

*Admiral Nimitz Historic Site
National Museum of the Pacific War*

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

*Mr. Paul Jackson
United States Marine Corps
Battle of Iwo Jima*

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Mr. Paul Jackson*

Ms. Roberts: This is Virginia Roberts. Today is April 10, 2008. I'm interviewing Mr. Paul Jackson in Horseshoe Bay, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Welcome Paul. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences during World War II. We're going to start a little before the war and ask you when and where you were born.

Mr. Jackson: I was born in Fort Worth, Texas, July 10, 1926.

Ms. Roberts: Your parents?

Mr. Jackson: My Mother's name was Nona Nancy Jackson and my Dad's name, Edgar Jackson. They also were born in Texas.

Ms. Roberts: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Jackson: I have many. I was the youngest of the litter. Carol was the oldest, Leon, my sister Regina, Eddie, Mart Wallace, Irma Ruth, Cleo and me.

Ms. Roberts: Did you go to school in Fort Worth?

Mr. Jackson: In Fort Worth, through High School, Paschal High.

Ms. Roberts: Did you enlist right away or start college?

Mr. Jackson: I enlisted on my 17th birthday. The Marine recruiter was quite happy to sign me up. I didn't report to San Diego until August 20th, which is the longest month and a half I have ever spent. I had to wait until they called me and mustered me in. They sent me the traveling orders to show up on the 20th of August, 1943.

Ms. Roberts: So that would have been after Pearl Harbor. Where were you on that date?

Mr. Jackson: I was playing softball in Fort Worth on a vacant lot, a block from my home when we heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

Ms. Roberts: Did a lot of your high school friends also join or did they wait until they got drafted?

Mr. Jackson: I think quite a few of them joined. Most of my buddies joined the Navy. And one waited until he was drafted in the Army. I went down big and happy and enlisted in the Marine Corps.

Ms. Roberts: Why did you select the Marines?

Mr. Jackson: I had a brother in the Marines. He was already overseas. That was Cleo, the one next to me. He had spent thirty months overseas. He was on Guadalcanal, Peleliu, and a couple of others. He was in some active battles.

Ms. Roberts: Were any of your other brothers or sisters in the military?

Mr. Jackson: Yes. Eddie was in the Air Force, and he was killed in England. My oldest brother Carol was in the Army. He was drafted. He spent time in North Africa, the invasion of Italy, and came back pretty shook up.

Ms. Roberts: Was your Father in business in Fort Worth?

Mr. Jackson: He was a carpenter. During the depression he did just about anything that had to be done.

Ms. Roberts: Where was your first training?

Mr. Jackson: I completed boot camp and went to radio school in San Diego. I told them that I wanted to fly. I wanted to be in the air wing. He said that I qualified as a aerial gunner and a radio operator. He told me if I would complete the radio they would send me to Norman, Oklahoma for gunnery and I would be an air radio gunner. Two weeks before I was to

graduate I was called down with seven others to the top Sergeants office. He said “guess what, they are forming a new 5th Marine Division at Camp Pendleton and they need radio operators, congratulations, infantrymen”. He should have locked me up. I hit the ceiling. But there wasn’t anything I could do about it.

So when I graduated, they put us on a bus and carted us out to Camp Pendleton. They called out some names, and he said those I call out fall in over here. I was one of the first names called. He said congratulations messmen, you are on mess duty for thirty days. I had to feed these people that I graduated with. Again, I went ballistic. I was beginning to be known as a ballistic Marine. After completed thirty-three days, instead of thirty, I went to field signal school. As an aside, had I not been chosen for mess duty, I would have gone on in with the rest of the troops. I would have finished the field signal school, and shipped overseas. I heard that about half of them got killed on Saipan. Anyway, I finished the six weeks of field signal, learning how to live in fox holes, one of my favorite subjects.

After completing that, I was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment of the 5th Division, at Camp Pendleton. We continued to make numerous assault landings both in Higgins Boats and LCTs and what have you. We made all kinds of assault landings, landing under actual fire, with planes firing their weapons, dropping bombs, anything to get us ready. We trained that way, and I went through a couple of enemy jamming schools. We learned the code in school so we learned it in actual operations. They got ready to ship us overseas, August 6th. We sailed to Hilo, Hawaii. By this time I was used to being aboard ship. We had hit all the islands up and down the California coast in practice. We landed in Hilo, and they couldn’t have picked a better spot for us to train. We were based up in the lava flow from the mountains, and lava was so bad I could wear out a pair of Marine boondockers in about two months. You would be walking along and you would be in a whirlwind and it would be raining on you. It was beautiful. So we trained quite heavy. Radiomen would be assigned to go with the companies or squads. They had mountains that were up around five thousand feet. There wasn’t any timber until you got to about thirty-five hundred feet, and I had to carry that radio and my gear and double time with these people. Finally I told them that if they didn’t slow down you are not going to have a radio. So we got up into the top of this mountain above

Kurame. It was raining so hard, and we were in thick jungle where you held on to the guys pack ahead of you. Some wise Marine up ahead got to playing around. He didn't hold on to the guy in front of him, and he purposely made a right turn and realized he made it wrong. The rest of us slept in that jungle that night because of this guy. I chopped limbs down, and piled them high, so when I got on it I wouldn't sink down in the water.

Ms. Roberts: How did you get back with your unit?

Mr. Jackson: I had the radio. The officer in charge made his outfit stay put and he tried to back track. He got within yelling distance so we could find him. Anyway, that's the type training we got, getting ready to go to Iwo Jima. We were there until December. We boarded ship and made a practice landing at Maui and then went to Honolulu. We left there and spent fifty-three days aboard ship. We made one interim stop at Saipan and boarded the LSTs and made a simulated landing on Tinian. The water was choppy, very rough and we went in within about a hundred feet of the beach and turned around and went back. The fun came trying to climb back on board ship on the net rope with the ship heaving to and fro. Everything was making us feel right at home. From there we shipped out and went on to Iwo Jima, about a three day trip. By the time we got on Iwo, I was so out of shape I ran in that volcanic sand and I could hardly move. That was our introduction to the landing at Iwo Jima.

Ms. Roberts: Paul, since my husband Evan was on Iwo Jima, with the Marines in the 50's, I'm going to turn over the interview to him as he will know more about the island.

Mr. Roberts: Paul, if you would please, start with the landing and tell us which beach where you landed on Iwo Jima, Suribachi would have been on your left, and just tell us the story as it happened.

Mr. Jackson: We got out of our LSTs early. We were aboard the LSTs from Saipan up to Iwo Jima. We circled until they staged us and got us in the correct position. I was in the fifth wave in amphib 5-9. We spread out and started in. The waves were to be three minutes apart. We must have been two or three miles or more out. When we were going in towards the beach we were not too far from one of the battle ships. He opened up broadside and practically sank us. The water was rushing at us was boiling. It was quite impressive.

We were on our way in and I'd say we were probably about a mile or mile and a half off shore, and I looked to my right and the second amphib to my right was blown out of the water. That was my outfit. The one next to us was blown out of the water and I knew we were next. So I kind of scrunched my head down and it blew the one on my left out of the water. I don't know whether anyone has ever addressed this, but we went right on through. Immediately an SBD dive bomber was coming and he got hit while I was looking at it, about 1 o'clock from our position. He got hit and he had all machine guns blazing. He missed the front bow of my amphib by not more than twenty feet. He crashed into the water, nose went down, the tail came up and it sank within in five to ten seconds.

The way the waves were set up, the first two waves did not carry troops. They were rigged with thirty-caliber machine gun, a fifty-caliber machine gun and a thirty-seven mm Howitzer. Their job was to get in there and try to give us a little protection. I landed on Red Beach One, the 28th Marines were on my left, and they are the ones who took Suribachi. We came in and when the front tracks hit the beach, the Coxswain stopped, and we are still bouncing in the water. And when he hit the release and the gate dropped, one of the four of my radio crew fell over backwards. He went completely out of sight, in the Pacific Ocean.

Lieutenant Moore, my commander, took his rifle butt and was banging on the trap door telling the Coxswain to pull it up. And when the amphib lunged forward, he threw two more of my radio crew out into the ocean, and they went out of sight. So I'm standing there thinking well, I'm next. By this time, he had pulled up enough on to the beach, so that when I stepped out I stepped in the water halfway up to my knees and my boots filled with salt water. I had to spend the next six weeks with them. Iwo beach came down at probably a fifty to sixty degree angle and the water was very deep. It sloped down maybe twelve to fifteen feet deep down there. And here came all three of these guys crawling up out that Pacific Ocean. Boy if they weren't a great looking bunch.

So I stepped out in the water, ran around the left side of the amtrack, a shell exploded behind me and I went sailing through the air. I landed face down against the first terrace and ran my rifle straight into the sand. I don't how long I lay there as I was really stunned. I was feeling around to see if I was hit, but I was just stunned. I had a carbine because I had to have a light weapon since I would be carrying the radio. I beat on the

barrel, trying to beat the sand out of the bore, I popped the bolt back and it jammed. I ejected a shell out and took my clip out and tried to look through there and what I saw just scared me to death. It was packed with volcanic sand. So I sat there, and then forced the bolt forward injecting another shell into the chamber. I held it at arms length, as I figured if I'm going to try to fire this it will probably blow the barrel off. So I fired it, and the bolt stuck open. So I looked in the bore and I had cleaned it out pretty good. It was still dirty, but the bullet went out. I thought what a spot to be in. Here I am, on the beach, and I've got a rifle that's jammed. I can only fire one round at a time.

So we started up the terrace. On Red Beach One, we had three terraces. When you get to the top, you are looking at two hundred feet or more of a clear spot, nothing between you and the pill boxes and the block houses. So I figured this is it. Our Lieutenant, who had been on Peleliu, and several of the other battles, told a group of us before we left the ship whatever you do, don't take more than two steps and on the third step, you hit the ground. He said the Jap is sighting in on you. And I remembered this and when I got up with seventy pounds on my back, I didn't run too fast in that volcanic soil. I would count one, two and then get down, and I would feel the pressure of the bullet against my face as it went past. I'd hit the ground and crawled some. And that's how I covered that ground. Two steps, then fall, and every time you could just feel the pressure of a bullet. We lost a lot of our men. We lost about half of them in the amtracks when they were blown up. We had one fellow from Dallas who was charging along and he stopped to pick up a Marine who had gotten hit and he got hit. The bullet went through his collar bone, traveled down through his leg and out his knee. He later died aboard ship a few days later. But that was one episode during our attempt to get up there. On the charts we had studied, there were ten block houses and about fifteen pill boxes in that spot that we had to get to. You have to get to them, and not all of them were blown up. The big ships took care of a lot of the block houses, but the pillboxes were still very much in business.

We went across there and it wasn't until we got over where there is vegetation. The place was just blown up. There were plenty of holes to fall into. When you went down, you never stood up in the same spot. You had to learn how to be a snake. I could crawl on my stomach with seventy to seventy five pounds on my back and just keep going.

So when we got halfway across the island, Lieutenant Moore called me and said I want you and Mitchell to get a reel of wire and a telephone and go back to the beach and pick up McGinnis' line. McGinnis was the kid that had been hit. I thought if I ever got across the flat spot we might have a chance, and here we have to turn around and go back. So we struck out and I couldn't even fire my rifle. We went all the way to the waters edge and started walking up and down the beach. We went clear into the 28th Regiment territory, looking for his line.

What we had was, every few feet we had tags wired to the line with 2-27th which was for the 2nd Battalion - 27th Marines. We spent a couple of hours walking around and finally I told Mitch, the lines are cut to pieces, the Amtracks have run over them and there isn't a telephone line down there that's intact that more than fifty or a hundred feet. So we looked as long as we felt necessary so we started back. We had to go through the same thing we did from the first, and the Japs were very good shots. I remember thinking, they lied to us about how the Japs can't see, they can't shoot, and we found out that they were excellent shots. What I didn't know is that we had gone through two mine fields. I went up, back and now I've got to go back up. So we went back and fortunately Mitchell and I got through okay. It was dusk, and the sun had already set by the time I found my outfit. We had almost cut the island in half. We were still in vegetation and the beaches were smooth, long and pretty. That's where they were holed up.

I finally got in there and found my outfit. Mitchell and I were dragging, and I walk in and here's a blockhouse that has been blown to smithereens, and it was so dark I couldn't see inside. I went along side of it and tried to look in. I couldn't see anything. There was a trench that the Japanese had dug. I was too tired to dig a fox hole. I just went over there and just plopped down and went to sleep. I dreamed I was home and it was so real. The next morning, a Jap had spent the night in that blockhouse and he was looking at me face to face. I couldn't see him the night before. He had apparently cracked up as he came out of there screaming, screaming high C like a woman. He ran out and I turned around and grabbed my rifle with one shot, and he was hit from all angles by the Marines. It wasn't but about sixty seconds later on the right side of me, not twenty-five feet they killed another Jap running out. We had slept among these Japs that night. They had pulled a banzai charge on us and they estimated there were about two thousand Japs killed that

night. We had Japs all over the place. So I hurriedly ran the string through my bore to clean my rifle the best I could so at least I would have more than one shot.

That was my first day on Iwo. And what scared me was one of the fellows (who lives near San Antonio), ran over to me when he saw me and he said “Jackson, I told Lieutenant Moore I saw you get killed”. There was a Marine with a radio just like mine and he was hit by an explosive shell and I just knew they were going to send that to my Mother. So I worried about that and I had that in the back of my mind the whole time I was in Iwo.

Ms. Roberts: Now did your Mother get notification?

Mr. Jackson: No. But she had gotten notice of my brother who was killed in England. He died at the White Cliffs of Dover while trying to rescue a B-24 crew that crashed in the water.

So we cut the Island in half and we swung north along the west beach. We hadn't gone too far and the Japanese, as I said, were good shots. They would throw a barrage of mortars and they would make a step, left, right, left, right. They would have each gun firing and then change their sights. These things are coming up and one shell exploded about a hundred feet from me. I figured the next one is for me. So I turned and ran to the left as hard as I could and there were some bushes there. I leaped and held my rifle out in front of me to try and break my fall on the bushes. I think the shell exploded before I hit the bushes and I was sorry I jumped on them as there were needles on those bushes like knives. They really hurt. I'm laying there with my rifle under my stomach, and I was numb. I was feeling to see if I had been hit but nothing had happened. So I took my rifle and pushed this bush aside and there were two Japs sitting three feet away, just looking at me. I fired at the first one and hit him and my rifle jammed. The other one didn't move so apparently that shell that went over me had killed them both. So I went ahead and put a shell through the other one in case he came to. So that was the start of the excitement of going north.

We got along side the first airfield and the Japs were very much alive on the north end and very accurate. They had that island blocked off where they knew exactly how to set the settings on their sights. We got up about three quarters of a mile on up there and here come the shells coming again. I turned and ran to the left and carrying the radio on my

back I can't jump into a foxhole on my back. It was always face first. I looked up and on my right was a Marine in my outfit. He was running for this shell hole the same as I was. We ran and he was about a step ahead of me and he jumped feet first. And I jumped head first and the shell exploded and caved this wall of volcanic sand over me. When I came to, I couldn't breathe or see, the dust was so thick in the air. So I'm shaking again to see if I have my legs and I looked up he was sitting there with one arm behind him. I reached up and grabbed his jacket and asked him if he was okay. His head fell forward, as his neck was broken. His arm was held together with just a small piece of flesh. And what happened was he had his helmet strapped under his chin and when the shell exploded the concussion snapped his neck. I didn't find any other blood coming from anywhere but his arm, but he was dead. I laid there until I could breath.

We continued on up, and when I set my radio up, I had a TBX , we worked using morse code, CW. It took four of us to carry the equipment. We had a Trans receiver, I carried the battery pack, and we had the antenna and a generator. I set it up, got ready to load up the antenna and three dial divisions above my frequency was filled with Japs sending code like mad, sending emergency. I had Martin crank the generator and I loaded the antenna and it stopped. I would wait and he would start transmitting again. I would hit the key and after about the third time, you could hear the shells coming in. I called Lieutenant Moore over and said "Poggie, I want to show you something here". Poggie was his nickname because every time I got some candy he would come over and ask if he could have some. Any way, I was telling him that we've got a Jap three dial divisions above my frequency and every time I load up they hit us. I said watch this. Martin cranks up the generator, I hit the key, and the shells hit all around us. So Moore said to shut it down and don't use it any more. So we used that radio to tune in Tokyo Rose at night. Weeks later, I thought I saw the range finder as we went on up on the north end of the island.

That left me without my radio, so I got the job of going up to the front line carrying battery replacement for the radiomen on the front line-2nd Bat, 27th Marines Dog, Easy and Fox Companies. The batteries are pretty heavy so I would carry just one set at a time and someone else would go with me and carry one for the others. So I did that for a day or two. I asked Mitchell later if Lieutenant Moore had a death wish for us. He's always volunteering us for something. We set up an outpost this night, about a hundred and fifty feet in from the rocks on the northwest beach. We dug a fox hole and they set up a fifty

caliber machine gun to my right about forty feet away. I didn't know they had set another 50 caliber gun up directly behind us. The first night, Mitchell stood watch until 12 midnight and then he woke me up. He looked down and said "Holy smoke, what is that?" I looked down at the rocks and there were Japs running all over. They had come ashore in wooden row boats. So I grabbed the radio and called my regimental headquarters which was Bludgeon. I said Bludgeon One we have enemy at shackle so and so and request flare and mortars. They shot flares up and kept flares up where they thought we needed it. The guys on my right opened up and I'm talking to them trying to guide them in there and the machine gun opened up behind us and almost killed Mitchell and me both. We dropped down and those bullets were close over our heads. If we had stuck our hand up it would have taken an arm off. I didn't know they were back there. So we had to lay there until they quit shooting. They estimated they killed three hundred Japs. They got in about a hundred feet of me. They came in on those wooden boats. So that was the last of the big experience there. I spent three days in that same fox hole before we moved out. I had a Jap who fell with his arm hanging over in my fox hole. I took his arm and put it back out of the way.

We got a little further up into the rocky terrain. The first night I was there I dug in. I heard this noise that sounded like a whole troop digging. I was sitting there and couldn't sleep. I had my carbine ready. It turned out to be little crabs. There were had hundreds of them and they really make a noise. Talk about a sleepless night. We moved up on top of that ridge and our Sergeant came and told us that either Mitchell or I would have to go up to Easy Company. You want to decide who? Well neither one of us had a coin. So he picked up one of those little sterno blocks that you use to heat your K Rations. He designated heads and tails and flipped it up and I won. So Mitchell grabbed my cartridge belt and his belt and started filling mine up. He loaded up and asked if I needed any more grenades. Well, at least I didn't have to carry that seventy pound radio. So there was a Marine who knew the way up there. He was showing me the way and he would tell me when to hit the deck. The Japs were really thick and we had to go along side a whole pocket of them that had been bypassed. When I got up there they introduced me to this guy that I was going to be with all the time. He almost got me killed dozens of times. We took off and it was exciting.

Afterwards, they came in with a bunch of replacements. The Major called me over and introduced me to this young kid. He told me that this kid would be my body guard. You don't have time to kill Japs and talk on the radio. I didn't think it was a very good idea. I talked with the lad. He had taken one liberty in San Diego after he had completed boot camp, and they put him aboard ship and brought him out there. I felt like crying. I sat down and told him, number one, don't get within fifteen feet of me. Twenty feet or thirty feet is better. Two is a crowd and Japs love to shoot and will pick a crowd. I said now don't take more than two steps and hit the ground. Don't ever stand up where you went down, you snake forward, back or anywhere, just move. The Japs are sitting there waiting for you. I could tell he was just panicking. I took one two, and the machine guns opened up and I dived into this hole. Within ten seconds, he landed in the middle of my back. I thought he had broken my back because it really hurt. I didn't have my big radio, I only had my pack. I could feel those vertebrae move and I rolled over after getting my breath. I thought I told you never to get within fifteen feet of me. Now see that you do that. So I snaked over to the other side of the hole, got my feet ready and I jumped up and a machine gun opened up over my head. The lad stood up in the very spot he had gone down. He got hit right under his helmet. I crawled back and grabbed him and I yelled at him that I had told you not to stand up. So I left him there. He had felt no pain.

I came around to a clearing and there was a Jap officer laying face down with his hand out and a Luger by his hand. I stopped because he wasn't discolored or bleeding and I thought he's just laying there and the minute I pass he's going to nail me. So I put a round through his temple, and his head bounce and he bled. He was alive. So I learned not to take a chance. I continue on and I don't remember how many days had passed, but the Japs with their mortar were throwing stuff at us pretty hard. There were three Marines in a fox hole they had dug about eight feet higher because they thought they could see better. A shell exploded and this Marine yelled I'm hit, I'm hit. He came falling down onto this ledge and I saw that he was bleeding badly. His left leg was spurting blood and I grabbed him and he threw me around like a ping pong ball. So I wrestled and screamed at him and finally drug him back to my fox hole. The shrapnel had cut his leg to the bone above the knee. I took his belt off and made a tourniquet and pulled it as tight as I could get it, and I didn't have a watch so I couldn't tell time every fifteen minutes to release the belt and let the wound bleed. I let him sleep and got the bleeding stopped. During that morning we had made an assault and the officers had decided that it wasn't really good to spend the night at that

position so we withdrew back to our original line that evening. I found a little can of pineapple that had been opened. Boy that looked good, it tasted pretty good, so I got a ring and ate about three of them I was so hungry, we didn't have any food. That night I was upchucking so badly and I had one arm around this guy's neck to hold him down and worry whether it was time to loosen the belt, and upchucking at the same time. Boy was I sick. I couldn't eat pineapple for years after I got home.

Anyway, I would tell him in the morning they will send some bearers out here and they are going to carry you and by nightfall you will be aboard ship and could be back in Saipan or Hawaii if they fly you back. I was trying to give him something to keep him calm. And I was just glad that we didn't jump off at eight o'clock that next morning. We were down to twenty-five men covering that flank. There was probably about thirty or forty feet between us, including me. They brought in eighty replacements. And that night we had five left. But they weren't all killed, some were wounded. But that was the most horrible experience I had on Iwo, was trying to sit there and hold one arm around his neck. I think I was hurting him too. They finally came and got him and carried him off. I didn't know his last name. He did crawl back up there to see his buddies and both of them were dead. Then he started cracking up again. Here again I'm getting beat up trying to hold him.

We had a tank on the front line what was really firing a lot of rounds. The Major told me to tell the tank to turn his motor off as the fumes were bad. I asked him if he was serious and he said I told you an order. So I crawled up there behind the tank on the left side and you have a metal box with a telephone in it. Well it was blown to pieces. I crawled back and told the Major that the telephone had been blown up. He said go around in front and tell them to turn it off. So here I am crawling on my hands and knees with machine gun bullets going all around me. I got out there and stood up, and both the tanks 30 and 50 caliber was pointed right at me. I gave them the sign to shut the engine down. They shook their periscope no and I waived OK. By this time, the Major was walking off with my radio. I told him I'll stay right over here and if you need me signal me. Another episode, the Major would pull the rounds out of the machine gun belt and put them in a magazine box. I would take one loaded belt and one with just ammo, throw my rifle over my shoulder and run up and down the line delivering this ammo to the marines. There were two places there where you had a clear a section to run across and that is where I ran into the most action. I took more than two steps and the bullets would fly. I told everybody,

keep your clips and make your shots good. I would run all the way down there and the machine guns by the time I would get there they would be out of ammunition. They would load a belt and they would hook it up and they were in business again. There were times when the Major and I would crawl out beyond the front lines so we could see the Japs. We would call in and give the coordinates. I remember one in particular we really pounded them. It was 175 Sugar Southwest. There was one round fired for a target. We lost one mortar that was sunk, so we only had three mortars. One round fired per target and they would come back with splash. I would holler splash and everybody laid down because sometimes those rounds fall short. And they would hit one, two or three. I would call back number one fifty right, up seventy-five; number two, up one hundred, right twenty-five; number three up fifty, fire for effect. And he would come back splash. Twenty seven rounds would come over. Every time they would fire they would click their sight just a little bit more. You would see the troops down there crawling around and all of a sudden they would just explode. It was beautiful. We got to be a pretty good team.

Ms. Roberts: How much longer were you on Iwo Jima?

Mr. Jackson: I was in the fifth wave and one of the last ones off. I think it was six weeks. I spent four weeks on the line with Easy Company. Then they sent us to Japan.

Ms. Roberts: By the end of your six weeks, was Iwo Jima taken?

Mr. Jackson: They told us that Iwo Jima was taken after four weeks. I said if it was taken, why are we up here dying on the front lines. I think it was all politics. The north end of the island sloped down and the Japs were on the far side. Our shells were almost impervious to them. So they brought in some P-51s and for three or four days they tailed in on flights of Wildcats and Hellcats, Grummans, and they didn't fire a shot. Yet they were in there going with them. Then one day they showed up and the Wildcats and Hellcats were no longer tailing along. I called a mission on a position and these P-51s went out over the north end, down low, skip bombed and you could hear that five hundred pounder hit the ground and bounce. It would be coming straight at me. I'm looking at this thing. I was thinking I hope it gets down. I have never seen such beautiful skip bombing in my whole life. I have a friend who was in that outfit and he said those guys were good. They came in and were hitting the Japs from the side where we couldn't hit them. Our shells were

going over. We would lay out white markers for our front lines and said don't get on this side.

Ms. Roberts: Paul, for those who may be doing research in the future, please tell us how you eventually got food and water.

Mr. Jackson: To this day, I don't remember how we got food. I'm sure they had to carry the rations up. I remember one time on the north end where the island was so hot there was volcanic action. When we dug our fox holes we laid on top and when they shot at us we would roll down in it because it was too hot to stay in them. I could take a C-ration and dig a hole and bury that C-ration and in about fifteen minutes it would be hot enough to eat. And when you would dig, it would smoke. It was something. I remember digging a trench as long as I am tall. And I would lay on top and just roll over when a shell came in. It would burn you. I just don't remember how we got food and water. I'll never forget. When we got back to Hilo, the first thing they gave us was a glass of pineapple juice.

Ms. Roberts: Would you tell us about your departure from Iwo Jima?

Mr. Jackson: When they finally pulled us back off the line, it was the first time I rejoined my outfit in a month. They gave me time to go down and walk into the cemetery. I was surprised that they had it prepared so well. They finally decided to get aboard the LSTs. They had them beached. It was calm then. I remember them telling us we are through, but I didn't trust them. When we walked by some of the pockets we crawled on our stomachs for several hundred yards before we got to where we could get up and crawl on our knees.

Ms. Roberts: Where did you go from there?

Mr. Jackson: When we got on the LSTs we went back to Saipan. We got aboard ship and went back to Eniwetok and then went on to Hawaii.

Ms. Roberts: How long were you in Hawaii?

Mr. Jackson: Thirteen months total. When we left, thinking we were going back to the states, instead we went to Japan. I landed in Japan on September 25th, 1945.

Ms. Roberts: You thought you were going home?

Mr. Jackson: Yes, that's when we had put our clothes in our sea bag and sent them home. They gave us three days liberty in Oahu. When we left, instead of going east, we went west. The way I found out we weren't going the right way was I was on the fantail and I said "hey, are we going the wrong direction"? Nobody said anything and several hours later and Oahu was completely out of sight, then they came on the speaker and told us that we were on our way to Sasebo, Kyushu, Japan. Kyushu is the south island and Sasebo is the big city. Being a radioman I got a chance to go a lot of places in Japan. I got to go to Karatsu, which was the Palm Beach of Japan. I slept under sheets, and it wasn't that rough in Japan but I sure was homesick.

Ms. Roberts: When you finished your service in Japan, you had been away from home for how long?

Mr. Jackson: That was August the 20, of '43, until April, 1946. They came around everyday and offered me a bonus, another stripe, a ninety day vacation if I would sign to re-up.

Ms. Roberts: Where did you go back to in the states?

Mr. Jackson: San Diego.

Ms. Roberts: Did you have leave after that?

Mr. Jackson: I didn't have leave. I stayed getting physicals.

Ms. Roberts: What was your rank when you got back?

Mr. Jackson: Praying For Civilian, PFC. I chided them on this. I said you people ought to be ashamed of yourself. I've gone through radio school, field signal school, Iwo Jima, Japan and I'm still a PFC. So they gave me a Corporal stripe.

Ms. Roberts: So you didn't sign up for more service?

Mr. Jackson: What was funny was there was a doctor, a big man, and he came up and took me by my shoulders and he told me that if you take this discharge, if you don't re-up now, with that right eye you've got, you'll never get back in this man's Marine Corps. I looked him in the eye and said "sir, give me the Ruptured Duck". He did this almost daily.

Ms. Roberts: When you got on the bus, they took you to the train?

Mr. Jackson: No I got on a city bus to the station and then a cross country bus.

Ms. Roberts: So you came back to Texas on a bus.

Mr. Jackson: They gave us a tour up through Albuquerque and all around.

Ms. Roberts: So you got home.

Mr. Jackson: Then I took six months leave of absence. I had been sending all but ten dollars of my pay to my Mother and I told her to use it. She put every penny in the bank, and when I came home she said here's your money. I had spent twenty months overseas.

Ms. Roberts: You got back into the business world?

Mr. Jackson: I went back to work for Consolidated. Before I went into the Marine Corps I went to an NYA School, and they paid me twenty-five cents an hour. And after that they hired me in the Consolidated Vultee that built B-24's. I shot many a rivet the few months I was with them. In 1946, I went back to Consolidated and every year they would change my classification and give me a raise and lay me off. Then thirty days later they would call me back. After three years I decided I didn't want to go back any more.

Ms. Roberts: Did you stay in Texas?

Mr. Jackson: Yes. I ran into the most beautiful brown-eyed blonde and convinced her to marry me on the 28th of March, 1948.

Ms. Roberts: Did you have children?

Mr. Jackson: One daughter. She works for the First Evangelical Free Church. She's been with them for thirty-five years. We are proud of her. She is quite a pianist. She lives in California.

Ms. Roberts: Paul is there anything you can think of that you feel would be interesting to future researchers?

Mr. Jackson: Oh I think we have pretty well covered everything. Every day when you woke up you would wonder if this is going to be it. You see so many people go and there have been times that I thought that this would be it. But the Lord took me through. I mentioned the mine fields. On about the eighth day they pulled us off the front lines and took us back almost to the same spot that I shot those two Japs on the first day. That night they hit our ammo dump and the smoke was billowing and the guy on the PA system on the shore says gas, gas, if you don't have a gas mask, come down to the ship. I ran over to get my gas mask and somebody had stolen it. I had one that the canister screws on to the side. So I looked around and whoever stole it left me a World War I gas mask that had the canister and the hose, so I got that and I put it on. I couldn't breath. It had a clip on it. This guy says come down to the ship and we will give you a mask. I said watch my radio, and don't let any body steal it. I ran through those two mine fields again and I came back, so I was up and back five times and the Lord protected me from the mine fields.

Ms. Roberts: Paul, thank you so much for sharing your story with future generations. I'm sure your experience on Iwo Jima will be very interesting.

Transcribed by:

Evan and Virginia Roberts

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