

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR***

***Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas***

***Interview with George L. Craig  
US Marine Corps  
Battle of Iwo Jima***

## Interview With George L. Craig

This is an oral history interview of George L. Craig, a corporal in World War II with the Second Battalion, 13th Marines, 5th Marine Division. He was born 13 July 1924. The interviewer is myself, Dwight D. Daniel, Oral History Volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War located in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today is 18 February 2005, and this interview is taking place at the Sixtieth Anniversary of Iwo Jima at Fredericksburg. This interview is in the support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, which is the Archives for the Preservation of Historical Information of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife. This is Tape One, Side A.

**Mr. Daniel:** Do you want to say a few words just to make sure we're doing this right?

**Mr. Craig:** What kind of words do I need to say?

**Mr. Daniel:** You've done it. That's enough. I always ask a couple common questions here. One of the questions I ask is, who were your parents, where were you born, that type of stuff. So who were your parents?

**Mr. Craig:** My father was George Craig.

**Mr. Daniel:** Ah. I bet you were named after him.

**Mr. Craig:** I was named after him. I'm junior, and also just for a sidebar, I've got a son who's the third, and his son is the fourth. We are creating a dynasty.

**Mr. Daniel:** Got a dynasty. What was your mother's name?

**Mr. Craig:** My mother's name was Anna Elizabeth.

**Mr. Daniel:** Anna Elizabeth. Ah, okay. What was her maiden name?

**Mr. Craig:** Sling, S-L-I-N-G.

**Mr. Daniel:** No kidding, never heard of that name before. Where were you born?

**Mr. Craig:** Born in Winchester, Virginia.

**Mr. Daniel:** Back before Washington D.C. ate it.

**Mr. Craig:** Back before Washington D.C. and back before, I believe, the Woodrow Hospital did birth babies, they did it in my home at that time.

**Mr. Daniel:** You were born at home?

**Mr. Craig:** At home.

**Mr. Daniel:** I like it.( Chuckles) Did you have a midwife, or not you, but your mother.

**Mr. Craig:** I don't know. She had a doctor, doctor came.

**Mr. Daniel:** Okay, that's not bad. That was the good old days.

**Mr. Craig:** Good old days. All you had do was tell 'em. Of course, she had care through her doctor and when the time came, he just went to the house, delivered the baby, said "Good day."

**Mr. Daniel:** Which makes sense.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** Unfortunately, they don't do that any more.

**Mr. Craig:** No, indeed they don't.

**Mr. Daniel:** So what did your father do?

**Mr. Craig:** Father was a salesman. A bookkeeper.

**Mr. Daniel:** Being in Winchester, I figured it had to be horses. I'm sorry, I know the area. And your mother was a typical housewife?

**Mr. Craig:** A housewife. She was, she taught school for awhile. She had an associate degree from, in those days, what they called "Normal School." So she taught school for awhile.

**Mr. Daniel:** Cool.

**Mr. Craig:** And after her family began to arrive on the scene, she substitute taught. Which hasn't changed a whole lot since that to now, what the lady folks do now.

**Mr. Daniel:** So how long did you stay in Winchester?

**Mr. Craig:** Stayed in Winchester practically all my life, for all my career, except for the years I went away to college. The University of Maryland.

**Mr. Daniel:** Ah, okay. I know the University of Maryland.

**Mr. Craig:** When I got back out of service, on the GI Bill. Went to the University of Maryland for four years, graduated from there in 'fifty-one. Returned to Winchester then, and stayed there until I went into education. I spent thirty-two years in public school education in that area. Retired in 1985.

**Mr. Daniel:** Wow!

**Mr. Craig:** When I retired, I was principal of the Handley High School, the school I attended as a student. I saw the error of their ways, so I came back to school. (Both chuckles)

**Mr. Daniel:** What's funny, reason I'm laughing, is, in Austin, Texas nobody, very seldom was anybody born here. They all moved in in the eighties, so there's no history. Whereas in Virginia, where I'm used to and you're used to, is people born there, they lived there all their life. And that's normal. I mean, so what. You liked Virginia, I'm not leaving. And my mother's side, she's from West Virginia, same thing. And you know, they may move out for four or five years for college or the Army or whatever, but they go back home.

**Mr. Craig:** They go back home. That's right. That's no different from their parents, too. My grandparents, same way, they were born and reared there in the area and died there. Great-grandparents, same way. All in the same area, never left Virginia. The horses had shoes, maybe.

**Mr. Daniel:** Well, I guess we better get to the military part of this. We're having too much fun here, I know. Let's see now, twenty-four, oh, you had to be a young whippersnapper when Pearl Harbor happened.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, yeah, I was, Pearl Harbor, in 'forty-one, I was about seventeen.

**Mr. Daniel:** When did you join the Marines?

**Mr. Craig:** In 1943. Joined in April 28th.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, everybody remembers the date they joined.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** So why'd you pick the Marines and not the Navy or something else like that?

**Mr. Craig:** I was, by that time, it wasn't 'forty-three, of course I was seventeen in 'forty-one. My career, though, was to become a doctor. It was to attend the *University of Virginia*. But when I graduated from high school I was seventeen, matter of fact I was sixteen when I graduated, a month later I was seventeen. I didn't have any money to go to school.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, that's funny how that works.

**Mr. Craig:** Typical, yeah. And so my parents didn't have any money to send me, I didn't have any money of my own, so I went to work to save money to go to school. Sometimes I worked for \_\_\_\_\_, So I worked for a year and got things going pretty well, but when the war broke out everybody was, patriotic fever was an obsession. I myself was too young

even for draft numbers, so my mother insisted I continue to work because she definitely wanted me to go to college. I desperately wanted to get in the service. And I wasn't eighteen, so what choice had I? so when the time came for me to be eighteen years old I persuaded her, my draft number was coming up anyway, so why not. You asked why the Marine Corps, I guess like a lot of folks, the glamor of the uniform first of all, those dress blues, you know.

**Mr. Daniel:** I understand.

**Mr. Craig:** And I'd always thought, I wanted to join the Marine Corps, join the Marine Corps, just a statement, never serious about it, but I ended doing it, I joined.

**Mr. Daniel:** The reason I asked is that both my parents were in, like my mother wore combat boots, the old joke, and I thought about joining the Marines. Both my parents were in the Army, but you got to be nuts (chuckles). That solved that problem. It deteriorated from that point on, there was no dialogue, it was like okay, let's see now, leave out the Marines.

**Mr. Craig:** I was in the Marine Corps, my son went in the Army. He was in the Army National Guard. He spent thirty years, retired as a major. He came to me one time, he said, "Would you advise me to go into the Marine Corps?" I said, "Hey, it's your life, go for it, where you're happy."

**Mr. Daniel:** Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor happened, or when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, I do. I was a soda jerk in a drugstore.

**Mr. Daniel:** You're kidding! On Sunday afternoon?

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. And we had the radio on, a few people were in there after church, and came over the air.

**Mr. Daniel:** What did you guys think about?

**Mr. Craig:** Where do I sign up.

**Mr. Daniel:** Gotcha.

**Mr. Craig:** It's just, you know, everybody was highly incensed over the violation of our rights and our way of life and all that sort of thing, and the patriotic fever ran at a high pitch. You were about ready to take off your hat, throw away your apron and go. But here again, 1941, I was too young. I had to have parental consent. Which I knew was impossible, that wouldn't happen.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, my mother was interested, I think she joined when she was sixteen or fifteen or something like that, but she looked older than her age, and so she got in (laughs).

**Mr. Craig:** She didn't tell the truth, though.

**Mr. Daniel:** I didn't say that.

**Mr. Craig:** I knew you didn't. Well, I was just the opposite. I looked younger than I was.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, that's bad. Yeah, that's bad.

**Mr. Craig:** So I still had the baby face, you know, and the fuzz on my chin.

**Mr. Daniel:** You had a big sign on your forehead, said "I'm really too young for this."

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. And then when I got in I said "What's a good guy like me doing in a place like this."

**Mr. Daniel:** When you joined the Marines, where did you join? Actually in Winchester?

**Mr. Craig:** Richmond.

**Mr. Daniel:** Ah, you went to Richmond.

**Mr. Craig:** And some civilians, whose number had come up, and had busloads to go down and pass your physical do all that sort of thing. Took us all down to Richmond. And if you passed your physical, then there were the recruiters there, they had the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. So you'd go to whatever table you wanted. Except, most of 'em went to the Army, so they'd draft you into the Army. But if you wanted to opt out of that, then you could. So there were two of us from that busload elected to go to the Marine Corps. I felt, man, here's my chance at last.

**Mr. Daniel:** Did you, did they send you back home, or did just . . .

**Mr. Craig:** Sent back home for a two-week leave. Report for active duty on the thirteenth.

**Mr. Daniel:** Where did you go to?

**Mr. Craig:** Parris Island, I was at Parris Island.

**Mr. Daniel:** Man, good old Parris Island.

**Mr. Craig:** Good old Parris Island. My introduction to that was to get on what they called a cattle car,

a big old trailer, semi, with bars across the sides so you could hang on and didn't fall out on the street. You'd go through the gates of Parris Island and here were all those recruits in there, they went through, the truck, went through those gates, all I could hear was "You'll be sorry!"

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, I know. You know, the Army got, were all politically correct, and they can't call them cattle cars anymore, they have to be called people movers. (Both laugh) What was Parris Island like at this time? How long was your basic? Do you remember how long your boot was?

**Mr. Craig:** Well, in point of fact went to Virginia on the thirteenth, got through boot camp on the twelfth of July. Eight weeks, nine weeks, whatever that is.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you had the eight-week one, then.

**Mr. Craig:** I think, but that was after years, that's throughout the war. Reason for that, was cannon fodder, you know, it's running out.

**Mr. Daniel:** I've talked to Army guys that they got in, they had, they learned how to salute, and they got sent over to Europe because we were so short troops at the end of the war that we were hurting, and the Battle of the Bulge, a lot of those troops actually had not gone to basic. People don't realize that.

**Mr. Craig:** I didn't know that.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, I didn't know that either 'til I started talking. I did some research into it. They, technically, on their records, they were in basic but the basic consisted of "Okay, here's your uniform, here's how you salute, there's the cattle car, have a good day." And the theory was, you'd go over to the replacement center and be trained over there. And they were sent to the Battle of the Bulge area because that was a soft area. And idea was, they would get a little combat experience, OJT as we used to call it, and then nothing would happen. Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way. So at least you got, you actually got a real boot camp.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, we got the full nine yards.

**Mr. Daniel:** Any bad things, or good things, happen to you at boot camp?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, I guess. Had to wear those pith helmets.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, you still had those pith helmets.

**Mr. Craig:** We wore them from the first of May through June and July.

**Mr. Daniel:** That's right, you got the good times down there.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, that was the choice season. (Chuckles) But I don't know, we were wearing one of those pith helmets and a couple things, I guess. But then while we were at inspection, we were standing at attention, the platoon was, a drill sergeant came up and of course he was right in your face, yelling and carrying on. Shouting. Something he didn't like about what I was, he said "You got a smirk on your face," or something like that. He took his fist and hit the top of that pith helmet, and drove it down over my ears. I looked like something, with my ears stuck out here. And when it went through, that Marine Corps emblem down through the center of my part just cut a line.

**Mr. Daniel:** You're kidding.

**Mr. Craig:** And the blood began trickling down there a little bit. It wasn't anything serious, it was just all part of the game. He didn't mean any harm, and I didn't mind it a bit.

**Mr. Daniel:** I never had the pith helmets, I passed those by, thank God. What kind of weapon were you trained on?

**Mr. Craig:** M1.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, you had the M1s by then.

**Mr. Craig:** What they always say about the M1, that's the rifle that won the war.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yep. Okay. Because early in they had the Springfields, the Marines were not into that. So you actually started with M1s. You were one of the first guys I've talked to that actually started with them. After you had your fantastic vacation at Parris Island, where'd you go to?

**Mr. Craig:** Quantico, Virginia.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, Quantico. All right. What'd you do at Quantico?

**Mr. Craig:** Trained field artillery. What's called the FAT battery, Field Artillery Training School.

**Mr. Daniel:** So what were you trained in?

**Mr. Craig:** I was to be part of the survey team, do you know what that entails?

**Mr. Daniel:** I do, but the poor person probably listening to this tape fifty years from now may not. You better tell them.



- Mr. Craig:** It's a group of us, like about five in the group, took what we called aiming circles, today they're called transits, and set it on a trap line and beam in on the \_\_\_\_\_ so the member of your team has a hundred yards or two hundred yards down. Cut the angle, tape the distance, compute it all, hand it over to the what's called VHOH, the HCO, Vertical Control Operator, Horizontal Control Operator, who then plotted it on a map that tells the gun batteries how far to shoot, which way to go.
- Mr. Daniel:** You're actually a surveyor, you actually do a survey. Basically, what you do is you place your guns in.
- Mr. Craig:** Yeah.
- Mr. Daniel:** Yeah. Today it's all electronics, it's wonderful.
- Mr. Craig:** I happened to be beside the computer roll. I had to take all the data, a hundred yards or more, two hundred yards, whatever, what this thirty-two degree angle will do here. Then I had to take, I wore a slide rule on my hip, on my leg.
- Mr. Daniel:** Oh, you actually did?
- Mr. Craig:** Yeah, a big slide rule, about four or five inches wide and about eighteen inches long.
- Mr. Daniel:** Oh, man!
- Mr. Craig:** And I had a piece of rawhide down at the bottom, wrapped around my leg just above my knee below my hip, and I had that thing slapping against my leg everywhere I went. I picked up a pretty neat nickname, they called me The Computing Cat at the Back of the Second Bat.
- Mr. Daniel:** Were you assigned to that, or did you pick it?
- Mr. Craig:** I was assigned. Assigned. You'll do this, you'll do that.
- Mr. Daniel:** So that's how you got it, then. Now, is that what you actually did through the Marines, or were you . . .
- Mr. Craig:** Yep.
- Mr. Daniel:** Cool. We'll talk about that.
- Mr. Craig:** Of course, you're a rifleman first.

**Mr. Daniel:** Right, I understand. I understand the Marine philosophy. Now, what kind of guns did you work with?

**Mr. Craig:** 105.

**Mr. Daniel:** Ah, you worked with 105s.

**Mr. Craig:** Had pack housing in case we need them, 'cause they'd break them down, toted them wherever you wanted to.

**Mr. Daniel:** Right, for mules or Marines, whatever the case may be.

**Mr. Craig:** Well, it's the same thing, isn't it?

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, I understand. (Chuckles) Pack houses were wonderful, just don't want to carry one.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh my, no, heaven's sakes. We carried them because those big rods you put through them, so four people would carry the barrel. The barrel weighed six hundred pounds.

**Mr. Daniel:** But you were Marines.

**Mr. Craig:** That's right. Could have carried it by myself. Especially if they said "Do it."

**Mr. Daniel:** After Quantico, where did you go?

**Mr. Craig:** Went to New River, North Carolina, Camp Lejune.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, okay. So you went to Camp Lejune. Boy, you hit all the real garden spots, didn't you.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah. Tent City.

**Mr. Daniel:** Tent City.

**Mr. Craig:** The only time I ever, a little over three years in the Marine Corps and the only time I ever spent in a barracks was at Camp Pendleton and in boot camp. The rest of it was either in the ground or in a tent.

**Mr. Daniel:** Scary, isn't it.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** That's why my parents told me, skip the Marine nonsense. (Laughs) At least the Army every so often has a barracks for you. So after you left, okay, what did you do at Lejune? Just get formed into a unit?

**Mr. Craig:** More training. Went down there to become a cadre for the 5th Marine Division, it had not yet formed. So we were the nucleus of that.

**Mr. Daniel:** Right. And when did you leave Lejune?

**Mr. Craig:** October, November, November 1943. Went to Camp Pendleton, California. Didn't everybody?

**Mr. Daniel:** You know, it's a joke, but you can do these interviews from World War I to the current thing, you ask "Where have you been," the same places.

**Mr. Craig:** For sure, no place else to go.

**Mr. Daniel:** At least the Army, they have a chance they'll move you around, but the Marines, it's the same places. You can take a rubber stamp and go check, check, check, they've been there. So Camp Pendleton, I assume, more training yet again?

**Mr. Craig:** More training again out at Santa Margarita Ranch. Went out there, they had, of course, the infantry, and then they had the riflemen, and we had the artillery and we practiced and practiced and practiced some more. For desert training and all that, because why it was desert, I guess they wanted to see if we could stand the heat, out in the California desert, spent two weeks out there. That's where the temperature got to be a hundred and twenty. But of course, that's where we were supposed to be and that's where we were.

**Mr. Daniel:** But it was low humidity.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, that's right.

**Mr. Daniel:** Still hot.

**Mr. Craig:** Some days it would go down to a hundred and sixteen.

**Mr. Daniel:** When you're in a tent, forget this humidity, it's still hot.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh boy, yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** Okay, so you did it. Now, when you were at Camp Pendleton, did you have, was the 5th Marine Division fairly well complemented by then?

**Mr. Craig:** It formed totally at Camp Pendleton, and we received our colors there. It was a spearhead division.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you were ready there.

**Mr. Craig:** Um-hum.

**Mr. Daniel:** After Pendleton, where did you guys go to?

**Mr. Craig:** Hawaii. Camp Tarawa.

**Mr. Daniel:** I don't know where that is.

**Mr. Craig:** That's on the Big Isle. Kamuela, a little place called Kamuela.

**Mr. Daniel:** How do you spell that, can you guess?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, sure. K-A-M-U-E-L-A, or something like that. Or A-U-L-A.  
(*Transcriber's note—Kamuela is the correct spelling*)

**Mr. Daniel:** Is that where they did all their practice landings and things like that?

**Mr. Craig:** No. The Parker Cattle Ranch. And the Parker Cattle people leased thousands of acres to the Marine Corps for assembly area, I guess. So they set up—by that time the Tarawa Campaign was over, and so that's why they called it Camp Tarawa, just in honor of that campaign. That's where it got its name. We did more advanced training, got ready to go. I'm sure the powers that be knew a whole lot more than we did about where we were gonna go, or when we were gonna go, but we just kept on training. Enjoyed Hawaii.

**Mr. Daniel:** Did you get any time off to go, actually do anything?

**Mr. Craig:** Not until we came back. Got back just got R&R, five days.

**Mr. Daniel:** But the good part is, though, the weather was nice.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, it was beautiful. For kids from Winchester, a town of eight thousand people, never seen an orange grove. Man, I was in hog heaven. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven though. Palm trees, warmth, it was everything, a man's ideal.

**Mr. Daniel:** I hope the historians of the future understand that, in your era and even in my era, travel was not, when I was a kid, travel was a big thing. There were no interstates, and so people basically stayed within fifteen, twenty miles of their home. A big trip was fifty miles.

**Mr. Craig:** That's right.

**Mr. Daniel:** And you didn't really, nobody could afford airplanes, and so it's not unusual. Like you said, your folks lived all their lives there. My folks on my mother's side the grandmother went from North Carolina, I think, yeah, North Carolina to West Virginia and that was

her only trip in her life, when she was a little kid. She went to West Virginia, never moved. And so people don't realize that, when you're a kid from the farm and you go to Hawaii it's like WOW! Nowadays everybody, yeah, I went to Hawaii. No, it's a big deal!

**Mr. Craig:** It was also \_\_\_\_\_. When I was stationed there I was two days on the sand, and palm trees, and we had all that in Virginia. So we had palms. But my first introduction to Camp Pendleton, in California, was the troop train we were on had to get off on a spur line to let something else go by, a freight train or whatever, and they backed up that troop train into, right through the middle of an orange grove. Man, I looked out that window and here was these green trees with these ripe oranges on 'em, and I thought man, I've got to be in heaven. I've just got to be in heaven. Well like you say, kid from Winchester, never been out of \_\_\_\_\_, we didn't travel any. You couldn't travel, the cars weren't reliable a lot of time.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you're in Hawaii with great weather, and somehow the Marines—they don't want you guys to be happy.

**Mr. Craig:** True.

**Mr. Daniel:** This great weather, the beautiful scenery, something had to change. What happened then?

**Mr. Craig:** We got word that we were gonna be on the move, so pack your gear and stand by. So that's what you do. You pack your gear and you stand by. So this is right before Christmas, 'forty-four. I don't what the date was, the twelfth or somewhere in there. And so we were in Camp Tarawa, which was up in the, forty miles from Hilo. So the whole division moved to Hilo. Not all at once, of course. A number of us went down and we spent Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in torrential downpour, stacking ammunition in ships. Twelve hour shifts. Nothing but ammunition, all kinds.

**Mr. Daniel:** And you knew something big was coming up.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, we knew we weren't going to be in training much longer.

**Mr. Daniel:** What kind of meal did you get for Christmas? Do you remember the meal?

**Mr. Craig:** No idea. For Christmas—we had decent meals of course, while we were at the post, but I don't remember, probably K Rations stuffed in my hip pocket or something.

**Mr. Daniel:** Holy mackerel! What a way to spend Christmas.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, well.

**Mr. Daniel:** Then you, I assume you shipped out probably—

**Mr. Craig:** A couple days later.

**Mr. Daniel:** You remember your ship?

**Mr. Craig:** APA 96.

**Mr. Daniel:** No kidding. Boy, you do remember that, don't you.

**Mr. Craig:** You remember most all about your Marine Corps experience. Most of it. We kid about it a lot, some guys get a little blasphemous about it, but I have to be honest, I enjoyed it all, most every minute of it, and I almost stayed in the Corps.

**Mr. Daniel:** We'll talk about that in a little while, then. When you shipped out, how long were you on the ship? When did you find out where you were going?

**Mr. Craig:** When we were out in the middle of the Pacific somewhere where you couldn't get in contact with anyone. Or they with you.

**Mr. Daniel:** And they said, we're going to Iwo and you said where's Iwo and I don't care because you've told me where to go anyway.

**Mr. Craig:** No, they didn't say you're going to Iwo, they said there'd be a meeting on the quarter deck. All hands fall out, ten hundred hours or something we're gonna have a meeting. So everybody was draped all over the guns and all over the gun turrets and everywhere else, it was crowded. Had four or five thousand Marines on the APA. And then they brought out the relief maps. They were big as the size of the door there, or the side of the wall. And said, this is Iwo Jima. We said, what? Who? What's that? So they began to tell us. But, they said, here's the battle plan, it'll be a cake walk, no problem. We've bombed this island for—at that time the last forty or fifty days, daily. There'll hardly be any Japanese left. So you'll go in to a cake walk, *this is gonna, this operation is gonna be very limited* in time. Here's Mount Suribachi here, and here's where you're gonna land today, the first day. So from this point, Suribachi's just one day's operation. First Airfield there, north I guess it is, northeast.

**Mr. Daniel:** Here's some maps, if you need 'em.

**Mr. Craig:** No, I can do it all right.

**Mr. Daniel:** You still remember this, don't you.

**Mr. Craig:** I'll show you where it is, though.

**Mr. Daniel:** There you go. Here's the landing and here's the Japanese lines.

**Mr. Craig:** The original plan was to to land here, but to secure Mount Suribachi was one day's operation. Go from here to the First Airfield, second day's operation. Third day's operation. Day four was home, out of here.

**Mr. Daniel:** Well, they were close, give or take a month.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, a Zero here or there. But it didn't work that way.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you were told it was gonna be very limited, it had been bombed so long, a cake walk. Were you told why you were taking the island?

**Mr. Craig:** Yes. We were told, I guess, it was justified. Because the airfields were critically important. That the Air Force, damaged planes, couldn't make it back from Tokyo, historians have said for years. We were told it was imperative we take the island for the use of the Air Force.

**Mr. Daniel:** The reason I say is in the early days they left out some of those details, like we're gonna take the island, why? Who cares, we're gonna take the island. So at least they told you that. Now, when did you land and where did you land?

**Mr. Craig:** We landed I guess on Green Beach.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you're the Green Beach guys, then.

**Mr. Craig:** Is that the 28th? No, with the Red. Artillery was in support of the 27th Marines.

**Mr. Daniel:** Okay, so you landed on Red Beach then.

**Mr. Craig:** Red Beach.

**Mr. Daniel:** Now that supposedly was one of the—I know this sounds an oxymoron, but wasn't that one of the easier places to land?

**Mr. Craig:** You got me. I wasn't but at that one place. (Both chuckle)And it wasn't any picnic there.

**Mr. Daniel:** Let's talk about that. What was it like?

**Mr. Craig:** We come in about noon time. We were supposed to come in earlier than that, but I don't know why, but we stayed in that Higgins boat, the landing craft . . .

**Mr. Daniel:** For a long time?

- Mr. Craig:** Oh, just round in a circle, just round and round. Everybody got seasick. And you didn't care where they put you ashore, just get me ashore where I've got some solid ground under foot. So it was noon time before we got in, we were supposed to have gotten in five-thirty, ten o'clock. At least that's what we were told, that was the battle plan. When we got in then, there was a lot of mortar fire, a lot of small arms fire, a lot of damage, blown up vehicles, equipment on the beach. Dead Marines, that sort of thing. Wounded Marines. Because the assault wave, the wounded had already been pulled back out. And we spent the day dodging bullets and digging fox holes, and trying to crawl inside your helmet.
- Mr. Daniel:** I understand that. Now, a bunch of questions for you about this. Did you land with the guns?
- Mr. Craig:** The guns, no, we were supposed to have been in before the guns.
- Mr. Daniel:** That what I thought.
- Mr. Craig:** But because for whatever reason we were delayed out there in the middle of the ocean, means we landed after the guns. The guns were there.
- Mr. Daniel:** No kidding. That is unusual. Had they even tried to deploy the guns when you got there?
- Mr. Craig:** Well, they didn't need us in our specialty. All they had to do was spin those things around and fire direct. I didn't need to run any surveys. Thank goodness.
- Mr. Daniel:** So they had employed the guns, but they're really direct, our weapons.
- Mr. Craig:** It's also been testified that our ammo was a little bit limited. But they were operational.
- Mr. Daniel:** And these were the 105s?
- Mr. Craig:** The 105s.
- Mr. Daniel:** A couple things. What was, I know you said it was rough seas. Were what you expected or were they really rough.
- Mr. Craig:** They weren't really, really rough. Didn't have twenty-foot waves and that sort of thing. It was just the incessant rocking back and forth in what I guess you'd call swells, today. But again, to a nineteen, twenty-year-old kid, who was scared to death in the first place, sick from the rolling sea, that was enough.
- Mr. Daniel:** You're just happy 'cause it's over. Now, I've always heard about the black sand of Iwo, that it's very difficult to dig into. Tell me about that.



**Mr. Craig:** Black sand is exactly that. It's black, but very deep. It's like, wearing combat boots when you walk into it, some of it would even go over the top of your shoes. So it depends, of course, on how high that is, and that wasn't with every step. But, it was very very difficult to walk in. It's probably like walking in six, eight inches of snow. And you never got out of the snow, you always stayed in the stuff.

**Mr. Daniel:** I've always heard that when you dug a fox hole, it basically filled back in almost immediately.

**Mr. Craig:** Just about, yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** So how'd you guys dig a fox hole then?

**Mr. Craig:** Shovel, you didn't have to use your shovel, you'd just take your hands and just kick it aside. Had to go into a shell crater, that way it was already dug for you. But then the next shell came in close by would cover you up.

**Mr. Daniel:** Did you guys have any bags, sand bags.

**Mr. Craig:** No.

**Mr. Daniel:** Did you get any later on?

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, got 'em later on.

**Mr. Daniel:** But you didn't go in with them.

**Mr. Craig:** No. Didn't have any body bags.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh yeah, I heard that, because it was supposed to be a cake walk.

**Mr. Craig:** That was said tongue in cheek. The \_\_\_\_\_ warrior now has the flak jacket. The flak jacket we had was dungaree.

**Mr. Daniel:** The other question I had for you, I heard there's a lot of wreckage on the beach. What was that like?

**Mr. Craig:** Tremendous amount of wreckage. Higgins boats, the landing craft, tanks were bogged down or run over (*a few words lost here*) I don't know. A lot of, were just pieces of equipment.

**Mr. Daniel:** How did that affect you? Here you are, a young stud Marine, it's a hard charge, you look out on this beach that's laden with lots of stuff.

**Mr. Craig:** Well I said, no problem, tongue in cheek. Remarks, you know. What's a nice guy like me doing in a place like this? I just didn't really say that, but looking back in retrospect, that's the way you feel about it. But the thing that was more unnerving than anything else was seeing dead Marines. Because here again, young kids, never been exposed to anything like that.

**Mr. Daniel:** Did they prepare you for that or anything?

**Mr. Craig:** No, I don't think anybody could ever prepare you for that.

**Mr. Daniel:** The size of the fleet, I heard, the invasion force was humungous, it was just huge.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** did that impress you as a young charger? Or you didn't care, you were in that Higgins boat circling around.

**Mr. Craig:** I was in the Higgins boat, that was all behind me and I was looking this way, looking ahead at the island and thinking, well, maybe the Air Force was still blasting away. And I didn't know the identification of the battleships but later on the old *USS* battleships *Washington* and *Texas* cruising up and down firing sixteen-inch shells in here. I believed 'em I thought it would be a cake walk. After a few days. That was (*some lost here*). That in time we got to the reality of the whole operation. Didn't really think about getting out of there, I'd just think about what to do next to stay alive maybe, instead.

**Mr. Daniel:** You're on this beach, and you're not really being used as a survey person. Now, I realize you're an infantryman first. What did your unit do, just basically go in in an infantry role?

**Mr. Craig:** Helped set the guns, carried ammunition, lot of ammunition, because the 405 takes what's called clover leaf ammunition, that's three shells. The two down here and one up at the top. And they've got a band around them.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, I didn't realize that's what you called those.

**Mr. Craig:** Clover leaf. So you'd pick those up, put 'em on your shoulder and away you go. So we carried a lot of ammunition, because we used a lot of ammunition.

**Mr. Daniel:** Were you running out, or did you have enough ammo?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, we had enough, but we could have run out. We were at one point down to ten, twelve rounds per gun.

**Mr. Daniel:** Whoa, that's not good.

**Mr. Craig:** By the time that happened, it was a day or two later, it wasn't it wasn't the first day, and the 27th (*some lost here*) on Red Beach, and the 28th had turned to Suribachi. And that's one thing about the guns, they could lay the guns around there just inside Red Beach and turn 'em and fire either way, because the power could fire another seven miles. The island was only seven miles long, so you'd go from tip to tip. You'd set up once and that's it.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you never really moved those guns?

**Mr. Craig:** Uh-uh. Not to my knowledge, anyway.

**Mr. Daniel:** How come they didn't use ducks or amtraks to move all that ammo? Just didn't have enough, or they had more Marines, or . . .

**Mr. Craig:** Why didn't they use ducks?

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah. To move that ammo from the ship to shore.

**Mr. Craig:** I think many of the ducks capsized, maybe, didn't have too many of 'em. There was this black sand again, it bogged down the tanks and everything else. They had extreme difficulty getting in and giving support.

**Mr. Daniel:** So we're gonna foot this in.

**Mr. Craig:** Foot this in is right. Put it on your shoulder and away you go.

**Mr. Daniel:** But that weighs more than a few pounds.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. A few more.

**Mr. Daniel:** I mean, you gotta be humping in that black sand, that's gotta be a lot of work.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, yeah. But you stop and have a rest break for a few minutes, you weren't the only one out there carrying ammunition.

**Mr. Daniel:** What kind of meals did you have? Did you have K rations?

**Mr. Craig:** K rations.

**Mr. Daniel:** Did you ever get a hot meal while you wee out there?

**Mr. Craig:** Not from a field kitchen, no. We had C rations.

**Mr. Daniel:** Which were better than the K rations.

**Mr. Craig:** That's a move up.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you basically never got any meal from any kind of mess hall or anything.

**Mr. Craig:** I don't remember ever getting any. Field cooks made you hot coffee. I don't really remember a meal, they may have been available somewhere, but I don't remember them.

**Mr. Daniel:** Now, you're standing in this stuff and you're doing your thing in this black sand. Then what happened?

**Mr. Craig:** What happened, we just kept doing our thing. We kept getting ammunition. We had an ammo dump. Where we had a surplus of ammunition, then we made an ammo dump then you could pick up what you needed, take it to whatever guns needed it, and that sort of thing.

**Mr. Daniel:** One of the ammo dumps got blown up.

**Mr. Craig:** Right.

**Mr. Daniel:** Was that yours, or . . .

**Mr. Craig:** No. It may have been, I don't know but we still had ammo available. I don't know whether it was one community dump or a division dump or whatever.

**Mr. Daniel:** Because the guns didn't move, then you never really moved up and down the island, you stayed with guns, right?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, I moved, because they ran out of personnel.

**Mr. Daniel:** Ah, now I'm getting into . . .

**Mr. Craig:** We're getting into the nitty-gritty.

**Mr. Daniel:** We're getting into the fun part now. So the guns stayed where they were, but I know there was a lot of casualties. So what happened, then how'd you start to move? I mean, who were you assigned to and how did you start to move then?

**Mr. Craig:** They took a whole group of us, I don't remember where the order came from or who the, even who's in charge, but this was, I would guess, ten, twelve, thirteen days after D-Day, and they needed help up Hill 349, they needed to reinforce the 26th Regiment, 27th, whatever. I'm just picking numbers now, I don't remember which ones. A historian

would blow that to pieces. But, gather up your gear, we're moving up. So you got up your gear, you got ammunition, you get the ammo belt and all that bit, and so you move up.

**Mr. Daniel:** And you knew you were going to be a ground pounder at this point.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah. We go up, and some of the troops were moving back down, it was kind of an exchange thing. They were pretty battle weary, I guess. So we'd move on up and take the position up and do what we're supposed to do and what we can do.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you spent the rest of the campaign then as an infantry person.

**Mr. Craig:** Well, back and forth. Maybe two, three, four days, and then come on back. Because we were, maybe because we were—I don't know why we came back.

**Mr. Daniel:** I didn't realize that. Most of them, I thought, just stayed up there 'til they got burned out, then they moved back. It kinda makes sense to keep the artillery, 'cause they're better trained—not better trained, but they're trained differently. You can't take an infantry guy and give him a tube. You can, but it's not a pretty picture. So you went back every two to four days. You go a lot of walking in there.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah. But wasn't that often, really. We'd come back to the assembly area where it was— quote unquote—safe, where the Japanese by that time did not have any weapons that could reach that far that were functional, I guess. So we'd, we'd fall back and we might stay back a week. Or more. Of course, now we're getting halfway through the campaign, too. As far as that, it was like the fifteenth of March and the Powers That Be declared that the island was secure on the sixteenth, but there's there was still two weeks of fighting left after that.

**Mr. Daniel:** Funny how that works, isn't it.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. Don't shoot me, we're secure. The island's secure, don't do this.

**Mr. Daniel:** What was the combat like? I've heard lots of things, so I'd like to get your opinion. What was combat like when you were on the front lines up there at Iwo.

**Mr. Craig:** Well, it's not very comfortable. It's scary and I hated the night.

**Mr. Daniel:** Why is that? Because infiltration?

**Mr. Craig:** Infiltration, and you just, well, here again, I was just a kid, I don't like the dark maybe. (Chuckles) No, it wasn't that, it was just that at night you imagine things. We fired star shells to see if there was any movement, infiltration, and the light from the star shells

would pick up the reflection of a tin can or something like that, and you didn't know whether the tin can or . . .

**Mr. Daniel:** And the shadow looks like Godzilla out there.

**Mr. Craig:** Well, it looked like eyeglasses on an enemy troop was moving in, you know. And you'd imagine all sorts of things. Had a machine gunner—just a side comment—we had a machine gunner up there, a sergeant, and he'd been on the line for a long time. And we happened to be back at that time. He came traipsing on back one afternoon all by himself. The sergeant major stopped him and said "What are you doing back here?" He said had to pull himself off line, night time, he said "I can't see a damn thing. I think I got night blindness." So they shot him over to the doctor, a Navy doctor. The doctor says "What's the problem?" He says, "I'm upon that line on a machine gun," he says, "I can't see a damn thing. I got night blindness, I got to be pulled off the the line." He says, "You don't board ship and go back home or something. Get back upon that line, you fool, nobody can see anything tonight." So back he went.

**Mr. Daniel:** So much for night blindness.

**Mr. Craig:** I'll never forget that.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you were on line for two to four days, or were you rotated?

**Mr. Craig:** Two to four days, and back maybe as much as a week at a time. On the line less at a stretch than I was back.

**Mr. Daniel:** Now, this is a strange question. Did you ever see any Japanese?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, yeah. Not many, not many. Saw more dead than I did alive.

**Mr. Daniel:** The reason I asked the question, I heard they were so buried in they were virtually impossible to see.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, you didn't see many. When I say many, I'm talking about half a dozen. I mean, maybe ten. But you'd see 'em dart from one place to another. No, you didn't see many.

**Mr. Daniel:** What was it like, with them buried that deep. I know what we'd do today, 'cause I'm trained in modern warfare. Smart bombs are wonderful things to have.

**Mr. Craig:** Casualties, where I was at, run pretty high because of these caves that they were firing from, and a frontal assault was futile. It was stupid to do that. We found that out very quickly. So we got the engineers of maybe the Pioneer Battalion, or whomever, I don't know, to make up what they called satchel charges. TNT, I guess it was, or some kind of

explosive in a little bag that looked like a satchel. And so they worked their way around beside these caves, put those things down there, and blow them out with that cave shot. Collapse that sand, you know, and everything else, and bury them alive. So that was a strategy that worked pretty well.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah, that works wonderful.

**Mr. Craig:** That's the old smart bomb.

**Mr. Daniel:** Politically correct, you're not supposed to do that, but let me tell you something. If you're politically correct in this day and age, you're not supposed to bury people alive. Now let me explain the concept here. Frontal charges, you're right, are stupid. If you can blow the cave shut, life's good. We just do it with smart bombs now. Why put troops in harm's way? That's silly.

**Mr. Craig:** I was just reading in the paper yesterday , now they have robots. Give me a control panel and I'll sit here like video games. I often wondered, the last few days of the week, I've been reading about robots being maneuvered one way or another. How easy wouldn't it be to (makes sound of bullet) the end of the robot, you know?

**Mr. Daniel:** Amazing, isn't it.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you blew these caves shut. Did you ever see any Zippo tanks, the flame thrower tanks?

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. Saw one flame thrower \_\_\_\_\_ tanks, too.

**Mr. Daniel:** How was, what was the Zippo tank like?

**Mr. Craig:** Just looked like a regular tank with gun barrel, instead of a gun barrel it had a flame thrower on the end of it.

**END OF SIDE A  
BEGINNING OF SIDE B**

**Mr. Daniel:** This is Tape One, Side B, of the oral history interview of George L. Craig, a corporal in World War II, at Iwo. Interviewer myself, Dwight D. Daniel.

We were talking about the Zippo tanks. The other question I have for you, the Japanese at Iwo used the rockets and they had the spigot mortar, which had that big shell. Did you ever see any Japanese rockets fly overhead?

**Mr. Craig:** No.

**Mr. Daniel:** Let's see, we talked about the rough seas, we talked about—what was the weather like at Iwo?

**Mr. Craig:** As far as I recall, it was pretty decent weather, I guess by February standards. Had a couple days, several days, of rain. Not torrential downpour like you'd have elsewhere, but just annoying, wet, damp, cold, nasty, raw, that type of thing.

**Mr. Daniel:** Now, everybody thinks of *Marines in jungles*, and that's true, the *Marines fought in jungles*. But Iwo, obviously, was a lot colder than that. Were you guys expecting to be that cold or that raw?

**Mr. Craig:** Well, yes, I guess we weren't expecting to be cold and raw, but we knew it was not being to be jungle.

**Mr. Daniel:** So they briefed you pretty well.

**Mr. Craig:** We knew we weren't going to be in jungle warfare type of situation. That we'd be just hot in that situation.

**Mr. Daniel:** A couple other things about this. Did you ever see a B29?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** What was that like?

**Mr. Craig:** Well, they started landing on First Airfield, and we were close by when they came down.

**Mr. Daniel:** That's what I thought.

**Mr. Craig:** Because the airfield here in the center, and of course you'd go around side, you're not going to damage the airfield if you could avoid it. That's \_\_\_\_\_ enough as it was.

**Mr. Daniel:** That's the important part of the whole island. That's right.

**Mr. Craig:** That's the reason we were there. Yeah, we saw them land, a lot of them. Not a lot of 'em, a half a dozen or more.

**Mr. Daniel:** How did that impress you, as being a young kid?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, it was great. Just a big morale booster, a big morale booster. But it was a bigger morale booster when they raised that flag on the fourth day.



**Mr. Daniel:** I was gonna ask you about that. Did you actually see the flag going up, or later on did you see the flag?

**Mr. Craig:** I was at the base of Suribachi, just inside Red Beach. And I don't know what I was doing, carrying ammunition or having dinner or whatever, but here's this tremendous roar, like a, I guess you'd compare it to having the wave at the football stadium, that kind of noise, and I looked up and here's this flag flying. It was a breeze all around, and the flag went up, and everybody just cheered. I don't know how many made up that group, everybody who saw it, I guess. After you heard the roar, then you looked around to see what it was and you saw the flag, and then more chimed in.

**Mr. Daniel:** So it was, I mean, you always hear about this, and I always wondered, you're the first guy I ever saw be—the last guy I interviewed was on a seaplane, on a seaplane tender, and he couldn't see the top of the hill from where he was, he'd seen the photograph. That flag, I assume, stayed up there from that point on, right?

**Mr. Craig:** What?

**Mr. Daniel:** That flag stayed up there the whole time.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, yeah. As far as I know, yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** You went back and forward a bunch of times at Iwo. then what happened? When they finally declared the battle over with, and yes, the Japanese attacked the people on the ground and killed a bunch of pilots, but minor detail.

**Mr. Craig:** Well, I guess we were up, probably, three times. Which would amount to three or four days at a time. Ten, twelve days. Then we were back between those times, so we'd have eight, nine days off. Word came down from somewhere that, this is right around the twenty-eighth, -ninth, of March, so we get to the end of the island, the northeast end of the island, there'd be ships there to pick us up and get us out of there. But we kept on pushing the Japanese back, we pushed them back and pushed them back, until the survivors were left back here in a pocket, so the idea was to bypass them or to destroy them in some way. Whatever. But of course everybody was, you talk about a morale booster, that was one. Let's get out there and get on that ship, and finish this operation, get on that ship, and go.

**Mr. Daniel:** So that's what they did. Soon as you got to the top of the island you just got on a ship and went.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** No kidding, I didn't realize that. How 'bout that? Where'd you go from there? Did you know why they pulled you off the island, or just the battle's over with?

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** Where'd you go from there?

**Mr. Craig:** Hawaii. To regroup, to get replacements, and whatever.

**Mr. Daniel:** And you went back to the same spot in Hawaii?

**Mr. Craig:** Um-hum. Same tent, same everything. Name was still on the door.

**Mr. Daniel:** God, I love it. Only the military.

**Mr. Craig:** Like you say, the Army, everybody . . .

**Mr. Daniel:** I have a close friend, I actually interviewed him, and he was at Guadalcanal three times. But never in combat, cause the Marines used that as a staging area after they took the island. Any base is the same thing. To him, luxury was, the third time the tents had floors in 'em. I'm thinking, that's why I joined the Army.

**Mr. Craig:** Actually I had a wooden door on some of the tents.

**Mr. Daniel:** Wow, oh, you were in hog heaven then.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, I was.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you got pulled back, you went back to the same tent with the same name, then what happened?

**Mr. Craig:** Well, let's see. This was . . .

**Mr. Daniel:** You got to be pretty close to the end of the war by this time.

**Mr. Craig:** We got aboard ship off of Iwo and headed back south to Hawaii, and heard about the invasion of Okinawa. First day of April. And thought, man, kind of lucky we missed that one, you know. So anyway, we get back to Hawaii and by this time it's sixth, seventh day of April, somewhere in there, and we were given a five-day R&R, to Pearl Harbor.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, that must have been super.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. They just took groups at a time, couldn't take the whole division. I don't know how

they made the selection. But my turn came up, along with a jillion others, and so they put us on board a ship, 'cause it's from Hilo, Hawaii on the big island, over fifty, sixty, seventy miles, whatever it was, to Pearl Harbor. Docked there, the ship docked. Of course, four or five of those APAs lined up side to side and they're just a foot apart, so they put a gangplank across.

**Mr. Daniel:** You'd just walk across.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. So then we got into Hawaii, and they gave us—but that took *one day to do that*. Took one of your five days. It was like a cruise line, advertise thirteen days, you're actually on board ship ten. The same thing. So we get on board ship, going to Hawaii, and it took us that one day. And they gave us, in those days, only had two major hotels. I'm sure motels weren't in Hawaii. The Royal Hawaiian, and the Moana Loa Waikiki, something like that. The only two of 'em. Major hotels. But everybody didn't get their choice of places. I was lucky enough to get the choice place.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, you got the Royal Hawaiian?

**Mr. Craig:** Royal Hawaiian. For three days. First day was to travel over to get over there, three days there, then the fifth day of the five-day leave to get back to Hawaii. In the Royal Hawaiian they gave us nine chits, called 'em chits. I don't remember the colors: three red, three blue, three yellow. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, real food.

**Mr. Craig:** Real food. Real food. And sticks in my mind, I don't know why, they charged twenty-five cents for laundry service. I don't know why. At least that's the way I remember it, it may be a part of my sleeping in hog heaven. Had clean sheets for a change, you know.

**Mr. Daniel:** My god, a bed no less, with a door on your, where you need.

**Mr. Craig:** So we had the five-day leave then.

**Mr. Daniel:** What did you do those five days other than eat?

**Mr. Craig:** Well, we had a few beers, just went sightseeing, we didn't really go sightseeing. We spent most of the time doing nothing, biggest thing.

**Mr. Daniel:** Which is a nice thing.

**Mr. Craig:** Smelled the diesel fumes, I guess, from all the small ships and the dinghies that were in the harbor.

**Mr. Daniel:** What was Pearl like then, was it really crowded?

**Mr. Craig:** It was crowded, but lord, nothing like now. We went back, when I took the wife back, but gosh, wall-to-wall people. Nothing on the beach now except high-rise condos, hotels. And the beach is small now, ruined because of that. Because, eight feet of beach, and that's about it.

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah. You really got to go around the island to the other beaches.

**Mr. Craig:** Or get on the other islands. Go to Maui, it's beautiful. Just beautiful.

**Mr. Daniel:** So that worked. I tell you, for a kid from Virginia, that must have been super.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** Just the fact you had real food, that was super.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. So we left there, came back then to Kamuela, and began to make, train some more, because we were expecting to make the invasion of Japan.

**Mr. Daniel:** That's what I figured. It was obvious who you were gonna by that point.

**Mr. Craig:** Yes.

**Mr. Daniel:** There was really nothing left.

**Mr. Craig:** Because Okinawa was being taken by the 6th Marine Division. And others. Army. And so we were going to invade Japan. When we didn't know. So we'd get more training, more training. Because, it was kind of eerie, I guess, kinda scary too. I don't know why, but the survey, I guess they found, the survey, artillery survey, was really not necessary. I don't know, that's supposition. Whatever the case, the survey team I was on, we were told that we were going to be pulled from our unit and be moved into the regimental level.

**Mr. Daniel:** That probably makes sense, yeah.

**Mr. Craig:** Where we would be trained to do other things as well.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh oh. We know what that means.

**Mr. Craig:** What it boiled down to was that, not only the survey team that I was on but many others as well, I don't know how many, because it never did come to fruition, it just was one of those things, this is what we're gonna do, this is what you're gonna do. Our mission was to be pulled, the whole thing, was to be pulled from our unit, put at the regimental level,

and be trained to invade by rubber raft. Not to invade, particularly, but to be ashore in rubber rafts.

**Mr. Daniel:** This is not good.

**Mr. Craig:** Because, I guess, again here I'm supposing, I guess because of our training we could serve as a forward observer. Locate. Our mission was to be locate shore batteries, radio back positions on a map we've got, to the *Texas* or a battleship, aircraft, to whomever, I don't know who. They would in turn zero in on these guns and we would watch the shells come in and so we'd knock out these installations.

**Mr. Daniel:** Now, I'm sure you figured out this is not the safest thing in the world.

**Mr. Craig:** We were to land D minus Two. It was at night. We were to spend the next day ashore, secure everything by the night before the invasion, and the invasion would take place the next day.

**Mr. Daniel:** When did you find out that this is what the plan was?

**Mr. Craig:** In June.

**Mr. Daniel:** At this point, did you realize just how dangerous this could possibly be?

**Mr. Craig:** I didn't. I don't know. Hey, gung-ho Marine. I didn't. Shucks, if that's what the man wants, that's what the man gets. We'll do it. Now this was, I guess you could say on paper, because it never did come to fruition. Simply because of the atom bomb. Because they'd already dropped that bomb, and there was no more need for it.

**Mr. Daniel:** Right. How'd you guys feel about dropping the bomb?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, man, what do you think? Elated! Here I am in a rubber raft, two days before landing, I'm gonna have to fight the Japanese on *their own home land*. People have asked me a hundred times, a hundred people have asked me, "What do you feel about Truman saying 'Drop that bomb,' I say God bless him. Because if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be here."

**Mr. Daniel:** I asked that question because the new history teachers in college, we were bad to drop the bomb. And I know the reality of it. And I've interviewed a lot of guys like you. My father went through, he was with Patton's outfit, but he was signal. You know, all those telephone lines you see on the ground, that was my father. And he was programmed, at the end of the war, he was gonna get a thirty-day furlough to see Mom, and he was programmed to go to the Pacific. The only reason he didn't go to the Pacific was, they dropped the bomb. At that point they dropped a couple bombs on Japan, it would be a good

time to stop this nonsense. And so what happened was, he did not get sent back home on furlough, he just stayed in Europe for another year or so. But his unit was programmed, there was no options here. It was forget this crap about points or anything like that, he was signal, he was critical, we know where you're going. And that was it. So, my father, he's alive because of that. So I always ask this question because there's just this revision with history, wait a minute, this is war, kill the enemy and go home.

**Mr. Craig:** I was married at the time, I was married when I first got in the service. When I got through boot camp. In July. I was stationed at Quantico, and my wife and I, we were married in October of 'forty-three, and I had just, I was still in training with the artillery unit, artillery school, in Quantico. But I told her, she said "I'm so glad they dropped the bomb." We got a chance to talk about it. I said, "Well, I'll tell you one thing, if they hadn't dropped it you'd have been a widow. I guarantee you that."

**Mr. Daniel:** Yes. Rowing ashore in a rubber raft, and staying there for two days, hopefully not being caught by anybody, that's bad enough. And then trying to figure out how to survey all the stuff and radio back when everybody's got direction finders is not exactly healthy. I mean, it's necessary, but it's not healthy. Thank god they got spy airplanes for this nonsense now.

Now, let's talk about—you were happy, it was obvious by this time and I'm sure they announced the war was over with pretty soon thereafter, so everybody was happy.

**Mr. Craig:** Armistice was signed on September second, on the *USS Missouri*.

**Mr. Daniel:** And everybody wants to go home.

**Mr. Craig:** But nobody went home. Like your father. We were programmed. So second September was the official end, signing of the Armistice, on September twenty-first we landed at Sasibo, Japan.

**Mr. Daniel:** You were one of those guys.

**Mr. Craig:** Full combat ready. Live ammunition, the whole bit. "Cause we didn't know what to expect. So we got in, the Japanese were very cooperative, very docile really, so we had no need to have any more concern about them. After a day or two, you'd just walk around like you were a visitor in the city. Of course, we left the city.

**Mr. Daniel:** That part, that place is, what city is it near to, I can't remember now.

**Mr. Craig:** Sasibo. Sasibo is, it's not too far, I think it's due south of Nagasaki. Maybe fifty, sixty, seventy miles, I don't know. Somewhere like that. But Sasibo's a naval base. We went in there. Then turned all our live ammunition back in, all that sort of thing. Didn't worry

about it. I learned how to drive a finger lift. (Both laugh) Specially. So I drove a finger lift, I picked up aerial bombs, whatever bombs were stockpiled there at the naval base. Put 'em on board an LSC. Rolled up on the ramp to the LSC. Dropped 'em, strapped 'em there as high as I could and the LSC backed off, turned around, went out to the ocean, dropped 'em off. Deep six. So we did that for awhile. Then we moved on inland, the 5th Marine Division was deactivated at that time. And I was transferred to the 2nd Marine Division. But I still couldn't go home.

**Mr. Daniel:** That's what happens when you're highly trained.

**Mr. Craig:** You're right. I forgot the name of the places where we were stationed. But I got into, we had a jeep available to us, three or four of us, and our mission was to go around through the countryside and confiscate anything that would remind the Japanese people of the war. Sabers, rifles, pistols, any of those things. Matter of fact, we made a name for our group called Reclamation and Salvage. So we did that, and it wasn't very effective because we didn't find very much, really. But as I said, the Japanese were very cooperative, so it wasn't anything like \_\_\_\_\_ hero coming in kicking in doors. We didn't do that kind of stuff. But we did stay, we didn't fool around. Like I said, we weren't by ourselves in the jeep, there were a number of other vehicles as well. But, cold as cold. Snow, yeah. Yes, it was September when we landed, by this time it was close to Christmas. We spent Christmas in Japan.

Then as you began to accumulate points, we hadn't had the points, I mean, we had the time all you had to do was translate it into the number of points. And you extra points for being overseas that long. Two points for a Purple Heart, three points for Bronze Star, and all that stuff. You totaled them up and you came to the magic number, then you could put in to go home. So I totaled mine up and I found I came up a couple points shy. So I stayed in, of course, until I got the number. And then I put in to be transferred home. A lot of guys were being sent home, too. And I was still a corporal. So as I said, I was married before I left and I'd been overseas nearly two years, so it was time to get home. So I told my lieutenant, I thought I was eligible, went to the top sergeant, he helped me make sure as a corporal I had the proper points, everything had to be copacetic. So I did, so the lieutenant said "Craig, if you stay over, six more months I'll make you a sergeant." I said, "Sir, if you want to make me a sergeant you'd have done it long ago." He and I had been together two years.

**Mr. Daniel:** You were no dummy.

**Mr. Craig:** I said, "I'm going home." So I went home.

**Mr. Daniel:** How'd you get home, by ship? Air, or ship?

**Mr. Craig:** Ship. We went over there it was this way, zig zagging. When we left Japan, pffft . . .

**Mr. Daniel:** Straight home. I guess that wasn't too bad then.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** So you landed probably in San Francisco or somewhere?

**Mr. Craig:** San Diego.

**Mr. Daniel:** San Diego. Then how'd you get from San Diego back to Virginia?

**Mr. Craig:** Went to Camp Pendleton, back again, 'til they got enough, I guess, for a troop train. They assembled the troop train at L.A. or somewhere, I don't know where.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, so they had a full troop train.

**Mr. Craig:** A full troop train to the East Coast. Discharge papers in Maryland.

**Mr. Daniel:** A lot of people were. I know. Bainbridge. Now, you said you almost stayed in. How come you didn't stay in?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, I don't know. I enjoyed the military life, I really did, but I still went back to the thing, as I said earlier, that I harbored some kind of idea that I'd like to be a doctor. As I stated before, I couldn't do that. It had already taken over three years of my time, and so I said, well, maybe I'll give it a shot anyway. I liked to go to college. So I was discharged in 'forty-six, went to work back at my old job, soda jerk in a drugstore, and applied at the University of Maryland, was accepted there, and went in 1947, University of Maryland, graduated in 'fifty-one.

**Mr. Daniel:** Now what did you major in at the University of Maryland?

**Mr. Craig:** I majored in agriculture. Animal husbandry was my major. And from there, some ways or how, I got into education.

**Mr. Daniel:** I was gonna ask about that. We went from doctor to animal husbandry, which actually in most of Virginia or Maryland, what people don't realize, in that era, schools taught that. High schools taught that. My high school, see, I was in high school from 'sixty-three to sixty-six, but about eight years before that they were raising tobacco at the school and they had cattle. And instead of, where nowadays you get this like secretarial, and accounting, hey, man, in those days you learned to be a tobacco farmer.

**Mr. Craig:** 1957, my first time at the high school level, teaching, I taught beef cattle production. I taught gardening, I taught advanced agriculture, and every single male student in the eighth grade had to take one two-hour course of agriculture once a week.



**Mr. Daniel:** People don't realize that nowadays.

**Mr. Craig:** It happened.

**Mr. Daniel:** Well, you gotta realize in Maryland and Virginia, at one time, that was important stuff. Maryland it's not any more. Virginia, when you get to the southern part, it is. Northern part is all Washington D.C., but at one time, that was where the jobs were. And tobacco's big business. And so you learned tobacco. I mean, you can say what you want to today, but it was big business and you learned how to raise tobacco.

A couple things. Did you ever see a USO show?

**Mr. Craig:** Oh yeah.

**Mr. Daniel:** Where did you see it?

**Mr. Craig:** I saw Bob Hope at Camp Pendleton.

**Mr. Daniel:** Damn. You guys, you're the second person that saw Bob Hope.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, is that right?

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah. Out of all the people, I've interviewed about twenty, you and the previous guy are the only ones ever seen Bob Hope.

**Mr. Craig:** I was only seeing him from about thirty miles away, of course he'd been on the stage, about that big. Well, not really, larger than that, but it wasn't real close.

**Mr. Daniel:** Well, one person I got, was interviewing, he was in the Pacific and he figured, oh boy, USO show, girls. Let's be honest here. And he got Randolph Scott and somebody else. It was like, wait a minute, what happened? Who cares?

**Mr. Craig:** Where are all the girls?

**Mr. Daniel:** Right.

**Mr. Craig:** I recall a USO show in Hawaii. I don't remember where it was. I have a picture of that, several of us, buddies, sitting on the floor, watching hula girls up on the stage.

**Mr. Daniel:** What was Bob Hope like?

**Mr. Craig:** Cracking jokes, and of course he had the band with him, and he had Jerry Colonna. It was

very uplifting. The purpose for which he was there was satisfying. You felt great. You didn't want it to end.

**Mr. Daniel:** It's my lucky day, somebody actually saw Bob Hope. Neither of my parents ever saw one. My father was constantly pulling signal wire, not the most glamorous job in the world, and my mother, she didn't have to, my mother had a dream assignment. She was one of Eisenhower's receptionists, not the secretary you always hear about. But I have to say that because that actually wasn't true, but Eisenhower, his staff, had about eight to ten receptionists, took all his mail, correspondence. My mother was one of 'em, so she followed Eisenhower. And so she got dream everything. It was a great deal, she didn't need any USO shows, why waste time. She went skiing and places like that. So it was a different environment from what you went through.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, one thing we used to, not gripe about, we used to realize when we were in combat was when we went back we were able to get a hot coffee and read Stars and Stripes, read about Patton, making an advance a hundred and seventy-five miles a day, If we made twenty-five yards we were lucky.

**Mr. Daniel:** It's amazing, isn't it. A whole different philosophy. And my mother, my mother was a model so she was actually a fairly good-looking woman, and the funny thing about my mother, because she was, I think she was the only female on staff other than the secretary, and the secretary, contrary to what the TV, was actually quite ugly, if you've ever seen a picture of her. So everybody who wanted to talk to Eisenhower would bring my mother gifts. I mean, in the middle of the war she had silk stockings, quite vast quantities. And it was like, you know, can you get me an appointment? (Laughs) Tons of food. And everybody would send Eisenhower food, and he smoked, he smoked, he like Turkish cigarettes. And he would, they'd bring in cases of this stuff. Well, no human being could smoke all this stuff, so Eisenhower would go out and hand it to his people working for him. So my mother had more stuff than she knew what to do with. Yeah, my mother had it rough.

**Mr. Craig:** Is that where you got your name, Dwight?

**Mr. Daniel:** Yeah. I had to be named Dwight David, no matter what. I mean, this was a given. But that was cool. My mother thoroughly enjoyed that assignment, for obvious reasons. It was a good assignment, and so, yes, she never saw USO shows, there was no need to. A lot of the other things, like I said, she really had good soft duty because wherever Eisenhower was he had good quarters, and therefore his staff had good quarters. So it worked out really good.

**Mr. Craig:** She didn't need a USO show, she had her own.

**Mr. Daniel:** Right. Okay, anything else you want to tell me about?

**Mr. Craig:** Well, I don't know of anything.

**Mr. Daniel:** What was it like being married, though? I mean, a lot of guys decided not to get married until they came back. And you did it the other way around, almost.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah, we were married when we were just barely nineteen. Both of us, the same age. And we'd known each other since the age twelve, thirteen. And by fourteen, I kinda figured it was something better there than a casual relationship, puppy love if you want to call it that, whatever. And so the next two years went by, three years, and I was joining the Marine Corps when we did a real quick ceremony. I was stationed in Quantico, scuttlebutt had it that, this was like on Wednesday, scuttlebutt had it that we were going to be shipped out to China on Monday. So I thought, man, China, that's a far piece away. I'm not too sure I want to do this.

So I thought well, maybe this would be a good chance to get—we'd planned to be married anyway. Matter of fact even set a date for our wedding, October 13th. And my wife had picked out her trousseau and this sort of thing. But this was like on Wednesday, so scuttlebutt persisted and got stronger and then you begin to believe it. So I went to the first sergeant and I asked him if I could leave to go home, because it was only, seventy-two hour pass was plenty of time, it was only about fifty miles from Washington and only sixty-five from there to Winchester. So I got a seventy-two hour pass.

Got on the train down in Quantico, went to Union Station in Washington, took the bus or something across town, I guess, to take a Greyhound bus to Winchester. And so while I was waiting on the bus to leave for Winchester I went to the phone booth. For a nickel I called my future wife. I told her, I said "Things are shaping up here quicker than I can handle, it's more than I can handle."

**Mr. Daniel:** What're you doing this afternoon. (Laughs)

**Mr. Craig:** Well, that's almost exactly what it was. We were supposed to be shipping out to China on Monday morning, and the bottom line is, I say "bottom line," we *didn't* have that expression in those days, we were to ship out on Monday morning to China, we're gonna get married, we're gonna do it tonight. Okay. So I got off the phone, I got on the bus, came home, this is five-thirty in the afternoon. That bus was going, I had to wait a little while longer, another half hour before I'd board the bus and this was only an hour trip up. I got the express, instead of the local. So I was home by seven.

In a hour and a half, she got her father—her father was a dentist. He also had vast holdings in apple orchards, it was apple harvest in October, he was out there overseeing that in the middle of the orchard. She had to go out to the orchard and find him. We had the marriage certificate filled up, he hadn't signed it. So we had to get that done. She had

picked out, like I said, some of her trousseau but left it in the store because in those days didn't have a whole lot of money, it was down payment, layaway, or whatever.

**Mr. Daniel:** Oh, this is going good. I see it now.

**Mr. Craig:** And so she had to go down, it was after store closing hours, so her father comes out of the orchard, he goes and gets the justice of the peace, somebody, no, not justice—clerk of the court. Who was a friend of his. He had to go down, open the office, get that unsigned certificate out. Her father had to sign it, then had to give to her, or he kept it, or whatever. She had to go down, and he also because he knew everybody in town. At that time Winchester was only eight thousand people, now it's about twenty-five. So he had to go down and find the owner of these dress shops and get them away from the dinner table 'cause they had to open up the store and get the dress that she'd picked out, or whatever it was. So she'd have something in her trousseau. This is all on the eighth of October. A week prior to the regular schedule.

So I got home, I got down with her, it was okay, everything's all ready, the church is all ready, I got a check for the minister, and yeah, I'll be available, all that sort of thing. So we get to the church and of course she didn't have a bridal gown, just a dress. Those days bridal gowns cost too much money, and didn't have the materials, nylon, everything else, so you were lucky to have the clothes to put on your back. So she had this new dress that she wore. At the church, I didn't even have a best man. So her father, it was an Episcopal church, so her father was out on the street before the entrance way, and it dawned on us that we didn't have a best man. So he just looked down the street, here comes this man walking down the street. A colleague of his, a friend, a doctor.

**Mr. Daniel:** You're now best man.

**Mr. Craig:** Right. And this man, walking down the street, had been my father-in-law's best man.

**Mr. Daniel:** So at least there's something there.

**Mr. Craig:** He said "Hey," he called him Buck, he said "Buck, come in here, you're gonna be the best man." "Okay." So that's the way it went down. From the time I called her at five o'clock to the time we were married at eight o'clock there was half a church full of people, a hundred fifty, two hundred people. I don't know where they all came from.

**Mr. Daniel:** Must have the sign out front, "Free food."

**Mr. Craig:** There wasn't any free food. We didn't have any reception. No honeymoon. Well, we had a honeymoon. There was no reception, no. I tell you what our reception was. We came out of the church married, went out to get in an old 1935 Plymouth my dad had, and it had two flat tires. He had to jack up the car, take the tires off, take 'em down to the corner to the

gas station, have 'em fixed. By this time it's eight-thirty at night. We didn't have any honeymoon destination or anything else. Well, I hadn't made any plans, being in the Corps. S my dad jacked up the car to take the tires off. For our reception, she and I went down to the local store where I was a soda jerker, we each had a milk shake. That was it.

**Mr. Daniel:** How long have you been married?

**Mr. Craig:** Sixty-one years.

**Mr. Daniel:** I figure if you can go through that, it's worth it.

**Mr. Craig:** Yeah. So we came back, got in the car, went down to the Mayflower Hotel in Washington for a honeymoon. Her father had arranged that, we didn't know it.

**Mr. Daniel:** 'Cause that was expensive, it was hard to get rooms in that place.

**Mr. Craig:** Oh, impossible. We went there, they threw rice and everything on us when we left the church. So we got down to the Mayflower, there were \_\_\_\_\_ people, generals and \_\_\_\_\_ "Sorry, there are no rooms." I come in, elbowed my way through that crowd, and went to the desk person, I said "Yes, I'm Corporal Craig, I have a reservation."

"Oh yes, we have your room for you."

**Mr. Daniel:** You're lucky you didn't get court martialed by all those people.

**Mr. Craig:** Had to sign in, my wife reached in her purse to get a pen or something like that, rice just flew everywhere. (Laughs)

**Mr. Daniel:** Cool. Well, I think that's all I have for you.

**Mr. Craig:** Well, it's more than you bargained for, I'm sure.

**Mr. Daniel:** No, it's cool.

**Transcribed by:** Betty Paieda  
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