

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

JOHN R. 'JACK' ADAMS

This is Cork Morris. Today is February 18th, 2005, and I'm interviewing Mr. Jack Adams. The interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas, in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Mr. Adams, I appreciate your taking time to talk to us. I usually like to start out with where you are from originally and what things were like before the war started and you joined up.

MR. ADAMS: Well, I was born in Waucoma, Iowa on a farm. I wasn't born in a hospital I was born out on the farm. I graduated from high school in 1939 and stayed out a year and worked and then I started into college in Iowa State College majoring in animal husbandry. I played in the band down there and when December 7th came along I was custodian in an apartment house and the recruiters came through. I was taking ROTC and I was in army field artillery and the navy and the coast guard and the marines they all came through looking for officer material. I went to see this show "To the Shores of Tripoli" with, oh, I forget who was in it, but anyway it was about the marines. The marines were coming through there looking for guys and I went down and I got my folks, I wasn't twenty-one yet, and they signed the papers and I enlisted in this officer's procurement program. Then you stayed in school and then they called them up as they needed them, you know. That's the way I got in the Marine Corps. I had to turn in my ROTC uniform and when I took that over to the armory one of the sergeants that was

regular army guys that were stationed there they gave me a hard time. A lot of guys were joining naval air corps, and went along and went along because I was only a sophomore and finally on July 1st, 1943, they came out and put all these people like myself in uniform and put them in. I went into a V-12 detachment and I was sent to Notre Dame University for four months. While I was there that was the fall of Angelo Bertelli who was the Heisman trophy winner and I went there in July. In four months I was sent down to boot camp at Parris Island. When I went down there the football season was over and Angelo Bertelli was one of the guys. Almost the whole entire platoon down in Parris Island was made up of guys out of Notre Dame, except for a few I think St. Mary's in California. Another guy that went down with me on that train was Andy Phillips who was one of the whiz kids from Illinois who was on the All America Basketball team that year. He just happened to be in that platoon. We went down there and we already knew how to march and we knew the turns and well, we got to boot camp. I don't know how long you want to take.

MR. MORRIS: Run it.

MR. ADAMS: We had a little guy, D. I., from Tennessee and he came out and said if anybody thinks he can whip my ass get out here. We had all these big football players, most of the platoon was football players, and he walked up to this one Irishman from St. Mary's out in California, that college, and said, "What did you play?" I think he was a tackle and he looked at him and said, "Ping pong." This tough sergeant broke down and just broke down laughing. We had it pretty easy really because we knew our left from our right and we knew how to march and we knew that if we did what we were told it was going to be easier on us. But still it was boot camp through and through and finally

the main sergeant got moved and they put us under the command of a Corporal Murphy from Boston. Where he had all these guys from Notre Dame he was proud as a peacock to have these guys from Notre Dame although most of us hadn't gone to school at Notre Dame. I remember towards the end, we were just practically ready to leave, and they put this Angelo Bertelli in head watch, head guard, guarding fire watch down in the head which was a humongous building. The officer of the guard went down there and Angelo Bertelli had his carbine leaning up against the wall and he was signing autographs for all these Italian kids that were from New Jersey. He wasn't walking his post the way he should have been but they didn't do anything about it. I mean, he went on, he was a remarkable person or he wouldn't have been the Heisman Trophy winner. While we were there in boot camp Andy Philips was supposed to go to Madison Square Garden and play in the national champion of basketball, they sent him down, and they wouldn't give him leave to go. They sent him his uniform and I think it was New Years' day or something that we had kind of a day off, when it was Christmas day he put on his blue and white and red basketball uniform and they went out and took some pictures. When we first got there Bertelli would get all these letters from all the girls, you know, and he didn't even know who they were. You know he'd get fan mail and the drill sergeant made him run around the platoon and he'd give him one letter and he'd run around and give him another letter. He was standing there in the sand and he was just about pooped and then finally he just handed him a handful of letters. Then I went up to New River to officers' candidate applicant class which was just the same that you got in Quantico. I was young and they'd send a detachment to Quantico every two weeks or every month, I don't know which it was. I was the younger one so I stayed there for three months or almost four

months then I got sent to Quantico and then I went into OCS. I was in OCS until ten days before I was going to graduate. We were all through with it, and all they had left was get the uniforms and a lot of that stuff. We'd done a lot of the chicken stuff, you know, and my grades were good. I just got notice and they called me in. They said, "You want to be a marine officer?" I said "If I can't be a good one, I don't want to be one." And they said, "That wasn't what we asked you?" There was a gunny(?) sergeant, he told me, "You know, Adam, you don't want to flunk out there. If you go in there and apologize and say that you want to be a marine officer more than anything in the world, and yes, sir and no, sir." I said, "Well, I ain't made that way. I just meant what I said. If I can't be a good one, I don't want to be one." And, so, they called me in before the colonel. Then I had a company commander, he was from Iowa, but he's the one that cut me off at the knees and I got noticed. As soon as you get noticed you're in bad trouble whether you're in boot camp or where you are. He just said, "I recommend that you go get transferred out to the ranks. Some of the best officers we have are men that go out to the ranks and then come back and go through again." When I finally ended up overseas I had a lieutenant and he called me in and he saw my record book and everything and he said, "If you do a good job on this next operation, Adams, I'll see that you get sent back to OCS and get another chance."

MR. MORRIS: So at this point, what rank are you?

MR. ADAMS: Pfc.

MR. MORRIS: When they sent you to Notre Dame that was all about being an officer.

MR. ADAMS: I was a private when I was at Notre Dame.

MR. MORRIS: Okay. Then when you went to Quantico, still private?

MR. ADAMS: I don't know whether I was private or pfc, whatever they were.

MR. MORRIS: Apparently they wanted you to be an officer.

MR. ADAMS: Yes, that's what I went in and I went to OCS and my grades were good, but I don't know. We went through a lot of 2nd lieutenants on Iwo and in some positions I would probably have been a real good officer and some situations I might not have been a very good one. So I never felt real bad about not being a 2nd lieutenant.

MR. MORRIS: You never did become a 2nd lieutenant?

MR. ADAMS: Oh, hell no. I ended up a pfc. I never even made corporal.

MR. MORRIS: Okay. They wasted a lot of time and money on you then.

MR. ADAMS: From OCS we went right straight to New River and then I was overseas in about three or four weeks in a replacement draft, 67th Replacement Battalion.

MR. MORRIS: Where were they stationed, Pearl Harbor?

MR. ADAMS: Well, this particular replacement battalion was made up at tent city in New River, North Carolina, and it was made up of probably eight or nine hundred guys that were out of boot camp. Then we got roughly three hundred plus or minus guys that were paroled out of Portsmouth Naval Prison. If they would go overseas and serve honorably then they would get an honorable discharge. A lot of them had been in trouble in Australia. They were in there for bad stuff because you didn't go to Portsmouth Naval Prison like you were an Aryan race or they hit an officer or just awful. Some of them were real good guys and some of them were real scumbags. Then there were guys that were put in there that their jobs had been taken over by women marines. We went in four trainloads from North Carolina to the west coast. When they fell us out to go on the train we fell out in about a forty-acre field. There was MPs around the field and we walked in

front of the warrant officer whose job was to take replacement battalions over to transient center or wherever they went and then deliver them. Then he came back and got another load and take over. That's the way I understand it. He read our name off and then they formed us up and they marched us to the trains. There were four trains sitting there, and there was MPs at every intersection. It was security. They loaded us on the trains and when the train pulled out the Marine Band was there and it was playing "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now." We went by four different routes to San Diego. The route I went through went through Chattanooga and Texarkana and I don't know where all. We ended up. A lot of these guys were paroled out of Portsmouth Naval Prison. He was in our car and when we went through Los Angeles he got a window open and we were short one man when we got to San Diego. There was a big hubaloo, anybody hear anything, I didn't know what happened to him but he went over the hill. He wasn't about to go overseas again. That was just about the same deal when they loaded us on the ship. They eyeballed every man and read their name off. In this railroad train that I was in, the front car was made up of guys they checked out of the brig. They took the guys from the brig with them, and then they detailed guards. We'd guard the front of the car and the back of the car and there was a guard car in the middle. I don't know why I was in there guarding one time and I didn't have any bullet. I don't know what I was going to do but these guys were all sober and there was no problem. The same day we went on board ship if there was anyone in the hospital that had a broken arm, they loaded guys with casts, anybody that was healing up they loaded. Then these prisoners the MPs took them down to the ship and as soon as the ship got out far enough so they couldn't swim back they turned them loose and everybody forgot all those areas. We were just a bunch of

meat that they were shipping over. I got over to the Hawaiian Islands and the scuttlebutt was that we were going to the Palau but we ended up going to Pearl Harbor. Then the 4th Division was just coming back from the Marianna campaign. We went over to Maui on an LCI. So they would read off a bunch of names every day and they'd be gone, you didn't know where they went. Then one day they read my name off and there was this load of guys in this LCI with a hundred and fifty guys or something. We got on that and they landed us on some beach because the 4th Division was using the harbor in Maui, Kahului, because they were just coming back from the Mariannas. It was after dark and we rode in the dark I don't know how long. We went up to this camp and we got there the same night these guys got back off the ship from Saipan and Tinian. I think K Company was half replacements after that operation. Then they interviewed us and I'd gone over in the 60th mm mortar platoon and I got put in 60mm mortars.

MR. MORRIS: The ole timers, how did they treat you new guys?

MR. ADAMS: We had a captain Witherspoon. They told us he told them no hazing or knocking and he wasn't going to stand for any of that and the more they could teach us it was going to help save their ass at the next operation. Anything they could teach us to help integrate us into that company was to their advantage. There was absolutely no hazing or anything like that at all. But on liberty day usually they'd break off and go to their own slop shoot together. Like this kid that was with me, he went overseas with a group of guys just out of boot camp, but I was all alone. I was kind of a loner because I'd come out of Quantico, you know, and I didn't know anybody. I was in with kids that were a lot younger than I was and it was kind of hard because there was guys in there seventh or eighth grades. I know this one guy and he'd sit there and say, "Look at him,

he's got a college degree and he's same as me." They rubbed you pretty hard sometimes but, anyway, you were just screwed.

MR. MORRIS: Meat, as you say.

MR. ADAMS: Seven or eight of us from Quantico ended up in the 3rd Battalion that were kicked out of Quantico and I think there were five of them that got killed there. Iwo.

MR. MORRIS: On your first action?

MR. ADAMS: Yes, it was the first time because I'd been floating around in the States doing all this stuff.

MR. MORRIS: Who went in first on Iwo Jima, what Division?

MR. ADAMS: The 4th went in on one side and the 5th went in, the 23rd Marines went in on, I think it was 23rd, and 25th 3BN went in on Blue beach 2 and then the 24th Regiment was in reserve. The 5th Division was split up the same way, they had two regiments that went in and one in reserve and they were the ones that went in there by Suribachi. Our battalion was under the command of Col. Justin Chambers. Later I learned that he was the highest ranking officer, he had a Congressional Medal of Honor on Iwo, Justin Chambers the name. He'd been a ranger in the South Pacific, Guadalcanal down in there and the nickname of his battalion was "Chambers Raiders" and he was everything that you dream of a marine officer is supposed to be. He was a hairy, mean lean machine. He got wounded right in front of our, in fact he came up to our company. We'd landed and he walked by our foxhole and he wanted to know in colorful language why we weren't moving out. We were headed right into where there was going to be the meat grinder, I guess. We only had a hundred men when we went up there and I think we were down to

about sixty men when we came. He got wounded out in front of us. They carried him back and they went right by our mortar position. I landed Blue Beach 2 at 0911 the 5th of 8 waves that landed in line. The waves were 2 minutes apart, eighteen marines in the Blue Baron. The name the drivers had painted on it. Another coincidence, when they went by our mortar position here was this Andy Phillips that was with the 14th Marines. Here was Andy Phillips walking alongside us, he was a lieutenant, an officer then. He came off with some officers and corpsmen and two or three other people and I saw that guy walk by us. I was squatting down in the dirt. Before we got relieved, this was before the flag went up on Iwo, our radioman got hit. I had gone to school to learn the alphabet and so I had to go over and carry that radio. Then when we came back and drew replacements they got in a guy that was a trained radioman and so then I went back to the mortars.

MR. MORRIS: I assume you guys were to support the guys ahead of you.

MR. ADAMS: Well, 60 mm mortars they're supposed to fire the middle on the card, two hundred yards, and I don't think we ever fired it more than a hundred yards. One time they tried to get us to fire it down to 30 yards, that's almost straight up and down, and if the wind's blowing it's and I hope to god we never hit anybody but I don't know whether we did or not. I mean my own buddies, I didn't care how many Japs we hit. Whether we ever hit any Japs I don't know.

MR. MORRIS: From what I understand these Japs were buried in the rocks.

MR. ADAMS: Yes, you didn't see them and they'd slide past you and the marines. We had to go back and carry up the water, the ammunition and the flame throwers. They'd fill them back there and we'd take down the empty ones and bring 'em up because we

had one flame-thrower man left. We did a lot of carrying, lot of carrying, and then we carried out wounded. A lot of times we carried wounded down and would come back with ammo or whatever we had to go.

MR. MORRIS: What was the terrain like there? I hear about hills and volcanic ash and all this stuff.

MR. ADAMS: The worst of the badlands was Dakota, I guess. It was bad. Rock, rock and one thing full of caves. I know they told the story about one time they blew one cave shut and the pressure went down through the tunnel and everything and knocked some guys out that were standing in front of a hole on the other side of the thing.

MR. MORRIS: I'd like to believe that, I don't know if I do. What was the weather like?

MR. ADAMS: When we landed we didn't carry any, all we carried was just our packs. I mean we didn't carry any packs we just carried our ammunition and I think a chocolate bar so we didn't have any not until our packs came in. The first time we were relieved we came down and they had our packs laid out in a row and we could pick them up. But up until then, but it rained up there the second, third or fourth day or fifth day and it was pretty cold. It was cold but you couldn't compare like the Battle of the Bulge. It was just miserable and wet. Then you were so tired because you didn't get any sleep. Well, we never slept more than an hour on and an hour off and sometimes it would be one hundred percent alert. I know one time Irish Morton said it was one hundred percent alert all night long and if I find any man asleep he's going to be hanging from that limb over there in the morning.

MR. MORRIS: How long were you on the line first time before you got relieved?

MR. ADAMS: Well, I tell you, we got relieved and they told us that when we got back to where we could see the Suribachi we would be able to see the flag up there. So it would have to be after the, I don't know what date that was put on, the 23rd.

MR. MORRIS: Like four or five days anyway.

MR. ADAMS: But we hadn't been relieved since then. The day we landed our company was in the assault and because we lost all of our officers by three o'clock in the afternoon our company was put in the reserve. Then the next day we got a Captain Breckinridge who took command of the company. He was limping from wounds that he had got, he evidently got worse than Kerry did, anyway he took the command and he led us until he got killed. The officer we had after him, we finally ended up with a 2nd Lieutenant, Irish Morton, and he came up from the ranks. He was a salty dog from old corps, he really loved fighting. He was just a 2nd lieutenant at that time and just got his commission, I think. They said he had been on one of these islands down there as a listening post and then on Saipan he was on some hill and fought all night long. He knew what it was all about.

MR. MORRIS: Did he last?

MR. ADAMS: Yes, he was there.

MR. MORRIS: How many officers are we talking gone through here?

MR. ADAMS: Well, there were three rifle platoons and they each had a lieutenant. Then the machine gun platoon there was a warrant officer that had charge of that. Then there was the executive officer and then our skipper, Witherspoon. Our lieutenant was 1st. Lt. J. R. Camine, he was from Kansas, and he had a wife and little boy and he was killed. He didn't go from here to where we walk in the door and he was killed getting out

of the tractor. Once we hit the beach we had some water to make the ammunition in the stuff in the air and he told me and the gunner to stay with him and we'd unload that. We started unloading and then they opened up with these shells and he said everyman for himself and he ran off to the left and got killed. Gunner Bishop followed him and he crawled around in the sand, I guess, until he got off. I never saw him after that but he finally got off. This kid that came in the door with me, they were lying there and our section leader Joe Skultety was lying there and he was shot. There was Saxon and this Hudspeth Spiegel and we were laying there and Joe said, "You got to get away from the water, you gotta move out." And then Crane who was the other squad leader was shot in the stomach and he was lying there. Joe Petty died and then there was this kid Spiegel, he was lying between us. When we went up over that first mound of sand we didn't know what we were getting into, you know, and we went one at a time and went from shell hole to another. But this Spiegel...

MR. MORRIS: What, this Spiegel?

MR. ADAMS: We told him to come with us. He wouldn't move, he wouldn't move. Hammersly, he got wounded and he said he saw him on a ship and he was combat fatigue. He evidently got off there and didn't get hit but he wasn't functional. Then my squad leader, he had evidently been on Saipan, had a problem with Henry Hines. He's from Alabama, corporal, and when our tractor got hit going in out in the water before it got to the beach, he just lost it. He was lying down in the bottom of the tractor and he was in a fetal position more or less and he just, "I want my mommie, I want my mommie." and he was supposed to be the one I followed. I know they transfer land (?) told us, now whether this is true or whether somebody will say I'm a liar, but they told us

that there is a driver who is supposed to get out and if you didn't get out of that tractor he'd either throw you out or shoot you. It was just that simple. In our tractor 14 men from the mortar platoon—2 cooks (runners) and 2 forward observers from the 14th Regt. to call naval gunfire. When we were throwing this stuff out, this assistant driver blood was running out of his arm. He was going to take Henry and throw him out and Bishop said, "Leave him in here we don't want him." By the time we were throwing that stuff out that was one of the guys that was jumping back in. I know there was one cook in our tractor, because there were two cooks that went in because they took everybody along to fight. He jumped out and got hit and he was jumping back in when I was jumping out. The end gate in the back malfunctioned and we had to go over the top of it to get out. Anyway, it was a slaughter pen that first day and it was no training, nothing made any difference on whether you lived or survived or anything. It was just all pure unadulterated luck the first day. After that, by then your time is up you were dead meat but at least you could protect yourself a little bit with your training.

MR. MORRIS: Did the original 4th Marine guys, your replacements, fare any better, the guys that had been in combat before?

MR. ADAMS: Not the first day. The first mortar section they sent in and seems like they lost about the same number of people we did but the ones they lost were guys that were replacements. There were quite a few of them that were left and I always wondered why they didn't put some of those experienced guys in because there was just four-man squad, four men left in our section. They said they fired their illuminating and there must have been four or five of them that was veterans of Saipan, the original 4th, they just hung together. The sergeant got wounded finally and the corporal took over. Early on they

picked out their position and then they'd point some place and they'd say you four guys dig in over there. So we were kind of lucky that nothing ever happened to us 'cause we didn't get the good position but still they fired the illuminating which gave away their positions. Our positions were given away as soon as we fired and we did that every night. We fired some but they fired the illuminating shells. I can't complain. I think I'd have stuck together, too, you know. After it was over, our Cpl (acting platoon Lt.) said each gun had fired 4,000 rounds. He said each one cost \$25 grand. Is it true?

MR. MORRIS: Do you have any specific friends in the group of replacements?

MR. ADAMS: Well, Saxon, I walked in with, I met him after. You mean the replacements we got while we were on Iwo?

MR. MORRIS: Yes.

MR. ADAMS: We had this guy, Cerione, New Jersey. He was a tailor. I always kind of liked him but nobody else liked him. No, you didn't make a lot of friends. I think that is one thing that is easier for me. I'd only been there four or five months before we landed and I hadn't made friends that I'd gone on liberty with. When somebody got killed it was more of a name than it was a person. I don't know, but still the guys I trained with those four months they were pretty well gone. I don't know, you get kind of numb I guess.

MR. MORRIS: Well, I'm sure that's true. I assume you guys were there until you took the island, right?

MR. ADAMS: Left 3-17. We were there for twenty-seven days and I think the 4th Division got squeezed out. Then the 4th Division got used up in that meat grinder or hamburger, meat grinder is what it was, and they left. The 3rd and 5th Division stayed there and fought longer than we did. The 4th Division they pulled them off the island.

MR. MORRIS: Because of losses?

MR. ADAMS: Well, for one thing there were too many people on the island. They had all these people making the airfield and then the job got small and we got squeezed out. I suppose there was I don't know how they decided the decisions up at the top brass, I mean there might have been a little hanky-panky went on up there. The 4th Division was pretty well shot. They told us before we ever went 'cause they had a full replacement battalion for each regiment which would be 12-1300 guys and they sailed the same time we did. They said we'd take that island in ten days and then we'd go on to another operation. I often wondered if they in the back somewhere up in the sky they didn't figure we'd lose about a thousand guys to a regiment and they'd replacement them and we'd go on to Okinawa. They told us we'd never come back to Maui again, we'd come back to Saipan would be our rest base. And then they brought us clear back to Maui because there was just nothing left because like that company I was in there was only like I said the day we left less than sixty. There was twenty eight or twenty-nine guys that had landed on that island originally and I don't imagine half of them were guys from the original 4th Div. Then there was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight of these replacements that we'd got while we were there that came out of this draft that we got. One time I wrote it down that we'd be through one hundred thirty-five replacements and that could be wrong. I know the first time we went back they said we're going back and we want to draw a ninety replacement. We were back there one night and we drew these ninety replacements and then we went back up and we came back one other time over night. We were living up there. Up there toward the end, you know, you'd come back, we only came back once, and they had showers set up and there was no artillery fire any

more and it was all smoke. Toward the end you didn't get any artillery fire hardly, it was more snipers, small arms fire out of these caves and guys getting hit right in the head. I mean there was more that way. At first you got a lot of mortar fire and a lot of artillery fire. The last guy we had killed, as I remember, was the night of the 16th of March. They told us that night the next day we're going down to the beach and leave. It was a seventeen-year old kid from West Virginia, Chicken Wanky was his name. His brothers, I think, were all over in Europe and he begged his folks if he could join the Marine Corps. He was only about seventeen but he was a good kid. He was a scraper, a good fighter. There was a lot of guys like that and that's one thing I think made me a better person not being an officer was that I lived with these guys and got to know them. A lot of them had very little education but I never once ever caught one of them that refused to help carry out somebody or do something like that. If I'd got to be an officer I might have been a genuine horse's neck. You'd have a whole different outlook 'cause I had a brother that ended up an army major and I know you just end up a different person, different experiences and the way you look at people. You realize that there is just an awful lot of good in the least, but I mean there is good in every, people can be pretty corn balley and there's still a lot of good in them. That's what I think. There was guys there, a lot of guys from Tennessee I know, they had this one corporal and he'd been in two whole operations. He was a runner and he had run for seven or eight different company commanders on Saipan and seven or eight different company commanders on Iwo. The company clerk told me that he had five or six women after him for child support. I don't know whether it is true or not but...

MR. MORRIS: Practice running. So where did they send you after Iwo?

MR. ADAMS: The Division sailed back to Maui and we were reorganized because there was no trucks, no tanks, there was nothing. They were just going to reorganize us and we were training getting ready to go to Japan.

MR. MORRIS: You figured you weren't going to Okinawa.

MR. ADAMS: No, we didn't ever go but I often wondered if that was what they had in their plans that they were going to do. If we could have taken that in ten days with a minimum of casualties then they would because that what's they did. They took Saipan and then about a few days they had to land on Tinian and fight. These guys were afraid of that. It just didn't work out that way. I don't know, I never heard that, I never read that, or anything but just in the back of my head I just wondered if that wasn't the way they were going to use us because why else would they have brought all these replacements along? They didn't figure they were going to lose that many people. I know, going in there on that tractor, I told Joe, and he looked out, these first three waves were just going, it would be duck soup and ten minutes later he's dead.

MR. MORRIS: I assume you were back in Maui when the war ended.

MR. ADAMS: Yes.

MR. MORRIS: Were you there when they dropped the atom bomb?

MR. ADAMS: Yes

MR. MORRIS: Did they tell you about that?

MR. ADAMS: Well, we kind of read it but we didn't believe the Japs would ever give up. Our office kept telling us, you know, we're going to have to clean out these islands anyway 'cause people aren't going to give up. We were training with live ammunition, this was after the war was over, and they had a guy get killed and then after that we never

trained with any live ammunition. I went on R&R in Hawaii and me and a guy from I company, three of us that had been kicked out of OCS and too long to explain it all here but we didn't do anything wrong. We were in the building and we were sleeping in the shower stalls and we woke up and we missed the ship and so we were AWOL. Then when I went back to camp I was PAL for awhile and then...

MR. MORRIS: What does PAL mean?

MR. ADAMS: Prisoner at large. They came out with some ratings and I never knew of a single guy that was a replacement either after Saipan or Iwo that ever got one. Our company was great, they didn't rate anybody. The replacements we got after the war, they were bringing in guys out of the marine air wings that were surplus and breaking them one rank and putting them in the infantry, and they were unhappy.

MR. MORRIS: I'm sure they were. Did you stay in the Corps?

MR. ADAMS: No, I got out. I had enough points 'cause they counted all my points from the time I enlisted. I don't know whether they should've or not but my name was up on the bulletin board and I had X number of points is why I came home with the Division.

MR. MORRIS: How does that point thing work?

MR. ADAMS: Well, you got so many points if you're wounded, and you got so many points for a decoration, and you got points for months, and I think so many points if you were in combat. They figured them out and I had enlisted the 6th of March in '42 and I had a low serial number. Anyway, my name was on and so I was coming home.

MR. MORRIS: Did you get wounded over there?

MR. ADAMS: No. Saxon didn't either, the guy that just walked in there. There were four of us and the one guy got shot through the leg, but otherwise we made it. We were pretty lucky we were not moving out against these caves either; I mean we were squatting there by our mortars. When we'd carry stuff up maybe we'd walk by and they'd say "Be careful there, somebody got shot there yesterday. Luck is all it is.

MR. MORRIS: The Japanese were they just playing a defensive game or did they attack positions or did they just stay in their holes and fight back?

MR. ADAMS: Mostly, yeh. We never did get a bonzai attack but these guys that had been on Mariannas got genuine bonzai attacks. They came at 'em and they'd drive the women and kids ahead of them and blow up the mines, and they'd come along behind them. I don't know they had all kinds of stories they told us. On Iwo they didn't do that at all, they just sat back and tried to kill as many of us as they could. Oh, I guess maybe they had scattered attacks.

MR. MORRIS: What is your opinion of the Japanese as a soldier?

MR. ADAMS: Well, they're pretty darned good. At the time you just hated them but as the years go by you think about it you really have to respect them because they would die for what they believed in. It's kind of like these guys over in Iraq now, these suicide bombers, in a way you have to have a certain amount of respect for them because they're willing to die for what they believe in. That's kind of what they expect you to do is to die for what you believe in.

MR. MORRIS: Yeh, I guess it works that way.

MR. ADAMS: But they're pretty darned good and then I think they had divisions in Manchuria. They had good people on there fighting you. I know they said out in Saipan

Tinian there was a lot of home guard stuff and they could shoot at you all day and couldn't hit you. This didn't work that way over there, they shoot pretty straight. I imagine they didn't have to shoot at you all day to hit you over on Saipan but a lot of them died over there. There were a lot of civilians on Saipan and on Iwo there were no civilians at all. It was just a military base and they killed us and we killed them. They kept sending in more marines and they didn't have any more Japs and so they got whittled away first.

MR. MORRIS: You hold any long term feelings about the Japanese?

MR. ADAMS: I don't drive a Japanese automobile.

MR. MORRIS: You make a point in that driving a Japanese automobile?

MR. ADAMS: No, not really. When the timber buyer comes around and wants to buy logs, I'd just about as soon let them rot down in the woods of the United States as chop them down and never see them again and let them go to Japan. I don't know. I have a Korean daughter-in-law, I don't have any racial thing hang ups. I have three South Korean grandchildren. Her dad was shipped over to Japan and worked as a forced slave laborer, and didn't get back to Korea until after the war was over. He was a slave laborer and she doesn't like them and I'm sure her dad didn't like them.

MR. MORRIS: So what did you do when you got out of service?

MR. ADAMS: I went back to school. I thought I had a girlfriend and I got back and she was gone and it was hard. It was probably harder after I come back than what I went through in the war.

MR. MORRIS: Do you think the stuff you went through in the war had anything to do with readjusting to civilian life?

MR. ADAMS: I don't know. I never had any dreams and I never was analyzed.

Suppose I'm too dumb? I don't know what else.

MR. MORRIS: With all this college I don't think that's true.

MR. ADAMS: I went back and I went to college and I got the best grades I ever got in my life. I had straight A's. For two quarters, I only had two quarters left, I hated school.

MR. MORRIS: Was it just going back to...

MR. ADAMS: I wanted to go back and live on the farm. I liked working with my hands and I just liked not having to do what anybody told me I had to do.

MR. MORRIS: I noticed we share a same feeling. I feel the same way. Are you a farmer?

MR. ADAMS: I am a self-employed farmer all my life and raised eleven children, my wife and I. I married a girl I knew before the war but we didn't write, we had nothing to do with each other during the war. After the war was a crazy time and everybody's home and everybody drank and I didn't drink and I lost hope. If you didn't want to party and drink there was just a lot of stuff you didn't get in on as far as veterans, I mean. A lot of veterans liked to go out and hang one on and I just didn't like to do that, didn't do it. I was just afraid I wouldn't be able to handle it if I started it.

MR. MORRIS: Took pretty practical thinking there.

MR. ADAMS: I was raised a Methodist and I joined the Catholic Church when I got out of Notre Dame. Pretty well alienated most of my relatives and I was just a mess then. When the war was over me and another, this Swede from Minnesota, were in a three-man trigger-operated knee mortar, 60mm mortar tubes. I was transferred out of the mortar platoon into the headquarters platoon. They told us we were going to be attached to the

assault rifle platoon for the day and then at night we'd come back and be cp protection at night. But each day we would go out with whichever platoon was in the assault and then we'd fire this knee trigger-operated mortar into the cave openings and pill boxes and it was about like we'd last I don't know how long. So I was glad when they got the atomic bomb. Then I got into trouble and they told us I'd never get any galley time, KP, you know, mess duty, but I did. So before the war was over they put me in the galley and I'd been there thirty-seven days working. I was all during V-J Day and when they played games and partied for three or four days, I was in the galley. I had to get up early. The same way when I came back, they were all the corporals and sergeants that came back with the original 4th Division, there weren't too many privates. So when we came back on Kadashan Bay aircraft carrier and it was dirty. They loaded up all of them and then they kept back about fifty or sixty privates or something. We had to have a field day and clean up the ship, the heads and do all of that and then we got on a truck and in the dark they hauled us out to Pendleton. We just went out in one truck, you know, and on the troop trains coming back from San Diego to Great Lakes I was still private so I wound up around the mess car all the way across the country. I enjoyed that because it gave you something to do and you could stand there and wave out of the door at people. You had the car pretty much all to yourself and it was kind of neat.

MR. MORRIS: Washing dishes?

MR. ADAMS: Yeh, washing dishes, pots and pans, I liked that. It was better than sitting in that car playing poker or shooting dice. I never played dice except shot craps just before payday when didn't anybody have any money.

MR. MORRIS: Safer that way, you think?

MR. ADAMS: Yes.

MR. MORRIS: So a farmer, huh?

MR. ADAMS: Yes, we had eleven children, seven boys and four girls.

MR. MORRIS: Any of them go into the military?

MR. ADAMS: I had one boy that put in twenty years and my oldest boy had been old enough to go to Viet Nam, two of them were, and he got a real high draft number but he went to college. From the time he was born I saved my money to send my kids to college. I always figured I had so many of them and if I got them through college my life was a success. So when he was going to college, I didn't send him to college to get out of Viet Nam, that's just the way it was. Then the other boy had a low number but the war ended by the time he was old enough to get drafted. Then the next boy came along and he joined the air force after he graduated from college and he ended up as a master sergeant in the air force. One of my daughters was in the air force for nine years. I don't know. I think the Viet Nam Era was probably as hard a time to try to raise children as there ever was because of all the upheaval that was going on then. I mean, the demonstrations and the civil rights movement and you had all the murders. Kennedy got shot, and Martin Luther got shot, and Bobby Kennedy got shot, you had all these students and you've got people now that are just almost as bad. They don't know what war is all about. It's just like this Marine that shot this guy over there, you know, and they're trying to try him with murder.

MR. MORRIS: Oh, in the mosque?

MR. ADAMS: Yeh, because I remember toward the end of the operation that there was a Jap sniping at us. They finally got him cornered and he stood up and waved his carbine

and had a white T shirt tied on it, you know wanted to surrender. Smitty had a Thompson sub-machine gun and somebody hollered “shoot”. I shouldn’t put that on tape. He just ??? right up the front while that guy was waving a white flag. If you’d had a photographer taking a picture of that it would have been terrible but he had been trying to kill us up until then. You didn’t know but what he had something up his sleeve then.

MR. MORRIS: Right, I’ve heard that story from Guadalcanal, same deal. One guy so much as said you might want to surrender but you ain’t surrendering to me.

MR. ADAMS: War is all about killing each other, and you kill a few innocent people it’s just going to happen that’s all. I don’t know. Do you have any questions you want to ask? That’s my story; it ain’t much of a story.

MR. MORRIS: They’re all good stories. Unless you got anything else you want to add to this, you’re good to go.

MR. ADAMS: I appreciate your patience.

MR. MORRIS: I like doing this. I appreciate your taking the time and I appreciate your service.

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