

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR
(Nimitz Museum)

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Interview with
WES RHINE
U. S. MARINE CORPS

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WES RHINE

This is Ed Metzler and today is the 3rd of September, 2004. I'm in San Antonio, Texas, and I'm interviewing Mr. Wes Rhine. Let me start out by thanking you, Wes, for spending the time with us to share your experiences. Let me get you to start at the beginning and tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about your family and we'll take it from there.

MR. RHINE: I was born in Amarillo, Texas, in February 27, 1928. I grew up, I guess my father was a early farmer until the depression hit and during the depression years he worked with the WPA building roads in the panhandle area of Texas. We moved to a little town called Idalou, which is a suburb of Lubbock, just east of Lubbock. I lived there and went to school there until the war started. When the war started my father went to work at the army airbase in Lubbock. It was the airplane-type airbase, not the glider base. The glider base was located north of Lubbock. When we moved to Lubbock I attended Lubbock high school and continued to attend school there until early 1945, like February. A group of guys that I chummed with had the urge to join the service. The first attempt was the navy and the navy was not taking anybody right then. I was working part time at a hotel, a Hilton Hotel as a matter of fact, in Lubbock and the recruiting sergeants, the two marine recruiting sergeants, lived in that hotel. They found that there was some people interested in the marine corps and push comes to shove and the next thing I knew they were saying, "Well, come on down to the recruiting office and let's talk about it." I was not quite seventeen at the time, I was sixteen. The other guys

were seventeen and one was eighteen, I believe, and they were so insistent. They thought, yeh, we'd like to go into the marine corps, and being a weak sort of fellow, my parents didn't really think that it was too keen but I finally got my birth certificate and was able to in lieu of a birth certificate get my parents to sign to say I was old enough to go into the marine corps. So this was the first of February and so about the tenth or eleventh of February I made the decision and signed some papers. The recruiters sent us off to El Paso to the main recruiting station and I became a marine on the 13th of February, 1945. The trip there after we were sworn in and were enlisted, then we boarded a troop train in El Paso and headed east. When we got to Dallas the troop train became a passenger train. We transferred to a passenger train and it essentially was pretty much a troop train except most of the passengers were marines that had just come back from the South Pacific and were on their way to Parris Island and Camp LeJuene area. I think there were six of us, six of us total that were in that enlistment group, and we went to Parris Island and received our first rude awakening on being a marine. I attended recruit training at Parris Island and when we finished recruit training it was late April early May and we were sent up Camp LeJuene for additional training before going overseas. We were given recruit leave and so we took our recruit leaves. I went back to Lubbock and spent my ten days there and then I went back to Camp LeJuene, finished the training and there were three replacement drafts being formed at that time. This would have been in late June, early July, late June of '45. Three drafts and we were on three troop trains, one went south in the southern route of the United States; one went in the middle central route of the United States and an additional one went kind of a northern route. We all arrived about the same time at Camp Pendleton, California. There wasn't

any additional training but it was just for mounting out these drafts. At that time, it was some time after Iwo Jima that there was some big controversy about the marines who were killed and injured in that operation that were too young. Some of them were barely seventeen, just seventeen years old and had received very little training or had been sent overseas with what somebody had considered not enough training for people the age the marines were those days. So there was a change of policy that anyone who was not eighteen years of age or who had not had six months in the States would not be sent overseas in a draft. So they reshuffled these drafts that were there and everyone who didn't have six months in the States, which was like me, I had enlisted in February and I was seventeen years old then, was delayed until we had the six months which was like August. In August the draft that I was in boarded ship down in San Diego and there was another draft that was also taken out, so we took the zig zag trip to our destination. But just as we were loading out, the atomic bomb had been dropped in Japan and that was a mystery to us. It meant very little in real terms because the media published this, that the atomic bomb had been exploded in Japan and the size of the bomb was the size of a golf ball. So the rumors and scuttle butt and so forth was passed around and we thought, man, this was amazing. Anyhow, we proceeded. In the meantime the second bomb was dropped, I guess while we were at sea or sometime, and we arrived in Guam. I guess it would have been mid-August, whatever period of time it took the draft to get to Guam. We spent some time on Guam in the transient area and they reshuffled. All the other drafts, there were three drafts, three replacement drafts, then they started whittling the drafts down. We did some patrolling, evidently there was enough of the hold out Japs still left on the island of Guam. A trick they had, of course, the Japs would come into the

camp area in the evening after dark and steal your clothes off the clothesline. You put your clothes out, they'd steal your clothes. They caught six of them one morning when we were going to chow. There was six of these Japanese that were dressed as marines in the chow line. They looked you know it's hard to tell. In those days I thought the code talking marines looked a little oriental to me. I found out later there was some difference. So then they picked some of us and used us for patrols in the area around our camp area where we were in tents back somewhere in the middle of Guam.

MR. METZLER: Had you been assigned to unit squadron positions yet?

MR. RHINE: Not yet. That's what we're there for. Then each day they would call out a series of names when you had your formations. We seemed to have formations every day, several times during the course of the day, and, of course, if you're familiar with the Marianna Islands or any of those islands in the middle of the summer it rains about every thirty minutes or an hour. It seems that our formations coincided a lot of the time with the rain so you'd fall in formation and get soaked and after the formation you'd go into your tent and dry out. We didn't have much else to do except just wait our turn and eventually a group which I was included in was called. We were taken down to the dock area and we went aboard an LST and we sailed from Guam over to Saipan. When we got to Saipan, they told us we were going to be assigned to the 2nd Division and so numbers and names didn't mean much. They used us first as a shore party group labor, just laborers.

MR. METZLER: Was this 1st Marines?

MR. RHINE: It was the 2nd Marine Division and the 2nd Marine Division some of them had oh recently come back from Okinawa. Their ships, the ships that had come back in,

they put us to unloading those ships, reloading them, from those ships over to the invasion force ships that originally was intended to invade Japan. Of course, things were changing a lot at that particular time in earlier August. The war was it really over or was it not over? So we worked a few days loading ship and the group I was with we were reloading ammunition from one ship on to an AKA. Once we were finished then they put us aboard LCVP landing craft and took us off to go aboard a ship. It was during a very bad storm and it was very interesting because we couldn't get aboard ship. The water was too rough.

MR. METZLER: This was just a troop ship of some sort.

MR. RHINE: This was an APA troop ship and my unit, which turned out to be the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, was on that ship and I was assigned to C companies. That was the assignment that was given to me when we went aboard ship and it took us awhile. We circled the boat, circled the ship, I don't know quite a long time before we could be taken aboard and it was an extremely rough, very rough sea. The old APA was rolling and you talk about a rock and roll, they were rocking and rolling. When they got the landing craft up next to the ship or close enough to the ship, the ship would list and roll to the side so far you could almost grab the deck. So they would time it. In the landing net, they had landing nets hung over the, cargo nets hung over the side, and they would roll into the boat and then about four people at a time would grab that thing when it was at its lowest end you took a ride. It was like a roller coaster ride and they were screaming at you from above, "Climb, climb!" And this was an interesting climb because we were equipped with field transport packs, helmets, rifles and difficult to walk under that load but trying to climb and particularly in that type weather. Then they had a group of people

at the top of the rail who grabbed us when we got to the rail and helped us get aboard and get on to the boat. A couple of people didn't climb fast enough and one of them fell into the back end of the boat and broke his leg. Then that was a crisis there and they finally took a boom on the boat and a cargo net into the boat and lifted this guy aboard by a boom in a cargo net. The cargo net was just laid out in the boat and he was laid in there and they pulled it and pulled him up and into the boat. That was enough to wake you up for awhile. Okay, then we went aboard and they assigned us to companies within the battalion, C Company, and then we were assigned to a platoon. It was a rifle platoon at that point and time. I'm not sure whether it was the 1st platoon or the 3rd platoon of C Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines. Okay, then we had served our duty as replacements and we were now members of the 2nd Marine Division and we learned that we were on our way to Japan. Then we were briefed periodically by our platoon officers and NCOs, given instructions, little booklets etc. like a Japanese-American dictionary on basic phrases and sentences and words. So then we were floating en route to Japan and this was a convoy of people the Division and in later years I learned of the big plan and the original plan. The real invasion of Japan had originally, as I understand it, been slated for November. In November of '45 would have been the real invasion. In late August we landed pretty much in the same manner that they would have landed for the real invasion in the same spaces. They had this Corps that came into Sasebo and that included the 5th Division and the group that I was with, 2nd Division. We went into Nagasaki and Nagasaki had been one of the cities that had been A bombed. They were still cleaning it up and the bay was full of bodies, a lot of bodies. I was a young boot replacement at that

point when we landed, my company and platoon were about the first folks, I guess, from the 2nd Division that landed. We landed in the steamship dock area of Nagasaki harbor.

MR. METZLER: Now what date was this roughly?

MR. RHINE: August towards the end of August.

MR. METZLER: So this is right after V-J day then, is that correct?

MR. RHINE: I don't remember what V-J day was.

MR. METZLER: Well, that was when Japan surrendered.

MR. RHINE: We were at sea. We didn't know about it.

MR. METZLER: You didn't know about that.

MR. RHINE: We didn't know that. The information that we were getting at this point was we were going ashore. We had a full unit of fire, and if the war is really over they won't shoot back and so we went ashore. One of the LCDPs was in the wave that we were in hit one of these bodies, one of these Japanese bodies, that was floating in the bay. The smell, because he had been there for a few weeks or days, was really bad and the whole front of that boat, the ramp of that boat was splattered with this. When we got ashore that stunk so bad that the coxswain actually lowered the ramp as far as it would go and backed away after the troops got out of there. The troops were pretty sick from the stench from this thing. We get off and go about our business and they tell where we are going and we move on out of that area and head out of the dock area. We then went from there out to the prisoner of war barracks. The prisoner of war barracks in Nagasaki had some Dutch and English and I don't know if there were French, I think maybe there may have been or some folks that they had taken from Indo China, and they were in Nagasaki. So we went to the POW barracks which were quite a number of barracks made of new

wood, didn't look bad, and they took those guys out and we moved in. That became the boating area for the 2nd Marines.

MR. METZLER: So that POW camp was far enough away from where the bomb was dropped that it didn't get wiped out.

MR. RHINE: Well, the way if you know how Nagasaki is laid out, there is a series of hills, etc., but in the dock area but then there is a ridgeline of hill mass that runs and it separates the city, there's parts of the city. Now the area where the bomb was that was off limits to everybody, of course, but the area of the bomb was the way the country is oriented it was more of a maybe southwest direction and the impact of the bomb was primarily in that area, populated area.

MR. METZLER: So the ridgeline absorbed the blast.

MR. RHINE: And then a lot of the city, some of the city was there, but a lot of the city was on the other side of this mass and other things. We moved in and then it was police call and clean up for quite awhile, cleaning the place up. The assignments we got after we had cleaned up the barracks and organized ourselves, many of us, of course, being the boots and new guys in the outfit, we did most of the guard duty. We did most of the working parties and we did the things that needed to be done. We seemed to be kept rather busy.

MR. METZLER: Tell me about the condition of the POWs that came out. Did you see them?

MR. RHINE: Yes.

MR. METZLER: Did you get to talk to them?

MR. RHINE: Yes, the prisoners of war that came out of there didn't look too bad to us. It looked like they weren't Americans but they took them out and we just briefly saw them as they were coming out. While we were en route walking from the area out there, we were hiking. They got trucks, they sent trucks through, and it was interesting because we didn't see any Japanese. There were just no people around. When we got ashore and started out at a street intersection there was a policeman. A Japanese policeman dressed in black, everything was black, he was in a black suit and a black cap and was standing on a great big box like a half barrel in the center of the street. He had a little dagger sword that he carried on the side, but no weapon, but he was a policeman. We assumed and thought it was very humorous that there was someone there to direct traffic that didn't exist.

MR. METZLER: He was there but the traffic never came.

MR. RHINE: Except the trucks. When they got the trucks off they were going through there. He wasn't going to be directing any of those guys because they were on their way out to the POW area and they were to pick up these guys. Most of them were out of there by the time we got there walking. We walked but we saw the trucks that were coming back. The folks from the outfit, that had been left back for guard duty in the dock area, said the first thing they did to these folks in the steam ship area there in the office or depot was give them food and beer. A lot of those guys got a little inebriated early because they hadn't had any for a period of time that they were there. They gave them anything that they could give them that they wanted or that would help them even though they weren't Americans they were the prisoners of war. Then, I guess, the big picture would show that they went aboard the ships or ships that were there and wherever their

people wanted them, wherever they took prisoners. We didn't have very much contact. We just took their housing away from them and made it our own. It worked out.

MR. METZLER: How long were you there in Nagasaki area?

MR. RHINE: In Nagasaki area they gave us various jobs, as I said guard and so forth. My platoon was given the armory for a short period of time and we were there to guard the arms that were being brought in, the Japanese weapons, etc. They'd bring them in; they'd sort them and load them back aboard boats and ships and take them to sea and dump them. They were doing this for quite awhile. When we finished that job the next job we got was we patrolled the area in boats. We would go around the island out of the harbor and this is Kyushu. We landed on Kyushu and we were patrolling on the boats and going into these caves where the midget submarines were stored. I was looking at one of these yesterday...

MR. METZLER: Yeh, the one we have in the Museum.

MR. RHINE: Yes, but they had some that were smaller than that. We found those places and then the next job that we got was dock guard. The unloading supplies and you just go down and it was guard duty around the clock, and we lived in the steam ship house. Thank god, we had a good platoon commander and he saw to it that the troops that were part of that detail got some of what was being unloaded. So we had some pretty good food and we had all the beer we wanted and that was interesting. Then they decided they needed someone to go to Japanese language school and they selected quite, oh, so many people from each company throughout the battalion. They assigned us to go to school. They had Japanese professors from the University of Nagasaki that came in and they spoke better English than we did. They took us under their wings and their structure

would have fifteen or so people, ten to fifteen people, and so we went to school. That was our job. After we had the fundamentals and the basics down, now, they weren't trying to make interpreters out of us they just needed someone to learn enough to communicate with the populace as need be. All of the interpreters and language folks that they had in the service in those days, those guys had been in the war and they had been over there for awhile, they did full tours, they didn't do short tours, and they were going home. They pulled out all the people that had eighty or ninety rotation points and those folks left and a lot of these people were amongst those. We went to school and they would teach us all morning. We would do the vocabulary memorization primarily at that stage and then in the afternoon we'd get a short period of liberty where the instructors would take us out into the city of Nagasaki. So we would go and we got to shop in their stores, etc. and liberty was very limited. There wasn't very much liberty at that point and time and later they would have liberty parties that they would take you to where they could go to the shops and stores in Nagasaki. We went to school and then the short liberty period of talking and trying to talk to the Japanese.

MR. METZLER: Was there stuff in the shops there?

MR. RHINE: Oh, yes.

MR. METZLER: So they were still well supplied even...

MR. RHINE: I don't know about well supplied but the areas where most of us wanted to go or did go were things like they had a merchandise store which I thought was kind of like a Sears-Roebuck back home that had kimonos, etc., and people wanted to buy kimonos if they had the money. I was able to buy a string of pearls at the time for twenty or twenty-five dollars and my wife has those today. I had bought them and gave them to

my mother, or sent them to my mother, and my mother insisted that my wife have those pearls when we were married. This routine went on for a very short period of time and then the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines got orders to move from Nagasaki to Miyazaki. Miyazaki is around the coast of Kyushu away from the regiment who was still back in Nagasaki. We went there and we moved into the Japanese maritime academy area and the barracks that we had belonged to the maritime academy of the Japanese. They were pretty nice. They were a lot better than the POW barracks because the cracks were sealed and the bunks were built in. They had built in nice wooden bunks and you put a regular ole mattress pad on that and it wasn't bad. There then we had to build that camp or add to the camp, modify it to the point as a military camp for our needs. Then we worked out of there, my platoon was here again on patrols. They would send us on patrols, and we would go up into the mountains, way up into the mountains, patrolling. It was interesting. I guess we were up there a week on one and we stayed in a Japanese university dormitory. It was very comfortable and the city, the old mayor of the city, I think the name of the city or the town was Shinks ka ba roo(sp?) or something of this nature. It was real high up in the mountains and they had a hydro-electric plant there where the water had dropped. The mayor of that town was an electrical engineer and we found right away that he was an MIT graduate from the United States. Yuano was his name and we got located and the trucks we were using were Japanese trucks. We had these old Japanese trucks that we were using on the patrols. After we got there and got settled in, the lieutenant, oh, what was his name, anyhow I'll think of it in a minute, but he called me and says, "Rhine, you've gotta go with me and the platoon sergeant this evening on a call. We're going to the mayor's house for dinner, I want you along

because might need somebody. You don't have to talk to them but you may need to listen and make sure we know what's being said if it's in Japanese, do the best you can." So he took me along and another guy as a body guard. So we went to dinner and that was my first real encounter with a Japanese family and it turned out to be a very interesting social event. We were introduced to his family and we took our boondockers off and went in the house and the small talk and entertaining. He had a son that was about my age who was studying and he spoke pretty good English. His father was grooming him for the future. Then he had a daughter that spoke no English and the wife didn't speak English so evidently they didn't converse in English. The old mayor had spent several years in the United States and he was an electrical engineer. So he told us that they had to move back there because their home, their real home was in Tokyo and it had been bombed out in the big fire storm bombing. They had lost everything that they had there and had moved down to Shinks ka ba roo. So we spent a very interesting evening and he breaks out the old bamboo flute and plays us a tune on the flute. The daughter breaks out a big long flat Japanese harp and plays the harp for us and we have to sit and smile. Then I found that the son was a stamp collector and we were talking about our hobbies. I told him I had been a stamp collector and so he gave me a lot of duplicate stamps, mostly Japanese stamps, just about all Japanese stamps. He insisted that I take these and they were duplicates that he had and some of those I still have today. That was an enjoyable evening and we did consume a lot of sake and beer. The evening ended and we went back. It was quite late at night, and, of course, ole Yuano insisted that he walk back to our building area, back to the University with us and it was across the dam. He lived on one side of the dam in a built up residential area and the road went across the dam and

where we billeted was the other side of the dam, not far. It was a little distance and so Yuano staggering along insisted that he go back to where we were. So we got home and then Yuano was just about ready to crap out he was so drunk. He was really drunk and so the lieutenant says, "Well, Rhine, you and the other guy that went with us have got to take him home." So the other guy and myself had to escort Yuano back to his house and pour him into his house. Then we had to walk back by ourselves, dark night in a strange area so we didn't waste a lot of time along the road getting back home. After that, the days following we would go out on patrols, one truck would go in one direction and the other one would go in the other. They were just looking for some degree of what was in those areas . If there were anything, contraband weapons or anything, to collect those and we didn't find very much of anything except some good number one sake.

Whenever they would find some sake they would buy it. An interesting thing is ole Yuano thought, well, these crazy marines they like to drink and he put a big water cooler right inside the dormitory where we were staying. He filled that water cooler with sochu, which is Japanese whiskey. It is a little bit stronger; it's like vodka only the sochu is powerful. It's almost like grain alcohol. Some of our folks got some great experience in drinking. At night you'd hear some of these guys klop, klop, klop; we had straw mats in our rooms but the hallway was wood, and you'd hear them and the canteen cup banging on the going down to the water cooler for a little snort. We finished that and one of the trucks went over a cliff and hurt several of the people. The corporal who had that particular truck load of marines was a squad leader. Some of the marines were hurt. When they got the word they sent the other truck back to pick these guys up and the truck was at the bottom. The corporal was pretty inebriated, they'd been sipping the saki.

They found some good saki is what I'm trying to say, and so the lieutenant took him and the wounded, the folks that were hurt, down to the railhead where we came in, quite a little ways away, took him to the railhead and sent him back to the battalion for big time problems. So then when we finished and went back to the railhead they had trains that went back to the Miyazaki area. This was real soon after we had been to Miyazaki.

When I got back there we still continued our school. The professors continued this for quite some time then my name was called again and you fall out and they say, "Have you ever ridden a horse?" and I said, "Yes." "Well, your record says you're from Texas and I figure all Texans have ridden a horse." "Yes, I used to ride a horse quite a bit." "Okay, we're forming a group of people to go up to a place which turned out to be Mimetsu and that turned out to be the R&R center for a lot of the people there after a period of time. We're going on a horse patrol. Okay, and so we went up to the place and a lieutenant, a staff sergeant, a corporal and the rest of us were privates and pfcs, there was ten of us total. We get there and get bunked down and head to the stables, and they had stables with Japanese Calvary horses. The Japanese still had Calvary during the war, Japanese Calvary horses, English saddles, so we were assigned our mounts and (end of side A) ended a long time ago while we were the horse marines at that point and time. So we spent about two months almost until the end of the year, I guess it was about the end. Initially the lieutenant took all of us out and we went on our orientation ride seeing how we'd work the horses a little bit. We went out on a distant run and very early in the morning and when we got out I guess close to noon a little before noon, the lieutenant split the group into two groups. He took one group and the staff sergeant took the other group and we went off on patrol. I guess the trail that we were on was an old narrow-

gauge railroad trail. There were no roads and that's where we were supposed to go where no man had gone before other than by narrow-gauge rail or horse or foot. We got to a spot in the trail, I don't think these railroads were used that much anymore but they were there and they were laid but the cliff had given away, part way. So then came the test on the horsemanship aspect of our thing is how to get across, it was just enough of a fall and the cliff below, it was just enough that you had a real tight squeeze. You had to jump your horse, not forward, it was just a short jump and horses are smart enough to know that they have to jump if you're moving them forward. I think the staff sergeant went first and somebody went next and my horse went and no problem. I'm making sure that I'm attentive and my horse got across and the guy behind me had a horse that was kind of a problem horse. He was kind of not too suited for that because he was from New York City and when they were asking about people to ride a horse at the battalion, oh, yeh, he used to ride a horse in Central Park in New York. They allowed him to go but when he started, just for orientation, the lieutenant was shaking his head because he said mount your horse and he went over on the wrong side of the horse first and he's trying to get up into the saddle. So the lieutenant directs him around to the right side and is instructing him. He says, "Rhine get on your horse. Show him how to get on a horse." I reach up and grab the saddle, they didn't have a horn on those saddles they were English saddles, grab an area and put my foot in a stirrup, jump and throw your leg over and get on the horse. So he finally got the hang of it and he got on his horse. He says, "Now walk your horse." So he had one reign in this hand and one reign in this hand like a motorcycle. The lieutenant was very dismayed at the guy but anyhow getting back to the point. As the horses were to make this short jump he didn't let his horse do the job. He reigned the

horse when the horse was trying to jump and that was a bad thing because the horse jumped and stumbled and fell. The guy was able to get off but the horse went tumbling down the hill and it killed the horse, of course. So then we went on for a little way. There was something we had to check at that point and when we finished that then we had to go back. He had to ride on the back of another guy, double up on a horse, so we were able to negotiate it okay going back. Anyhow, we returned back down the trail and several folks, when they got back to the rock slide or the slide area, dismounted and the horses were able to jump as they led them across the thing. The area was wide enough that you could walk a horse; its sides were going to touch the hill when it went by and he was trying to walk. Anyhow, we got back across went back to the assembly area. The lieutenant was there and so he sent the guy that lost his horse back to the Battalion. So we lost a man there and we became nine instead of ten. So we went back to the building area and, I guess it was the next day or thereabouts we started the patrol, and I got kicked. One of the horses was a kicker so we were stalled or stopped. Our mission primarily at that point was to check the maps, the maps they had of the area where we were. There was a big weather station up above; we had to go up there. The maps were not contour maps like military maps or contour maps, topographical maps, but they used hatcher(sp?) maps. They had the old maps in Japan, hatcher maps, and a hatcher is they marked the elevations differently than contours. A hatcher illustrates a hill or a mountain rise with a number of how high it is, etc. so the maps had of a lot of these areas. They had to verify what was there because they didn't have any topol maps. The topol maps that they had were very limited topol maps. They needed to verify the accuracy or the correlation

between the two. We were kind of doing a geodetic survey in Japan. After I was kicked I was laid up for a week.

MR. METZLER: I should put down here wounded in action.

MR. RHINE: No, I was wounded on a horse, mounted wounds. Anyway, that healed in time well enough to proceed and when they figured we had done our chore, they sent us back to the battalion. At that point things had changed where the 5th Marine Division which was at Sasebo was closed down and the 5th Division went home. What they had done they took points again, everybody that had the high points, had been overseas the longest, and took them from the 2nd Division and put them in the 5th Division. Everybody in the 5th Division that had low points, folks like myself that had come over late, sent them to the 2nd Division. Then we had an orientation, new people and switching around and I went from my rifle platoon to machine gun platoon. After a short period of time they called my name again and said, "You're going to Sasebo." The 2nd Division had moved their headquarters to Sasebo. So they took about ten or so of us to the railhead and sent us off to Sasebo. We got to Sasebo they assigned several of us to the 2nd motor transport battalion and our job was security and dispatch checking at the gate to the compound. A short period of time later they made me the laundry NCO. They had a laundry there and my job was to get up in the morning and this was an old laundry. It was a rotator-type laundry hooked onto a recon motor and my job was to start the engine, get the laundry ready. The troops would bring their laundry, their dungarees. We just did dungarees and they'd throw them on a table. I would rev up the old laundry machine and cut up the ole brown soap and throw it in there and launder the stuff, take it off and then throw it over a clothesline that was there if the weather was bad. Then they'd pick

up their laundry in the evening and so naturally they had to have it well marked. My job was to wash it. A short time later in Sasebo, the word came out that the 2nd Division was going to go home and a lot of people were going other places and if you haven't got two years overseas you're not going home with the Division. When that time came they did give several of us a choice. They had billets at Yukuska, a Marine barracks was being formed up at the new naval base. They had some billets in Guam. I think they were sending a group of people back to Guam or China. We had an old warrant officer, an old master sergeant, in the utility section that I was in then who said, "Oh, god, China. You've gotta go to China. Everybody's gotta go to China." They had sea stories that you wouldn't believe about China. I'd never been to China so I said why not. I'd love to go to China. The 1st sergeant says, "Okay, you're going to China." On that fateful day when I think it was July, just about July thereabouts, late June or July, we went down and went aboard ship and headed to China. We were aboard ship a couple of days; I think it wasn't very long. We arrived in Pacu(sp) or Tangku(sp?), the Tacubar and it was the area where the old river came out but they loaded you off the ship.

MR. METZLER: What year is this?

MR. RHINE: This is '46. I had been just about, not quite, a year in Japan. Then in '46 I went with this group, large group of people, to China because they were rotating their people out also 1st Division. I guess some of the other marines that had been there Tsing Tau or some of the other places but they needed replacements and so we were it. We went in. I was assigned, we got ashore and we spent the night in their transit center in Tangku or Tacubar. The next day they put us on a train and we went to Ten Sin and we over nighted in Ten Sin, overnight at the tank battalion, because they took several of us

that were there. Then we got on the train again and we went back down to Tangku. When we got to Tangku we stayed there for a short period and then the train went on south to Tangshan or east, I guess. It was the area over near Pado Ho beach and those areas. We went there and we spent two days, I think it was the 7th Marines had headquarters there. They took some of the people that were there from the train and then they put some of us back on and where do we go, we go back to Tangku. We get off and they say this is going to be your home.

MR. METZLER: Are you still in the 2nd Marine Division?

MR. RHINE: No, I'm just now getting my assignment. We arrived and they said you folks are going to go to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. The group of us, must have been thirty of us at that point that went to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. We got to a compound, we went into the compound and they say, "Okay, you guys are going to wait here for assignment." and they billets us in a big dormitory upstairs over the supply shed, cots and etc. So we settled in for the time and waited. About two days later they voted and nominated me as the spokesman for the group and say see if you can find out, a bunch of anxious troops, go to the 1st sergeant or somebody and see if you can find out where we are going to go and when we're going to get paid. I thought a great responsibility has been placed upon my head and I march out of there and over to the 1st sergeant's office, go in and I'm standing in the doorway. The 1st sergeant was an elderly guy and he was busier than 1st sergeants are supposed to be and he turned and looked at me and says, "What in the hell do you want?" I forgot. I forgot why I even went over there, anyhow I recovered shortly and asked him. I'm a member of this group that came from Japan, the troops haven't been paid. They had had a payday for their people, I

guess they paid the first and the fifteenth or something, it was at a pay period, and he says, "Oh, come in. What's your name? You people are going to be assigned this afternoon. You're going to be assigned to your units. Some of you are going to stay here, some of you are going to the other companies." There were three companies for the battalion. "You just standby and we'll tell you." "Yes, sir." "Don't call me sir. I'm a 1st sergeant." Anyhow I got out of there alive and back and told them what the scoop was and sure enough we were falling out. They took several people and they went to some companies and this, and they assigned me, and I'd say maybe ten or twelve, to the 81 motor platoon. I was assigned to 81 mortars, never saw an 81 mortar in my life until then. That worked and we were indoctrinated and told get those 2nd Division patches off those uniforms and get 1st Division patches on those uniforms and that we accomplished. Then shortly after we had joined they went back up towards Tangshen, put us on a train and we went to the mortar range. We learned what mortars were all about and then after we were up there a week we went back to the unit and then we went to the rifle range. They sent us to Peking to the rifle range and so we went up and did liberty. We found out that was a beautiful place to go because the Forbidden City fascinated me. I was fascinated by the things that were there and the older sections of Peking. We fired the range, did our qualification there, and then back to the unit, back to Tangku. Then the NCOs had changed around and there were a lot of NCOs that had left and so there were a lot of actings. Anybody that had any time or any moxy it seems they were making them acting corporal or acting this and etc, or you're in charge because the NCOs had all gone home. They sent the mortar platoon to the Division ammunition supply point which was just out of Tangku, Sinho was the ammo dump. That was our job just to guard the ammo

dump and it was a big area, big long triangular area five miles around it. It was broken up into magazines and then there was dead space and then magazine areas where the ammunition was kept. I was one of those that was designated to be an acting corporal of the guard so I stood corporal of the guard watches most of the time. Sometimes a tower, they had towers around the place and you'd stand your watch in the daytime in the tower and at night you'd walk a post between towers. So the platoon stayed at this place a couple of months, I'd say, and then we were relieved and sent back to the main compound and I made real corporal at that point.

MR. METZLER: Did you ever hear about the communists, did you ever see any conflict between the nationalists and the communists?

MR. RHINE: When we were at the ammo dump they used to raid, they would sneak in and they'd steal things.

MR. METZLER: They, the communists?

MR. RHINE: Yeh, baloos we called them. Baloo was the name for the Chinese bandit and the communists were the baloos as far as we were concerned. Yes, we had frequent encounters at the ammo dump with these folks. I remember one evening, when my watch was being relieved, the corporal of the guard that was coming on, it was midnight. The corporal had his watch and he posted his watch. He had already gotten his watch posted and my watch was off post. Rounds were fired up the road, they were numbered, I guess it would have been post 1, which wasn't that far from the gate where the corporal of the guard shack was. Some of my troops, my watch, were still standing around by the corporal of the guard shack because we had three Quonset huts that were just a little ways back from the dump where they billeted the night watch. They didn't occupy them

during the daytime because they came from the main where the platoon was billeted in the daytime. So he grabbed a BAR out of the guard shack and I had an M-1 rifle and we took off down the road and we were fired upon. He hit the deck and started spraying the area with that BAR and I don't know I cranked off a couple of rounds at what I thought was something moving out there for awhile and then the commander of the guard and some other people arrived after awhile. What the hells going on? There was nothing else that was happening after that so then I went back and he went back to the corporal of the guard shack and I went over to where my relief was in the Quonset huts. Couldn't sleep all night, just a little bit of excitement, and the next morning when the trucks came to take us back to the main area away from the dump they found a donkey down there. So he and I got credit for a donkey, however, somebody was with that donkey earlier because the guy on the post up there swears that he was fired on and I know we were fired on unless the guard had fired on us. Somebody was shooting at us. That was just an encounter at that point and time. When we had done our duty or done our tour out there, we used to hear these guys at night. They would come into the area and one of the areas that they would raid was in the center of the dump. It was kind of like a lake but they had drums of napalm. They had napalm that was stored out in this area and you could hear them out there banging on the drums trying to get the drums open to get the napalm out of there. They used it for Molotov cocktails and what not. So at night you had an edgy guard in the middle of the night with all this going on out there but you couldn't see them and you couldn't go out there. It was kind of a no man's land and so they would try to keep their eyes open for when they exited it, when they left, but you never could catch any of those guys that were there. When we finished our tour there, we were relieved by

C Company of the 1st Battalion. They sent a full company out there to handle that because the stuff was starting to build up and the hand(?) happened more frequently and even though the 81 mortar platoon was a big unit, we had two sections, we were almost like a company. We were part of headquarters company but we had two sections and each section was the size of a normal platoon. You had your gun platoon, you had your ammo platoon and a lot of ammo to carry around for a bunch of mortars. When we went back to the main compound, the Charlie Company took over and they had their machine guns and normal stuff out there, much bigger force the whole company. They'd have a full platoon on duty all the time out there. Shortly after we went back and after we'd done the things that you do, training, etc., that's when I was promoted to real corporal after we got off the dump. Then they called me and they transferred me to the communications platoon. Somewhere back in my records they said some of my civilian job I rode a motor scooter delivering things one time for the army when I worked at one of the air bases and they decided that was good enough to be a communicator. Anyhow, I went in and they made me the message center chief since I was a corporal and they didn't have any more corporals. So then I became a communicator and spent my time learning a new job. Shortly after I had taken that task on was when they really had a big raid on the dump. They had a large communist unit that raided the dump and that would have been the 5th of April of 1947. There was five marines killed and sixteen wounded and the whole battalion was activated. I almost got put in jail that night because the platoon leader of the mortar platoon wanted me to come back and take the mortar section that was going to be sent out on a patrol and I was ready to go. The captain who was a communications officer didn't think that that was a great idea. You're going to man your

post and do your job. You are the messenger chief and you're going to be busy. His approach to that was how close to going to jail I was at that point for deserting my post. I was going to war and anyhow I didn't. I stayed and did my job and the communications traffic was very heavy at that point because our radio had been down. The radio section had gotten the big radio, the only big radio we had, to our headquarters, put back together just before dark that evening and it was on the air. The telephone lines had all been cut and so they were able to get the word back to the Division and to regiment. Ole Bull Frisbee, Col. Wolf Frisbee, was the CO of the 5th Marines and they were in Pekin which was quite a long ways from where we were. Between us and Pekin was Ten Sin that's where the Division and there was the 2nd Battalion of the 5th marines at Ten Sin. As this stuff goes, C Company, the people that they didn't have at the dump at the time, had an old half-track with quad fifties mounted on the top of it and that was the heaviest armor that we had in our area. It was old and a half-track is a cumbersome piece of equipment anyhow. The 1st sergeant of C Company, the company commander and somebody else had hopped in that half-track and were on their way out to the dump with a convoy of relief, etc. They had put a land mine in and the half-track hit the mine and it blew the track on the half-track. The 1st sergeant gets wounded, I think he got a piece of his ear, and I don't remember if the captain was wounded or not but they slowed that action down and stuff was happening rather rapidly that evening. The colonel, the Battalion commander, is getting the rest of the troops together and, oh, shortly after the attack they blew one of those magazines and it shook the earth forever. I think it was one of the sheds that was full of dynamite and it was a very strong, strong thing. It shook the buildings where we were and we were several miles from the dump at that point and

time. Then the colonel got the group together and the mortar platoon wanted me to go with them on that patrol and this was a combat patrol that left in pursuit of the bandits. They captured two; one of them was a Jap and the other was a Chinese. They brought them back into the compound.

MR. METZLER: So this Japanese, was he just left over from...

MR. RHINE: Left over from the war and joined the commies, I guess, but he was a Jap. Fortunately the S2 and S3 section there had interpreters that could converse with these guys very well but I could hear. They were across the hall in the S3 and my office and message center was on the other side of the hallway. I could hear the interrogation process going on in there. Shortly after that the Division passed the word that the 1st Division was preparing to go home but the 1st Battalion 5th Marines was not going to go home. They were going to Guam, I think it was Guam, and everybody that had their two years or thereabouts overseas would go back with the Division. So they took myself and the group that I came with and the group that I knew that I had gone to boot camp with that had come to the 1st Division. They sent us up to Tin Sin to the Service Battalion and we didn't have much to do except wait. So we came back with the Service Battalion and the Division came back in July of '47. The periods of time that I was in China I can't think of anybody that could have had a more interesting time because I did just about all of it. I spent time riding trains, I had ridden the trains because I had a security clearance. They had given me a security clearance early on when I became a communicator. They didn't have any officers that had security clearances and I became an officer messenger for awhile as a corporal. They'd strap a mail bag on or handcuff a mail bag on my arm and any classified material. I'd hop on the train and take it up to Tin Sin or to Peking and

bring the same back. I was still a messenger chief but I had the job as the courier on the train.

MR. METZLER: You had a lot of different roles in both Japan and China.

MR. RHINE: I'd love to go to Peking because my buddy, a good buddy of mine, had been to boot camp etc. was the colonel's driver, Col. Frisbee's driver, and they were billeted in the German legation in Peking and that place was well stocked with art and a library.

Wagner lived in the library and the colonel lived in the Attache quarters, which was right near the library. So I'd stay with Wagner when I'd go up. I didn't sleep in the bunk that they had assigned for me for the couriers, etc., I'd just stay in Wagner's place; they put a bunk in there. It was enjoyable for me. I got to get liberty at least one night I went up there and they had a nice little NCO club. China was interesting to me but I didn't get to do a lot of the things that the folks in the cities did because we were down in Tangku and that's not a city. We rated R & R, we got R&R out of Tangku. They didn't send you up to Tin Sen, for example, for three days.

MR. METZLER: Have you been back to China?

MR. RHINE: I have not been back to China. I've been back to the Far East many times but I stayed in the, from China I'll abbreviate this from there and bring it up to date.

When I left China and came back to the States we were at Camp Elton, California. The people that had been there, we had like sixty days leave on the books. That's when they could have more than thirty, but sixty days leave and I took two-months leave and went up to my new home in Oregon. My parents had moved up there when I went to war and spent some time up in Oregon and then back. I was promoted to sergeant and joined a unit that was being formed in Camp Pendleton, combat service group, and stayed with

that unit and then was promoted to staff sergeant. I was going to get out on my enlistment and go back to school at SMU. I had satisfied my education enough even though I dropped out of high school to join the Marine Corps early. I had taken correspondence courses and GED tests, etc. and got my equivalency ahead of time. SMU said you've got to have a unit of American History before we can let you enter. My enlistment was coming up and the Marine Corps Institute offered that course so I enrolled in the course and extended for two years, extended my enlistment for two years, took the course and graduated from high school, ole Lubbock High graduated me and they had transferred me from Pendleton to Quantico. I had gone to Quantico and then Korea broke out in fifty and then everybody's frozen. My enlistment was up and I was frozen so I saw that I wasn't going to get out and go to school at that point and time that the war was going. So I re-enlisted again and I'd been promoted to staff sergeant but I was able to stay in Quantico a year more because that was the schools. So in '51 I went to Korea and I was promoted to tech sergeant when I was in Korea. When I got that tour over with, that was an interesting tour, I was assigned to Washington, D. C. and promoted to master sergeant when I got to Washington, D. C., just settling into my job and then they pulled my records and sent me down to Quantico and made a second lieutenant out of me. Got me demoted and from that point on it became a career so I spent the next years until 1971 and retired as a major.

MR. METZLER: I'll be darned!

MR. RHINE: And that's the story of my life.

MR. METZLER: At least your life in the military. So it ended up being a long haul for you then.

MR. RHINE: Well, you know several circumstances as they arise do that to you sometimes and sometimes they are for the good and sometimes they're, it's destiny and that's where you are.

MR. METZLER: I appreciate your taking the time to share your experiences. I think picking up the time and occupation period of Japan is a bonus for us. We thought we were going to get just China.

MR. RHINE: That was my learning point in time because I was a young misguided marine, shall we say, at that point.

MR. METZLER: Well, thank you for spending the time with us. I know you had other things you could have been doing so we appreciate your doing this. As soon as we get it typed up, and I told you that could be some period of time, we'll get it to you.

MR. RHINE: Thank you so much.

Transcribed February 3, 2011 by Eunice Gary.