

# **National Museum of the Pacific War**

*Center for Pacific War Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas*

*Interview with Charlie Adams  
United States Marine Corps*

## Interview with Charlie Adams

**Mr. Graham:** This is Eddie Graham. I am interviewing Mr. Charlie Adams who was a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps. We are recording this for the purpose of the preservation of historical society, the Nimitz Museum. We are in the Zion Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today is February 17, 2005. OK, Mr. Adams, let's start off and tell us about when and where were you born?

**Mr. Adams:** I was born in Muncie, Indiana, January 19, 1924.

**Mr. Graham:** And what were the names of your parents?

**Mr. Adams:** Paul Adams and Frances Adams.

**Mr. Graham:** Where did you go to high school?

**Mr. Adams:** I finished high school at Anderson, Indiana.

**Mr. Graham:** OK and where were you and what were doing on December 7, 1941?

**Mr. Adams:** On December 7, Sunday, December 7, 1941, we came home from church, my family and I. My mother decided to make Sunday dinner. They asked my to saddle up a horse and take a ride while they fixed dinner. When I came back in, my folks were waiting at the kitchen door to tell me that Roosevelt had announced that they had attacked Pearl Harbor.

**Mr. Graham:** OK. How did you end up joining the Marine Corps?

**Mr. Adams:** I had registered at the University of Arizona at Tucson for the fall class of 1942. My father had gone to Arizona to manage a ranch south of Tucson between Tucson and Nogales, Mexico. When I came in after riding on Sunday December 7, they asked me to please go back, make sure I started college. At least go

back to college. So I promised them I would. But, during the summer of 1942, following Pearl Harbor, I enlisted in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps told me that boot camps at Quantico, and also the one at San Diego, were full and to go on and go to school and they would call me when they were ready. They called me in March of 1943 and I went into the Marine Corps and went to San Diego to boot camp. Following boot camp I trained in the Marine paratroopers. Then they broke up the Marine paratroopers to form the Fifth Division.

**Mr. Graham:** Where did you train? Where did that training take place....the paratroopers?

**Mr. Adams:** At Camp Elliot.

**Mr. Graham:** That's in California also?

**Mr. Adams:** Yes. Then we went to the Fifth Division, which was at Camp Pendleton at Oceanside, California and they broke up both the paratroopers and the Marine raiders at that point to make up the Fifth Division. Many of the men in the Fifth Division, especially in our company, had prior combat experience at Guadalcanal and some of the other islands.

**Mr. Graham:** So you had some experienced combat marines.

**Mr. Adams:** The captain of our company, Captain Caldwell, had been on Guadalcanal and had made a field commission at Guadalcanal.

**Mr. Graham:** OK. After you grouped up, in the manner in which you described, what happened to you?

**Mr. Adams:** We trained at Camp Pendleton for several months and then they sent us to the big island of Hawaii. We went to Camp Tarawa, named after the island battle of Tarawa. So we trained there and we left Camp Tarawa for Iwo Jima in late 1944, December.

**Mr. Graham:** Let's go back to some of the training you've had, starting to go back all the way to the United States, then what you had in

Hawaii and so forth. Was this any special type of training that you took?

**Mr. Adams:** Well, following boot camp, six weeks, we only had six weeks of boot camp during the war. Then following that, I did go to field music school. I learned to play the various bugle calls. Following that, then, they sent me to the paratroopers for training.

**Mr. Graham:** Did you also jump?

**Mr. Adams:** I did not jump. I jumped off the tower and they broke up the paratroopers just one week prior to the time I was to jump out of the airplane. So I never did receive my wing. But, I had full training in the paratroopers, up to that point.

**Mr. Graham:** Alright then, let's tell us some more. What kind of training did you do in Hawaii?

**Mr. Adams:** Most of it was fieldwork on the island, on the slopes below Mona Loa and Mona Kia. A lot of it was in the edge of the jungle, but a lot of it was out in the lava flows which certainly fit into Iwo Jima because it was one big volcanic rock. My particular training, I trained with communications, radio, sound power gear. I also trained with machine guns and everything but flamethrowers and bazookas. So that when we went into combat, those were my jobs. Wherever I was needed, I filled in during combat.

**Mr. Graham:** You said something about Tarawa? Did you do some training in Tarawa?

**Mr. Adams:** No. I was on board ship for Tarawa. Before we left San Diego for Tarawa, as we were to be the floating reserve, and I went to La Jolla, California and stepped on a stingray, swimming. I got a bone infection so I sat on board ship for the rest of the fellows going on shore. Probably saved my life. (laughs).

**Mr. Graham:** And this was, where again, you did this?

**Mr. Adams:** At Tarawa.

- Mr. Graham:** And then what happened after that?
- Mr. Adams:** We went back to the United States and then joined up with the Fifth Division.
- Mr. Graham:** What happened after you joined with them?
- Mr. Adams:** As I say, we went to Hawaii. After we finished our training at Camp Pendleton, we went to Hawaii to Camp Tarawa.
- Mr. Graham:** I see.
- Mr. Adams:** It was named after the Second Marine Division that was at Tarawa.
- Mr. Graham:** You stepped on the stingray, though, while you were there at Tarawa. But, you then came back to the United States?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah.
- Mr. Graham:** Then what happened after you came back to the United States?
- Mr. Adams:** Then I joined the Fifth Division.
- Mr. Graham:** And then when you joined the Fifth Division what happened then?
- Mr. Adams:** We trained at Camp Pendleton, at Oceanside. And then, from there, we went to Hawaii to finish our training. We went on to the big island of Hawaii.
- Mr. Graham:** Then after you finished your training there?
- Mr. Adams:** Then we boarded ship to go to Iwo Jima.
- Mr. Graham:** OK. Tell us what happened in Iwo Jima when you got there.
- Mr. Adams:** We landed on February 19, in a Higgins boat, on Red Beach One. We landed about five o'clock in the afternoon. We had attempted to land three different times. But, all three times the

beaches were so cluttered and so shot up that there was no place to land. So it was about five o'clock before we got the signal to come on in. So we landed about five o'clock on February 19, I mean January 19.

**Mr. Graham:** Did you establish a beachhead there, or move on inward?

**Mr. Adams:** No, we moved on in. The man going in on the Higgins boat, the man in front of me, was shot. They machine-gunned us from Mount Suribachi because we were, basically, just below Suribachi. He was machine-gunned and they shot him through the intestines. Then when we landed on the island, they dropped the ramp on the Higgins boat and, fortunately, the coxswain that was running the Higgins boat, ran us up on the beach far enough that we landed right on dry sand. We hadn't gone fifty yards; I was with the gunnery sergeant. I was in Headquarters, part of the company. We were about ten feet apart and they dropped a mortar and got both of his legs. So he was the first, second casualty. One in the boat and he was the second; both of them, right in front of me. So then, our Lieutenant Clark's platoon got lost. Their coxswain got lost and landed down at Yellow Beach, which was right under Suribachi, next beach. So I had to go down and find them. So I had to go down through, along the beach and find them and bring them back up to the company.

**Mr. Graham:** Were they firing on you?

**Mr. Adams:** All the way. Somebody was looking after me.

**Mr. Graham:** OK. So you find them. Then what happened?

**Mr. Adams:** Well, back to the company and then we moved inland.

**Mr. Graham:** And what was it like moving inland?

**Mr. Adams:** Sandy. You take two steps forward and one back. But it was sand half way up to your knees in places. Then was one sand terrace after another going up to the top of the island. So we

dug in at the top of the island at night, since it was late in the afternoon when we got in.

**Mr. Graham:** Did you get a fairly restful night, or did they keep you busy?

**Mr. Adams:** No. They kept us pretty busy.

**Mr. Graham:** What happened, mostly, during the night?

**Mr. Adams:** Most of it was either artillery shells, or mortar shells during the night. Most of the machine guns were daytime, from the Japanese.

**Mr. Graham:** Were the Japanese fairly accurate with their artillery and mortar? Or was it just.....

**Mr. Adams:** Pretty accurate. Pretty accurate. They had the beaches, the landing areas and the center part of the island pretty well zeroed in. The island is, kind of like a large pork chop, but down the center of it is, kind of, a ridge and that's where they built their airfield. Then from the center, on each side of it, there were, was one little ridge after another the full length of the island. So you take one ridge and then you'd have to go to another. Then you take another ridge and then you'd have to go to another. In between there was depressions and little valleys. In each one of those they had the machine guns and their artillery set up and mortars set up ahead of time so they just, they had each one of those areas zeroed in.

**Mr. Graham:** How long did this take before you finally moved up to your objectives? I mean, you say ridge by ridge and how long did it take before you got to, what, the top? Is that what you're objective was, the top?

**Mr. Adams:** Our objective was the north end of the island. We landed at the south end.

**Mr. Graham:** Also, you were to clear the island.

- Mr. Adams:** I was one of the fortunate. I made it the thirty-six days. I guess you could say I was fortunate. We went to Katano Point, which was the northern part of the island and Bloody Gorge. I took tanks into Bloody Gorge two days before we finished the island.
- Mr. Graham:** When you say you took tanks in there, you say you directed them?
- Mr. Adams:** I directed tank fire.
- Mr. Graham:** When you, you were talking about you went up, trying to get to the top and then it leveled off. Is that basically what happened?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Um-hum.
- Mr. Graham:** And how long did it take before you got to the top?
- Mr. Adams:** We were at the top, well, we got over those ridges, I mean, those terraces, to the top of the island and dug in that night. Probably took us about two hours. It was just at dark when we were able to start digging in.
- Mr. Graham:** So you got there the very first day you made it all the way to the top?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. We were at the south end of the first airfield between the south end of the airfield and Mount Suribachi.
- Mr. Graham:** And then from that spot, you just moved forward?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. We cut the island off the next day. In other words, we went straight across that narrow point, just below Suribachi, there's a narrow, it comes down to a very narrow point there at Suribachi. So we cut that part off. Then we moved up from there. We moved along the west side of airfield to the north end of the island. That was our goal.
- Mr. Graham:** Did you have to use any special type of tactics in this type of maneuver that, let's say you weren't trained for?



- Mr. Adams:** No. We were well trained with bazookas, flamethrowers mortars, machine guns, assault squad. We handled demolitions, satchel charges, that type of things, so you could blow up caves.
- Mr. Graham:** Were the casualties higher going up to the top of the mountain, or after you got to the top and started moving on?
- Mr. Adams:** The further north we went the heavier the casualties.
- Mr. Graham:** Became more concentrated?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. The further up... Yeah, because they broke from one ridge to the next.
- Mr. Graham:** So they just got more of them gathered.....
- Mr. Adams:** Yes.
- Mr. Graham:** Did they use any special military tactics that surprised you? That you all wouldn't have expected?
- Mr. Adams:** We expected bonzai charges. But, the general in charge of the Japanese, General Kuribayashi, had trained his men to the point where they stayed in caves, bunkers, what was called spider holes, which might be barrels buried in the ground with a lid covering it and camouflaged with dirt and soil or whatever. There was one main tunnel, the length of the island, and then laterals off that, throughout the island. His premise was that for every Japanese that's killed, we want to take ten marines, wounded or killed. Basically, they did a pretty good job.
- Mr. Graham:** Came close to that. OK, and then what do you feel like was the main actions you took were the most effective?
- Mr. Adams:** It was just, simply, manpower. Going from ridge to ridge, taking cave-by-cave, tunnel-by-tunnel, one emplacement after another. Just man on man basically.
- Mr. Graham:** Was there much hand-to-hand fighting in the.....

**Mr. Adams:** Not as far as bayonet type, no. Much of the combat, though, as far as, grenades and pillboxes, or in caves, flame throwers in caves; satchel charges, which were, looked like a little backpack, with plastic explosives in it. We would throw those in. It was just simply man-on-man, tunnel-by-tunnel and cave-by-cave. We sealed a lot of the Japanese in those tunnels and caves and so forth.

**Mr. Graham:** Now this being, of course, a day and night war there was no breaks or anything. How did you, kind of, switch the battle out, where some people could stop and eat, or get drink of water, or something?

**Mr. Adams:** Well, there were times that we didn't drink and we didn't eat. We moved in the daytime. Usually I was on the radio first thing in the morning. I would call for artillery. We had, what we called, a normal barrage, in that we would saturate an area that we were going to try to move in to with artillery. Then I'd call for rockets. A lot of times, off the LCIs, they had rocket batteries on board the ship and they would fire rockets into that same area and saturate it with rockets.

Then we would try to move forward immediately following that before they can get organized and get out again. Then, if we had other emplacements that we needed help on, we would call for air strikes and I'd get on radio and call for air strikes. That was one of my duties, part of the time.

If we were short handed in the assault squad, I might go help with the assault squad and do covering fire. If they needed somebody to direct tank fire, I was the guy that ended up leading tank fire for the company.

**Mr. Graham:** Boy, for a corporal, you had a lot of responsibilities.

**Mr. Adams:** Well, when you end up with corporals instead of lieutenants, as platoon leaders, everybody had a job to do.

**Mr. Graham:** So you were a platoon leader to?

- Mr. Adams:** No. No. No. I did everything else to help out of communications. As I say, I filled in whatever needed.
- Mr. Graham:** Ok. Let's get a little more graphic picture of this. So you moved a lot in the daytime. I assume that's when you did most of your attacking. Then, at night would you kind of sit tight.
- Mr. Adams:** We did not move. Anything that moved at night was fair game, man or beast. I mean, if a marine got up and moved he was dead; as well as the Japanese. But the Japanese moved at night. They come out at night.
- Mr. Graham:** Did they try to attack?
- Mr. Adams:** No. It was, again, they would try to pick off individuals in foxholes. We normally had a two-man foxhole. We would sit just like we're sitting now. I looked over your shoulder and you looked over my shoulder. And anything that moved out there, now the ships fired star shells. It was a shell that exploded up above with a parachute, like fireworks. Only it was very bright, a brilliant, white light. As that dropped, it cast shadows. And the Japanese would follow, and move, in the shadows. But, it gave us a lot of protection, as far as, being able to see any major movement.
- Mr. Graham:** But you would say the Japanese showed a lot of courage in trying to sneak in and find individual Marines.
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Mr. Graham:** They were very fierce warriors.
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Very dedicated and very loyal.
- Mr. Graham:** How many of them, after you captured, and I know you didn't capture to many, evidently, but which ones you did, how many of them, say, spoke English or had been to the United States. Did you find many that had been.....
- Mr. Adams:** Yes. We did not take any prisoners, my company. I took one prisoner and he turned out to be a Navajo code talker.

- Mr. Graham:** How did that happen, that he was a Navajo code talker and he was Japanese?
- Mr. Adams:** This was just at dusk. I just finished digging a foxhole for the night. I was by myself at the time. I didn't have anybody, that night, with me. I looked up and coming around the rocks; there was big piles of rock all over the place, and coming around the edge of these rocks was this black-haired, no helmet, dark-skinned, but he had on marine dungaree and jacket; but, no weapon, no canteen, nothing. And he walked up, and a lot of times the Japanese would come out with grenades under their armpits, or they would throw grenades. So, I pulled at him and darned near shot him. But, I something, you know, in an instant like that, it's like taking a photograph. What you see you have to make a decision. I didn't shoot, but I took him prisoner. He would not talk. But he was the same complexion and dark hair and same build as the Japanese. So I took him to the company commander and he wouldn't talk. So we took him back to the battalion and ran into another Navajo and then he started talking. He came that close. That is strange, because they were not allowed, not supposed to be, on their own. There always had to be a marine with them. If they were captured he was to be shot so that they couldn't get, the Japanese couldn't get the code talker.
- Mr. Graham:** Well now, when he went back and started talking to this other Navajo, did he ever speak English or did he just talk Navajo?
- Mr. Adams:** They just started talking Navajo. I went back to the company. I came so close. That was the only prisoner I tried to take.
- Mr. Graham:** Well, of the prisoners that were captured, the others, did they seem to have a change of attitude towards us, or, in other words, were they.....
- Mr. Adams:** I wasn't that close to them. I think we took approximately three hundred prisoners during combat. Now following combat they took some additional prisoners. At night, a lot of times, the Japanese, in English, would try to antagonize us and they would

recant, "Marines, you're going to die." "Tomorrow you die." "Tonight you die." You know, in English, that type of thing. Or they might start crying, "Help. Help me. Help me. I'm wounded," in English. Trying to get you to come out of your foxhole. If we did, we were dead. A friend of mine and I, I say friend because we are still very close, were in a foxhole at the very end of the island the night before we secured it. A Japanese came around.....it was so rocky at Bloody Gorge that there wasn't any place to dig a hole. So we piled up rocks and were at the top of a little pile of rocks. This Japanese came out around them and he pulled up and, at my buddy to shot him with an M-1 and his rifle didn't fire. It was full of sand. (laughs). So, I shot him and the Japanese said, "I'll be a God damned son-of-a-bitch," in English after I shot him. So then we dropped a grenade on him. We thought we had shot a marine. But when we checked his papers, in his wallet, and he had a little cloth wallet, he had gone to school in California at Berkeley.

- Mr. Graham:** So that's the reason a lot of them knew English to.
- Mr. Adams:** They did. A lot of them had been educated in the United States. When I went to Nagasaki, at the end of the war, English was a secondary language in grade school, elementary school.
- Mr. Graham:** OK. Moving, let's go back to the island now, as you moved across you, I assume there was an airfield there that you captured, is that correct?
- Mr. Adams:** Yes. We went around the west side of the airfield. We did not go down the top of it. Another outfit went down the top of it.
- Mr. Graham:** So as you went around, you said it took thirty-six days? And the very end when it was obvious that you were winning was there many Japanese that surrendered, or did they keep fighting right to the end?
- Mr. Adams:** No. They fought to the end. One night, right near the end, I took three tanks in to the Gorge to seal caves. What we tried to do is, if we couldn't seal them with explosives, we usually used

tanks. High explosive shells from tanks. What we would do, we would go in and seal those caves. With the three tanks, late in the afternoon, we sealed all the caves except one. So, that night, three of us set up, we dug a slit trench, and we had one man with a BAR and one man with a M-1 and I had a carbine. We had a box of hand grenades and a box of, what we called, illuminating grenades. And so when the star shells were fired we would watch this single cave. When the star shell went out, then we would throw an illuminating grenade. We took 150 Japs, that night out of that one cave, the three of us. They came out one or two at a time.

**Mr. Graham:** That cave was not sealed. Correct?

**Mr. Adams:** No. We could not seal it. And the tanks, it was too late in the afternoon, they had to go back and refuel and they were out of ammunition. So we had to wait until the next day, but we had to watch that one cave that night. One hundred and fifty Japanese came out of that cave that night.

**Mr. Graham:** Did they surrender?

**Mr. Adams:** No. The last man out was a Japanese officer. Those caves were hot and they wore, a lot of times in the cave they wore long johns to absorb the sweat because it might be 115 or 120 in those caves and they would perspire so they wear long johns. This Japanese officer came out and he had on tennis shoes and long johns and a helmet; a bottle of sake, in one hand, and a Japanese saber in the other and he was hollering, "Bonsai." He had a little white beard. I can just see him yet.

**Mr. Graham:** So just in one night, you said, a hundred and fifty. That's quite a few. This was all done with small arms fire?

**Mr. Adams:** Yeah. BAR, M-1 carbines and grenades. If they had come out all together, we would have been in trouble. But, they come out one, or two, at a time.

**Mr. Graham:** It was a small entrance to the cave?

- Mr. Adams:** Yes. Very small. Yeah.
- Mr. Graham:** They couldn't come out in big groups. Was there any cases where you all had sealed off a cave and they dug themselves out?
- Mr. Adams:** A lot of times, no. What happened though is a lot of the caves were interlocked. So if you sealed one entrance, they would come out of another. I had that happen one time. We sealed....I threw a satchel charge in and it came back out. Blew me about thirty feet in the air. (laughs). But they came out another entrance.
- Mr. Graham:** Now this was, these caves were like, you say, the whole island was that way?
- Mr. Adams:** Yes.
- Mr. Graham:** And then when the right...last days of the battle, do you remember anything special about them?
- Mr. Adams:** Well, of course, that last day that we're talking about where we got the numbers out of the one cave.
- Mr. Graham:** Did you see the.....you saw the flag waved?
- Mr. Adams:** I did. I saw the flag go up. I was on the radio. One of those times I was on the radio; a lot of times I wouldn't have the radio, I'd be someplace else. I was on the radio and they called on the radio and battalion called and said they were going to raise the flag on Iwo. I was with the captain and we were getting ready to organize something and so we watched the flag go up with field glasses. Quite a trip.
- Mr. Graham:** I was going to say, especially nowadays, with all the attention that's given to it.
- Mr. Adams:** I couldn't tell you which flag it was whether the first one or the second one. All I know is that they told us on the radio and we watched the flag go up.

- Mr. Graham:** And was this, what, the second or third day of after you had invaded.....?
- Mr. Adams:** I think it was on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, which would be the fourth, or fifth day.
- Mr. Graham:** Yeah. That was quite a momentous occasion.
- Mr. Adams:** Yes. I t certainly was.
- Mr. Graham:** After you....battle stopped, that is, how long were you there?
- Mr. Adams:** Well we fought right up to the thirty-sixth day. Then they pulled us back and we took a shower, salt-water shower, because there was no fresh water on Iwo Jima. None. It was all volcanic. And sulfa pits. We took a salt-water shower and the most lasting thing on the island was to go the Fifth Division cemetery and see all those white crosses with Suribachi as the background. We went into see some of the fellows that we had lost.
- Mr. Graham:** You lost quite a few friends, didn't you?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. We had ninety-five percent casualties out of the original 248 men. There was thirteen of us actually able to walk off the island under our own power. Then we had over two hundred replacements and ten of those walked off. The rest of them were either killed or wounded. We had four officers killed out of seven. The other three were wounded.
- Mr. Graham:** Now you're talking about out of the Fifth Division?
- Mr. Adams:** That's out of our company. Out of 248 men there was thirteen of us original men that trained in company and landed on the island. Thirteen of us were able to walk off under our own power. Of the seven officers that landed on there, only one walked off. We had four killed out of the seven.
- Mr. Graham:** OK. After Iwo Jima, where did you go?



**Mr. Adams:** Went back to Hawaii, the big island of Hawaii and there we were training for the invasion of Japan. We were to land on the island of Kyushu. We had our orders. We were to land in November of 1945. I was loading a ship; I was running a forklift on the dock at Hilo, Hawaii, loading ship with ammo, in cargo nets, when they dropped the bomb on August 7, on Japan, the A-bomb. So instead of going into Japan for an invasion, we went in as occupation. At the end of September, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, we landed at Sasabo, Japan on the Isle of Kyushu. I was in Sasabo for a day or two and then they put me on a cattle train and sent me down to Nagasaki. I spent, was in Nagasaki until March of 1946. Then I came home, discharged.

**Mr. Graham:** Let me asked something. You know, of all the controversies there still is to this day about whether the Atomic Bomb should have been dropped or not, how do most of your people feel about it?

**Mr. Adams:** One hundred percent in favor. I could, after being in Japan, and seen the defensive system they had set up, it would have been as bad, or worse, than Iowa Jim. They had kamikaze planes. But they had, what they called, Sinyo, S-I-N-Y-O, boats, which is a small, plywood, boat with a Plexiglas windshield and a place to put a torpedo. And there were manacles on either side of the torpedo where they manacled.....

**Mr. Graham:** What goes on either side? You said what goes on either side?

**Mr. Adams:** Manacles.

**Mr. Graham:** Manacles? Which are?

**Mr. Adams:** Point where the Japanese rode astraddle the torpedo. And his legs were manacled. They had manacles on them so he couldn't get off. He had enough fuel to run about twenty miles. If, with the weight of that torpedo in there, or that boat stopped it would sink. So you had choice, either sink and drown, or hit a ship. We used to race those and they would

travel about forty, forth-five miles an hour without a torpedo. We had, our job was to destroy a lot of the defensive positions.

- Mr. Graham:** You said you used to race them. You mean that was your fun after the war was over with?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. When we were in Nagasaki.
- Mr. Graham:** So they had quite a suicidal defense set up.
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. A lot of the airplanes were spaced, may one here, one there on small strips and were not concentrated on a big airfield.
- Mr. Graham:** Now most of these planes were also the Kamikaze?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah.....quite few of them. Not all of them, of course.
- Mr. Graham:** And how long were you there?
- Mr. Adams:** Went in in the end of September and left there the first of March.
- Mr. Graham:** Did you.....how was the Japanese civilization population at that time? Were they friendly, of distant?.....
- Mr. Adams:** When we went into Sasabo the only people that were in the big city of Sasabo, and it was a big navy area, Japanese navy town, the only people in town were police, the invalids that could not be moved, or the prostitutes. Everybody else had gone to the hills. By the third day, they started coming out of the mountains; coming out of the hills. It was one of the finest occupations the world will ever see. We had no problem, what-so-ever with the Japanese. The Japanese had no problem with the Americans. It was a wonderful occupation. We had nothing but the best of relations.
- Mr. Graham:** How was the food and water supply there at the time? Was it.....
- Mr. Adams:** In Japan?

**Mr. Graham:** Yeah.

**Mr. Adams:** I can't remember of any problem for our standpoint. Of course, we were supplied shipboard. I mean we've got our supplies in Kyushu. The Japanese, remember, at that time, the Japanese people were, pretty much, agriculture. There was a lot of vegetables and produce, eggs and that type of thing not so much meat. But in Nagasaki, as an example, where I spent a lot of time, in the downtown part of old Nagasaki, now the new part of Nagasaki, the industrial area, was destroyed by the A-bomb. In the old part of town, the cobble stone streets, the little narrow streets and the old fashion type housing and so forth. But in the center of it was a market square, probably a good long block square. In the center of this the farmers would come in, with their produce, every morning at, or before daylight, and they would set up their little hibachis and have their little fire there, but they would have their produce for sale. Every day, because there was no refrigeration, the housewife would come to the square and barter for whatever she wanted for that day. But, you could hear those farmers coming in and they were usually, there was no vehicle, no automobile, no truck. They would come in with oxen, or a water buffalo, on wooden wheeled carts and you could hear them coming down those cobble-stoned streets. Just like you read in the Bible five thousand years ago, you know. But you would hear them coming, klip, klop, klip, klop, in these old wagons.

**Mr. Graham:** So they would end up, grain....and feed for their oxen that they kept those up. And what about, they raised, like pigs; that's about all they had.....

**Mr. Adams:** Poultry. A lot of poultry. So everybody had a few chickens. And everybody had a garden.

**Mr. Graham:** Now, these hibachis, what kind of meats did they mostly cook on those?

**Mr. Adams:** A lot of it was, kind of like a vegetable stew, something of that kind. For instance, I've been to dinner with Japanese. I've been invited to families. One family I became acquainted with,

this Japanese had gone to University of California before the war, and he studied art and stage. Drama. So I went to some of the Japanese stage shows and they put on the type of shows where they would come in and, they had a love triangle, you know where one guy would go in with the other guys wife and....just like the United States.

**Mr. Graham:** Soap operas.

**Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Soap operas. But, instead of paying for it, the entry fee, with money, they paid with goods maybe a head of cabbage or a head of lettuce or some eggs and that type of thing. When we'd go, we'd take maybe chocolate bars or something....(laughs) and got free admission. But, anyway, I became acquainted with this gentleman. So he invited me out to his house. The hibachi was going all the time in the center of the house. He constantly had was cooking, steam cooking, whatever they were going to eat. In Japan, at that time, about fifty percent of the population died from parasites internal and external.

**Mr. Graham:** Foods infected?

**Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Fertilizer in the garden. Every member of the family had a row in the garden and they take a stake and they would go out and do their daily constitutional, or what ever, in that row and that was their fertilizer. And they would keep moving the stake. You've heard of the smell of the Orient? Well that was the smell of the Orient. Downtown they would have big pits on the corner with a public outhouse. They farmers would come in, with ladles, we called them, "Honey dippers", and they would have a yoke, with a bucket on either side and they would fill those and head out. Or, they would come in with a donkey, or whatever they had and fill buckets

**Mr. Graham:** You can easier see how disease could spread very quickly.

**Mr. Adams:** Yeah. When I came back out of the service my current wife talked me into taking her to college one night. Her father's car

broke down. This is when I first met her. She was going to college and, of all things, she was taking, what were you taking, dear?

**Wife:** Parasitology

**Mr. Adams:** Parsitology. And that night, when I took her to school, she talked me into staying with her. And he talked about the parasites of Japan: My skin crawled; liver flukes, long worms. But, anyway, that was one of the major problems and that is why they steam cooked, they cooked it on a twenty-four basis practically to try to kill the parasites.

**Mr. Graham:** They weren't close enough to the ocean to catch fish, were they?

**Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Nagasaki is right on the ocean. In fact, Mitsubishi, the large maker manufacturing company, manufactured the midget submarines. They had submarines, right there, at Nagasaki, in the bay. We stayed in the Mitsubishi office building. A big, six story, beautiful building.

**Mr. Graham:** Who's now a very successful carmaker.

**Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Very much so. And international trader. I worked with them out of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

**Mr. Graham:** So, if I'm hearing you correctly, then probably an overwhelming majority of the Japanese population were very friendly to Americans?

**Mr. Adams:** Yes, very friendly. We had no problems. Now, I don't know what their personal feelings were. But those that I had personal contact with didn't appear to be any animosity, any more than we had. We just simply, from my experience, we had no problem. The only problem we had was with the Russians.

**Mr. Graham:** What problems did the Russians.....?

- Mr. Adams:** When I was in Nagasaki, I, we received word from McArthur's headquarters, I think it was Supreme Command, that they were sending Russian officers into the various cities, Truman had asked for a joint occupation, or they had asked for one, and so they sent two Russian officers to Nagasaki. I was assigned to those two Russian. During the two days that they were there, they never spoke to me one time.
- Mr. Graham:** Now who sent the Russian? Did we, the Americans, send them?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. Sent the Russian officers.
- Mr. Graham:** Russian officers?
- Mr. Adams:** They were talking about a joint occupation, with the Russians, like we had in Berlin. We received word from McArthur's headquarters that these two Russian offices were coming to Nagasaki as an example. I was assigned to those two Russian officers for two days. I lived with them for two days. In those two days, they never spoke to me; they had nothing to do with me.
- Mr. Graham:** What was your job in being with them?
- Mr. Adams:** To report to McArthur their actions in those two days. I reported to McArthur's headquarters every four hours. If they wanted something out of the store, they went in and took it. The only way we got it put back was if I ejected a shell and stuck it in there ribs, and then, they would put it back. If they wanted a girl on the street, they would grab her. And I would do the same thing and they would let her go. At the end of forty-eight hours, from the reports that went to McArthur's headquarters, I wish I had kept it, we received a wire from McArthur's headquarters, send the SOBs home on the fastest means of transportation possible. The joint occupation of Japan is over. If it hadn't been for McArthur we'd probably had another Berlin. These are facts.

- Mr. Graham:** Very interesting facts. OK. Then after you finished your occupation, where did you go then?
- Mr. Adams:** We came back to the United States and was discharged and went back to college, got married, raised a family and worked.
- Mr. Graham:** All right, let me ask you this then. Of all your experiences in combat, or the occupation, are there any particular ones that you still think about more than others? If so, what are they?
- Mr. Adams:** Well, I think it's some of the people I was with when we lost them. I don't have nightmares. I would compare it with nostalgia. I remember things that I did when I was a kid. I remember these things that, it doesn't, emotionally disturb me, I don't dwell on it. I didn't start thinking about it until, probably, 1988. At that time, with our old Fox Company reunion, the remaining members of the old company that I was with started getting together. And so, annually, we get together and, of course, we swap war stories. I was with a number of people that we lost.
- Mr. Graham:** Well, you've given us a very interesting story, but is there anything else now, that you would like to add that we haven't covered?
- Mr. Adams:** Well, I had malaria. I got malaria on Iwo. I went from a hundred and sixty to one hundred and nineteen, in pounds. I had a few fragment wounds. Some pock marked my leg and my back and my wrist. I received my Purple Heart fifty-seven years later because the corpsman that was working on me got hit and the corpsman that worked on that corpsman got hit, so then fifty-seven years later, before we got together and they wrote up the fact that I deserved a Purple Heart. When I talk to the American history classes, they asked about what I thought of the war. I tell them it was dirty. I didn't wash my face for thirty-six days. It's bloody. I was with somebody, everyday, that was killed or wounded. And it smelled. Can you imagine twenty-two thousand Japanese dead, plus the Americans and the lack of sanitation? We had no fresh water.....(tape ends).

**Side B:** ...open sulphur. Almost one hundred percent pure sulphur. You'd hear them, "Bloop", you know? But you could, there were areas on the island where we would dig a foxhole. If you didn't turn you could blister. (blank space in tape). If you dig a hole and bury your C rations, it's a little canned ration, in, maybe eighteen inches deep, and if you didn't get it out in about fifteen minutes, it would explode, it was so hot. In a lot of areas, at night, that's, you saw the steam coming up. It was just like a fog. But there was just certain areas where you had open pits of sulphur, hot areas.

**Mr. Graham:** So we can say war is nothing like Hollywood projects it.

**Mr. Adams:** Not necessarily. I've had canteens shot off of me. One day a Japanese machine gunner shot at me, we were going from one ridge to the other down through a little valley, and he...I had a flare on my right hip and a canteen on the left and they set these machine guns up on a traverse to cover an area. They hit the flare on my right hip and set it on fire and shot the canteen off my left, he moved too fast, and I had to get rid of my pants. I still got a scar on my right hip from that. That flare was pretty hot.

One day, I picked up three different radios. The first radio, I was setting it up in the morning, next to the foxhole, and they hit it with a German 88. They used field guns from the Germans, 88s, flat trajectory. I was raising the antenna on it and, the next thing I knew, I didn't have a radio. All I had was the antenna. I still got the scars. They blew my watch off. I had watch springs sticking out of from my wrist. So the corpsman was wrapping up my wrist and he got about a ten inch cut in his back from another shell that come in. They killed a man I was with in the foxhole at the time. The corpsman that worked on him, Bob Deguess, got hit and then Everett Kellogg, another corpsman, working on him and they took all of them....(laughs).

**Mr. Graham:** So you could say the difference between life and death, in battle, can just be a matter of inches.



- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. I went back and got another radio. When I got back up with it, to the front lines, it didn't work. The captain looked at it and it had a bullet hole in the middle of it and went out the side. So I went back and got a third one and they made me sign for it. (laughs). They thought I was giving them to the Japs, I guess. (laughs). Those are some of the things. But I would say that, most of the combat that I was involved in, as far as personal, was probably no more than twenty-five, or thirty, yards. It was fast.
- Mr. Graham:** That's like in football from the twenty-yard line to the goal line, isn't it?
- Mr. Adams:** Yeah. There is the quick and the dead.
- Mr. Graham:** Did you, since the war's been over with, did you ever run into any Japanese soldiers that, you know, were in battle, that you had a chance to talk to?
- Mr. Adams:** I did one time. In 1995 we went back to Iwo, the fiftieth anniversary. We went back to Iwo. There was six of us from the old company went back. We had ceremonies over there on Iwo. We went to Guam, stayed at Guam and then flew up to Iwo for the day. We went back and toured the island. There were some Japanese; there was some Japanese survivors there that had been taken prisoner. So we got to talk to them. But they felt the same way we were; they felt like they were professional soldiers. They had a job to do just like we did.
- Mr. Graham:** Nothing personal.
- Mr. Adams:** No. General Kuribayashi's widow, they never found him, he committed hari kiri, or something on the island. But General Kuribayashi's widow was ninety years old and she spoke to us that day. It was very interesting. There again, I think if they felt that they were defending their country, just like we were, had a job to do.

**Mr. Graham:** Well you certainly have given us a very interesting story and I have no more questions to ask, so I'm just asking you, is there anything else that you would like to add?

**Mr. Adams:** No. I don't think so. I just feel it was something we had to do under the circumstances. We were attacked. I think, at the time, the general attitude of the men my age, was that, we had to defend our country and we had to do what was necessary. We certainly appreciated our freedoms and our liberty after we look around the rest of the world; especially today

**Mr. Graham:** I can understand that. Well on behalf of the Nimitz Museum and the Historical society I want to thank you very much for your contribution to our library and we certainly wish you the best of luck and God's speed in the remainder of your life.

**Mr. Adams:** We are looking forward to seeing Fredericksburg.

**Mr. Graham:** Thank you sir.

**Mr. Adams:** You bet.....(tape ends)

Transcribed by: Bob Grinslade  
22 August 2010  
Fredericksburg, Texas  
Tape #1316

Finalized by: Bob Grinslade  
19 February 2011  
Fredericksburg, Texas