

## David Lynch Oral History Interview

JAMES LINDLEY: Good afternoon. This is Dr. James Lindley. This is 1 December 2010. This interview is taking place at the old Nimitz Hotel at the National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg, Texas. The purpose of the National Museum of the Pacific War Oral History Project is to collect, preserve, and interpret the stories of World War II veterans, home front experiences, the life of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and the old Nimitz Hotel, by means of audio and video recordings. The audio and video recordings of such interviews become part of the Center for Pacific War Studies, the Archives of the National Museum of the Pacific War, and the Texas Historical Commission. These recordings will be made available for historical and academic research by scholars and members of the families of those that served. We, the undersigned, have read the above and voluntarily offer the National Museum of the Pacific War full use of the information contained on the audio and video recordings and/or written text of these oral histories for research interviews. In view of the scholarly value of this research material, we hereby assign rights, title, and interests pertaining to it to the National Museum of the Pacific War and the Texas Historical

Commission. At this time, this interview is with Mr. David J. Lynch. Mr. Lynch, we certainly want to thank you for your service to our country. And certainly, we appreciate you coming to the National Museum of the Pacific War and participating in the Oral History Project. If you would, Mr. Lynch, would you please begin by telling us your full name, when and where you were born, a little bit about your early life, where you might have been on December the 7th, 1941, how you came to join the United States Marine Corps, and your Pacific War experiences? Thank you, again, for coming today, Mr. Lynch.

DAVID LYNCH: I'm David J. Lynch. I was born in Ithaca, Michigan, 1922, on Mother's Day. I went to high school in Shepherd, Michigan. And I made four years of all kinds of sports: football, basketball, and baseball; and the last two years of my high school I ran track. And then at the time that Pearl Harbor was bombed, I was at school at Central Michigan. I played football for the first semester; I made the freshman team. Next day, I came to my dad and I told him that I would like to go in the Marine Corps. My father, being an old military man from the Calvary in World War I, he said, "Son, why do you want to go in the Marine Corps?" I said, "Dad, I just want to go." So the next day he took me to Detroit. We went to the

Marine Corps Headquarters. They had inspection there. Our DI was inspecting us over, and I volunteered for the Marine Corps. Then I was sent to Parris Island, South Carolina. But before that my dad said I could go home for two weeks. I said, "Dad, I don't want to put you through this. I think I'd better go on my way." So we had a little cry, and he left. The next day, they sent me to Parris Island, South Carolina, for boot camp. We learned a few things in boot camp: close-order drill, and... Then I was sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for further training. I was rifle-trained. I was left-handed. I was shooting my rifle on the rifle range one day, and the DI stepped on my rifle and says, "Lynch, put that on your right shoulder." So I put it on my right shoulder for a minute. He went down the line, and I put it back on my left shoulder. I kept firing at the firing shot. Got a lot of flags. Couple days later, I talked to the Sergeant. I says, "I know I got some bullseyes." He says, "We know you did, too. But the reason they don't give you any is because they don't want you to get too overconfident." That's his story.

Anyway, I went on from there. We were in the movie one day. And I looked down at all these Marines coming in with big stripes all over them. The Sergeant Major is setting

next to me. And I says, "What's going on here?" He said, "We're forming the 1st Marine Division. We came in here to form the 1st Marine Division," which I ended up to be a part of. Then we went aboard ship, the USS Barnett, went to New Zealand, unloaded and loaded ships, clothing and ammunition in our cargo ships, and then we headed for Guadalcanal. I landed on Red Beach on Guadalcanal, and we had a firefight the very first day. For that next day, we fought our way through and went into Henderson Field. We surrounded the airstrip, raining like crazy. We'd captured a Jap and tied him up and put him under a cart. This Marine was sick, so we put him under there with this captured Japanese. He kept talking to him during the night. He kicked him. He said, "All right, if you don't want to talk to me, forget it." Morning came, and he looked over and saw this enemy. He got out from under that trailer like a shot. He couldn't get out of there fast enough. The next day, we had 15-man patrols and 7-man patrols. Seven-man patrols, if we'd go on patrol and the Japs would hit us, we'd go back, we'd run back. But on the 15-man patrol, we sat there and fought and sent one man back to tell the other Marines where we were. So we captured two Japs. We were walking along, we were coming back, and you could hear the Japs coming through the brush,

cashing us. Finally, the two that we captured, it was slow-going. They just tried to drag us so they'd catch up to us. One of my buddies must've done something to him, because there was only left. And he was running with it. Something happened there that he didn't want us to know about. Anyway, we got back to camp safe.

And then we secured the island on patrol. We had a lot of fire fights. I was in the Battle of Tenaru. Previously what we'd done -- somebody was very bright. What we did, we made a circle around the ocean, crossed the Tenaru River, and then that early morning the Japs hit Tenaru. The Battle of Tenaru was really a big battle. We fought there till about 4:30 in the morning. They pulled so many of us out. We went around the fire line, and daybreak came. And the Japs were retreating. And none got away. So we secured that. We spent almost five months of Guadalcanal, I did -- and December 23rd, we left. We went to Melbourne, Australia. We were going to another island to train again for another island. But they decided to take us to Australia because the Japanese were on the northern part of Australia. When we got there, the Japs left. The Australians were more like Americans than I'd ever seen. They were so thankful that we were there. We

spent a couple of months there training. We went to Dandenong. Our company holds the record for going 60 miles out in the jungle to retrain for another island. Course, we didn't stay there long. But we trained enough to prepare for another island. Then we went to Camp Gloucester in the LS-454, I believe it was. Aboard that ship, I met a fella that I went to school with, which is uncanny because you very seldom meet anybody that you knew. He and I had quite a time around the crow's nest. In the middle of the night, we'd bring out hot coffee. We had a lot of nice visits.

Then we landed on Cape Gloucester. And the LST, they'll go right up on the beach. And they dropped their ramps and we charged off of there. I was standing by a Marine with a German Shepherd. A sniper got the German Shepherd. They didn't want to have a dog around anywhere. So they had killed the dog with the sniper shots. Of course, we took off in that island. We'd go back into the jungle. In the hills up there, there was a big waterfall with a big lake on the bottom. It was really beautiful. We stayed there for a few months, and then we went back and landed in Pavuvu. And Pavuvu was -- I mean, you want to talk about water... You'd walk in knee-deep water and it was

horrible. Bugs... We secured that island, and then we went to Finschhafen. And at Finschhafen, it was not so bad. It was dry. Of course, I don't remember too much about that island. We took it, but we didn't stay long. They we went back and trained a little more. They decided to secure Peliliu. They needed the airstrip. And the Admirals in the Army was commuting back and forth, trying to bypass the island and bomb it. They said "They bombed it enough; the Marines will walk in there and take it within a day or two. It'll just be a cakewalk for them." Well, it wasn't quite a cakewalk. We landed on the island. Our company was pinned down at the very strip. In fact, in the museum here they have a pillbox that I swear that I flanked. What it was, they threw a flamethrower at this pillbox. And the flamethrower would go in and come back. They still pinned us down. For some reason, I felt that something's happening. So I ran around the front of the pillbox, got up on the side of the pillbox, halfway up. And I look down. There was a trench going to another pillbox. And that was what it was. They had a hole in the back of that, just like I thought. They had a hole in the back of that pillbox.

So what happened, I got seven Japs there, myself. And they told me that there was eight, but I counted seven. But then we secured that. That was secured, because then we could travel onto another. The second day, we hit a block pillbox. Course, before we got to that, before the pillbox they had rocks and everything on a ledge. And the Japs would come up and they'd fire at us. And then they'd drop back down. Well, my buddy, [Rickner?], got wounded at that time, right by me. Waist-down, he was paralyzed. More about that. Anyway, what we'd do, we'd lower our rifles and see if we could pick them up a little bit more. But we couldn't. So we charged that pillbox. And we secured that pillbox. We had plenty of help to secure that pillbox. But there was plenty of the enemy there. They're all over the place. We finally secured that pillbox. We were up on a cliff. And that night it was so black you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. We ran out of hand grenades. The Japs down below were talking all night to each other. We'd throw rocks down, and then they'd be quiet and they'd shut up. Then we'd throw another rock down, because we didn't have any grenades. We didn't have any more grenades. The next day, we went down in this ravine and we headed for the foot of Bloody Nose Ridge. And Sergeant Major Ainsworth called me over. He says,



"Lynch, you have been written up in the Navy Cross for your first two and a half days of action." He says, "Lieutenant Burk and I will take care of that. For god's sake, take care of yourself." And in the meantime, there were bullets popping around us, snipers shooting at us...

I got back to my squad. Previously, I lost my squad leader on the beach. He was hit right between the eyes. I told the boys, "You've got to hit the beach and roll. You've got to roll. Come on, guys. You can't stand in one position." Then further on, we went on to the foot of the Bloody Nose Ridge, not quite up to it. Well, I ran up to the Bloody Nose Ridge, and there was potholes all over the place. There were dead enemy in every pothole, and some Marines, quite a few Marines. I spent most of the morning pulling out the wounded. Finally, at the last three or four Marines that I pulled out, I had the help from [Carella?], a good Marine, Carella. He and I pulled the last three or four out of there. Then I was pulling the last one out, when I slipped. And a bullet hit me in the helmet and hit me in the head. If it'd been another inch, I would've been dead. I hit the deck and I hit the bac of my head. And to this day, I can't sleep on my back. The right side of my head is very, very sensitive. In the

meantime, I woke up later on a Hospital Ship, a day and a half later. They were taking me to Manus Island, in the Admiralties. They put me in a hospital there, a Field Hospital. One day, I got up and walked out. And I saw this marquee. It gave the history of the island. It told about the Seabees. There was not supposed to be any Japs on that island. Well, they told about the Seabees coming and landing, with the bulldozers and shovels. And they fought the Japs. The Japs came at them, and they fought the Japs and buried them with their bulldozers. And they fought with shovels. That marquee is right there for anybody to see. It tells the history, just like I told you. It was so remarkable to me that these brave men were fighting with bulldozers and shovels and finally secured the island.

Then I came back to the States. I went to Key West, Florida. I was in the hospital there. In the meantime, my Captain [Pope?] and [MacLannis?] were in North Carolina. One day they a company of Marines walk in, and (inaudible) slide and they showed picture. And my Company Commander got the Congressional Medal of Honor. And his Sergeant Major got Navy Cross. So then I was in the hospital. I was in a padded cell for three days, because it took five

guys to hold me down. (laughs) I just lost it. A couple days later, Captain [Loag?] at the hospital called me and said to me, "Dave Lynch, come down here. I want to talk to you." So I went down. He says, "Get your khakis on." So I got my khakis on. I have a picture of this to this day, of Captain Loag pinning the Purple Heart on me. I went back to my camp and thanked him for that. And then when I went back to my camp, the doors were off the hinges and everything like that. The Captain came up missing, and he ordered all Marines back to San Francisco to ship out overseas again. So what happened, one of the Sergeants called and told the Commandant of the Marine Corps that. And he called up and said, "Give every man that gets out to San Francisco a discharge. If they want to ship over or carry on, let them do so." So that was the story there. Then I went back to the office there, where they were working on the doors and everything. I walked through, and the Sergeant that I knew at the desk, he says, "Lynch, just a minute. I have something for you." And he handed me my Silver Star over the desk. He said, "I have something for you." It was the Silver Star. I got it for the fifth day on Peliliu. Captain Pope must've written me up for a citation for that. I'd have much rather have the first one, but I didn't get it. But that's another story. But

Captain Pope never said anything to me about citations or anything. He said I was an hour at the foot of Bloody Nose Ridge. It was practically all morning. That ended that story. Anything else you want?

JL: Anything else you'd like to tell us?

DL: Then I came back from the service. And when I got out of the service, I was having a bunch of trouble with my sleeping. One day, I had to go for help from the hospital. I was having nervous problems. But I finally got over that. My daughter told me one day, "If anybody wants to know about your war experiences, ask me. I'll tell them about the nightmares you have." I've had plenty of those since then. And I still have them. (laughs) But that's another story. After that, thank god I got a job with Sears Roebuck in the furniture department. Later on, I married a lovely lady, Dot. We still work together and love each other. I'm glad the war is over. Thank God.

JL: We certainly appreciate all of your service. I know that, many men who were there, the trauma of all of that is still with them and causes many nightmares and problems. We certainly appreciate that difficulty. During the time you were there, from the beginning at Guadalcanal on, how many months of service did you have out there?

DL: I was on five islands. So I couldn't tell you exact -- but it was five months on Guadalcanal alone. And I want to say something about -- we were on patrol one time. We had a rest on the beach. This was above the Tenaru River. I noticed these mounds. So I pulled on the mounds and there was a piece of canvas there. I forgot to tell you that. There's a piece of canvas there. So I pulled it up and we uncovered a beautiful piece, field piece. I think there were four or five pounds there. So what we did, we reported it. They went up there and dismantled them and put them back, put the canvas back on them, coconuts on the top and everything, just like they were. So when the Japs came in, we figured that that's what they were going to hit, at the top of the Tenaru, because that's the way they were coming from. But think of what would have made a difference if they'd had a few of those guns they would fire at us. But I don't take credit for that. It was just an accident that I found them and the guys helped me. After the thing was all over, I said to myself, "Man, if they ever had those firing on us, we'd have had a much tougher time." So I forgot to tell you that, and I'm sorry. But it's been so many years ago, that it's tough to remember. I've had a lot of other things happen.

JL: These were fairly large gun pieces?

DL: Yes, they were. Small cannons. That's all I can remember.  
Just the prettiest blue you ever saw. Brand new. (laughs)

JL: Of the five months there on Guadalcanal, did you have a  
problem with either malaria or any of the other illnesses  
that were common out there?

DL: I was down two weeks in the bunk with malaria. And two  
days later I got (inaudible). That's the way we had to do  
it. And I always took my Atabrine. When they would give  
us that, we'd be lined up for shots. The Corpsman would  
dagger the shots in the shoulder. We'd have Marines pass  
right out. So what he'd do, he'd bend over and shoot them.  
He'd give them a shot in the shoulder. But we all laughed  
about that, because some of us -- I can take a shot. I can  
watch him do it. Didn't bother me. But that was another  
funny thing that we got a little kick out of. And a lot of  
the boys wouldn't take their Atabrine, and they paid for it  
because they got malaria. One young man went from 190 to  
about 60 pounds. They had to get him off the island. And  
another thing, we had another nice break. We had a friend  
by the name of [Grief?]. His brother was a bomber pilot.  
He'd come in before the airstrip was secure, and he'd fly  
in there with duties for us. That's the only reason that  
somebody told me that we got some of the pictures that we  
got, because he brought cameras in. And then he'd take

them back with him on the plane. So that helped us. I had buddies of mine send the pictures that I have at home to this day.

JL: The airfield itself was a very strategic thing for us to have. And for your participation in securing that, I certainly commend you, because that was critical, for our men to have that airfield.

DL: Our company was on the airstrip. The second day, we had the airstrip pretty well secured. But we had a lot of fire fights. Oh, a lot of fire fights, off and on.

JL: How long were you on Peliliu?

DL: Almost six days of solid fighting. At night on Peliliu -- I never remember Guadalcanal being so black and dark. But Peliliu, at night, it was black. It was really sullen, dark. To me, it was. (laughs) I don't know about anybody else. But you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

JL: Some of the men that I have had the opportunity to interview that were at Peliliu saw very few of the enemy, although they were continuously fired upon. They were so well-hidden that they never saw them or saw them very rarely. What was your experience, aside from the episodes with these pillboxes?

DL: The Japs fought a different fight than they did on any of the islands. They would fight. Then they'd back down. On the other islands, they'd scream and holler. On Tenaru, they'd scream and holler, "Bonzai!" They'd scream and just carry on. On Peliliu, they were quiet. They hit and then they'd go back. We'd charge in, and then they'd fall back again. So that's why we lost a lot more men than we did, because they fought a different battle on Peliliu, altogether different. Of course, the pillbox and the other pillbox, I saw a lot of fighters. From then on, very seldom you'd see them. The sniper that wounded me, I never saw him. I was at the foot of that Bloody Nose Ridge, and their bullets were coming on us. But you didn't see them, because they're a different type of fight. Like I said, they'd hit and fall back, hit and fall back.

JL: You mentioned a few men that you were friends with who were there with you. Was that common? Were you able to make friends and keep friends in the company? Or was the company turning over so rapidly that you really didn't know very many people?

DL: [Batton?] and Cassidy are the ones that got me out. They were with me all the time, from Guadalcanal right on. Hook Robins, a fella by the name of Hook Robins, he was with me all the time. I hear from him constantly now. He lives in



North Florida, not too far from me. The only thing is, I'm trying to get him a Purple Heart. Hook was wounded in the hand. I have a picture of him at home with his hand wrapped. A month and a half he was in the hospital in Australia. He has all the paperwork from the hospital. We're trying to get him a Purple Heart. He hasn't got it yet. We hope to get it for him. Did I tell you about [Carella?]? My friend of mine, Carella, helped me pull the people out of the swamp at Bloody Nose Ridge. He has three sons. They wrote me one day and told me if I would give him any information about his dad helping me -- well, I did. I wrote him and told him just exactly what his dad did to help me. And they got some other information from others. They got it someway to Captain Pope. I didn't have anything to do with Captain Pope at that time. But Captain Pope I think got it all together. And somebody got it to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. And they gave him a Bronze Star. So one day, at a meeting, they had a letter. And one fella mentioned the letter. He says, "I have a letter to read from the Carella brothers." See, his dad had leukemia and didn't tell him. And he died of cancer before he got the Bronze Star, bless his heart. They got the letter and opened it up. They read the letter. "And by the way," he said, "we want to thank Dave

Lynch for helping my dad get a Bronze Star." I felt very, very good about that, because I just wanted him to have something, because he deserved it. See, he just came in on Peliliu. He was a replacement. And he was 17 years old when he went in the Marine Corps. So I'm glad that I was able to do something for another person, for another man.

JL: When did you come back to the States?

DL: Nineteen forty-five. I was discharged in '45. I stayed not quite four years.

JL: What were you studying in college before you went in? What were you planning to major in?

DL: I was just taking the major courses. I wasn't doing anything right at that time. I only went one semester. I played a few football games, and that was it. But I went to class, English. I remember English and typing. But that's about it. I hadn't made a decision what I wanted to do at that time. But I'd had a little help. My dad was in the Calvary in World War I. He was the head of his Calvary group. They had seven horses, and he was in the center. He ended up a Lieutenant Colonel. He was a veterinarian at the end, and I helped him with a lot of things. He set me straight. He didn't think I should go in the Marine Corps. But we had seven kids in the family. Three of us were

Marines, and two Navy. So that's a pretty good record, isn't it? (laughter)

JL: Where did your brothers serve?

DL: My younger brother, he just served here in the States, because he was younger. My other two, the Navy -- the one, Jim, he was aboard a ship. And then my sister, a Marine, she was out in California, had an office out there. She was a Marine also. She ended up being a secretary for the real estate firm, practically the whole state of California. She had a beautiful job. She was a sharp lady. Good Marine, too. (laughter) Anyway, Jack was younger, so he didn't -- but I think that's the guy that's got my uniforms. I don't even know what happened to my blues or any of my uniforms. I don't know what happened to them. My younger brother got the rifles. I used to hunt a lot when I was a kid in Michigan. I got to be a pretty good shot. That's why I know on the rifle range I knew I got a few bullseyes. (laughter) And it's funny that that Sergeant would be honest with me. But we had a bunch of good people. They really were.

JL: We certainly thank you for your service to our country. Your generation certainly did something marvelous for our country. And I appreciate it, as others do.

DL: Thank you very much.

JL: We certainly thank you for coming today, visiting our museum, and certainly we are very appreciative for you sharing your story here in the oral history. So thank you again.

DL: Thank you.

JL: Are there any other vignettes that you can think of that you might like to tell us here at the end? Things that you can recall? Humorous things?

DL: No, not too many. I've told you about everything I laugh about. We didn't have many laughs. The only thing I can tell you is I felt so bad -- I'll tell you a little story about [Brigner?], that got wounded right by me. I lived in Fort Lauderdale. He'd come down to Fort Lauderdale. Hook Robins lived -- he lived for Bell Telephone, Hook did. Brigner would come to see me in a wheelchair. He was married to a nurse, thank god, because she took beautiful care of him. And he always wanted to come down and see me. But then he wanted to get down to the Keys to fish. So Hook would take him out fishing. He'd put that wheelchair in a boat, and away they'd go. And they'd catch fish. He did that for a few years in a row. He'd come down and see me. But that's one story I have to tell you, because he was a good Marine. He spent all the islands with me, up to Peliliu. And to live through five islands, you're lucky to

come out of it alive. I count my blessings every day. I think about it sometimes during the day. (crying) And I just can't believe I'm still alive. And I told him, I said to myself, when I got aboard that Hospital Ship, when I woke up, "If I ever get out of this island, I'm going to be the happiest man in the world." Well, I've been happy. I still suffer some, but I've still been happy. So that's another story, with Brigner, because they were such good Marines. I was very fortunate to be surrounded with a group of just good -- they trained well and they fought well. And they were excellent Marines. I couldn't say enough about them.

JL: During your experiences on the islands, did you come across any of the Officers that were noteworthy? Did you get to meet any of those guys?

DL: No, I didn't meet any of them. No, I never did. I never saw many Officers. Even my Lieutenant of our platoon, Lieutenant Burk, I saw him when we were doing our marching and things. But I can honestly say I never saw Captain Pope, even, during my fights. Where he came from, I'll never know. My Company Commander, Stevenson, he was the Company Commander up at Peliliu. And then Pop took over as Captain of our company. And then Stevenson went to Assistant Battalion Commander with Chesty Puller. And I

never saw Chesty Puller, either. He always says he was on the frontlines, but he wasn't on my frontlines. I still have letters from Major Stevenson. He answered my two or three letters. I thank god that he thought highly of me. I told you he volunteered me to stay. He's told his family about me. He says, "You know what the Stevenson family thinks of you, Dave? Very highly." He must've told his youngsters about me. And his son, I gave him a lot of material; his son wrote a book.

One thing about people writing books: they mention the Officers more than they do Enlisted Men. It's a sad thing, but that happens. I'm not complaining; don't get me wrong. But I've helped several people that I've given interviews to. And I know I forget a lot of things, because it's been a long time. But I've helped a few people, like Colonel [Donovan?] out of Washington, D.C. He interviewed me in 2008. And there's another fella there that got in touch with me. He's writing a book. And I helped him with a few things. He said he'd give me a free book, so (laughs) I'll accept it.

JL: We certainly appreciate what you have done for our country and certainly your life. You're an example for all of us, so we appreciate that.

DL: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

(break in audio)

JL: This is a continuation of the interview with Mr. David Lynch. He is going to tell us an additional story.

DL: We were on a hill by Henderson Field. We were on Zero Day, they called it. You never saw so many Jap planes in the sky in your life. We stood up on that hill and we were cheering them on. It looked like a football game. I can't tell the time; it seemed like forever. But the planes were flying right over our heads. And finally, all the Zeros were knocked out of the sky. We had the best pilots. And it was quite a firefight, but here we are. Can you imagine a group of Marines standing on a hill, cheering planes fighting up there? They didn't bother about strafing us. They were fighting each other. And then one night -- it seemed like it happened all night -- all the sky was lightened up with the ships. Our ships had a fight with the Jap ships. There was all kinds of cruisers and battlewagons. They called it Iron Bottom Sound, because there was flames all over. The ships would come in and knock each other out of the water. Well, all these ships ended up, naturally, in the bottom. And they call it Iron Bottom Sound. And I forgot to tell you about those two stories. But it was very impressive. Our Marine unit was

really impressed on both of those occasions. That helped a little bit to give you a little encouragement of what was going on.

END OF AUDIO FILE