

**Admiral Nimitz Historic Site
National Museum of the Pacific War**



**Center for Pacific War Studies
Oral History Program**

An Interview with

Junior H. Montgomery

**6th Marine Division
3rd Raiders
Bougainville, Guam, Okinawa**

Date of Interview: August 8, 2001

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is August 8, 2001. I am interviewing J. H. Montgomery and this is taking place at his home, his address is 1320 Lakeview Bend, Rochester, IN 46975. His phone number is 574-224-2271. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific Wars Center for Pacific War Studies and for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Richard Misenhimer:

I would like to thank you for taking time today to let us interview you about your history of your service in World War II. Let me start off by asking, where were you born?

J. H. Montgomery:

July 15, 1923

Richard Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

J. H. Montgomery:

In Fulton County.

Richard Misenhimer:

Close to where we are now?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes not to far, 4 or 5 miles.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, I had three brothers.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were they also in World War II?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were they older or younger than you?

J. H. Montgomery:

One younger and two older.

Richard Misenhimer:

You were in the marines, what branch were they in?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well my older brother was in the Army. He was drafted first and then my second brother was drafted and he was in the Army. My younger brother enlisted before he graduated out of high school and he was in the Army too.

Richard Misenhimer:

What were your parent's names?

J. H. Montgomery:

Everett Montgomery and Lena Montgomery.

Richard Misenhimer:

Where were they born?

J. H. Montgomery:

They were born around Marshtown.

Richard Misenhimer:

Here in Indiana?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, that is west of here about six miles.

Richard Misenhimer:

Where did you go to school?

J. H. Montgomery:

Grass Creek.

Richard Misenhimer:

Grass Creek, Indiana?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

You graduated from High School there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

What year was that?

J. H. Montgomery:

1942

Richard Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well in the middle of the summer of '42.

Richard Misenhimer:

Just after high school graduation.

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, a couple months after that.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, I enlisted. I knew I would have to go so I enlisted.

Richard Misenhimer:

What branch was that?

J. H. Montgomery:

Marine Corps.

Richard Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Marines?

J. H. Montgomery:

I didn't know much about them, I really never thought much about it until, you know, it began to get close to time to go and just wanted to pick my outfit. I just read magazines, little stories about the Marines.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you happy with that decision after you got in it?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, I never regretted it.

Richard Misenhimer:

I understand once a Marine, always a Marine.

J. H. Montgomery:

I guess. I was always proud to serve in the Marine Corps.

Richard Misenhimer:

Where did you take your training then?

J. H. Montgomery:

San Diego, California.

Richard Misenhimer:

How long was that training?

J. H. Montgomery:

Maybe three months.

Richard Misenhimer:

What were the conditions like there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Strict.

Richard Misenhimer:

How were the facilities, were you in barracks or what?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, barracks and wash racks to wash clothes on.

Richard Misenhimer:

How was the food?

J. H. Montgomery:

Food was okay; I have never been one to complain about food. I knew a lot of people did, but I didn't. It was always pretty good.

Richard Misenhimer:

Your three months of training was that infantry type training or combat type training?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, we went from there at boot camp, all Marines went thru that and then went out of there into different places.

Richard Misenhimer:

Now the boot camp – that was the three months?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you go to special training after that?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, I went to training at Oceanside, California for amphibious tractors.

Richard Misenhimer:

To drive them or what?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Drive the Amtrak?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, after about a month and a half they need men overseas so they took me out of there.

Richard Misenhimer:

Back into a regular outfit?

J. H. Montgomery:

Into a replacement battalion.

Richard Misenhimer:

What rank did you have at that time?

J. H. Montgomery:

Private.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have any other special training?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well not unless you could call the raiders special training. When I got over there and they asked for volunteers in the raider outfit, I volunteered. You couldn't be married. I guess that was one of the stipulations, you couldn't be married.

Richard Misenhimer:

After a few weeks of this Amtrak training they put you on this replacement battalion?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you go overseas right straight then?

J. H. Montgomery:

It wasn't very long.

Richard Misenhimer:

Where did you go?

J. H. Montgomery:

Went to New Caledonia, was where we landed first.

Richard Misenhimer:

How long did it take for you to get there?

J. H. Montgomery:

I'm guessing about a month, it was a long time.

Richard Misenhimer:

What kind of ship were you on?

J. H. Montgomery:

A troop transport, it had been converted to a troop transport.

Richard Misenhimer:

Do you have any idea on how many people might have been on that ship?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, I don't have any idea.

Richard Misenhimer:

A large number?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, there was a lot of them on there, but I just don't know how many.

Richard Misenhimer:

What were the conditions like on that ship?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well they weren't good, but they weren't unbearable.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have hammocks to sleep in, bunks, or what?

J. H. Montgomery:

We had bunks down in a hold, they had maybe seven bunks high and you had a bunk. You had salt-water showers and stuff like that.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was there plenty of fresh water for drinking and that sort of thing?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes and the food was not good, but it was partially because we didn't feel good. A lot of the guys got seasick, I didn't but I just got a dirty feeling like.

Richard Misenhimer:

Where did you depart from in California?

J. H. Montgomery:

San Diego.

Richard Misenhimer:

On the journey over did you have any particular training then or what did you do during that month on the ship?

J. H. Montgomery:

During that month we didn't do anything. They had a few calls that planes had been spotted, general quarters.

Called general quarters.

Richard Misenhimer:

Battle stations?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you zig zag for submarines?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, whenever they got in water that was bad they zig zagged.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was there a convoy, other ships along with you?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes there was some, but I don't remember having a good count on what there was.

Richard Misenhimer:

But you were not alone?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, we weren't alone.

Richard Misenhimer:

I am assuming that you had destroyers or something as escorts?

J. H. Montgomery:

I would think so, but they never got close enough to really tell.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then you landed in New Caledonia, where did you land there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Noumea.

Richard Misenhimer:

What did you do when you landed there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well we stayed there a little while; I think that is where I joined the Raiders. They was making up a Raider battalion, I decided I might as well try it.

Richard Misenhimer:

Prior to that the replacement battalion did it have a number or name or anything? Or just a replacement battalion?

J. H. Montgomery:

You know it had one but I don't remember.

Richard Misenhimer:

After you joined the Raiders then what did you do? Take training there you said.

J. H. Montgomery:

I might tell that a good friend that I had, George Beanie, they asked each individual you know and I talked to the Captain first that was doing the signing up and I went in. George Beanie told them he didn't want to go in and then when he found out that I went in, he went back to the Captain and told him he had changed his mind. He never made it home.

Richard Misenhimer:

So then when you told the Captain yes, then what happened?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well they began to form it together – squads, platoons, and so on. There was already a nucleus of the Third Raiders there.

Richard Misenhimer:

This was the Third Raiders?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes and when our replacement outfit go over there they got the ones that wanted to join and they put us in squad tents and we had squad leaders and platoon leaders that began to form it together.

Richard Misenhimer:

This raider battalion had a name also I believe you said.

J. H. Montgomery:

Third Raider Battalion.

Richard Misenhimer:

Some captain or Colonels name? Bean did you say?

J. H. Montgomery:

Colonel Bean at that time.

Richard Misenhimer:

B.E.A. N.

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes. B.E.A. N.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was a kind of repeat of the training you had in California?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, more intensive.

Richard Misenhimer:

Lot of physical training?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, much physical training, a lot of night training. One platoon would go out and hide and we would have to find them.

Richard Misenhimer:

You lived in tents there you said?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was it pretty warm there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, it was pretty warm, but it was warmer on Guadalcanal.

Richard Misenhimer:

About how long were you there in this training?

J. H. Montgomery:

It must have been a month it wasn't too long, things were moving rapidly in the war. They were getting ready to make the landing on Bougainville and they were getting us ready for that.

Richard Misenhimer:

About when would this have been? Was this in '43?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, Sept. of '43. Now that's not exact but my remembrance.

Richard Misenhimer:

Close enough.

J. H. Montgomery:

The first of November we hit Bougainville.

Richard Misenhimer:

You were part of that?

J. H. Montgomery:

We hit Bougainville, November 1st.

Richard Misenhimer:

Do you want to tell me about that?

J. H. Montgomery:

I was on the first wave when we went in, of course, never had been in combat. Nobody had been in combat really, even the older men that I joined over there. The first night was horrible, they sent us inland for our company to put a circle up on a trail and block a trail during the night. We dug, of course, the officers – nobody knew how to do it in combat. They thought it would be smart to send two men out in front of each platoon so if they heard the Japs coming in, they was suppose to crawl back in that circle. So they sent me and another guy named Maloney out there about 50 yards in front and I never seen it so dark, we were young and had never been

in anything like that. It got dark, and it got dark, and it got dark. The word was that you were not suppose to fire your rifle, because the Japs would see the flash and would get somebody else to fire and then they could draw a line and lay mortars in there on us. So it got dark and we were just scared to death, we could hear but we couldn't see a thing. We thought sure, and then about 1:30 a.m. in the morning, you never heard a noise. You would never known that there was a company of men, nobody whispered – dead quiet, just crickets. You could hear the night life and the jungle, about 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning a guy that had been in my tent, I didn't know it at the time but somehow he got a hand grenade in his fox hole.

Richard Misenhimer:

The Japs had thrown it in?

J. H Montgomery:

Well that is what I understood; all I got the next morning was what word that went around. They said a Jap had thrown a hand grenade in there and it went off between his legs and blew part of his groin off. We were out there in the real quiet and all you could hear was "God Help Me, Somebody Help Me". Like a chicken in the dark, well the corpsman couldn't go to him because anybody out of the hole was a Jap. So he had to lay there until daylight, as soon as it broke day they got him out of there and I never knew what happened to him.

Richard Misenhimer:

That was the only incident that happened that night then?

J. H. Montgomery:

That was the only incident, but about a million things that happened in our minds, you know. We thought we heard men around us but we couldn't go back in cause our own guys would knife us, you know. We never did that again, we never left two men out there.

Richard Misenhimer:

Just the one time?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, just the one time.

Richard Misenhimer:

Now back to the landing, what kind of craft did you go in to land?

J. H. Montgomery:

Higgins boat.

Richard Misenhimer:

You were a regular battalion and this was part of the total invasion or did you go in first?

J. H. Montgomery:

No it was part of the total invasion.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was this at Empress Augusta Bay?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, well you know quite a bit about it.

Richard Misenhimer:

Well a little bit, so that is where you went in?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, Piva Trail was the name of the trail where we put the roadblock up. We spent three nights moving up and down on that trail, had a few men get - lost a few men on that.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you actually have any contact with the Japanese?

J. H. Montgomery:

On the third night, we were laying down in fox holes and on the third night it got dark and we could hear this thumping, like hearing a dog dig underground that is what it sounded like. The Japanese had come up within thirty yards of us, maybe closer, they had dug in knowing we were there and when daylight came we went at it. It was bad, the Captain, we were just a company of men.

Richard Misenhimer:

That is around 200.

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, that Strank was one of the men who put the flag up on Iwo Jima. He was one of the Sergeants, Sergeant Major there and I can hear him yelling yet. Tow Joey and the Japs were yelling “Die Marines, more blood for Roosevelt.”

Richard Misenhimer:

So you had a pretty good fight out there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes that went on all morning and most of the day and the Captain calling yet, the artillery were behind us firing over our heads, you know and he would keep lowering it down. He was afraid they were just getting it over our head and it would explode. You could hear it coming and you hoped it was going to go on by. There was dead Japs everywhere when that day was over.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you lose many men that day?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, we lost several. I might tell you that second night me and a guy named John Rice dug foxholes together. We dug a sitting foxhole, the next night a single where you could get in and get to or rifle down and I never -- that rifle felt like a telephone pole. It had a bayonet on the end of it, you know but it felt like I could never get that round into a Jap and we strung a vine between his foxhole and mine and we had signals. One signal meant this and another signal all clear. That didn't work worth a hoot, clods of dirt would fall off, sounded like thunder and during the night I heard this Jap coming behind me. There was this little trail that went behind my foxhole and John Rice had built his foxhole right in it little path that we had wore. I could hear this Jap breathing, he came up there and he was feeling his way along see and John Rice was sitting there with his head up out of the foxhole. About this much of his head, you know that Jap came to his head and run his hands all around over his helmet. Scared John Rice to death, you know. He wasn't far out of high school either, he jumped up and I think fired at him. He wasn't suppose to fire, but he did and the guy went crashing out of there

and he was probably as scared as we were.

Richard Misenhimer:

So he didn't get him then?

J. H. Montgomery:

No he wasn't there the next morning.

Richard Misenhimer:

How far apart were your foxholes?

J. H. Montgomery:

About six or seven feet, the idea was that they weren't going to get thru there. They wasn't going to get into the command post, but one did get in during the night and got into a knife fight with the clerk or company clerk.

The company clerk killed him.

Richard Misenhimer:

Now you said this one was coming behind you, so this was from inside of your perimeter then?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes he was coming behind me, so yes he had to be coming from the inside of the perimeter.

Richard Misenhimer:

So he had gotten in somehow?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, they could do it. See we would fight during the daytime it seemed like and at night they would do their fighting. You couldn't see and lots of times during the couple of months we were on there you couldn't see.

You would think you heard something and I would take the point of my rifle and punch out there to see if I could feel a body.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did it have the bayonet on at that point?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, I just wanted to know if someone was there. What they could do was crawl up and find your dirt where you

had thrown out. Then they would reach up and tap their helmet with a hand grenade and throw it in the foxhole.

Richard Misenhimer:

They had to tap their hand grenades?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes they used their helmets.

Richard Misenhimer:

To arm them or whatever?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Now you weren't supposed to fire, you were supposed to use your knife if you found one of them?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you ever have to do that?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, I never had one get that close to me other than that one that I could hear him breathing. If he had kept coming it would have been my helmet that he would have ran his hands over. Can't you image that, what he would have thought?

Richard Misenhimer:

Yes that would have been something, then what else?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well then on the 9th I think we hit the beach on the first of November and then on the ninth they needed a raid made behind the lines. The Japanese ammunition dumps and so on. So they picked, I was in Company M and they picked my company and a battalion of paratroopers to make the raid. They took us in Higgins boats back

up around the island and about 2 o'clock in the morning we crawled in. They let the Higgins ramp down as quietly as possible, we crawled in on the beach to get to the tree line and then we lay there until daylight. Come to find out we landed when a regiment of Japanese were going thru there to the front lines. You know on a deal like that you don't really know the large picture. The colonels did, the leaders of the raid probably put it all together and knew what was going on, but all we knew was right where you were. It was sure rough, they were zeroing right in on us and they got the sick bay knocked out. We heard later it was the sickbay knocked out and ammunition dump they got that taken care of. They told us later, of course we were on the beach, reserve on the beach and out platoon Sergeant Jim Galardo, an Indian, got hit in the spine and he couldn't move and I crawled up along the sand and there was a machine gun. He knew we were there he was mowing right over. I kept down low and just drug Jim out of there; I understand he was paralyzed for life.

Richard Misenhimer:

You said a battalion of paratroopers?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Which is three companies?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

And your company so there was about four companies, so somewhere around 800 men in the raid?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

How long?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well we were just there that one day and we pulled back to the beach then, I don't know all you know is what

you hear "back to the water" they said the paratroopers hadn't been in combat before and they was out of ammunition and so they put a half circle up on the beach and the Higgins boats was suppose to come back in and get us. We put our wounded on the beach in the center and we didn't know when they could come and get us. They tried to get in once and they hit a couple Higgins boats with mortar so they turned around and took all of them. We heard they gave the sailors a choice of trying it again and they did. About 2 o'clock in the morning we heard those old motors a humming and we got our wounded loaded and got reloaded and got out of there. We left one or two guys that we didn't know what happened to them.

Richard Misenhimer:

From your company?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, we had some wounded and some dead.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you know how the paratroopers made out?

J. H. Montgomery:

No I never heard, I suppose about the same way.

Richard Misenhimer:

But you did accomplish your purpose in blowing up the ammunition dumps and things?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then what?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well we went back and they gave us a couple days rest and then the 29th, because it happened on the 9th and 29th. I used to remember we had the island secure in about a month and the army was going to take over and we had to build pillboxes. So we built pillboxes with sand and rifle slit and all that. One night I was lying there, I

had just taken the watch and I turned over on my side because you couldn't stand up and something bit me right in the side there. Of course, I didn't know what it was and I had 3 or 4 hours until daylight and I had to lie there. I could feel it paralyzing my shoulder and I couldn't do anything about it. Finally at daylight we called the corpsman and he took me up to a field hospital, I guess it was a scorpion that had bitten me.

Richard Misenhimer:

Those things really hurt don't they?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, Oh man and I didn't know what it was that had bitten me. I talked to guys now and they can remember calling the corpsman for me, that something had bitten me. I bet they made a big story out of that.

Richard Misenhimer:

In the landing there at Bougainville, were there more Marines besides your Raider battalion.

J. H. Montgomery:

Oh yes, I don't believe there was any Army involved they came in later.

Richard Misenhimer:

Yes, that is normally how the Marines went in.

J. H. Montgomery:

We got the island secure, it wasn't completely secured but it was ours. Then they pulled us off to get ready for the next campaign and to get replacements in and new gear.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you using the M1 Rifle?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well I was using the M1 rifle, I was using a lot of different things but I wound up with the M1 rifle. I had a Thompson's sub machine gun for a while, but it just seemed to me that the bullets would ricochet off of trees, helmets, and things like that. So I finally just carried the M1. I knew I could carry enough ammunition for me and I didn't waste any, so it worked well for me. I had a pistol for night.

Richard Misenhimer:

What rank were you now?

J. H. Montgomery:

Corporal.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you in charge of a squad then?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, well up and down. One time I had almost a platoon, you know what was left of a platoon.

Richard Misenhimer:

The officers and others had been ...

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes had been wounded.

Richard Misenhimer:

Casualties?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes that was on Okinawa I believe. The Captain and I believe were the only two that were original.

Richard Misenhimer:

Back to Bougainville then – the island was secure and you were pulled back for training or resting?

J. H. Montgomery:

They took us back to Guadalcanal; they were getting us ready to hit Guam then. So we got replacements in, there was still a few Japanese out in the boondocks but they were starving to death. Sometimes they would come in with a mosquito net over their face and eat chow in the chow line.

Richard Misenhimer:

What were the conditions like on Guadalcanal then?

J. H. Montgomery:

Guadalcanal was bad, it wasn't as bad as Bougainville but it was bad enough.

Richard Misenhimer:

This was like Dec. of '43 or some such?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, it was toward the end of the year.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did they have barracks there or did you live in tents?

J. H. Montgomery:

Tents.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you still getting air raids there from the Japanese?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have some air raids while you were there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well there on Bougainville this John Rice you know, we would hear this plane fly over every night. It was a Japanese plane and his purpose was to keep us awake and he would drop a bomb sometimes. Anyway we didn't have any watch and John Rice was kind of my partner and then he would sleep and then I would sleep. We would stand watch, but we didn't have any watch. Something like an hour or two hours, of course you know how when the other guy thought he had stood 2 or 3 hours the other guy thought he had stood 30 minutes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Right.

J. H. Montgomery:

He turned the watch over to me. You couldn't talk, no talking at all, it was just dead quiet and I heard that plane come over way up high and he circled the island there. He must have circled for quite a while and then I heard a little change in the pitch up there and I didn't wake Rice up. All at once that bomb landed and threw

mud and dirt, it must have been a pretty good size bomb. He just came out of a deep sleep, it was in a swamp and we were just laying on high ground and we had a fox hole dug full of water. It was dead quiet and he dived into that hole, by that time the plane was gone and it was dead quite. You could hear him get up out of that hole, drip, drip, drip. He was so mad he could have killed me.

Richard Misenhimer:

You weren't in the foxhole then? You were on top of the ground?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, we were on top of the ground and were on that trail. We were blocking that trail and this time we done it in the swamp.

Richard Misenhimer:

So on Guadalcanal then you got more replacements? You did more training there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, serious training. We were tough physically, really tough. They ran us around over those hills and then they put us on a boat and we were going to hit Guam. A date was set and we were all set to do it, but before they got there they had hit Saipan. I'm guessing a month earlier and they had gotten into a lot of trouble there. Things didn't go well so they backed us off and set our time back a month and we floated around out there in the ocean for about a month. No physical exertion, you know in a few days we had lost all that shape.

Richard Misenhimer:

Out of shape, so you didn't go into Saipan then? To help them on Saipan?

J. H. Montgomery:

No we hit Guam maybe a month later then they had planned.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you in the first wave there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, first wave I can't remember the beach it has been too long. That was kind of a rough place too, but it was

different at night they finally got flares. At night we had this line set up and dug in ready for an attack and if anything happened our boats out there would fire a flare like a fireworks and light the whole area up.

Richard Misenhimer:

The flare would be on a parachute as I recall.

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes, it was different because Guam was not so much jungle and things like that. It was kind of a nice island.

Richard Misenhimer:

So you went in on the first wave there?

J. H. Montgomery:

Yes,

Richard Misenhimer:

Anything particular that you recall that happened on Guam?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well I remember my friend George Beany got hit there. We was jumping in shell holes and moving up and he got shrapnel in his butt and I thought he would be done and come back to the states. I told him, you are probably bound for the states and I left him. The Corpsman got him back later in day and we were sitting around, you know how a group of guys are, everybody had his rifle ready but we were relaxed and taking it easy. A Jap that had lost his mind came out of a cave there with his saber and a little guy by the name of Sizemore; he just went to beating him over the head with that saber. He had just lost his mind and of course we couldn't hardly shoot as we were all around him. He was just ducking his head all around, taking the blows from that saber and finally one of the guys shot him.

Richard Misenhimer:

The guy that was taking the beating was he injured then?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, his name was Sizemore. He wasn't injured there, but he got injured later. Then I remember sitting on a cliff and the Japanese had just gotten rockets. I understood from Germany, they had told them how to make

them. So we got some of the first rockets, we were up on a ridge and tanks were going across a little flat plain right below us and to our right. You could see those things coming thru the air. They were just like a streetcar, they weren't that big but they looked big to us. They were trying to hit those tanks, but they couldn't hit anything with them. They made a lot of noise.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did they go a lot of damage to other things?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well wherever they hit, they were packed with explosives but they just couldn't aim them very good. They were trying to hit those tanks with them.

Richard Misenhimer:

What kind of tanks did they have? Do you recall?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well you know I never knew much about the tanks, we supported them on Okinawa. We were along side of them, but I never knew much about them. Of course down in those jungles those tanks were useless, they couldn't get around.

Richard Misenhimer:

Anything else you remember about Guam?

J. H. Montgomery:

No that is about the size of it.

Richard Misenhimer:

Now you were still in the raider battalion at this point?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well you see they decided as we moved North and I think at Guam they changed us from the raider battalions and they put the four raider battalions together and they called them the 4th Marine. The 4th Marine Regiment was in China when the Japanese took over China you know what I'm talking history that might not be right, but

the 4th Marines then got imprisoned and took to Japan. So they took these four battalions and made the 4th Regiment, which that had been and they put us with the 29th Marines, I think when we hit Guam and we were the 1st Marine Brigade.

Richard Misenhimer:

What Marine division at that point?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well later we became part of the 6th Marine Division, but I think we were just the 1st Marine Brigade.

Richard Misenhimer:

Not part of the division then?

J. H. Montgomery:

No, I don't believe so but I could be wrong. But a little later they moved us up to a larger unit yet in the 6th Marine Division.

Richard Misenhimer:

How long were you on Guam then?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well I think a couple months.

Richard Misenhimer:

How long did it take to secure the island? Do you recall?

J. H. Montgomery:

It took most of that, we wasn't there long after it was secured. I could be wrong on that time, but I know it was more than a month.

Richard Misenhimer:

Anything else stand out in your mind about what happen on Guam?

J. H. Montgomery:

No I can't remember anything that is worth mentioning.

Richard Misenhimer:

Just tough fighting everyday.

J. H. Montgomery:

Well you know not everyday. That's the thing about war you can go 3 or 4 days and nobody trying to shoot you or you can go 3 or 4 days and everybody or somebody is trying to shoot you. You feel like you have a lot of enemies.

Richard Misenhimer:

How much ammunition did you carry with you each day?

J. H. Montgomery:

Well I told you I found I could not carry enough ammunition to just go out there and spray the trees with it, which is what you wanted to do when you first go in there. You want to just shake them up so you just spray the area, which don't do much for you. He is still there and is still alive, but I started I think there on Guam carrying an M1 rifle.

Richard Misenhimer:

Several bandoliers of ammunition? How much?

J. H. Montgomery:

About two bandoliers and a belt had a web belt with ammunition in it and I carried a pistol. A guy got hit there on Guam, Kenny Webb and he was getting ready to be carried on his stretcher and he handed me his revolver, I still got it.

Richard Misenhimer:

What caliber?

J. H. Montgomery:

45.

Richard Misenhimer:

Revolver or automatic?

J. H. Montgomery:

Revolver, six shooter.

Richard Misenhimer:

Government issue or something he had of his own?

J.H. Montgomery:

No it was something he had of his own, I don't have any idea if it was family but I never did know what happened to him after the war.

Richard Misenhimer:

So when you left Guam where did you go then?

J.H. Montgomery:

We went back to Guadalcanal and in about a month we went to a little island called Emirau. There was suppose to be just a small Japanese detachment there, we landed and we never seen the first Jap. We stayed a whole month there on the beach and I don't think there was any Japs there at all cause we didn't find them. We put guards on at night. It was the most beautiful month of my life was right there. It was the most beautiful place you would ever want to dream about, coconut trees, white sandy beaches, no garbage or anything like that. We just talked and lounged around there for a whole month. Played cards and swam.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was it in the Solomon Island chain?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well it was a little bit North and West as I remember.

Richard Misenhimer:

Your whole battalion or company?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well we had a platoon there, I don't remember if we had other platoons around. I don't know what detachment.

Richard Misenhimer:

You stayed there about a month?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, I remember about a month.

Richard Misenhimer:

But the reason they sent you there was to clear the Japanese? It that correct?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, to make our presence known that we were on the island. They were leap frogging and such as that, I think they had some kind of communications set up. We didn't do anything ourselves, it could have been the whole company was there, I don't know.

Richard Misenhimer:

What was the name of the island again?

J.H. Montgomery:

Emirau Island.

Richard Misenhimer:

Do you know how to spell that?

J.H. Montgomery:

No. Emirau? Something like that.

Richard Misenhimer:

So after you went there, where did you go?

J.H. Montgomery:

We went back to Guadalcanal and got ready to hit Okinawa.

Richard Misenhimer:

To get from Emirau back to Guadalcanal, how long did that take?

J.H. Montgomery:

You know I can't even remember that. I figured out one time in the 2 ½ years I was over there I was on the water for 6 months. You know going and coming, island to island.

Richard Misenhimer:

But going from Emirau to Guadalcanal, what did this take? More than a day?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, I would just be guessing but it must have been 6 to 8 hundred miles and it took several days.

Richard Misenhimer:

When you got back to Guadalcanal, what did you do there?

J.H. Montgomery:

Got replacements in, we didn't need many but got built back to strength. Guys get sick and things happen to them, we got built back up. They wouldn't tell us where we were going until we were on board ship.

Richard Misenhimer:

What rank did you have now?

J.H. Montgomery:

Corporal, I finished the war as a Corporal.

Richard Misenhimer:

So you had more training there, I guess more physical training?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, and you would have to train any new replacements.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then you left there for Okinawa?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, that would be 1944 I believe.

Richard Misenhimer:

1945

J.H. Montgomery:

'45, I know it was Easter Sunday when ...

Richard Misenhimer:

April 1st of 1945, Easter Sunday of '45.

J.H. Montgomery:

Beautiful, I remember it was a beautiful day and they thought we were going to land. We were going to take that airport Yomitan airport. We were suppose to take that airport and they expected them to really defend that part of the island you know. Well the Japanese General decided to defend the Southern end of the island, so we just walked that first day. We never hit a thing on the beach, never seen a Jap, walked up there like it was a Sunday walking across the island. I think that same day across the airport and across the island. We patrolled the Northern end and of course the Army and some Marines hit the Southern end and they really run into them and had a lot of trouble. So after a while they told us we were going to go down there.

Richard Misenhimer:

So how long did it take to go from Guadalcanal up to Okinawa?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well you know I can't remember it would have taken quite a while.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you on a troop transport at this point?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, well now were on an LST for a while but we were on a troop transport when we made the landing. I remember the waters were high and we had trouble on the net.

Richard Misenhimer:

Side two tape with J.H. Montgomery. So you were on a troop transport getting ready to land on Okinawa.

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, we could see the island and we were reasonably close.

Richard Misenhimer:

But the waves was high, so when you go down the landing net.

J.H. Montgomery:

The water you know how the waves that boat would sink way down on wave and the water would bring it right

back up and it must have been 15-20 feet. It was raking them right off the side, you really had to be nimble to get off that boat and into the Higgins boat.

Richard Misenhimer:

If you fell off the net then that was too bad, right?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well it could do some damage, I didn't fall off but I know I was working at it. You had a rifle on your back and your full gear you know, hand grenades, bandoliers, and there wasn't anybody going to hand them to you on the beach. So it was kind of difficult.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have a field pack also?

J.H. Montgomery:

Had a pack of a couple of K rations in the bag and the rest was ammunition, hand grenades.....

Richard Misenhimer:

No blankets or that sort of thing? Shelter halves?

J.H. Montgomery:

Oh no, I don't remember any shelter halves. That would have been nice, a hammock would have been nice.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you go on the first wave there also?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

But then you said that they really didn't contest it the first day, the Japanese?

J.H. Montgomery:

No not for us, but they did on the South end of the island down around Naha.

Richard Misenhimer:

Now you were in the 6th Marine Division?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, we crossed the island and never found a Jap anywhere. We began to get word that they were really having trouble at the South end, we really didn't want to go down there but we just talked it up you know.

Richard Misenhimer:

(I was telling Mr. Montgomery about William Manchester being on the 6th Marine Division) Did you really have it rough too then, you said?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, it wasn't easy. When we were on the northern part of the island that was a picnic. Then when we went down South it got rough, they moved us up to the front lines and we passed through heaps of dead Marines. Passed them going up to the front and we were headed for Sugarloaf Hill. That was what they were trying to capture and Shuri Castle and when we pulled back from there a friend of mine, Gordon Shinelly, they pulled us back just a little ways and we were still getting artillery. He called me back and said he was going to stretch a hammock under a little tree there on the off side of the artillery. I took the rest of the squad in a tomb. The island people had a tomb there which was safe in there from the artillery. But when I left him outside, he said, "Buck I will be thinking about you, me laying out here in the cool breeze". So the next morning it rained a lot during the night and the next morning we got up and were going to get some chow and I walked by where he had hung his hammock up. The dirt was caved in and I could just picture him getting up and dragging that hammock. He was a funny guy and I laughed and then I thought maybe he was in there yet. So I reached down and pulled the dirt off and there wasn't 3 or 4 inches of dirt over his face but he smothered to death.

Richard Misenhimer:

An artillery shell hit there?

J.H. Montgomery:

No just rain during the night loosened those two little trees up and during the night they just got soft and his weight and he kind of fell down in a foxhole. Somebody had a foxhole dug below. That was hard to take.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then you were advancing on to the south, right?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes we picked up where they left off, those Marines just piles of them. I can always remember that, you know I thought of the parents just as still as they could be. So we just kept proceeding and then finally we got down toward the end of the island. Finally when we got so far along I couldn't understand it, we would walk up on top of a little hill and they would start blowing themselves up with a little hand grenade or whatever they could get. Just like popcorn a popping, now you would have thought that anyone of us would have tried to get one or two to take with us, but they didn't. They just blew themselves up.

Richard Misenhimer:

How about the caves on Okinawa?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, I went back in several of them that I shouldn't cause that is where they lived.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have trouble getting the Japs out of the caves?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well we did on Guam; we had a terrible time. We had an explosive called tetratoll, light that fuse and throw that back into the cave and a little later on the flamethrowers came along and they did well. They didn't come out easy, but a lot of places on Iwo Jima they were really dug in and maybe would wait 2 or 3 days to come out, when you had passed on by.

Richard Misenhimer:

So Okinawa wasn't quite so bad with cave's then? Tojo's Caves?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well the difference was Okinawa was they was beginning to see that they were losing the war and they was losing their will to fight quite a bit and that is why they were always blowing themselves up. They had always been told that if we captured them, we would torture all kinds of ways. So they would rather kill themselves then surrender to us. Toward the end there they began to change.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did your group take many prisoners at all? Your company or platoon?

J.H. Montgomery:

No, we were always, there were a lot of times I would have liked to have taken prisoners but there was nobody there to help me take them. I remember one time there on Okinawa, there were Japs laying all around and I was by myself and I knew they wasn't all dead. I'm not going to tell you what I did.

Richard Misenhimer:

Okay.

J.H. Montgomery:

A buddy of mine had just got a mortar in his rear end and I had just gotten him out of there and then there was these Japs. I suppose there was 10 or 15, one of the guys from my squad walked up and we were just walking around the boulder there and I didn't see him but there was a Jap down in there trying to get his rifle out to get me. He couldn't have missed it was only 10-15 feet, I just didn't see him. My friend told me he was in there.

Richard Misenhimer:

Your friend took care of him then?

J.H. Montgomery:

I don't remember one of us did.

Richard Misenhimer:

He would have if he wouldn't have been there?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes I wouldn't have seen him if he hadn't been there. I mean what were you going to do at a time like that, turn your back.

Richard Misenhimer:

He was trying to get his rifle?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, but the wounded that was a hard thing to do.

Richard Misenhimer:

Do you mean the Japanese wounded?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did we get our wounded out pretty well?

J.H. Montgomery:

We always tried, but we didn't always get them. We left a couple there on that raid behind the lines.

Richard Misenhimer:

In May of 1945 Germany surrendered, you were on Okinawa at that time?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you all get the word on Germany surrendering or anything?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well how much ahead of that did Roosevelt die? I remember getting the word there about Roosevelt dying.

Richard Misenhimer:

Roosevelt died in April sometime and Germany surrendered the first week in May or something like that.

J.H. Montgomery:

I'm thinking we were on the northern end of the island when Roosevelt died and yes we got the word about Germany that was too important not to get it. But we thought then that we would get a lot of help over there.

I will always think, you see I was scheduled to come home after Guam, and then after Okinawa they was going to send me home. Then after Japan surrendered they decided they didn't want to send the older men home and just keep guys there that hadn't been in combat. They didn't know where they were going, they were going to Japan and I had to stay in and go to Japan.

Richard Misenhimer:

Why did you not come home after Guam? They just needed you to stay?

J.H. Montgomery:

I think the plan was for me to come home after Okinawa and there were a lot of other guys that was going to have a month furlough and then we were going to hit Japan. I will always be sure of that, when we landed on Japan they were instructed to run a white flag out on the side of the mountain where there was a retractable gun. The mountains was covered with white flags, it would have been murder. I never thought I would come through that.

Richard Misenhimer:

Lets go back to Okinawa if I may for a moment, when you got the news that Roosevelt had died how did you all feel about that?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well as I remember it was news, but when you're in combat you have friends dying all the time.

Richard Misenhimer:

It was just one of those things that happen?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, it was not a good thing that happened and it happened.

Richard Misenhimer:

When Germany surrendered you all thought you were going to get some help at that point?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, that was a pleasant feeling, but we thought that it would be a long time in getting there but it wasn't I guess.

Richard Misenhimer:

Any celebration or anything?

J.H. Montgomery:

No.

Richard Misenhimer:

Were you still on Okinawa when Japan surrendered? That was in August.

J.H. Montgomery:

No, I think we went back to Guam. They was getting ready to process me to come home, then they surrendered and they changed the plan and kept us there and we went to Japan.

Richard Misenhimer:

What kind of reaction did you all have when you heard that Japan surrendered?

J.H. Montgomery:

Gosh you know I can hardly remember.

Richard Misenhimer:

Was there a big celebration or anything?

J.H. Montgomery:

No, I do remember one night on the – George Beany was still living, he was with us, and we were on the front line. We were not in combat right at the time but some pilots came up there wanting some souvenirs and I had a pistol, a rifle, and a Hari Kari knife and I gave that to them for 5 fifths of whiskey. George Beany never drank much and he must have drank too much, a happy bunch on the front line. They gave me IOU's for that whiskey, you know big bucks but I never collected a one of them. They got wounded and I never collected, I never regretted that.

Richard Misenhimer:

So now you went back to Guam after Okinawa and you thought you were being processed to go home?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Any training or anything there? Or just waiting?

J.H. Montgomery:

No just waiting.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then you went from there to Japan?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, Yukosuka Naval Base, my job was to take over the police station with my squad. Get the rifles and all the weapons they had in the police station.

Richard Misenhimer:

Do you remember when you landed in Japan? About what date or month or anything?

J.H. Montgomery:

The latter part of Oct. '45.

Richard Misenhimer:

'45. Japan surrendered in August of '45 and the ceremony on the Missouri was in Sept. the 2nd I believe.

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, I remember, I wasn't there but I remember them having the ceremony.

Richard Misenhimer:

So then just after that you landed in Japan.

J.H. Montgomery:

No just before I think. I think we were there for a few days, I know we were instructed not to have any ammunition in our rifles, but I told my squad to load up.

Richard Misenhimer:

Oh, you were instructed not to take rifles and ammunition?

J.H. Montgomery:

Not to have them loaded.

Richard Misenhimer:

Oh, not to have them loaded.

J.H. Montgomery:

They didn't want to have any discharges of any kind, but I thought there might be a Japanese that lost his son or something. I never regretted that.

Richard Misenhimer:

So you went into the police station and you took the arms from the policemen, the soldiers or whom?

J.H. Montgomery:

From the police station because they had them all turned in, rifles and I can't remember what all it was now.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then what did you do with these weapons then?

J.H. Montgomery:

Took them back to the barracks, we were in Naval barracks there. Japanese Naval barracks.

Richard Misenhimer:

Yukosuka is what part of Japan by the way?

J.H. Montgomery:

It is south of Tokyo, it is a big naval, Japanese naval base.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then what did you do from there then?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well then it was just kind of lay around, everything was quiet. The Japanese people were very polite.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you have any run ins with any of the Japanese solders that were there or anything?

J.H. Montgomery:

Not a bit in fact I don't remember seeing any. I think they all got rid of their uniforms. We got to going up to Tokyo and out to the park and nobody ever made a

Richard Misenhimer:

You said there were a lot of these white flags where these guns and cannons were?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, retractable. They could come out and fire a round and haul them back in. It would have been impossible to get them, no matter how much we broadsided it.

Richard Misenhimer:

What else did you see in the way of defense that they had?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well that's the only thing I remember. Everybody had been taught to use a sharp stick or whatever they had to use.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then did you go anywhere else? You went to Tokyo as far as on leave?

J.H. Montgomery:

We went on a train.

Richard Misenhimer:

Where else did you go in Japan?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well that's about it; I didn't get around a whole lot.

Richard Misenhimer:

How long were you there?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well I was there until November, the last of November. I came home and they sent me to Great Lakes Naval base and that was the day before Christmas.

Richard Misenhimer:

Dec. 24th of '45.

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you get your discharge then?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes.

Richard Misenhimer:

Then you came home?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, came home.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you notice any changes in this country when you got here?

J.H. Montgomery:

Oh yes, you know after all that time over there I really -- it wasn't such a great thing to come home. I just kind of got used to being in the Marine Corps. and here and there. So when I came home to town of Logansport wasn't near as big as I remembered it. When I came in on the train and my folks had moved while I was gone and I didn't know where they lived. When the train got in there about midnight one night and everyone disappeared, everyone left the station and I was all alone in there and I was debating over what I was going to do. I walked across the depot and looked up the street and here came my dad, checking the trains.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you consider staying in?

J.H. Montgomery:

I didn't, but thinking back it is a wonder I didn't. I didn't mind, I kind of liked the Marine Corps.

Richard Misenhimer:

Did you get wounded at all, anytime?

J.H. Montgomery:

I was hit with a bullet in the hip, but it didn't penetrate it just made it black and blue. I never went to the sick bay with it.

Richard Misenhimer:

So you never got a Purple Heart then?

J.H. Montgomery:

No

Richard Misenhimer:

What type of ribbons or medals did you get?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well I was up for the Silver Star but a Lieutenant came and got the information and he said a silver or Bronze Star. That was after Guam, but I never did hear any more about it. I got the Presidential Citation ribbon.

Richard Misenhimer:

How many battle stars did you get?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well that would be all those islands that were mentioned.

Richard Misenhimer:

Any other ribbons or citations or anything?

J.H. Montgomery:

Well I can't remember now, it probably shows it on my discharge. When we left California, George Beany and I was stand on the rail watching the ocean sparkle going by and we didn't know where we were going or what was going to happen. He said that if anything happened to me, he would get hold of my parents and if anything happened to him I would get hold of his parents. Well two years goes by and he gets killed and I finally came back home and before I can get up there my folk's house burnt. Burnt his address up; I never knew how to get hold of them. I went up there, even went to the school but you know things change. They didn't – I couldn't find him.

Richard Misenhimer:

That was where?

J.H. Montgomery:

At Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Richard Misenhimer:

Tell me what the Japs were doing with the hand grenades while you were there?

J.H. Montgomery:

Sometimes they would throw the hand grenade back out of the cave at us, so we got to picking up 3 or 4 rocks and mixing in with the hand grenades. They wouldn't get it done.

Richard Misenhimer:

They wouldn't know which was which?

J.H. Montgomery:

No, I remember on a patrol I was up on the point, I think it was on Guam. I caught a glimpse of a Japanese; they were on patrol too. I squatted down and the rest of the squad all squatted down and he kept walking right toward me and I aimed at his face. He looked at me and seen me, he had blue eyes. I shot, but then we had to make a move, moving around and I lost track of him, I don't know but I imagine I blew his face off. But I still remember his look because he looked straight at me.

Richard Misenhimer:

He had blue eyes?

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes

Richard Misenhimer:

Most of them are brown eyed.

J.H. Montgomery:

Yes, most are brown eyed.

Richard Misenhimer:

End of tape.

Transcribed by
Melinda Clinger