivated you to join up?

Kerins: To join the Marine Corps, you mean? Or just to join the military?

Q: Both.

Kerins: Probably the same thing that motivated every other young American, 19 years old. When- I can remember the day, on December 1st, 1941. It was in Terre Haute, Indiana. It was a rather balmy day for December and a friend of mine were out roaming around the hills of Park County, which is just north of our home. There are something like 32 old covered bridges up there, it's quite a historical little place and very picturesque. We were hiking up through the area. And we came home on Sunday afternoon and we went to his house and as we got there, his father opened the door for us and we could tell from the look on his face that something was wrong. And he said, we just heard on the radio that the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. Of course, I bet you it happened millions of times that day. I asked him, I said, where is Pearl Harbor? Nobody had ever heard of it. And he told us and of course the next day, everybody was so shocked and we knew that we had to do something about this. It was a terrible thing and Bob Anderson, my friend that I had been hiking with, and I, decided we were going to join the Marines. And we went down to enlist and they wouldn't take him because he was colorblind. And of course the war was starting so fast, the Marines were kind of special individuals. Special unit, I should say. And back in those days, you had to be a certain height and you had to have certain physical qualities before they would even accept you in the Marine Corps.

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Kerins: It was an elite unit. And of course, later on in the war, they had to ease up some of that stuff, because they needed men, but they were, at the time we went down to enlist, they were still under those conditions. And they wouldn't take Bob because he was colorblind. They wouldn't take me because I had a slight dental problem. Not this, that came from Bougainville, but I had a slight dental problem at the time. And so I went to a dentist and had him work it over and I went back to the recruiter and I passed this time. And my friend, Anderson, you know, they had back in those days, they had a book that had little- it had a circle in it full of colored dots and had several pages and it was a Naval, the medical department had these things. And the corpsman would hold it out and he would flip the pages and he would say, do you see a number there? Well, he couldn't see a number. I could, but he couldn't. And then he would turn the page and say, you see one there? He would say, no. How about here? No. And- but we kept going back to this recruiter, trying to get him to take us. Well, they get to arguing, Bob would, he is a pretty brilliant boy and he got to arguing with him and he said, well, what number is that? And he said, can't you see that seven? I don't see any seven. He said, maybe that's a seven over there, and he said, no, that's a nine. Well, Bob memorized those pages, so we went in one day and he says, a new recruiter there opened up and Bob just rattled 'em right off. Fine. So we were standing in line, a bunch of us that they were trying to enlist that day and the corpsman that showed him the book was called away for a phone call or something. And so another corpsman came by and he was coming from the other end and he came down to Bob, and Bob said, I read it already. He said, so what, read it again. The only problem was, he started at the back of the book and was coming forward and Bob got all fouled up and so they didn't take him. It ended up, later on, he enlisted in the Army later on and ended up in Europe, where he won a bronze star and a purple heart there.

Q: That's a great story.

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Q: Well, after you joined the Marines, like everybody else, I assume you went to basic training.

Do you have a reflection on basic training that you can offer us?

Kerins: I think no Marine or no one that was ever in the Marines will ever forget boot camp. It was just an experience that we couldn't believe. You know, we always- when we left home, we were on the trains coming out here. We were still in civilian clothes. And boy, we were proud, we had been sworn into the Marine Corps and we got into San Diego and they picked us up in buses and trucks and took us into the Marine base. As we came in there, there was a chow line standing there. Here was this long line of fellows in green dungarees and they had no hair. And the dungarees, you know, fit them like sacks. And something was wrong. We didn't know who these guys were. And as we passed and we were all in civilian clothes, we heard the whole chorus, it seemed like, all at once, hollered, "You'll be sorry!" And we didn't know what it was all about. So when we got over to the area where they got us down from the trucks and there was a big tall Marine came by, he had one of the old campaign hats on, starched khakis, you know, very trim, deep bull voice with a Tennessee accent. And he said, you people may think you are Marines, but you are not! He said, you are nothing but boots. Of course everybody just went like this and of course they used a lot of language back in those days, they don't do that in boot camp as much anymore I don't think. But I can remember some of the things we were called. And I better not say them here.

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Q: Well, I won't ask you to, unless you are comfortable, but I do have to say that reading some of the descriptions in your book are pretty vivid and I wonder if, I don't know if you can do an imitation of your drill instructor, putting you through cadence, but I thought you captured that very well and I don't know if you can try to imitate that for us. But I would like it if you would.

Kerins: Like I said, he had this deep, full voice and he would say, "Ten hut!" and he would say, "Lep face!" And I wondered what a "lep" was. It was left. And he would say "Rat face!" And then he would say, of course we were just starting out, and when he said, "Lep face", well have the platoon turned one way and it would be two or three guys would turn the opposite direction

and you are facing each other. And then I could remember him saying, “Kerins, you damn stupid, idiot!” He says, “Don’t you know your lep from your rat?” Things like this went on for eight weeks during boot training. But the boot camp, what it did, they cut that hair off. These boys came in from all walks of life, some of them from the slums of New York, some of them from families that were multimillionaires. But once they got them there, all together and they cut that hair off, they were all the same.

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Kerins: And that brought- and being talked to like that by those DIs. That brought us into a unit where it didn’t make any difference what you were before, you are different now and you are all alike. And then they got into the training and what they trained us, we remembered. And I can bring out a point here. When we landed here in Guam, the Regimental Headquarters Unit, there was a lot of specialists in it, like radiomen, telephone men who lay wire and so on. But there was a lot of specialists like survey teams, where they had to survey in the baselines for artillery pieces. And these guys were specialists, they were almost engineer types and when that banzai attack hit, you know, the infantrymen, they had it rough all the time, but they were trained for that. We were trained for our special units, you know. I was operating a radio. Of course I was operating it under combat conditions, but it wasn’t like I was on the line all the time. And here came this banzai attack with the Japanese come charging in to our outfit and we had to break that up. And like one of our boys, Jack Cross said, it’s a good thing we had that boot camp training because it was kind of like riding a bicycle, you will never forget it, and that did help us.

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Q: Could you go into a little bit of detail about the duties that you performed as a radioman, attached to an artillery regiment? [video cuts briefly]

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Q: Jack, I was asking you to describe a little bit about the specifics about what kind of equipment you worked with and what you were expected to do as a radioman attached to a headquarters

battery of a Marine's artillery unit.

Kerins: Well, we used several types of radios, really. Back when we first started, in the early part of the war, we were using radios that the Navy had used for years. And frankly, they weren't too good. But it's like a lot of things that, at the beginning of the war, we just weren't prepared for that war and our equipment was near what it should have been. There was a little radio they called a TBY that the Navy used when they would run a small boat, maybe ashore and wanted to contact the ship, it was fine for that because it was over water and so on. Line of sight communication and it worked pretty good. But you take that thing into the jungle, when you got behind the first tree, you were dead. And then we had another radio called a TBX and it was a three man operation that came with a trans-receiver unit and a battery pack, two heavy boxes, steel boxes, and one fit on top of the other. And then it had a generator that was about so big. And it had a chain on it so that you could strap it around a tree and a turn buckle and tighten it up. And a couple handles you would stick in and you would crank it. And then you would have a line that goes over to the trans-receiver unit. The third piece was a- the man who carried it looked like he was carrying a golf bag. It was an antenna and they would put it all together and have guy wires down and everything and it would work pretty good. You could operate it either with a key or with voice. And it was a lot better than the TBY, but it was, you know, like I said, it was three man unit and with all this equipment and everything, you don't get it in operation real fast and if you get it and get it set up, it's a semi-permanent thing. You don't move every ten minutes with it.

Q: Much more effective. This did work?

Kerins: This did work, yes it did.

Q: What kind of load was it? Sounds like it was-

Kerins: Carrying, you mean?

Q: Yeah.

Kerins: It was quite- the generator was very heavy. The guy that got the antenna had the best deal because it was fairly light and he carried it like a, like I said, he just brought it like a golf bag. The trans-receiver units, the other man had that on his back.

Q: Was this then the kind of thing that would have to go at the headquarters rather than be something that a forward observer would use?

Kerins: They used it at the headquarters, that is true, but the problem is, like down on Bougainville and before we went to Guadalcanal, the boys up there had the same problems. In the jungle, we had a lot of problems with communicating to the rear units, without using a TBX and set it up. And I had an experience-

Q: Excuse me. Was it the TBY that was being used in Guadalcanal and Bougainville?

Kerins: TBY was used, like I say, mostly between line of sight communications and we had them and we were expected to use them, but they just didn't work once we got into the jungle.

Q: And you had them, in other words, at Bougainville-

Kerins: Bougainville and after the Bougainville campaign, we finally got rid of those things. Seems like the Marine Corps, it's supposed to be a child of the Navy and the Army of course- the Marine Corps is a very small unit compared to Army and Navy, in numbers, I'm talking about. And we always got the- we were the last to get any new equipment. We just didn't get it. When we were on Bougainville, for instance and the Army came in to reinforce us and eventually relieve us, they came in with all this equipment. We were really hungry. We were eating K rations and D ration chocolate bars and we had shoes rotting off our feet and clothing was just in

shreds and here they came in with all this big equipment. They had a thing that we didn't even know existed. It was called a jungle hammock and it was a hammock that you would string up between two trees and it had another hammock above it that was waterproof, would keep the water running off the side, and mosquito net between the two. And you just climb in it and zip it up, you know. We were lying out in foxholes and fighting the mosquitoes in a foxhole full of water and everything else and we never knew that thing existed even.

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Q: Why don't you tell us a little bit about your personal experiences during the Bougainville campaign. You called it "the hell of Bougainville" if I recall.

Kerins: Bougainville is one of the worst rainforests in the world. The beach was probably no more than 10 or 15 feet wide from the water edge to the jungle and when you hit that jungle, it was in swamp. You were up to your thighs in water and muck and mud. That water might have only have been a foot deep, but the mud underneath it seemed like it was three foot deep and trying to walk and work through that stuff and especially under combat conditions. It was terrible. One thing that I remember, we were talking about that TBX radio, one of the things, we used to, we couldn't- we couldn't use our forward observers as much on Bougainville because you are in jungle, there was no vision at all. You could get on- even if you could get up on a little hill or up on a tree or something, you couldn't see anything but jungle, only right to your face. So we used what they called "air spot" back on Munda, on New Georgia Island in the center. They would send up an SBD, the old Scout Douglas Scout Dive-bomber, two place jobs. Well, we sent some of our forward observers back to Munda and they would ride the backseat in there and the plane would come up and fly over and try to spot jungle trails or gun emplacements or something like that. And he would radio us. We were in radio contact with him and we were using our TBX. And then in contact with him. And he would give us fire directions and we would pass them by telephone, would be right there, to our fire direction center, they would pass it by combat telephone wire to the firing batteries and they would start firing, laying the shells in, and then the changes in range and deflection were given to us by the spotter up in the SBD. Well, that

worked pretty good, but even so, there was so much of it, that they couldn't see. The jungle was just like a solid mass. It was like looking down on a carpet.

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Q: How did they know where the- [crosstalk]

Kerins: Once in a while they would see clearings or something like that and they could see where maybe there would be some treats or ruts where they had taken equipment through, so they knew that there was stuff right there. So, and then of course the Japanese would use some of the native villages and where there was a native village, why they cleared out a lot of brush around the village. So they could spot equipment there and so on and we would shell that. The one thing that I remember most was a place called Cebick's [sp?] Ridge. There was a infantry captain by the name of Steve Cebick [sp?] that led his men up through this jungle and they chanced upon this high ridge and it was, the Japanese had had it at one time, and for some reason had abandoned it. And they took that ridge and held it and it was our highest position that we had there at that time. So they- we were having a problem with a Japanese artillery piece that was firing at us, firing down along the beach, firing at our airstrip that was trying to- that was being built down there by the Seabees, which were the greatest guys in the world, how they did it, I don't know, but it was a place called Torokina Point, and where we landed, we were up to your calves in water, you know, up to your thighs in water. And 31 days after we landed in that swamp right there, the Seabees had a landing strip finished far enough that a plane came in and landed on it. But the Japanese artillery piece was shelling that airstrip and so we decided we would try to spot him from Cebick's Ridge up there and the jungle was so thick, we couldn't spot him. Well, we had a system worked out called "sound ranging." We practiced this on Guadalcanal before we came to Bougainville and we set up a forward radio station, either a couple on the front line or even ahead of the front line if we could get it that way. Then, back of the radio station, we would have another radio station. And then farther back, we would have another one and then another one farther back. And then one at the fire direction center. So this front station – all of these radio set-ups would be in communication with each other. And the forward station was a command

station. And when we would sit up there and listen and when we were- would hear the report of the muzzle blast of the Jap artillery piece, we would say, "Mark!" in the microphone. Well, all these other radio stations got the "mark" at the same time. They heard it at the same time. And when they did, they all started stopwatches. Well, the first station back, let's say it took him three seconds before he heard it and he would stop it. That sound travels out in a circle like this. So it would take maybe four seconds before the next one heard it. And then five or six where the next one heard it. So we had our radio stations plotted on our map. And what they would do, they would multiply the distance sound travels, by the – what is it, 562 or 592 feet per second, so they multiply that by the seconds and of course each one would be back a little further. So then they would draw a line down along all these stations, according to the- and what the- I gave them an arc. Once they completed the arc into a circle, the center of it is where the gun was supposed to be because the sound travels out in the circle, see?

Q: I see. So as long as these sound observation stations were not in a straight line-

Kerins: That's right, they were spread out.

Q: It wouldn't work if it was a straight line.

Kerins: No, they had to be spread out, so it gave them a curve, see. Once you completed the curve, well, then you had, the center of it would be where the enemy artillery piece would be. And we worked it on Guadalcanal, tested it with some of our own guns and it worked pretty good. You could usually figure to within a 100 or 200 yards of the thing. Well, if you could do that and plaster it with artillery shells, you had a pretty good chance of knocking it out.

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Kerins: The thing is, we went up on Cebick's Ridge, there were three of us, Art Carmichael, we called him "Hogie" Carmichael and Charlie Moore and I were assigned this front station. Some of the other boys that are here today were on the rear stations, but we were up on Cebick's Ridge

and the problem is, there is, we got up there and got all set up and then communications, we sat around waiting and the thing didn't fire. So we were about to give up and come home and when we did, the guns started firing and we didn't need to sound range it. They were right in front of us and we could almost feel the muzzle blast. So there was a, the fire direction officer, the forward observer, I should say, was a fellow by the name of Tom Jaley and he was from our Love Battery of our 4th Battalion and he was the forward observer for that battalion and he had a radio team up there that was supposed to be in contact with Love Battery. And there were some telephone lines that were supposed to be in contact. The problem is, we had been shelled up there quite a bit, with mortar shells and so on and knocked out all the telephone lines and when they tried the radios, something was wrong with the radio, we never could figure out what it was. It just wouldn't work. And he was pacing back and forth, you know, and I asked him, you know, there was a lot of firing going on and it was so much noise that we couldn't tell if that gun was going off out there, but we saw the muzzle blast and felt it. And he says, here I am up here with no communications. And I said, well, we are in contact with regimental headquarters. And I said, they are in contact with all the firing batteries by telephone, I said, maybe we could relay it. And he said, let's try it. And we did and I can remember him directing the fire and he called for a round of smoke, which is a smoke shell and it came in and he gave me some coordinates and the shell came in and then he made some directions on- corrections on range and the deflection and brought it down pretty close to him. And finally he said, fire a Love Battery, three rounds for effect. High explosive for effect. And I can remember, this was a Mickey Mouse set-up, really, because our fire direction center could hear us, but we couldn't hear them and some of these relaying stations behind us, started relaying it back and forth until it finally got to us and then we would relay it back to them, see? It was kind of a Rube Goldberg deal, but it worked.

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Kerins: And I remember we could hear that big radio from the fire direction center and I can remember hearing Colonel Fairburn come on there and say, when we asked him to fire a Love Battery three rounds of HE for effect, high explosive, for effect, I can remember hearing Fairburn's voice saying, we will fire the regiment. And they fired the whole regiment up there

and they just literally obliterated that area out there where those guns were. And it silenced it, immediately. And some of our patrols went up there the next day, some of the boys from our outfit went with them and they really found two or three Jap guns up there, some of the Japanese had tried to hide beneath the guns even, to get away from the shells. And they found a lot of dead mules where they brought the guns in, over the mountains on the jungle trails. They knocked 'em all out. Tom Jaley got the Silver Star for that, he was a great guy.

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Q: Could you talk a little bit about the Guam campaign? Tell us about what happened to you, personally, let's say the say you landed and-

Kerins: All right, I was aboard the USS Dupage and I was assigned to what we call a recon unit from our regiment. Each unit, each battery or each battalion, each company and so on, had their own recon people to go out ahead to set up whatever so that the rest of them could come in to do what they, you know, to their positions. Well, I was in a recon party from the 12th Marines. We were to come in and if they needed us for communication from the ship to shore or even to have direct ship to shore fire before we had our guns ashore, they used us for that. But our main purpose was to move in to where we had originally plotted on the map, where we would set up our first command post and get us as close to it as we could and if we couldn't make that, then we were to pick another one, and radio back to where it was and so they could bring our command units in there and our gun positions and so on. So I can remember being down in the hole of that ship, waiting to come ashore, they had us all. They woke us at 2 o'clock in the morning and we had steak and eggs for breakfast. That was the tradition in the Marine Corps before landing, you had steak and eggs for breakfast at 2 o'clock in the morning. So we were all in our units, all in our combat outfits, our packs and everything loaded down. Had a pack on my back, a radio on my back, checked my carbine and had- I had a .45 pistol on my side and a couple hand grenades and we were down in the hole along with all the other bunch in our group. They chased us all off the deck and go down into your holes until they call you to come up to your debarkation station. That way they don't have everybody up there all at once. Then we had

to climb down over the cargo nets to get into the landing craft. So I can remember, from up above, somebody called down and said, okay, that recon party, let's go! And we started climbing up the ladders and of course all the other guys in the hole are kind of giving us a cheer, you know, the whole rousing, go get 'em thing, you know.

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Kerins: And they were hollering, gun ho, go get 'em guys! Save some souvenirs for us. And all that. Some idiot from the back of the hole hollers out, banzai in case we lose! But anyway, it was a lot of fun things that happened right in the middle of all of this too. But I got up on deck, we climbed down the cargo net, we got into a Higgins Boat, we went out and we circled in circles- each- usually about four or five boats to a huge circle and until they gave us a command to go in to a certain line, where there would be a line of boats. And there was a control boat there and he would have a flag up, a pennant. And we would sit there with a red flag up and we would try to line up along that edge and when he would drop it and put the green flag up, everybody would head for the beach all at once. Well, the whole plan was here because down near the Asan River, we had a reef that ran out there quite a bit. These landing boats wouldn't go across that reef, but they got up to the edge of the reef and we had some amphibious tractors that came up along side of us and we would pile out of the landing boats into the amphib tractors to take us in across the coral reef.

Q: So your Higgins boat took you up to the reef?

Kerins: Right, yeah. And then we would get into the amphib tractor and then he would start to take us in across the reef.

Q: Do you remember what wave you were in?

Kerins: Well, this was one of the first waves. Because later on, some of the boys coming in, they didn't have enough amphib tractors to bring all those units in. The landing crafts would bring

them into the edge of the reef and they would have to wade ashore and those poor devils were getting fired on while they were still wading in. But they had to get those first waves ashore, that is why they used the amtracs, to get us ashore.

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Kerins: As ours was coming up toward the beachhead, just to the right flank of the Asan River, we took a, I don't know how far off the beach we were, but we took a hit, just a minor hit with a mortar shell, up on the starboard bow and it blew- it knocked a couple of treads off on the tractor on that side. So the thing wasn't working quite right and it scared the daylights out of us because when these treads were flopped over, every time they come around and hit the brace and one of these fenders on the thing, you know, it would shake the whole thing. But if finally waddled up pretty close to the beach and I thought, well, since we were hit on the right side, I peeled out on the left side and I was in water about up to my thighs and ran forward, I had the radio on my back, and ran forward and ran up there and plowed into that sand and when I did, my helmet tipped down over my eyes. And I was laying there panting and scared to death and it seemed like the whole world was going up around us. I thought, I've got to see where I am and what is going on here, and I reached up and pushed my helmet up and just about as far as from me to the wall over here, there was a little stake in the ground, stuck up about that high, and a little square placard on it. And it said, welcome Marines. When I hit that beach and, for some reason I thought, I'm really making history here, here I am one of the first ones on the beach. And I looked up and I saw this sign that said, welcome Marines. And it was signed "Navy Underwater Demolition Team." The frogmen had been there the night before, blowing up obstacles on the reef and a couple of those guys crawled ashore and put that sign up because they knew we were coming in the next day. Kind of blew the biscuits on my making history, but then I got up and I thought, I gotta get out of here because of all these mortar shells falling down and machine guns. And just up, there was a road running parallel to the beach there and there was a little coral road and I ran across the road and the little concrete covered bridge, where the Asan River came and emptied into the ocean there, was just to the left of me. And as I ran across that road, a machine gun opened up from the hills up on the left flank. And it started chipping, it was firing a little

low, and it was chipping concrete off of that bridge and I don't know whether a piece of the concrete or ricocheting piece of the bullet or what, but something tore back into my left leg and it didn't hurt, but I felt it hit. And- but I kept running forward and I got over to the edge of that bridge and I thought, I've got to get away from this, so I just jumped in the river. Well, that put me down in a little ravine like, so I was safe from that machine gun, anyway. So I thought, this is the best place to stay, but I was still moving forward, so I just waded up the river. And eventually ended up at the where the foothills started, I crawled up out of there and there was Colonel Fairburn, he had just gotten up that far, he had worked his way up. We had rice paddies on our right flank and he said, how are you doing? And I said, well, pretty good. He says, how is your radio? And I set it up and I tested it and I said, well, it's working fine, sir.

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Q: One piece of the TBX or?

Kerins: No, I better digress a little here. I didn't have a TBX. By the time we hit Guam, we had better equipment. Like I said, we were the last to get the good stuff. And after Bougainville, we started getting a little bit of the good stuff and I had a radio that was called an SCR-300. It was an Army Signal Corp radio and it was, instead of having all these calibrations that we used to use with a TBX to get a frequency and all this, this thing had just a simple little knob that you could switch, like we do today, from our television sets, from one channel to another. And we had certain assigned channels that we used. Different outfits had different channels assigned to them. And that's- and it was a lot better, it worked. Lighter weight than the old TBY that we carried on our backs. It was only good for line of sight communications and it was a very simple thing and still, it was a good radio that worked.

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Q: One thing that is striking me is that you are talking, in your very vivid description, basically how you are looking out for yourself; you are alone on the battlefield. That led me to the question of, you know, where were the other guys with your radio, which you answered, but it

also struck me to ask you the question, is everybody then moving to the same point because you got your orders to rendezvous over here and set up your command post?

Kerins: Well, you see, the whole plan for our landing was they had the beaches named by colors and we landed between Adelup Point and Asan Point. The 3rd Marine Regiment, or Infantry Regiment, landed on the left flank, the 21st Marines landed in the center, and the 9th Marines landed on the right flank. Then over around Orote Peninsula, that was another unit landing there altogether, that was the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade and reinforced by the 77th Army Regiment. But where we landed, I landed right actually between the right flank of the 3rd Regiment and the left flank of the 21st Regiment and when I started walking, wading up that river, down in there, of course everybody landed at once and they started moving in. We knew what our objective was and they were all moving forward in their area as much as they could. The 3rd Marines were pinned over there on that left flank for days. It just so happened that the 21st moved in pretty well and the 9th Marines did too. Over around Orote Peninsula they had a lot of problems, but as I was wading up this river, down in that gully, I could see no one, everything is going up around us. You could hear all the racket, the fire, you know, it was just amazing, the sound, how loud it was.

--01:16:14 - 01:18:10

Kerins: I was down there all by myself and wading forward and I thought, holy smokes, I may be wading right into the middle of the whole Japanese army, I was getting a little concerned about that. And there was a little bend in that river there and as I got to it, I kind of looked around and there was another one of my other buddies, David Bethany and he was hugging the left bank of that river, because the same machine gun, I think that fired at me from the bridge, was shooting over the top of that river bank and up on the right bank of the river, there was a coconut log that, or a tree, had been blown over. And right behind that was our communication officer. A real great guy by the name of Paul Moss. Captain Moss. And he was running up there and when that machine gun opened up, he just dove right behind that log and when he did, his dispatch case kind of flew out ahead of him and he was trying to reach it and every time he tried to get up to

reach out there to grab his dispatch case, that machine gun was chipping away at the top of that log. So we were down in that gully and Moss up there hollered down and says, see if you can draw their fire away from me! So Bethany had seen too many cowboy movies I guess, he took his helmet off and put it on his carbine, and raised up above there and they didn't do anything. I had a little brush where I was and I raised up just enough and I could see where that machine gun opened up a couple times and I could see the muzzle flashes from a cave like thing up on the hillside up there. And I popped off a couple rounds with a carbine, but they were too far away and the carbines are useless anyway. And Dave shoved that helmet up and the guns stopped firing. And about that time they lobbed a mortar shell over and it hit right above us and just blew dirt all down- [video stops briefly]

--01:18:14 - 01:20:35

Kerins: As I was saying, Dave Bethany raised his helmet up and when he did that, you know, they are smart enough to know that somebody is trying to draw their fire, for some reason and instead of opening up on us with a machine gun, they just lobbed this mortar shell over and they hit right on the riverbank, right above us and it blew dirt down over us and I was a little concerned later about my radio with the dirt on it and all, but it cleaned out and worked pretty good. But the fragments from that thing went up and out in all directions and one of the pieces went across that river, through that coconut log and it hit Captain Moss's dispatch case that was lying out there in front of him. Once it fired, why it wasn't like a machine gun, continuing to fire like that, he jumped up and ran forward and down the river too and we waded forward. But years later, I hadn't seen Moss after the war, of course we were in Iwo Jima together and so on, but after the war ended, I had- I had lost all track of him, but we had a reunion in Atlanta, Georgia and Captain Moss and his wife were there at the reunion and I walked in and of course I didn't recognize him and he didn't recognize me and we had our little name tags on and he looked and I said, Captain Moss! And he says, yes. I said, I used to be one of your radio operators. Oh yes, Kerins! We go through all this and I said, I can remember one thing about you. And he says, what's that? I said, I can remember when your dispatch case, when we landed at Guam. I said, I was down the river and you asked us to draw the fire away from you and that is when they

lobbed that mortar shell over. He said, yeah, I very well remember that! I said, as I remember, your dispatch case got some of the fragments from that mortar shell and I heard you talk about it later, saying that one of those fragments went through your wife's picture that you carried in the dispatch case. And he looked at her and said, just a minute. He said, Inez, come here. His wife. And she got over there and he said, I want you to hear this. He pulled out his billfold and pulled it out and he still carried a picture and there was a hole right through the middle of it.

--01:20:38 - 01:27:18

Q: Jack, what was the tightest spot you were in during the Guam campaign?

Kerins: I think perhaps maybe that landing. During the banzai attack too, that was something else. When they came down through our area, they were on both sides of us really, and then followed down a gully, led them right into us. And our boys fanned out and they set up a fire defense line there. And we were getting fired on from the higher ground on both sides. So Colonel Letcher, John Letcher, John Seymour Letcher, they called him "Buzz" Letcher, was our regimental commander- not our regimental commander, our battery commander then. Colonel John Bushrod Wilson was our regimental commander. But Letcher came out and we had this lieutenant Rogers with us, who was our recreation morale officer, and he says, Rogers, take some men and get up that hillside and get those damn snipers. So he took a group up there and there were several boys with him. There was a fellow by the name of John Wiley, there was Bob Wolf, there was another Rogers, a PFC by the name of AH Rogers and a fellow by the name of Harry Bailey. That made up his little squad that went up there to take care of the snipers. Well, they went around the base of the hill and up behind them, they come down on them and they were up on his hillside firing into our area. So when they got up there and they got to working the way down through this sword grass, well, there was a little sort of a trail that went down this one point and when, Lieutenant Rogers was leading it and Wiley was second and then I think AH Rogers and then Wolf and then Bailey behind him. And they were spread out of course, but when Rogers and Wiley started around this bend, they jumped back and started firing and they ran into quite a sizable group of Japanese there and of course when they started firing at the Japanese, the

Japanese were actually trapped between them and our boys down below and they were both getting fire from down below and from behind too. And the trouble is, the fire coming up from this side was heavier than what they were putting out and it was endangering the lives of our squad that was going down there, see? And Lieutenant Rogers stood up and he hollered, stop that damn firing! This is Lieutenant Rogers! And just as he did, I got all this from Bob Wolf, Bob is here, for instance, on Guam today. He said he saw an arm come out of the brush with a demolition charge and drop it right like that at Lieutenant Roger's feet and the arms and Rogers and all just disappeared in a huge explosion. And John Wiley was hit in three different places I think. In the throat and the leg and chest and it didn't kill him, but he was wounded. And anyway, the firing stopped and so they dragged Wiley back up the hillside a little ways and they could hear the Japs start firing again. And they decided they couldn't get Wiley out of there and he tried to tell them to go on and get out and he would try to hold them off. And Bob Wolf says, John, he says, either we all go, or none of us go. So they held out there for a while and for some reason the Japs quit firing at them. But they could hear them talking all around. And except back up on the hillside where they came down from. And finally they decided that they needed help to get Wiley out of there. So AH Rogers, the PFC Rogers, took off and got up over the hill and went down and there was an aid station at the foot of that hill. And he got a corpsman and they brought a stretcher up the top. Well, the corpsman waited at the top with the stretcher and AH came down and young Bob Wolf was quite a weight lifter and he picked Wiley up and got him on his shoulders and ran up that hillside and they got him on the stretcher. And the corpsman and PFC Rogers carried him on down to the aid station. And the thing is, when Colonel Letcher ordered that platoon to go up there, Colonel Wilson came around and he told Corporal John Wardlow, who was in our outfit, to take a unit up and take care of those. He said, rake that hillside and get rid of those snipers. He didn't know that Letcher had sent another platoon out, or another squad out already to do that same thing. So when John Wardlow got a group together, I was with him. He asked me to go and we had a bunch of guys and we went up there and we got into the same situation and I guess we were up there and that first squad was on our left flank. Well, we weren't about to fire down there, we were afraid of hitting some of our own men. But we heard the explosion, we heard him holler out to stop, we heard Lieutenant Rogers holler out

to stop firing and we heard the explosion and it was over to our left, but we didn't know what happened. But we got as far as we could and after that, all the firing stopped and our boys were down below, taking care of things pretty well. So we came back the same way, we were afraid to go down the hillside into our bivouac area, because those boys down there were firing in all direction and we didn't want them shooting at us when we came down, so we went in behind them and joined them down below. But it was a very hairy situation. That was probably my most remembered thing of the Guam campaign.

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Some of the things that I think about today though, after it's all over, this 50th anniversary of the landing, the liberation of Guam, we couldn't believe it. I never thought I would ever return to Guam again and I don't think any of us did. And those of us who came back and I understand there are about 960 of us who came back for this, and we got off the airplane and saw the reception that was waiting for us, we just couldn't believe it. And it has been that way every day here. Brought a lot of tears back. And still has. But we appreciate everything that the people of Guam have done for us. I'm sure all the Marines that came back feel the same way.

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Q: Is there anything else that you would like to say while we have the opportunity. Any other memory of the Guam campaign that we haven't gotten down yet?

Kerins: Oh, there are probably a lot of other memories, but I don't know- I don't know whether I covered everything in my book or not. In fact, since I wrote that book, and all my buddies have gotten it and read it and even people that I haven't known, have gotten a hold of the book, former Marines that were here in Guam, have read it and they have written me letters. I have a stack of letters in a file that big at home, that tell me how they liked it and how it brought their memories back. As far as the monetary situation, it paid for itself, but I would starve to death on what I made on the thing. But it's been so gratifying, I'm so glad that I wrote the thing. It seems like every day I get a letter from somebody that I don't even know and what happens, it brings back

memories of them. I had a ten page letter from somebody out in California that I never heard of, and he was telling me stories of what happened to him. And it's the same way with all the guys I have talked to. So I don't know what else I can say, really. The- some of our gang from our own battery where we have our reunions together, say, hey, I thought of some more things I didn't tell you. And they say, why don't you write a sequel? Well, I don't know about that and I mentioned it to Pat, my wife, and she says, well, she says, forget it. She said, there was enough vulgarity in the first book, and she says, don't expect me to- so she says, and besides, don't expect me to proofread another one for you. She said, don't press your luck! So I guess I'm not going to write another one. But I really enjoyed writing it. Actually, I mentioned a while ago, we did that television show and when you get old and ugly and stupid all at the same time, you get off that television and start writing, where people can't see you. I took up writing- I'm a 25 year member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and I'm the past president of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers. And I have been writing stories for- I have stories in *Field and Stream* and *Outdoor America*, *Outdoor Canada*, *Fins and Feathers*, *Wild Fowl Magazine.* I was on the- listed on the masthead at *Fishing Tackle Trade News*, which is a trade journal for the fishing tackle industry. And that is what I have been doing and I enjoy it. Now that I'm retired from the sporting goods and athletic business, and have been since 1985, the writing gives me something to do. That way I don't sit around and vegetate. And this is the book- I wrote another book, by the way. I have been working on it for two years and just finished it. It's going to be published in November and it has nothing to do with the outdoors. It has nothing to do with the Marine Corps. My wife, Pat's hobby, is collecting these old stick pins that men used to wear in their ties back around the turn of the century. My father had five of them and she inherited those back in the 1960s. And she got interested in them and started collecting them and now she has over 2500 and from what we understand, it's one of the largest individual collections in the United States and there has never been a reference book done on them. And these collectors, antique dealers and estate jewelers, they are interested in something like that. So I spent the last two years photographing macro lens stuff, you know, real close to get photos of those things. And there is a company down in Paducah, Kentucky called Collector Books and they are publishing it and it will be out in November. So I got that out of the way now and now I don't

know, I may go fishing for a while.

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Q: Sounds like a good thing to do. Jack, I have taken a lot of your time and I appreciate the time you have taken to tell us your pretty vivid memories of World War II and I just want to thank you for what you have done for us today.

Kerins: Steve, it's been my pleasure and it's been an honor being with you here.

Q: Thank you very much.

Kerins: You bet.

[END OF SESSION]