

# **National Museum of the Pacific War**

*Center for Pacific War Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas*

*Interview with Charles E. Allen  
United States Marine Corps*

## Interview with Charles E. Allen

This is Dennis Blocker. Today is October 9, 2004. I'm interviewing a Mr. Charles Allen. This interview is taking place at the Holiday Inn Select, near the San Antonio airport, where the CBI veterans are having their reunion. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War Center for War Studies for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

**Mr. Blocker:** Mr. Allen thank you for letting us interview you today. We'll just let you go ahead and let you get started, where you were born and where you went to school and what led you to getting in to the war and all that.

**Mr. Allen:** I was born in Valley Falls, Kansas, 25 September 1924. I went through all grades of school in that vicinity.  
In 1941... '42, I went to Kansas City and I went to work in a cafeteria. I got into the Marine Corps by the fact of the major in the recruiting office came through the cafeteria and wanted me to cook him eggs every morning. That was in September of 1942. I was shipped out to San Diego and went through boot camp there. Then I was over in Santa Ana at the lighter-than-air base. We were guards. There were thirty-nine of us. And in 1943, in September, I was sent to Noumea, New Caledonia. From there to New Guinea. I was put into the First Marine Division, Headquarters Company of first battalion. My first induction into the war was went we landed on New Britain. This was the southern tip of New Britain and our group was walking along the trail to go up to the front lines when all at once the earth started shaking and it just scattered the hell out of us. A whole bunch of us. We started diving and they said, "No. That's just the air raid. The bombs are coming down from our planes." Well, we were having quite a time on New Britian and we had put up our tents and such and such. In the mornings we would be all flooded out. We had quite a time moving through the trees and such as that and trails. We got up to hill 660; I believe it was, 600, or 660. Our Lieutenant was a man that had been an English teacher in Chicago University. We were up at the top of the hill. I had been placed into an observation post for observation group (?). We were right at the top. Our lines were half way down the hill. At the foot of the hill was the Japanese. They had got us cornered there for a while. Lieutenant heard one of the Americans holler out and said. "Go to hell, Tojo." The Japanese, one or two of them, that could speak English, hollered back and said, "To hell with Roosevelt." The lieutenant jumped up and said, "Don't shoot that Jap. He's a fellow Republican." From there

on we had quite a good time. But, it took us about four months to go through New Britain.

**Mr. Blocker:** What was the fighting like on New Britain?

**Mr. Allen:** It was wet. You were in the swamps most of the time and it was difficult to get dry and stay dry.

**Mr. Blocker:** Progress was made in.....

**Mr. Allen:** We would take....we would be in an amphibious boat with the plank going down in front. We had no support. We were supposed to get support from the Philippines from MacArthur's group. No planes came over. A boat or two would fire into the brush where they thought the stuff was set up. We would keep moving up the edge of the New Britain. One night there was five of us sent up to reconnoiter this trail where the Japanese, they thought there was a General going out. We were there all night and we could hear some of the ones running fast. But, we knew if there were any officers going through, it would be coming on a rickshaw type thing they would be riding in. We got out of there, oh, luckily without a tremendous amount of traffic and such as that. But after the island was secure we left there and we knew that Rabaul had a lot of people over there, fighters and so forth. They told us we were going to by-pass that. Well we got on the boat. We took out and went over to a Johnson....oh, I can't remember the name of the thing, but it was Johnson Islands, I believe it was, and we set up our base camp for going back into probable, further action.

Well, it was further action. All this of 1944 we landed on Peleliu. Peleliu was terrific. We went in on the third wave and the shelling and everything was fantastic. The Japanese had their coordinates lined up anywhere they wanted to set them. There was only one hill. The island was one mile by three miles I believe it was. They had this one hill there. The first two waves were allowed in then the third wave was knocked out.

**Mr. Blocker:** This is the one you were in?

**Mr. Allen:** Well, pretty much so. We were coming in. It was kind of slow. We were coming in behind, right behind, the third wave. We landed on the beach. We were there all the morning and part of the afternoon. The third day, we were able to cross the airfield. They had pretty much dropped the airfield.

The Japanese had it blocked up pretty well. Ball (?) holes all through it and so forth. We finally got down to about half of the island and we found out that the Japanese had their tanks, not tanks, excuse me, their guns lined up inside of

steel doors in the hills. They had put the concrete and steel doors in there. For about three hours, I had the opportunity to be behind the seventy-five millimeter guns, which were firing, point-blank, at those steel doors. It took them about three hours to knock the things down.

Peleliu was real rough. In fact, to me, it was the roughest one that I had gotten in to. We got out of there with about 50% casualties. This was killed and wounded. That was my group. My group was, I guess, about 25% casualties. I was assigned to intelligence when I got into the group. What we did was set up our maps, draw our maps and go out with the companies whenever they had a patrol and we would lead them in this patrol. We did pretty good on that. When we finished with Peleliu, and that was the worst one. When you're on an island one by three, it's pretty close encounters.

**Mr. Blocker:** Did you get hit?

**Mr. Allen:** Not there, no.

**Mr. Blocker:** Did you have some close calls?

**Mr. Allen:** Oh yes. Yes, we had real close calls. One of the guys had a scoop from an old piece of shrapnel, cut right through his leg. It took out a cup-like. That was about the only in our group that got hit. Then we went back to another camp and, I think it was on Pavuvu, or somewhere, we set up to go on to Okinawa. So on April 1, Easter Sunday and April Fool's day we landed on the east side of Okinawa, right in the middle. That was the first division. The Second Marine Division was down at the southern tip of the island reconnoitering around to draw the Japanese down there, which they did, very successfully. We went across the island without seeing anything. Right straight across. One group went up to the north and there wasn't anything up there, so then, they came back down. There was an airfield there at Naha, between Naha and, the other town. I don't know what its name was now. But we would have to go in at night to our.... they had their tombs, where they had a little door that they could go in and they had their ancestors and the big urns in there. We would go in there and rolled a rock up against the door, so nobody could see and we had

to run our maps off by lantern light, such as that. We had an A company commander, who's a captain, he was down at Shure castle. There was an actual castle with a moat around it. He was supposed to take Shure castle down there. He did. It took him two and a half weeks, two and half to three weeks to take over that castle. When he finished with that, the high command, the Generals, they wanted him to let them know so they could come down and put the flag up. The captain was from Georgia. He said, "Well, we'll let you know when it's over." He called them up and said, "It's over!" So they went down there with the flag and here was Georgia flag, southern flag, down there, hanging from the...and they had an awful fight over that.

But, we'd get our outpost set up and people come up and want to look around. They were there one day, looking over the bay trying to find out about any planes or any ships that were coming in. I don't remember the name of the general, but he had come up there and we had been looking out over the thing and we had a sniper firing all morning. We told the general and he came up and we told him to, "Get down, sir".... Buckner Bay, that's what it was. They named the bay after him, Buckner. That's when he got killed. He was shot right in the head. Sniper got him there.

From there on, we pushed down towards the southern tip and we had a place set up in the tents. We were going out, some of us had learned little bit of Japanese and we were told to go out and bring in people out of the caves. We did. We did, take that in and I volunteered to go bring in some of them. I never did make it. I took a few of the natives from Okinawa with me. I had a first, or second Lieutenant in one of the open trucks. They had two seats in front. He was sitting on the outside and I was standing in the back, talking to the natives, and we started to across the field to go over to the place. We hadn't gotten forty feet till a mortar hit the front of our vehicle, right underneath the front of it. It threw us out. Blew me out of the thing. When we got a hold of the lieutenant he had had his carbine setting right along side of him. He went straight up in the cab and came right down on the sights of that carbine. He had a hole in one cheek of his butt; I guess it was about that deep. But, that was just two days before the end of the war came.

We went back into bivouac and getting trained before that to land on Japan. We were supposed to go to Honshu, Japan, our division. But when the war ended, we didn't. We stayed there and we went through two typhoons that tore off the tents and such as that. Then they sent back some of the people that had been over there longer. I'd been over there twenty-eight months I guess it was.

The ones that didn't go back to the states went to China, to Beijing. The reason, I guess, we went there was to disarm the Japanese and settle it down and get them taken care of for the Chinese. We went around the all the places. We were supposed to be going up and down the streets and if we saw anything suspicious, we would stop them, talk to them, such as that. They were carrying riding crops. Practically all the officers were carrying riding crops about that long.

**Mr. Blocker:** The Japanese officers?

**Mr. Allen:** The Japanese officers, yes. One day we decided to take a look at that riding crop and when we twisted it, there was a blade inside of it about that long. I've still got it at home. But, we were there for four months. We went from Beijing down to Port City. I had had sweats. I would get malaria and while I was down at the Bay I was supposed to go out as sergeant of the guard and I went into the place and, all at once, I just got fiery red. I was about as far from the big stove that was there that was fire red and I was lying on the bunk and I was chilling, just shaking, like mad. The guys would come by and throw one of their big overcoats on me, or a blanket, if they could find it. I took me about three hours to get through with that. That made the tenth time I had malaria and then when I got home, back to Kansas, I had it again. It reoccurred. But since that time, I have not had it.

**Mr. Blocker:** From there they shipped you home? How'd that happen? Did you get your orders?

**Mr. Allen:** Well they sent me back because I had been over there long enough at that time. Had my points, as they called it. We went back into San Diego and while we were over at.....

**Mr. Blocker:** Did you think you were ever going to see the United States again?

**Mr. Allen:** There were times. There sure were, yep.

**Mr. Blocker:** That must have been good feelings, huh, to see San Diego?

**Mr. Allen:** Oh yes. To get on the boat. The fact that we were going to get on the boat and get back that was a good...way to get to feel better. I got back to San Diego and the people that worked my teeth over, I raised a little bit of hell with them because they had put in temporary fillings and the fillings came

out over in Pavuvu. I couldn't find anybody to put the fillings in. When I got back home, I found out I had lost three teeth that was perfectly good when I went in the service. But I feel better for all of it.

**Mr. Blocker:** If you had three words that describe New Britain, what words would you use to describe that combat there?

**Mr. Allen:** TERRIBLE! It was just like a slough. It had so much water in it that you had to, I don't know, I had a rash on my legs. Right between my legs. I went down to have something put on it at the doctors. The doctor says, "Well, all I can put on it is mercurochrome." So I thought, well, while I'm down here I might as well go jump in the ocean and take a swim. I went and jumped in that ocean and I come right back up and I never had it again. That's true. That is absolutely true. It didn't bother me anymore. I felt pretty good on that.

**Mr. Blocker:** And how would you describe Peleliu?

**Mr. Allen:** Peleliu was fierce. One of the worst things that I saw was a black guy that came up when they were bombarding the doors, the steel doors on the hill there. He looked around there and he says, "I wanna get me a saber." We told him, "You don't want to get out there. That's damn dangerous. There's nobody up there that's wanting to be up there." So between the 75 MM and the hill, some way or other, we found him the next day. He was dead. He'd been shot, by a sniper, I presume. But we couldn't stop him. We couldn't tell him. He didn't realize that...how bad it was. But it was terrible. You're going across the airfield and they had their guns set up just about knee high. Just about knee high and they were, that's why we had such a terrible amount of people getting killed and wounded. Because we had...I don't know if you ever saw Bob Hope's tribute, or not, after he died? He had come to our place, at Pavuvu, we had just come from Peleliu, and he went to the hospital and actually, he cried there. He couldn't stay there. He couldn't be in there. He was totally out. There were so many of them that was in that shape. I was very thankful that I didn't get hurt any worse than I did.

**Mr. Blocker:** When you got hurt, what happened? Was that when that truck got...

**Mr. Allen:** I got, I guess you might say, knocked out. I had a piece of shrapnel in the back of my knee. I was able to get back to my unit and stayed there with

them. But that's the only thing that happened to me. I, they said it wasn't too bad to go....I got a Purple Heart. But they said it wasn't bad enough that I couldn't go on to China and be there.

**Mr. Blocker:** There's probably not too many men that went through New Britain, Peleliu and Okinawa that can talk about it.

**Mr. Allen:** Yeah. That's right. Our unit, original unit that we were put in, was on Guadalcanal. For some time, and they were there, I think, about six months, or close to that. Then they had nine months in Australia for R&R. Get the people back up and so forth. We didn't get there that soon. We went on to New Guinea. New Caledonia was where we stopped first, but New Guinea was our ultimate point of departure over to New Britain. It was a bad thing all the way around.

**Mr. Blocker:** I just finished....a couple of weeks ago I read a book, can't recall the guy's name, but he was a mortar man on Peleliu and he was at Okinawa, as well. He had talked about Bloody Ridge? And the book was....and he got....he made it out pretty good.

**Mr. Allen:** That's something else. As we were going down to the southern part of the island, they had the Banzai attacks. There were a bunch of our people that got hit. The reason for that was when they had a banzai attack, they would have the women and children in front. Yeah.....(becoming choked up).

**Mr. Blocker:** They never mentioned that in the books.

**Mr. Allen:** Well, we saw it. We saw it. We held up our fire too much to not, we didn't want to hit them. We just let them go for a little while and then the Japanese started to kill them when they got closer. But that was bad. We had a rough time of it there.

**Mr. Blocker:** My grandpa was at Saipan, and Guam, Tinian and Iwo Jima and he talked about.....

**Mr. Allen:** Was he in the Marines?

**Mr. Blocker:** He was in the Navy. He led a gunboat that would right up against the shore and they would give close-in fire support to the marines and they would blast caves and things like that. He talked about hitting...hearing things hitting against the hull and looked down and water was full of babies



and women and they were jumping off the cliffs and soldiers were throwing women off and pushing them off.

**Mr. Allen:** Yeah. That's true. That's what they were doing that. I ran through two typhoons. One was at sea and I was sergeant of the guard at that time. I was up in the guy's place that was controlling the ship. It was an LST. It had the big open, forward bow and they were hauling tanks and such to other places. It was about eleven o'clock at night. Of course it was blacker than hell. This guy was standing there watching his gage and I could see there was a spot here and a spot right here and I said, "What 's this over on the starboard side?" He said, "That's another ship." I kept watching it and it got over closer and closer and I said, "He's going to hit you." He said, "yeah, I'm going to have to call him off in a little while." And he did. He called him off. But those shops were going this way and that way, this way and that way. I didn't get seasick. I never got seasick while I was on a boat over there. But we got into a rest area for a little bit and we, Randy, had to go out and do normal beaching exercises. You know, take your boat into the beach and so forth. Well, we had drank quite a little bit and before we went, that was the night before we went. I went and got an orange, or two, and was sitting in the boat and reached down and got an orange and he started peeling it and the guys turned around and looked at me and bit into it and they just heaved right over the side of the boat. Oh yes. Ernie Pyle was with us that night. He was with us the night before he got killed over at Aiishima. He was at our regimental headquarters. He was having one, whale of a time.

**Mr. Blocker:** What was he doing?

**Mr. Allen:** Drinking. Drinking and telling stories and such as that.

**Mr. Blocker:** Was there a large crowd?

**Mr. Allen:** Oh yes, he did. He had a whole bunch of them. But, we enjoyed him there and we were so damn sorry.....

**Mr. Blocker:** If you recall the G.I.'s, or the soldiers corresponding with, what was he called? He was every body's favorite, wasn't he?

- Mr. Allen:** Oh yes. He was the correspondent for all the G. I .'s over there. Yeah, He was sending back his words and such as that. Quite a bit.. There was a lot of that stuff that I had forgotten about.
- Mr. Blocker:** How about Tokyo Rose? Did you ever hear.....
- Mr. Allen:** Yes. We had jeeps with radios on them and at night we would take and turn those jeep radios on, in the communications section, and she'd start saying. "You American boys. You're going to get it tonight. We're going to have a big party up there. And maybe they would send over one plane. It would sound like a Piper Cub, you know. We'd have the, not we, I don't mean that, but he anti-aircraft would putting up a line of flight for them and they'd just dive down and take off. (laughing). That was the thing on New Britain too, that I forgot about. We had the P-38's there that,...P-38, P-39 I can't remember which one when it came in. But, we had them land there. One afternoon, and we'd been having the planes come over and they would drop a bomb, but they'd never drop it any place where there was people around. They'd just take off and drop it someplace. Well in came one of their little planes, flying around and around and about that time we heard our plane take off. We had or radio on and heard him going and he said, "Tally ho." Got one. Sliced out. But it was something that we were real proud of. Because the planes was taken care of a that time.
- Mr. Blocker:** How about the, I know I've seen almost all the old World War two movies. Especially "Guadalcanal Diaries" The one with John Garfield. I think its John Garfield. The one where he gets blinded and does a lot of that when the Japanese are out there yelling and taunting and trying to keep you up all night. "Come out you guys. Come out you guys." Did you experience any of the, I guess, you could say, psychological warfare?
- Mr. Allen:** No. Didn't experience anything like that. Not myself. I didn't.
- Mr. Blocker:** I just wondered if they made that up, or something.
- Mr. Allen:** Well, it was a....there was a lot of experiences there that the guys had. But, I wasn't in on any of those. As I said, I was setting out....I had a group that was setting out on an observation post where we were checking all things, like the bay. You know, the one I was telling you about. Buckner Bay and so forth. We even on Peleliu we had a big place there that we...hill there that we could be on. They were trying to come through and bomb that hill.

They were always hitting down below. They weren't up where we were. But, it was scary. Very scary. I don't know. There was a lot of times I didn't know whether I was going to come through or not.

**Mr. Blocker:** Were you married at the time?

**Mr. Allen:** No. No, I wasn't married until, about seven years after I got back.

**Mr. Blocker:** Did you have any other family serve in the war?

**Mr. Allen:** Yes. I had a brother that was with Patton. He was in the tanks. He started out in the cavalry. He went through the cavalry and then when the World War Two started over in the Atlantic, why he was put into tanks. Then he went completely through tanks he came out as a lieutenant colonel and retired. He was there. I had a cousin also that was in the marines. Matter-of-fact, I thought he was over at Guadalcanal when I got over there. I went over to Guadalcanal, this was after it was taken, I went over there to see if I could catch him to find out that two days before he had gone back to the States. They had sent him back to the States.

**Mr. Blocker:** But, every body made it back?

**Mr. Allen:** Yeah. Yeah. Sure did.

**Mr. Blocker:** Then what happened after the war? You just retired from your job? What did you do? Go to school.....?

**Mr. Allen:** No. It was about a year, I didn't do anything and then after that I got into a guard job down at Topeka, Kansas. I was there for about from 1947 to 1958, eleven years. Then I was transferred down to Kelly Air Force base.

**Mr. Blocker:** My dad served there.

**Mr. Allen:** Oh, he did? What type work did he do?

**Mr. Blocker:** My dad was in the security police.

**Mr. Allen:** Oh, the security police, huh?

**Mr. Blocker:** He retired in '90. Twenty-one years.

- Mr. Allen:** Well, I retired in 1982. I enjoyed it there. In fact, when I went down there I was handling medical supplies for the Air Force. And the Navy, I was in charge of them. When they took back the rights to them, in other words, they took over everything and had their own supply line going, why I got into packaging and transportation. This was we packaged everything from nuts and bolts, up to airplanes. C-5 landing equipment, wings, everything like that.
- Mr. Blocker:** Where do you live now?
- Mr. Allen:** In San Antonio.
- Mr. Blocker:** Have you been able to see the World War Two memorial in Washington?
- Mr. Allen:** No. I would like to see it. I'd like to see the ones at...that I knew about that they...like the one that got that, like a cup cut out of his leg. I'd like to see if his name is on there.
- Mr. Blocker:** Do you know his name?
- Mr. Allen:** Oh. A lot of the names, I've forgotten about. I had a guy that his name was....there it goes. He was, he and I played cribbage all the time when we were in rest areas. When I came down here about a week after I got down here, I hadn't even thought about him, I saw a truck, station wagon pull up in front of me and guys taking out a television. I said, "Hey, you big, fat bastard." And he, "God damn," he started out and he came down there and said, "Oh. Lightening." They always called me "lightening" over there.
- Mr. Blocker:** What was the reason for that?
- Mr. Allen:** I was about the first one into the foxhole. (laughs). But, he was a fireman at that time in San Antonio. He died seven years ago. But we had a good time. We had a good group of guys that knew how to react and did their work.
- Mr. Blocker:** About the memorial, have you had a chance to see it? Pictures of it? Dedication on TV?

**Mr. Allen:** Yeah I've seen pictures of it in the paper. I didn't get a chance to see that.

**Mr. Blocker:** I was there. It was amazing.

**Mr. Allen:** That's great. I hope to get up there sometime.

**Mr. Blocker:** Have you noticed a difference in America's, I guess, have you felt America's appreciation for you all did for us?

**Mr. Allen:** When I came back in January of '46, from China, I never saw a soul on the docks, Never saw anybody that was welcoming around, like giving coffee or anything like that. Not a thing. I know they had a lot of big hoopla when the first group came back. But, that was all.

**Mr. Blocker:** I would say that the country now is probably showing more appreciation because there is a lot more World War Two movies being made and a lot of documentaries that finally got your memorial for all the service that you all did. Steven Spielberg's movie.....(Tape ends).

## **Side B:**

**Mr. Allen:** I think it was on Peleliu we were getting the Japanese out of the caves and such as that. I had a chance and go down and we'd found five Japanese, big sturdy, bigger than the regular Japanese. I got some electrical wire and I wrapped it around the necks so that it would pull tight if they did anything. I had to take them into the regimental headquarters. So, I was alone. Took them down there and, as I got up close to regimental headquarters, the Navy commander had his camera there and he took a shot of us. I've got that picture at home. That just reminded me. I remembered that. But it was, we had to get them, just practically shoot them in the holes, but these particular ones wanted out. That was all that I can think of. Oh I can probably go back to the house and here's a lot of stuff that I can sit down there and think about.

**Mr. Blocker:** I appreciate that. I appreciate what you all did for us and for serving our country. I appreciate it.

**End of tape and interview.**

Transcribed by: Robert Grinslade  
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