

## Al Adkins Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 25th of May, 2012. I am interviewing Mr. Al Adkins Jr. at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical Information Related to This Site. Well, Al, let me thank you for spending the time with us this morning to share your World War II experiences, and I'd like to get it started by having you introduce yourself. Give us your full name, date and place of birth, and we'll take it from there.

ALBERT ADKINS JR.: Okay. Full name -- Albert Samuel Adkins Jr. I was born at 1719 East Missouri Street in El Paso, Texas (laughs). I say that because historically the house I was born in was my grandfather's and it was the last place in East El Paso. They had Tent City across from there where all the (inaudible) lived. So, it's kind of interesting in that part.

EM: Yeah. What was your birthdate?

AA: March 21st, 1924.

EM: All right. So, you are 88 years old.

AA: Right.

EM: Okay. My math is still good.

AA: Good. Good (laughs).

EM: And, what did your dad do for a living?

AA: My dad was with an outfit called [Mumson?] Nothing Can Rhyme Wholesale Hardware Stores in El Paso, Texas, that did all kind of hardware.

EM: So was he in retail, or?

AA: He was in wholesale. In fact, when I was 16 years old, I traveled with him around the area to help him carry his catalogues that he had. They had catalogues.

EM: Really? So, the area was what? Just the (inaudible) area out there in western...

AA: It was El Paso and east, west, and north, around that area. He'd travel -- learned he was Sales Manager there later.

EM: And your mother, was she, I guess back then, housekeeper or what?

AA: No. She worked for American Smelting and Refining Company, and was the first female secretary that American Asarco ever had. So, it's kind of interesting too.

EM: I've seen those old facilities -- those old Asarco facilities at El Paso. There's still a lot of it there. I don't know whether it's still operational or not.

AA: Well, it's down now, and they're leveling it. They have. Yeah. But she worked there before my dad and mom were married. So, I then worked there all my life.

EM: So two working parents, which is unusual.

AA: Two working parents. Well, I lived with my grandparents at the time. That was back of course in '24. That was during the Depression, and how everybody lived. He lived up in Hurley, New Mexico, for a while. We did when I was a little tiny...

EM: Mm-hm. Hurley?

AA: Hurley, New Mexico. It's right out of Silver City. Kenny Copper Company plant.

EM: There's a copper mine over there. That's right. That's right. And what about brothers and sisters?

AA: I have a sister that was two years older than I am. She's passed away here a few years ago. Then I have a younger sister that's 13 years younger than I am, and in fact she called me last night. She calls me every Thursday, but she lives in El Paso.

EM: So, you went to school there in Hurley?

AA: I went to school. In fact, when the war started, I had just started Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy there at the university. I graduated in '42 from Austin High School there. So, I was...

EM: Okay. So, you graduated from high school. You were old enough that you had graduated from high school before the war started.

AA: Yeah. 1942 was when I graduated. Well, the war started in '41, wasn't it?

EM: Well, that's right. That's right. So you graduated from high school just after the war started.

AA: Yeah, just after the war started, and went to the mines in the summer, and then that's when I decided.

EM: So, if I remember from reading your memoirs, you were Yell Leader and everything else, huh?

AA: Yeah I was pretty active. I was active at Austin High. I tried to play football. Then I broke my leg in my wrangling, and then...

EM: That put an end to that.

AA: Yeah. So I became a Yeller after that, and then I went to Mines, and started mines, and was Yell Leader at Mines.

EM: What was your goal at Mines, to be a mining engineer, or?

AA: No. Actually I took business administration and to be perfectly frank, I didn't know what hell I wanted (laughs).

EM: Which is not unusual for a freshman, I would say, but I was just testing you.

AA: Except to have fun.

EM: Well, that's awfully important isn't it?

AA: It really was then. Now, I'll admit, and one of the things that I always made plain to, and think it might be in my memoirs, is that if there hadn't have been Marine Corps, I'd have never made it, through my education and so forth.

EM: Because you were headed down the wrong path.

AA: No. Having fun. I was in there. Well, when the war was on, I never... So, I was having fun.

EM: Do you remember December the 7th, and what you were doing, and your family, and what have you?

AA: Well, I don't remember a lot of the details except I had been over to Warez, which we went to with a gal named Grace Mary Priest, who later I married. And the next morning, December the 7th, I slept in a little late, but I usually woke up and then that's when I heard about the attack, and I know that my wife reminded me. She remembered that a little clearer than I did, because her dad woke her up at one o'clock, I think they said, on Sunday morning, because

he slept in late, and she said, "Yeah. He told me what happened." I didn't pay a whole lot of attention at that time.

EM: I've had a lot of people say, "You know. When they said Pearl Harbor, we didn't even know where that was."

AA: Well, the reason I kind of remembered it, was because my dad was in the Marine Corps in World War I, and he was -- where was he stationed? Pearl Harbor. So, he was there the whole war. He was in the Marine Corps about a year and a half, I guess. Of course, he was an athlete. I'm not. He was an athlete and he played football, and he basketball, and he ran track, and he did all that kind of stuff in the Marine Corps. So, that's stuck in my mind as a kid. You know.

EM: Well, now, you weren't [hatched?] for the draft, or anything like that? Hadn't they pretty much started rounding up people, and...

AA: Well, yeah -- I'm probably repeated myself, but at the time, they weren't drafting Marines. I don't know about Navy. They were just drafting Army, and so when I met his friends. Like I said, since I've written this, I get myself...

EM: Tell me like you didn't write it. Just tell me what you remember. I understand. You're polluted by what you wrote (laughs).

AA: My mind. Yeah. Exactly. Anyway, so as time went on -- of course, I thought about the Marine Corps, because my dad was the key there, and then I talked with the different guys, and I was, like I said, we ought to do something, and then I ran across this [Ed Layman?], because my car stalled on me. I had a little red Ford that I drove, and he stopped, and he starts to help me, and he said, "Hey, let's go join the Navy," and I said, "Hell, I don't want to join the Navy." I said, "I'm going to join the Marine Corps." He didn't care. Whatever. That sounded better to me. He says, "Well, okay. I think this Ed -- I mean, Lin Sullivan is thinking about joining the Navy. Why don't we check with him?" So, we called him, and he says, "Well, I don't know. He might. Well how about the Marine Corps," and so they said, "Oh, the Marine Corps, why would you want to do that?" "Well, Al said that his dad was in there, and it was a good outfit. Of course, the fact that he was over playing football during the war."

EM: Might have been a little advantage.

AA: Yeah (laughs), but anyway, he says, "Oh, okay." So, then as I'm recalling the stories, we talked to a gal that I was dating. This was -- in fact, the closest friends of my wife, and her cousin was the Recruiting Sergeant for the Marine Corps. So, that's a good idea. We'll go down and talk to Harry. So, Harry Lee -- that was his name. I had forgotten about that one. Harry Lee talked to us and we decided that we wanted to be Marine flyers. That's we wanted. Everybody wanted the glamor. Off we'd go into the wide blue yonder.

EM: Right. Right. Marine pilot, it doesn't get any better than that.

AA: So, as I recall, we said, "Yeah, Harry, that's what we want to be. We want to be flyers, and we'd like to be in the Marine Corps, because that's -- his dad was in it, and my dad was in it, and all us want to be flyers, which we think is a little more glamorous." And, okay. So, Harry says, "Okay. That's good. We'll sign you up." I said, "Well, I have to check with my parents, but I think they don't mind me joining the Marine Corps, but we'll check." So, we -- he said, "Okay. Come back. Check with your parents. We'll give you a couple of forms." I had a sheet or something to fill out, and I talked to my mom and dad, and



they -- my mom was a little bit upset, but she says, "Well, I mean, let me check with you dad and we'll see." So, of course, I was 18 years old, and was in school, and they'd like to see me finish school, but I said, "Well, I'm not doing well anyway," and they happened to know both this Ed Layman and Lin Sullivan. So, we went back to the recruiting office and said, "Okay. Now we've decided. We're going to go ahead and join up, but we do want to get in the air wing of the Marines, and we want to know how to go about that. What do you think?" Since I was dating his cousin, I knew he'd shoot straight with me.

EM: Yeah. You figured you had an in here (laughs).

AA: We had an in here, because he'd help us get what... And he says, "No problem, guys. All you do is we'll sign you up, and when you're signed up, and then you'll go to proper boot camp, and then right after you get out of boot camp, then they give you a choice to where you want to be, and then all you just say what you want to get into, and then..." We said, "Oh, is that it?" "Yeah."

EM: It's that easy.

AA: "That's easy. Okay. That's great." So we were all enthusiastic. So we signed up, and we weren't sworn in. We were signed up in El Paso, and then we had to go to

Phoenix to be inducted, so to speak. So we rode in the men's room on the train, because it was all full of (inaudible). I tried to sleep, and it had little chairs -- a bench-like thing in the crapper, and...

EM: It seems like you'd get interrupted from time to time trying to sleep in there (laughs).

AA: Yeah. Well, I was. In fact, some sidelight on that, when we got to Phoenix, and were sworn in and they checked us out, they gave this Ed Layman an eye test, like they gave us all, and he couldn't read that thing, and says, "Well, hell, you can't expect me to do that. I was up all night in the damn train, and I couldn't sleep," and so forth, and so -- "Well, okay." So they gave him a little extra help on the eye chart (laughs). He passed the eye chart.

EM: I think they needed bodies.

AA: They needed bodies. Hey, they wouldn't have taken me if they hadn't needed bodies at the time (laughs).

EM: Now, had you already broken your ankle?

AA: I had broken my ankle.

EM: But you were healed, and everything.

AA: It had healed, but I just a little bit of a limp, is all, and so forth. So we passed it. I think my mom still --

just since we're reminiscing -- I think my mom signed because she didn't think I'd make it anyway (laughs).

EM: She probably thought you'd end up with that broken ankle and stuff.

AA: Yeah. My arm -- I didn't. But anyway (inaudible). So, and then we went on into San Diego, of course, and they gave us our uniforms and this and that.

EM: That was your first visit to the West Coast. I mean, you had never been to the West Coast?

AA: I had never been to the West Coast.

EM: So, was it an eye opener for you, or what?

AA: No. Well, I had heard enough, and we had relatives that lived over there, and so forth. So, we were prepared for what we were going to get into.

EM: You knew you were going to be a Marine flyer (laughs).

AA: I was going to be a Marine flyer (laughs). Little did I know.

EM: Little did you know.

AA: But anyway, we got through boot camp.

EM: So, how was boot camp for you? Was it tough? Was it easy? How'd your buddies do?

AA: It was tough. We had a bunch of Dallas Texans that was in our platoon. We had a good group, and the same old Marine

Corps stuff. They break you down as much as they can, and then they build you back up to where you --

EM: Reconstruct you.

AA: -- reconstruct you. Yes it was. Yeah, and they really do, as you know. So, anyway, we had -- it worked out good. I had to do a little scrubbing with a toothbrush, and I had to do -- one of the funny things -- this Ed Layman and I, who as a sidelight, went all the way through the war together. And Lin got separated from us right after boot camp, but he complained because I was on the upper bunk, and he was on the lower bunk, and I was always dropping stuff on him or something, and he bitched a lot about my dropping stuff on him and what have you, but...

EM: Now, where was this boot camp?

AA: San Diego. We were in San Diego. So, right there.

EM: So, they got a huge spread, and they got barracks, and...

AA: Oh, yeah. We had a good little barracks. It was just two tier. Well, they weren't barracks. They were almost like Quonset huts, as I recall. Yeah, because they had a squad -- a platoon in each section of them. I should remember some of those things. Anyway, it worked out good. The only thing that I felt bad about is that I didn't make sharpshooter, because I did a lot of hunting, and I was a

kid, and I didn't make sharpshooter. I had been on the firing range. I did good, but then when they had the final test for it, the guy -- I kept getting Maggie's drawers, as they called it. You know, when you're missing the target?

EM: Maggie's drawers, what's that about now?

AA: Well, when you miss your target, they give you -- when you find out.

EM: They kind of let you know you missed it (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

AA: Yeah. They let you know you missed it. They wave what they called Maggie. It was a red flag, but we called it Maggie's drawers.

EM: Maggie's drawers -- I get it.

AA: Maggie's drawers, and the only time I was really shook up, was when I had gotten my score back, and I had missed the target. And so I didn't qualify, but then the sergeant there in charge says, "What you didn't do, was you didn't set the windage and all on your rifle correct, because you shot a little hole right there just to the right of the God damn target, kid." He said, "You'd have made expert, but it's too late now. We can't go through that again." I said, "Okay. God..." It was disappointing, because this Ed Layman and I -- he got sharpshooter, and Sully got

second, and I didn't make it, and I'll never forget that.

How...

EM: It's still bothering you!

AA: Right! It's still bothering. It's my Goddamn pride. God -- how could I? There's no such thing as [blowing shit?] in the Marine Corps, because you know -- if I'd have told them, they would have believed me anyway. It is a true story. I got to say that now, but...

EM: But as far as the physical -- the forced marches, and the running and all that, you did okay?

AA: We did okay. I got a little tired, but that's all I could do, but it's a matter of pride. You've got to keep going, and pride helps an awful lot, when you're with two other guys that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

EM: An important driver. Yes. It is.

AA: It really is, because Ed was in real tip-top shape, and had done some boxing, and Sully was a trackman. So, it kind of pushes you, because I was the Yell leader. So what do you expect to Yell lead us in, anyway? So, I had to do it.

EM: You had to step up to the plate. So, after you got out of boot camp, did they offer your choice of things?

AA: No. They sent Ed Layman and I -- they sent Sully to radio school -- this Lin Sullivan -- and they sent Ed Layman and

I to Hawthorne, Nevada. Now, I don't know if you know about Hawthorne, Nevada. It was the largest naval ammunition depot in the world at that time.

EM: I'm sure it was a highly populated area, right (laughs)?

AA: Yeah. In fact, I visited there not too many years ago with my wife. We went back through there.

EM: Has it changed?

AA: It's an Army base now. The Army has it. It's kind of surprising, but you know they had those igloos and so forth, and that was quite an experience we had.

EM: So, that's in winter of '43.

AA: Yeah '43 -- winter of '43. It was in the cold of December. We got there in -- I think -- January of '43. It was a good experience. I mean, that's how I told the story in this thing, about how I got on the... Number one: I learned to drink coffee, and they'd say, "What do you mean you learned to drink coffee?" I said, "Well, when I was a kid, they used to feed you castor oil all the time, and my grandmother always put it in coffee with cream and sugar, so that I wouldn't taste the castor oil. So, up until I did guard duty around the mine-filled plant in Hawthorne, I couldn't drink coffee, but it got so cold there that I'd

drink black coffee without sugar and cream." Well -- and so forth.

EM: As long as you didn't have any castor oil in it, it wasn't bad.

AA: It wasn't bad at all. So I drank coffee from then on. I still do. I had two cups this morning.

EM: It turns out it's a health food now. I know this, because I drink. That's what I'm drinking right now (laughs).

AA: It's funny how those things go. Anyway, so...

EM: So you were stimulated by this guard duty assignment.

AA: Oh, yeah. Well, and then I got on the mounted patrol. I don't know whether that's interesting or not, but I was from Texas. Well, the next thing I know, I'm assigned to a horse patrol. I thought, "Hell..." I didn't even know if I could ride a horse or not.

EM: You were from Texas.

AA: I'm from Texas. So I was assigned. I told my sergeant -- I said, "I know how to ride a horse," because I had a good friend who lived across the street from me whose father had been a rancher, lost his ranch, and he had a horse, and so I learned how to saddle (inaudible), but that's all right. I told him, "I don't know that I could handle that." "Yeah, you can handle it. Just go ahead." But I had a



four o'clock assignment -- 4:00 a.m. -- to go out and relieve the guard out at this area -- [mine-filled plants area?]. So, I got this horse. I saddled it, and rode out there. It wasn't too bad riding out, but then we had a rising gun. I don't know if you remember. We carried a rising gun and a flare pistol, and a rising gun is a very cheap Thompson submachine gun that they built during the war that had a clip of 20 rounds in it that they used for guard duty, because it was light and had a (inaudible) -- an (inaudible) flare gun. So, I'm going out. I meet this guy, and he hands me the rising gun and the cartridge belt, and the flare gun. Then I go on out and do my rounds where he told me to go around. So, I went around, and then it got -- the horse seemed to be kind of hard to handle. You know. Well, I didn't know better. So, I finally got him to go around the way it was, and he did. Well, then it was time to go back to the guard shack, and Goddarn, that horse took off. He was headed back to the barn, and I couldn't hold him back. I couldn't hold him back, and I had a hell of time trying to get that damn horse. Well, and here's a guy that's waiting. He's got his horse. He's waiting (inaudible), and I had unbuckled cartridge belt, and took

this thing, and handed it to him, and I couldn't get that horse to --

EM: As you went by (laughs).

AA: -- as I went by, and he grabbed it as I went by. I'll forget that, and then just as we got to where the barn was. He hid right around the corner of the barn, and tried to knock -- he hit my leg, but he tried to knock me off of him. He tried to scrape me off, and then finally we got there and Goddamnit. I pulled on the damn thing. I got off that horse, and I was mad. The God damned sergeant of the guard came in there -- "Hey, you son of a bitch, what are you doing? That's the sergeant of the guard's horse. You're not supposed to saddle that horse, and you're not supposed to ride that. There's only one man. That horse is named Napoleon, and he's the only one that can ride that." Hell, I didn't know. I said, "I didn't know."

EM: Well, you rode him.

AA: I rode him, but I'll never ride him again (laughs). It is really funny. I thought he was going to throw me in the Goddarn brig, but then he was too pissed off I guess to worry about it. He says, "All right. Get back there." So, anyway...

EM: Old Napoleon.

AA: Old Napoleon. Isn't it funny how the little things. You don't remember a lot, but then you remember the name of the damn horse. I can't remember the name of the sergeant, but I remember the name of the damn horse (laughs). Then the next one -- just because we're talking -- the next time, I had a nice gentle horse, but we'd go around the mine filling plant, where they store all that stuff, in those igloos.

EM: Yeah. They're almost bunkers.

AA: Yeah. Almost bunkers, and he kept stopping at this one bunker. "Oh, what the heck? Come on. Let's go." And there'd be a sergeant of the guard that would be around every now and then checking, and well, finally, I looked in it. It damn near an empty bunker, and I said, "What in the hell is that?" Shows you how naive I was. So, I finally when I got off (inaudible), I said, "That God dang horse," -- I can't remember his name. I remember Napoleon's, but I don't remember that horse, and I said to one my buddies -- I said, "That God dang horse, he'd stop at that igloo, and I thought what the hell was the matter with that thing." He said, "Well, that's where we usually crap out and take a little nap when we're..." I said, "Oh, well that's what (inaudible)."

EM: He was waiting for you to hop off and take a nap.

AA: He wanted to take a nap. So, he'd whinny or something when (laughs), if he heard the car. So, funny experiences that you don't think about all the time, but that's when I found out what that bunker was for, but I was too much of a Marine. I'm not going to go to sleep on my duty.

EM: No. You obviously hadn't been around long enough.

AA: I thought they were going to write me up, but it was cold out there. Goddamn it was cold. You know. They had a bottomless lake that this thing was built around, and Goddamnit, you'd get off that damned horse, and you couldn't even move. You had all that clothing on.

EM: Well, at least you had warm clothing, huh?

AA: Yeah. We had warm clothing. We had those -- I can't remember what the hell they called them.

EM: So, at this point, you don't know whether you're just going to go through the whole war on guard duty. You don't have a clue, do you?

AA: No. We didn't. Then they shipped us off.

EM: Well, did you ask to be shipped off somewhere, or did they just...

AA: No. No. They just called your names off, and said, "Okay, now. You're all are assigned to so-and-so." And then we went to Camp Elliott for training. Layman and I went.

EM: Where's Camp Elliott?

AA: That's down in San Diego. It was in San Diego. It was just north of San Diego, but that Naval air station right by there. I don't know. I don't think there's -- I would have thought that if there's a Camp Elliott, I think they closed that in the meantime, but that's where we did all our training there.

EM: But you still don't know what you're going to be when you grow up, do you?

AA: No. I didn't. Of course, they just told us. We didn't have a chance to say whether or not we'd like to go. They didn't tell me.

EM: You didn't go down to the list to check off first choice, second choice (laughs)?

AA: No. They didn't have any of that. I understand they do now.

EM: Well, you know. That's volunteer Army and Marines. That's different. Yeah.

AA: That's different, but they sure didn't.

EM: So, they started training you for something but you don't know what.

AA: We didn't know for sure what, but we did a lot of -- well, long distance marches, and all of this. They kept us in pretty good shape.

EM: Was this more intensive than boot camp was?

AA: No. It really wasn't. It wasn't harder in the respect of the conditioning, it seemed to me at that time, but -- because maybe I was out of shape, because I was riding around on a horse instead of...

EM: Well, yeah, you had too much guard duty and got...

AA: (laughs) But it was good.

EM: So, how long did that last? Just a few months, or weeks, or what?

AA: No. I think it was about four weeks, I believe. You know. I'd have to look. My notes might even tell me, but about six weeks -- four to six weeks of training, and then we went on board the USS -- I know it had 8000 troops on it.

EM: The USS United States, right?

AA: Yes, USS United States. That's right.

EM: I read your memoirs.

AA: Thank you. That's why I'm in this retirement home, because -- that's what we all say, "Well, that's why I'm here. I can't remember."

EM: Anyhow, it was a luxury liner, and they were using them as troop carriers.

AA: Yeah, we had 8000 troops on that damn thing, and we had... Can you imagine? We loaded it.

EM: Wow. Are these all Marines, or?

AA: I think there was... I know they went 30 knots in that damn thing, and they didn't have an escort when we --

EM: Because you're fast. Escorts can't keep up.

AA: Yeah. Hawaii -- Oahu -- is where we landed.

EM: So, this is still in '43.

AA: Yeah. It's still in '43.

EM: So, we haven't elapsed two years since Pearl Harbor was attacked yet. So, what did it look like? Still banged up around there? Is there still stuff poking out of the water in the harbor and everything?

AA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It looked pretty rough, and we went -- again, to reminisce to try and think back -- we went to Oahu, and it was interesting in that damn, big boat, because I remember going down in the ship. And there was a little built-in swimming pool, because like you say, it

used to be a real luxury liner, and I was fascinated by the fact that down in the lower deck, there's a little swimming pool, but they didn't allow us to use it. We didn't swim laps.

EM: Did they feed you okay? I mean, how was the food arrangement?

AA: We stood up. They had these counter things on posts, where you stood up to eat. The only bad part about it was there were some people that didn't handle their food very well, and there was some seasickness around. We had one guy, I think he stayed in his sack the whole time almost, because he just got -- he stayed. Fortunately, I didn't. The only time I got seasick was between Oahu and then when we went to Maui when we joined the 22nd Marines, and I was on there just reading, and boy, I almost threw up. I had to... Of course, they used to do some fishing and all, and so they always looked at the horizon. So, I did have to stop reading, and look at the horizon, and well, that helped. It really did. It's a funny thing.

EM: So, did you do more training while you were in the Hawaiian Islands, or?

AA: Well, when I first went to Oahu, before we were assigned to the 22nd, it was just... I know that's where I had my mess



duty, because of the Adkins -- same old crap. Ed Layman and I were in the Marine Corps the whole time, and he never got mess duty, and I got it all the time.

EM: You needed to change your name to Ladkins (laughs).

AA: Ladkins. Yeah. (laughs) Oh, shoot, but I did. In fact, I almost started to strive to be a cook, because the guys that worked the damn mess hall so much, they said, "Well, why don't you -- we need some cooks." "Oh, I don't want to be a cook."

EM: "I want to go out and get shot at."

AA: Yeah -- "I want to go out and get shot at." Anyway, then we went to Maui.

EM: So, while you were stationed on Oahu, you were off the boat now.

AA: We were off the boat and we were there, but not too long. I don't know why, but then I guess they had just replacements that were coming in and they were assigned to different places for different regiments and what have you. So, that's when we went to Maui, and then that's where we were trained more, with the 22nd. We were replacements for their group who had been on Samoa. They were on American Samoa. The 22nd Marines were before...

EM: Had they been on Guadalcanal and all that?

AA: No. They hadn't. See, we went to the 22nd. They had been to Samoa, and then came to Maui to pick up -- as I recall -- to pick up replacements, of which I was one, because they had a lot of moo moo, elephantiasis, and stuff -- problems -- in the Samoan Islands, and so they'd lost quite a few through elephantiasis -- moo moo, as they called it.

EM: What'd they call it? Moo moo?

AA: Moo moo.

EM: Is this where your legs swelled up?

AA: You looked like you Goddarned -- I saw a picture -- looked like a Goddarned elephant's leg, and so forth.

EM: What causes that?

AA: It's a mosquito. I understand. As I recall, that's what they trained. It was a mosquito that carried whatever it was that caused the swelling.

EM: Now did you know any of the guys that were in the 22nd when you joined up? Had they been victims of it?

AA: Some of them, but not bad. Evidently, I don't know of them. I never did the (inaudible). I know that this friend of mine had had some problems with it, but they lost a few there because of that, of course, and malaria.

EM: So, you were replacements for the 22nd Marines, and had they been in combat?

AA: They hadn't been in combat. They just got a lot of sickness, and so forth. I think at one time, the 22nd was in Alaska. I don't know why I get that, or maybe some of the guys that were in Alaska, they had joined the 22nd on Samoa. I really can't remember all the history of that. I got a book from this guy -- *A View from a Foxhole* -- and he was in the 22nd Marines then, and he went all through the same (inaudible), and I didn't know him, but he wrote a book on it, and it was kind of interesting.

EM: So, when you went in as a replacement in Maui, was there more training done, or?

AA: Oh, yeah. We did more training.

EM: Was that when they formed the 6th.

AA: No. That came later. See, we went from there -- from Maui -- to the Marshall Islands as a bastard outfit, as they called them at the time, because they were just (inaudible), and that's when we hit the Marshall Islands. Well, in fact, I wasn't even... I was accompanied, but we had a 20mm cannon. I don't know they called us, because that's how hit the beach, out of (inaudible), and...

EM: Well, I have one question to ask you. I'm looking from the parts of your body that I can see, and I don't see any tattoos. There it is! Tell me the tattoo story.

AA: (laughs) We were in Honolulu and there were five of us -- six of us, in fact -- that were going on liberty -- first liberty we'd had in Honolulu, and I don't know. We were on a truck to take us into Honolulu itself, and one of the guys says, "Hey, guys, let's go get screwed and tattooed!"

EM: I've heard that terminology before (laughs).

AA: You've heard it? "Well, all right!" So, we got a bunch of imitation whiskey that they had there. They made it. I don't know what they made it out of, but it was literally imitation whiskey.

EM: So, where did you get it from?

AA: Hell, I don't know. The guys went to some store, and they'd... You know. So, we started drinking the Goddarned (inaudible) -- the hooch -- and going on. Well, so we went to a tattoo parlor.

EM: Do you remember the tattoo parlor well, or not?

AA: I remember fairly well. I remember I was (inaudible) tattooed --

EM: You were feeling good.

AA: -- and I, in fact, they said, "You're going to faint." I said, "I ain't going to faint." He said, "Well, take a break." [This guy did this?]. So, he finished the tattoo, and -- "all right, let's go." So, we went to one of these

houses and they smelled our breath, and they didn't let us in. They take too long, but that's a fact. That's what they say: "You take too much to drink. You take too long."

EM: You need to move them through, right?

AA: You've got to move them through (laughs).

EM: It's all about volume (laughs).

AA: So I got stewed and tattooed, but I never got screwed (laughs). I got to tell you another sideline story about... You want to turn that off, or?

EM: Well, or I can leave it on. It's up to you.

AA: Well, no. I don't care, because this one guy -- it's history, but one guy went to one of these things, because we never would go back, and he says, "You went up there and there and they wouldn't let you?" He says, "Goddarn it." He says, "You know what I did? I went up there and I just wanted to be sure I got to this gal, and I started playing with her a little bit, and I Goddarn ejaculated before I got to, and they still charged me." I said, "Oh, you had to pay to play with yourself?" I said, "Hell, I can do that in Goddarned tent (laughs)." We kidded the hell out of him. Mark of a man, and I'll never forget him saying that.

EM: Oh, my gosh. So, anyhow, you didn't faint when you got your tattoo.

AA: No, but then (inaudible). We had a little more to drink, and then who knew what there?

EM: I bet you had a hangover the next the day, didn't you?

AA: I had a hangover. Yes.

EM: That must have been nasty hooch. I don't even want to know what was in it.

AA: And so, we got back. (inaudible). I wonder why I did that? It was a little...

EM: Well, you still got it. So, I guess you're...

AA: I still got it. I still got it. I fortunate enough I put it up high enough so I didn't have to show it off.

EM: That's right. You can at least, when you wear a short sleeve shirt, it covers it up. Doesn't it?

AA: That's right, and now it wouldn't make any difference, but in those days, it was a little bit... Now days, my God, if you don't have a tattoo, and even if you're a woman, and you don't have a tattoo...

EM: It's standard operation now.

AA: But at that time it was a little bit...

EM: So, after you joined the 22nd Maui, you guys shipped out somewhere. Where did you go?

AA: Yeah. We shipped out. Well, we trained at Maui, and then we went aboard, and we went to the Marshall Islands, and then from the Marshall Islands -- after the Marshall Islands -- we went...

EM: So, which island in the Marshall Islands were you on? Do you remember?

AA: Well, we were at Kwajalein. I had celebrated my -- what was it? My nineteenth birthday on Kwajalein.

EM: And, had Kwajalein been secured already?

AA: It had been secured. Yeah. We hit two islands: (inaudible) and Enewetak. Our outfit -- we went and cleared it out. I remember. That was where I was telling people -- that we were told -- [I don't take any of the prisoners?], and they had those spider traps, as they called them. Do you remember that?

EM: Now, this was on Enewetak?

AA: That was Enewetak.

EM: Tell me about the whole Enewetak experience. So, you guys -- was this an amphibious landing? Just...

AA: Yeah. It was an amphibious landing, but it was Higgins boats. That's all.

EM: Okay. Higgins boats off of a troop carrier. So, you lower them into the water.

AA: So we were going through that Goddarned -- we had to go up and down those damned nets on the...

EM: The rope nets?

AA: Those ones. Yeah. It was tough, because on the other landings we had the alligators. You know, and we rolled on them. Getting in those Goddarned Higgins boats, that was...

EM: Yeah. So, what were you? You were a scout, or a...

AA: At that point, I was a rifleman, just to protect the guys that handled the 20mm cannons that we used at the time. So, we were there just to protect them -- defend them and all that on the landing, and you know. I don't remember a whole lot about that. I remember...

EM: Was it heavily resisted, or not?

AA: Well, it wasn't heavily resisted. We secured it in a pretty short length of time, but yeah. So, I don't remember personally any heavy fighting. Some of the guys - - I don't think we lost too many men there, if I'm correct on that.

EM: So Enewetak that's just an atoll, right? It's just a small island.

AA: It's just a small island, low lying. You look at it, and they had shelled it so well that there was a couple of



three palm trees. The rest of them were all shot down.

The thing is, they were just dug in. I'd say there were more sniper type of people. I don't remember the...

EM: So, tell me about the spider holes.

AA: Well, what they did, they dug a hole, and they were down in there, and then they had on their hats.

EM: This is individual Japanese soldiers?

AA: Individual Japanese soldiers, so you've got to be careful, because they would let you go through, and then reach up and bam. The snipers reach up. Instead of shooting out of the trees, they were shooting in what they called spider holes, and I don't remember. I don't know how that word came back to me, because I don't remember reading about them, even, but anyway, I remember them. So, they'd pop up. So, we got to looking for spots where it didn't look just right, and I remember a couple of them we dug up and killed the Jap that was in those spider holes, because we got smart enough to where we could spot them pretty well.

EM: So, this is an up-close-and-personal type of a thing.

AA: Yeah. It was kind of personal at times.

EM: Did you personally kill any Japanese?

AA: I don't know. I shot, and a couple of us shot, and I don't know whether I killed him, or he killed, but you know what

I mean. Not many. Not many. Like I said, it wasn't a heavy, Sugar Loaf Hill type of battle (laughs).

EM: Right. We're going to get to that. I know that was a different scenario. So, did they land heavy equipment: tanks and the whole nine yards?

AA: Well, we had the small types. I think they had a couple on that -- I'm trying to think. I get my battles mixed up. I get my Guams and my...

EM: Now, did you go into Enewetak as a bastard outfit still? You weren't attached yet?

AA: Yeah. We were a bastard outfit. It was just the 22nd Naval Regiment.

EM: Did you go in with some Army guys, or other Marines?

AA: I think there was other Army guys, but I think on Enewetak we were the lone... They had all those lagoons, and it was one, and as I recall, we were the only ones on Enewetak, but I -- you know. Somebody can call me a liar on that. I'll have to ask my buddy Ainsworth. He'd tell me. There's a guy that I still correspond with. I thought I'd tell you that you ought to get in touch with him, because he keeps telling me things now days that I did that I don't remember.

EM: Where does he live?

AA: He lives in San Diego. In fact, I've got his address.

EM: Well, after the recording is over, give me his contact information.

AA: Yeah. Seriously, just recently, he was telling me, "Well now, when you got shot in the butt, I was right behind you." "You were what?" Yeah. He says, "I remember when you got shot in the butt." That'll be a good story.

EM: Yeah. That will be a whole other story. I'm sure. We'll get the real story from him, huh (laughs)? Now, you had mentioned in your memoir -- I'm not trying to go back for the memoir, but it helps structure. You had an experience which I find particularly interesting. Your exposure to a black regiment where you went, and to me the subject of the segregated Army, and Marines, and everything, is a real historical issue, and I'd like for you to tell me your experience.

AA: Well, I had a guy -- darn it, I don't know I have his name written in my memoirs or not, but he was a good friend of some of the colored people, because he was from Alabama, or was it Tennessee? Some place in the South, and he and I were good friends, and this was on Maui. I believe.

EM: Okay. So, this was before Enewetak.

AA: Before Enewetak, and he -- I believe it was -- it might have been on Guadalcanal, but I believe it was -- and he says, "Come on now. We're going to go on down and see some friends of mine." So, we went down and sat around, had a beer with the -- you called them then -- the night fighters, and they were a black outfit. They did all of the dirty work, is really what they were doing. They were doing unloading and loading of all the ships and all that kind of stuff, and I got to -- in El Paso, you don't find a lot of blacks. So, I didn't know a lot of blacks. A lot of Mexicans, and Hispanics, and everyone I knew I was getting along with fine. You know what I mean? But, I just never...

EM: Sure. Just part of scenery. Yeah.

AA: I remember my dad knowing a couple of black people, and real good buddies, and I didn't have any prejudice one way or the other, frankly, because I hadn't been associated. God, I enjoyed (inaudible) those guys. That was real...

EM: What did you enjoy about it?

AA: The comradery. They were friendly and they had fun. Of course, he being a buddy of theirs and why. He had been from the Deep South, originally. I don't know.

EM: In Jim Crow South, they were kept separate.

AA: Yeah. I know it, but he had these guys, and I thought, "Well, Goddarn." They were very human.

EM: Imagine that!

AA: Imagine that (laughs), and it was a good experience. It was a very good experience to me. Now, later on, when I did my KP, I had blacks, and we all peeled potatoes together, and this and that, on Guadalcanal. So it was a good experience probably for me to accept them. You know. It helped my thinking, to be honest with me.

EM: Yeah. That's good. So, after Enewetak, you went on to Guadalcanal. Is that correct?

AA: We went to Guadalcanal.

EM: So, were you on troop carriers?

AA: Yeah. We were on troop carriers to Guadalcanal, and you can turn this off and I'll take a break.

EM: Okay. Let me put it on hold -- the story. So, let me go ahead and start it again, okay? Okay. So, you're on a troop carrier, and you're headed from Enewetak. You took Enewetak, not a lot of resistance, and now you're heading to Guadalcanal. Is that correct?

AA: Yeah. Now, we spent some time back for the birthday thing on (inaudible), and had it there, before they got us back aboard the ship, and that was -- we swam.

EM: So, you had a little R&R, huh?

AA: A little R&R. It was kind of interesting there too. I mean, it was relaxing, and then we went to Guadalcanal.

EM: Now, Guadalcanal at that point was secured, because it generally -- I think it was late '42 that they ended up securing Guadalcanal for the most part, although there were some lingering resistance.

AA: Oh, they were lingering. There was definitely that.

EM: So, what did you do on Guadalcanal? Was that more training?

AA: That was more training. I'm trying to think now. Yeah. We went to Guadalcanal. We went to Guam, back to Guadalcanal, where we formed the 6th (inaudible). We went to Guadalcanal and formed the 1st Provisional Brigade. That was it.

EM: Formed the 1st Provisional Brigade. Okay. And, that's how you went into Guam, then at that point.

AA: That's how we went into Guam as the 1st Provisional Brigade. Yeah. I've got to think about these things.

EM: Okay. That's the order that I'm showing here. Yeah. Anything stick in your mind about the first visit to Guadalcanal that we should discuss, or should we move on to Guam?

AA: Well, I was trying to think. I don't think -- to be honest with you, I cannot distinguish first Guadalcanal and second Guadalcanal, as far as the training. We trained and we went to the jungle, and of course we were going to fight in the jungle both places. So, we went through the jungle training, and there was nothing outstanding there, except they did give us some beer, and we'd drink beer, and people were in our tents, and then when it rained, where they'd thrown their stuff on the tent, it would leak (laughs). But, no. It's just nothing.

EM: So, I know Guadalcanal is tropical, and I know there's issues with malaria and dengue fever.

AA: Oh, yeah. We had to wear these helmets with these mesh -- whatever you call it -- over them. Yeah. You kept your sleeves down and buttoned. We took the Atabrin, turned yellow. Yeah.

EM: Everybody was yellow, anyhow.

AA: Oh, God, yes. We all looked the same anyhow, but you know, it's funny. They did away with the quinine, and that was too bad, which is too bad, as far as I'm concerned. I wish I had some now. They cut me off of quinine at the VA.

EM: How come?

AA: They don't recommend quinine anymore. I took it for a long time for leg cramps.

EM: Did you ever get malaria?

AA: No. I never got malaria. I was very fortunate. I had jock itch, and those kind of things -- sweating, and jungle rot, [parmesan?], [magnum?] -- something [magnum?]. My mom sent me some for this rash that I had, and I didn't... It helped, but when you put it around your personal effects, you don't want to do that. It burned a lot. They had me -- Goddamn it -- running around that ten for 15 minutes. I said, "Gee, oh! What did I do wrong?" God, it was something.

EM: So, do you guys know you're going to Guam when you're training?

AA: No. We trained. The big shots know where we're going, but we don't know. We're just doing jungle training, and we have no idea where we're going. We're going into an island, and they have no -- in fact -- as it turned out when or why we were going into Guam, itself. I don't believe, because as you know we were floating reserves for Saipan for forty days, which we talked about. So, we didn't know.



EM: So, you thought you were going to go into Saipan, but you never did?

AA: Yeah. Well, in fact, they called aboard our ship one time, like we were going to be going in there, but we stopped back at the Marshall Islands, and refueled, I think, when we were floating reserves.

EM: So, that was for a fairly long period of time.

AA: About forty days. I'm repeating myself, but yeah, we were on there so God damned long, they used to get us up, and make us exercise, but Goddarn, that forty days on that thing, and they ran out of food. I told people that the only protein I got was from the weebles in the flour that they had for the pancakes. Since I ate so Goddarn much orange marmalade with my pancakes, I got...

EM: Is that what they gave you?

AA: Yeah. They had orange marmalade and pancakes. I'll never forget, and then they had some D-Rations, but they ran out of almost everything. They were floating, and then went back and restocked, before went actually to Guam.

EM: So, tell me about the Guam experience. The landing, now, did you go in on Higgins boats again?

AA: Yeah, that's where I went to (inaudible). This is the guy that went to the reunion on Guam, July the 21st. Those are

a couple I didn't mean to give you. You can have them, but those are just... That's a friend of mine that's been to the reunion, because they treat you like a king there. In fact, he wants me to go this year, but he says that's where we landed, and that was the one that -- did I write something on there?

EM: Yeah. Just for the recording: this is a photo that looks like investigating some fortifications or something on Guam, and it says, "Guam, July 21st, 2010, Marvin Ainsworth," which I guess is the guy you're... Yeah. It says, "Last time, July 21st, 1944, pill box sank 25 of our landing craft alligators." So, this must have been pillbox that did a lot of the damage.

AA: So, he sent me those things.

EM: That's interesting. So, the other photo here is landing beach in Guam, July 21st, 2010, Easy Company, 22nd Marines, 1944.

AA: That's the beach we landed on.

EM: And, you're Easy Company. So, you came in on the alligators. So, I've heard about alligators, seen pictures of them, but how did they work. Were they working pretty well?

AA: Yeah. They worked pretty dog gone well. They were like tanks. They had tracks, and the tracks kind of helped move you through there. They had a motor on the back, but some of them had .50 caliber machine guns, and all, but the one that I was on -- and I think Marvin was on a different one -- but they just go on up. They were so much better than the Higgins boats, because on the Marshalls, you just get up to the edge of the water, and then you got your feet wet, and everything else. Well, they'd ditch you on the dry land, and then you jump out the sides.

EM: This was a true amphibian. It was water and then on the land as well.

AA: Exactly. They could move right on.

EM: And a little bit of protection.

AA: Well, you did, because Higgins boats, they're just a little bit of plywood, but they gave pretty good protection to you.

EM: Now, you still were a rifleman.

AA: Yeah. I was a squad leader at that time. Well, I was not. I was second scout in the second platoon. [Stanford?] Myers was my first scout.

EM: So, when you say first scout, and second scout, tell us what you mean.

AA: Well, the guy who was leading the platoon, and not in the landings, because you're all jumping off at the same time and moving up, but later on in Guam, when we were chasing the Japs through the jungle, then he led the way, and I followed him.

EM: You were crossing the land and taking territory, and basically the rest of the squad was behind you.

AA: They were behind us. Yeah.

EM: That sounds to me like the single most dangerous job, being a scout.

AA: It's how you think of these things, and somebody else asked me about that, and I said, "Well..." He wanted a lot of arms. So, he carried a BAR, and I carried my M1, plus ammunition for him and me, and grenades. We were pretty well endowed, but the story was saving me happily was that the thing is with the Japanese, they would let a couple of people through first to get to the main part, and then they'd start shooting. Well, in my mind was, hell, I can fall down, instead of getting shot in the open. So, I was glad to be a scout.

EM: You would almost rather be a scout than be a part of the main body.

AA: I'd rather be a scout. You know. That's terrible. Damn, you're lucky. You'd spot them and you'd get to shoot at them. That's fine, and I don't remember I shot at or didn't shoot at, to be honest with you, but I remember that one thing in my mind was that I'm safe because I can get down. I have a chance to shoot back, rather than some of the guys getting picked off by snipers. So, they're going to let me through first. So, they did. That's the way it worked, mainly. It really did.

EM: So, some pretty close skirmishes here?

AA: Oh, we had some skirmishes, but of course, a lot of our skirmishes were perpendicular, where we moved up and you shoot. You know how. Some people might have an idea of how many people they shot and so forth. I have no idea how many I actually hit, and how many I didn't in the heat of battle. To me...

EM: So, this is heavy jungle, though. It's tropical. Is that correct?

AA: Yeah. Some of it was, but when you're moving across Agana -- the airfield -- and all that, well you're separated out, and you see guys shot. I had a couple of my friends shot over here earlier, or something, but I was lucky. I didn't get hit, but you had fire, but to me, you're shooting at

these moving targets, and you don't know how many you shot, killed, or not.

EM: Did you ever really see the enemy, or was this pretty much guerilla warfare?

AA: Well, you see the enemy. When we were on Guam, we had a couple of banzai attacks, and so you see enough of the enemy to shoot at, and to have them shoot back at you. In fact, I recall -- I can't remember exactly where in Guam -- but I remember walking behind some tanks that were with us when we were moving up.

EM: So, you had some armor leading (inaudible) in some cases.

AA: Yeah. So, they led us in certain areas, because some of that was pretty open.

EM: So, are you in foxholes a lot, digging in?

AA: Yeah. Every night. We dug our foxholes every night, and you would be with your buddy sometimes. I remember about three of them, and some of them would just -- you had been fighting.

EM: Well, you didn't get a chance to bond a lot, but...

AA: Well, some of them I did, but I told about a couple [incidents and the deal?], and the one that stood out -- I think he mentioned it -- this Dillon. Not Matt Dillon, but his name was Dillon, and he was a red headed guy, and he's

the one I told you about. I'm laying there, and I'm --  
"Okay. It's your time to stay awake." There were two  
little foxholes. They always had two little foxholes.  
Never had any single foxholes. We always had at least two  
guys in it, and preferably two-man foxholes is what we...  
I don't remember staying in anything else other than a two-  
man. I dug a lot of them. So, anyway...

EM: So, anyhow, what happened with Dillon then?

AA: He's the one that says... He pulls the pin on a hand  
grenade and he's holding, and I said, "What in the hell are  
you doing, Dillon?" He says, "Well, I'm going to stay  
awake." I said, "You're damn right. You're going to stay  
awake." I said, "Put that pin back in." "Oh, no. It will  
keep me away. That way I'll stay awake." I said, "Well,  
you son of a bitch, what do you mean? What do you think  
I'm going to do? Sleep with you holding a God damned hand  
grenade?"

EM: I thought if you pulled the pin, it was going to go.

AA: No. You have a thing on it, the little flipper thing. You  
hold it, but anyway, a flipper thing that holds it. So you  
put the pin back in when you're through, see? But he was  
ready, so he wouldn't go to sleep, and I'll never forget  
this, and neither one of us slept. Imagine that, but there

was a lot going on. In fact, we had guys in the next foxhole were killed when you're in the damn thing sometimes. I know in a couple of spots there on Guam, we had a couple of three banzai attacks there in the night, little banzai attacks, because they like to...

EM: Tell me about a banzai attack. What was that like?

AA: Well, they're all ready to die. So, they don't care what they do. They get all saké-ed up, and then rushed toward you, and I remember one of them that stands out in my mind. This God damned Myers, who was my lead. He was in the foxhole next to me, and he says, "Now, Atkins, you keep your head down, because I got my BAR going and I'm going to cover this part of the fire. So, you just keep your head down, and I'll..." And, man, he was firing like crazy, but I finally went to sleep. I mean, you get so Goddamned tired, that... And I forget who was with me now, but I'll never forget that either. That's another one of those incidents that kind of stand out in your mind.

EM: So, you kept your head down. In fact, you finally fell...

AA: I kept my head, and finally fell asleep, because I was covered. I didn't have to be awake, and my partner didn't have to be awake, because he was covering us with a



Goddarned BAR, but most of the time you had to be sure that your buddy was awake.

EM: So, how did you deal with the banzai attacks? Did you just pick them off until there's no more?

AA: Well, you do the best you can, and then they'll get a few of you. Of course, (inaudible) the old movie kind of stuff where they just rush in there, and throw grenades.

EM: It's just like the movies, huh? And do they tend to do this at night?

AA: Yeah, pretty much. Yeah. They do it at night.

EM: So, what do you do for light to be able to see what's going?

AA: Oh, I'm glad you mentioned that, because the Navy supplied us with star shells. They did a good job. I'm glad you brought that up. I had forgotten about that. In the Marshall Islands, and on Guam, they did a tremendous job of supplying us with light with these star shells that they shot over us during the night, so that we could see the Japs to pick them off, if possible.

EM: So, what do you do? You call them up, and say...

AA: Oh, I don't know. Somebody with a radio probably did. They have a radio deal.

EM: So, they say, "We're being attacked. Give us some light."  
I guess.

AA: Yeah. I guess. That part, all I can remember is I was saving my butt, but they did an awful good job. Say, I remember now that you brought it up that they did give us a lot of light that way, with these star shells, and they'd shoot them high, and it would really light up the... Now, you couldn't pick out the face, but you could pick out the silhouettes and it helped us.

EM: Would they come one way back or another?

AA: Sometimes they'd come one way back from the other, and sometimes they'd just sneak up. That's why you... The only reasons that I remember thinking about the... Two things about dying or getting shot is you didn't want to have scream corpsman, because the God damned Japs did that, and people would come out and get... Yeah. "Goddarned, if I get hurt, you just go ahead and knock me out, because I don't want to be hollering and then (inaudible) off the corpsman." Or somebody coming out, and... Yeah.

EM: So, is that what the Japanese did? They would call out corpsman, and...

AA: They'd call out, "Corpsman, corpsman!" So the guys would come out to try to find out who it was and they'd pick you off. They were pretty good at that. Tricky, they were.

EM: Tricky devils. So, what do you think about the Japanese now that you've been at war with them.

AA: Well, I didn't like them for many, many years, and I think they have a little a bit of a superiority complex, because I still don't think that they're that superior to me, but I think they do, but I'm not a hater. I don't believe in... I've had that. I don't need to do that again. Been there, done that. I don't need to hate anybody.

EM: So, these banzai charges, now you've got some of the enemy dead there. I mean, are you taking swords and guns and flags from them?

AA: Some. We did. We took some. I guess I still have some in my C-Bag, pictures of some Japanese families, and a little beat up flag, and I used to have -- I don't even know what happened to them now -- but I had a sword, one of their bayonets, and a few things we took.

EM: You brought them home, then?

AA: I brought some. (inaudible), see? To me, in a C-Bag, I had forgotten that I had some of that. So, yeah I got some at home, but I left them in my...

EM: So, tell me about the dead chicken.

AA: (laughs) It was one of those -- I can't remember all the details right now. It was twice when I thought I had been wounded, and one of them in a foxhole was when something hit me in the back, and I told my foxhole mate, "Look at me. I think I'm wounded. Something hit me in my back. I'm wounded and I can't breathe." And they were shelling, and of course some of them, you don't know whether it's a short shell from ours, or they're shooting at us, but I knew I had heck of a funny feeling, and the guy says, "What the hell? That's a chicken." Well, a chicken had been shot down or something, in all the shelling and bombing, and it was doing its dying, flipping, flipping, on its back, when it hit me, when it dropped down from the sky, or wherever it dropped from. It was a Goddarned chicken.

EM: You may be the only Marine that was hit by a flying chicken.

AA: A chicken. A flying chicken. Well I was. I might have been, but that's another thing I got razzed about. "He's a chicken." You know. "Adkins is a chicken. Wounded by a chicken." And I really did. Well, another time in a foxhole, it wasn't as impressive, was I woke up and I thought I was hit in the shoulder, and I said, "My

Goddarned arm doesn't work. I don't know what's the matter with it." And, well, what had happened was I'd slept on it, and it had gone sound to sleep, see? And it wouldn't move (laughs). You were out there and you'd think, "Goddarn it."

EM: When you're out there in the fog of war, you don't know whether you've been wounded or whether you just slept wrong.

AA: You don't. Psychologically, you're a Marine, and you don't want to be chicken. As that chicken says when it hit me in the back. So, I remember that we talked about it. It's not getting killed that's bad. It's a matter of being hurt. You weren't worried about dying at that point. Seriously, you got that one thing. Okay. I don't want to suffer. I don't want to make a fool of myself. It's important to be brave than to live. So, you know, because these things, all these, you've got that image of all these heroes you read about, and so forth, and you're a Marine and this and that, but it is funny how you think at the time. Now, I'm a chicken again, but at that time, I thought -- you think differently.

EM: You think differently, don't you? I guess you have to.

AA: Well, you can die. That's why join the Marine Corps. You figured you aren't going to get out alive. So, anyway, those things go through your mind. It's kind of funny. It really is.

EM: Now, you were actually hit, though.

AA: Well, no I wasn't.

EM: Tell us that story.

AA: As I told my buddies, these God damned Japs can't kill me. Now a God damned Marine might, and that's what happened. That was after Guam. We came back, and then we were training for Okinawa, and we didn't know, again, Okinawa from [apple butter?], but we were doing more training. We had gotten all of the replacements, and formed the 6th Marine Division. As an afterthought, we trained there, and they had the 6th Marine Division, which included the 22nd, and the 15th Marines, which was an artillery branch, and I can't remember the 4th Division. Anyway -- and that's where Ed Layman and myself met with three other people from El Paso. One of them was Lin Sullivan, the guy that we joined Marine Corps with, and then two other guys that we knew through school, a guy of the name of Charlie Carrol and another one. Oh, what in the hell was his name? His dad was into produce out there. Anyway, we've got pictures

of the five of us on Guadalcanal and so forth, and then of course we were training. It was in the training at Guadalcanal. We were doing firefighting, and of course, again, I had become first scout, since Myers left. He went back to the States for (inaudible). So, I was leading my platoon around the hill and then firing in it, and as they were moving around, of course, they were firing into it. Well, then I got shot in the rear end. It was a ricochet bullet, or I don't know exactly what hit me, but they'd hit me, and knocked me flat on my stomach, and I remember laying there. God, what happened, again, it was almost like when the chicken had hit me. Boom! And they called the corpsman, and he came up and gave me some morphine. Whatever. Well, they hauled me back to sick bay, and to make a short story long, I lay there on my stomach for quite some time. I was very fortunate, because I was there a month maybe, but whatever hit went through my canteen and my canteen fortunately was full of water. So, when the bullet hit, it splattered lead from the canteen and everything into my back, but it was right by my spine, and I remember that my spine -- they showed me with the mirror -- "There's your spine, Adkins. See?" And you could see actually the spine. It was just spread out. I was so

fortunate that that canteen was full of water, according to the doctor, that, hell, I would never would have walked again. I was one of those that good Lord was after me. I (inaudible), you dumb shit, and I lay...

EM: So, it was friendly fire.

AA: It was friendly fire. I didn't get --

EM: No Purple Heart.

AA: -- no Purple Heart. Well, I didn't deserve one. I wasn't in combat at the time, but it still hurt just as bad, but I was a very lucky guy. I really was on that kind of stuff. So, yeah, I was in the hospital.

EM: Well did they pick the shrapnel out, or what?

AA: Well, here, I'm laying I'm on my stomach, and they took a lot of stuff out. Now, they didn't take it all out, because I had little scars around, and I remember later -- probably a month later -- when I was out walking, and I was having some problems, and my back was killing me, and I went to sick bay, and they guy says, "Oh, you're (inaudible)." "Well, okay, doctor." Well, I still hurt. So, I went to him, and I saw another doctor, and he said, "Oh, hell, let me get that." I had little pieces of shrapnel that were sticking out of my back, and they were rubbing, and so forth. And of course they were hitting the



nerves, because it took a while for the nerves to get back -- a lot of the nerves. But, I'll never forget that one doctor I would have killed, I think, because I was hurt, and I was hurting bad, and he -- "Oh, go on (inaudible). Get back to..." I was just a complainer. Well, they dug out some shrapnel.

EM: And did that help?

AA: It helped, because it wasn't the rubbing. The shrapnel, well, all it was rubbing against the belt and all and causing the pain. So, I had the shrapnel taken out later. There was a lot of shrapnel, even after I got out the Marine Corps. There was little pieces that would arrive to the surface.

EM: Yeah. Skin kind of works it up to the surface.

AA: The only thing my good friend gave me a bad time about was that they said, "Adkins, when I tell you to get the lead out of your ass, get the lead out of your ass. You don't do that right."

EM: You're having trouble with that. Get the lead out (inaudible). Well, now that we're talking about canteens, think back to -- and I think this must have happened on Guam, if I remember story correct -- you had a new guy come in, and...

AA: Oh, he's the corpsman.

EM: Yeah. Share that canteen story.

AA: Okay. That's when we were -- there was a governor of Massachusetts or something that we were going after, or his son, who had been lost in the jungle, and we went. We were trying to find him, and we led a contingent through the jungle over to one of the edges of the island.

EM: This was back on Guam.

AA: This was back to Guam, and of course, I had been born in the Southwest. I was born in El Paso, and I used to go hunting, and I was with my dad. When I hunted with him, he'd say -- "I need some water, Dad," -- "Just put a pebble in your mouth and it will keep you... Suck on it." Okay. There, we had been going. We started early in the morning, and it was around noon, and of course I still, because when I had sucked on something. I forget what it had been a pebble necessarily, but I had something. So, I had a full canteen of water left, and I had shared, because I had two canteens to go in the jungle, and I had shared the one canteen with the guys that needed it. "Oh, what the hell? I'm used to it." And then, a little bit later, this corpsman, I felt sorry for him. He was just a young -- us old timers then -- 20-year-old timers. He says, "Yeah,

Adkins, could I have a little water too?" I said, "Yeah. Just be careful, and took that thing, and he started chugging that damn thing. He damn near emptied the damn canteen." He chugged almost all the water. Well, there might have been some gone already, but he chugged nearly that whole Goddamned canteen. I'll never forget that. I would have shot, I think. I really was close to it, because that was hard to come by. You know. It really was. He was new enough. He had just joined our outfit. In fact, I didn't know him well, because he just joined our outfit as a replacement corpsman, and he was Navy corpsman. He wasn't a bad guy. He was just a young, snotty-nosed kid, as far as us old veterans were concerned, and that was, of course, after the island was secured. As you know, they killed about 6000 after it was secure, and 25 years later they found a few more.

EM: So, apparently Guam has got some mountains, and it's a fairly good size.

AA: Yeah. Mountains, and it's a good size, and I'd almost like to go back if it wasn't a 16-hour flight.

EM: It'd be interesting, though, wouldn't it? To go back.

AA: It would, and this guy wants me to go back with him this July. I'm thinking.

EM: I'm coming back now. We've lay Guam behind us, and that was a pretty hard slog. I mean, we're talking banzai charges.

AA: It was a hard fight. We'd get a lot of shooting, and banzai charges, and buddies killed.

EM: It's not a pretty scene, but you secured, quote, unquote, "secured" the island, and then they transferred you back to Guadalcanal. That's when they formed the 6th Marine, and that's what your hat says, but you still have got to go the main feature, here, which was Okinawa.

AA: Yeah. Now, Okinawa was a lot bloodier in a lot of respects, but of course, when we landed -- we got gunfire on the Marshalls, and we got gunfire on Guam -- but on the landing, we were startled. We didn't know what happened. We came in and it went on about our business, and in fact, our outfit, as you know, went to the north, and we secured the north, and we had a little sniper fire, and things, but I don't remember any major battle, you know, where there was a contact zone --

EM: Not like you'd had on Guam.

AA: -- no -- until we went to the south, and then we went to...

EM: So, did you go all the way to the northern end?

AA: Yeah. We went to the northern end. In fact, one of my privileged times, too, was we got up on the northern end, and we got secure, and so we just decided to -- guy says, "Oh, we got a cow over here. Let's have some beef." So, we shot the cow, and then because I was from Texas, and I'd never cut a cow before, but then we skinned the cow, and we cut off some meat, and we had us some nice steaks and everything at the northern end (laughs). I'll never forget that. Well, hell, I don't know. A guy says, "Oh, come on. You're from Texas."

EM: So, you not only had to know how to ride a horse, but you had to know how to butcher a cow too.

AA: Butcher a cow, too. I had to butcher a cow on Okinawa. That's another story.

EM: Now, I have got to say, I've never met anybody that butchered a cow on Okinawa.

AA: You know. It was pretty good, and then we went back, and I can't tell you a whole lot about the southern end, because I remember sleeping in foxholes again, and raining. And having a little shelf built here so I could put my hat on, because I was laying in water. Anyway, and I don't remember doing a lot of rifle shooting myself on Okinawa, because I didn't just spasmodically, because -- and I

couldn't tell you. I'd have to look at a map. That was where we tried to take (inaudible) a little hill and it was three or four times we were up and back down on that day. I lost...

EM: That must have been a rough day.

AA: It was a rough day. It was a rough three days, back and forth, and that's -- oh, I lost my best buddy there, and that's where...

EM: Now, who was that that you lost?

AA: Hank [Brenner?]. I don't know if I mentioned Hank [Brenner?]. I think I'm sure I mentioned Hank [Brenner?]. He was a guy that we liked. You know. He and I buddied. He wasn't on Guam, but he joined us on Guadalcanal, and he and I -- I don't know what -- we hit it off. We just became very, very close, and he was just a great little guy from Philadelphia. Hank [Brenner?]. He had just gotten married before he came, and was a replacement for our outfit, and so then we were in the same platoon and all for all the fighting there.

EM: Are you still a first scout?

AA: Well, yeah, but we didn't do much of that kind of scouting stuff on Okinawa, because it was all -- you know. You don't lead the way through just when you were going

through... You know. I had a squad. In fact, (inaudible), I was a squad leader. So, we got on Sugar Loaf Hill, and that part of the war is still -- I blocked 90 percent of it out, and it's still blocked out. I know certain things that happened, and I can tell you that, which I think I wrote in the thing pretty much, because I remember fighting, and trying to take the hill, and moving back, but I did it according to what the lieutenants and captains and all told us to do, and if we had to retreat, we retreated. If we had to go back again, we went back again, and it got kind boring for me. It really did. In fact, the things I can remember, which I think I recorded there, I wouldn't remember them now, because I didn't want to, but we were up on the hill on Sugar Loaf, and this getting to be the end my story -- Sugar Loaf Hill, and I was the only senior enlisted man left. There was nobody that outranked me in seniority or anything. So, I was the acting platoon sergeant, you might say, because everybody else was gone. Now, what happened during all that time, and how they were going, I shut that out my mind. I don't remember, but I do remember there weren't any other senior enlisted men. I was it as far as seniors, and we had some new guys.

EM: Sure. You weren't the only one, but you were the senior guy.

AA: But, there were others. We brought in a new lieutenant, because our lieutenant was killed, and I can't even remember his name. I'll have to ask Ainsworth. He'd remember all this God damned... Anyway, he completely cracked up. Well, I must have been about that way myself, because I said, "Okay, you guys. Let me take him back to sick bay, and then I'll get back to you."

EM: So, is this one of those 90-day wonders that are coming?

AA: Yeah. One of these 90 day wonders. Poor guy. I felt sorry. Young guy, and he just completely cracked up. He was just crying, and carrying on. I don't know what happened to him.

EM: It just came on all of a sudden?

AA: He came unglued. Well, I don't even remember him being there very long. I really don't, but I don't know his name. I don't care about knowing his name. I really don't, but, you know, you have some of them that crack, and some of them don't, and you're ready to too, but sometimes you don't. So, anyway, I said, "I'll take him back to sickbay, and I'll get back to you." So, I took him, and -- "Come on," -- I can't remember -- "Lieutenant, we'll take



you back." So, anyway I took him back, I don't know how far, to where there was a sickbay, and -- "Well, hey, you've got to sign him in." "Okay. I'll wait." So, I waited, and then a couple of guys came out, the best I remember. I said, "Okay. You two, come over here. Get on the back of this car." So, we got on this truck, and we went to another receding area, and I didn't pay much attention. I just wanted to take care of him. The next thing I know, they had a tag on us, so they wouldn't get confused, and I was shipped out along with him.

EM: You were tagged too.

AA: I was tagged too. Well, of course, when I looked in the mirror when I got aboard ship, I could see what they thought. "God damn that is the Asiatic..." I had the worst looking face and stare: the Asiatic stare as they say. I thought I was going back to...

EM: Now, what's the Asiatic stare again? This is just the combat stare.

AA: Well, yeah, combat stare.

EM: Looking 200 yards off.

AA: Yeah, and I had a picture on the 6th Marine Division history of this guy who was in my platoon, and I said, "Man, that looked just like I did when I looked in the

mirror," but it really was. I don't remember why the heck they sent me on too, because I was planning on going back to my outfit, but I obviously didn't fight it, or argue about it. I just went with the troops when they sent me to go too. Well, of course, the one thing I'll mention, was that after I got shot on Guadalcanal, the doctor that released said, "Now, look, Adkins, you don't need to go back to your outfit. I'll put you in the supply bit, because you're not really yet in good enough shape to go back." And, I said, "Well, hell, I'm going to go back."

EM: Need a drink?

AA: In fact, he told the outfit, "I don't think he should, but you go ahead." So, I did. I really felt I had to get back to my God damned outfit, which I did. I didn't want to be in the back and be a God damned supply sergeant or something, because I had too many friends in there that were too close to me at that time, and I didn't want to -- same old story. It sounds silly, but...

EM: So, this business about being brothers is really true.

Isn't it?

AA: Oh, yeah. Yes, it is. See?

EM: It's okay. Well, since I've got you in a weak spot here. Can I go back, and have you tell me more about losing your best friend.

AA: Well, I can't tell you a whole lot except that he got the Bronze Star. Now, I say "best friend" -- I can't say "good friend" -- because the guys I joined the Marine Corps with, Ed Layman and I went through Okinawa and what have you all together. But the closest friend I made in the service, besides this guy I've become good friends with after the war...

EM: The guy in the photo that wants you to go to the reunion.

AA: Right, but he was just a great guy. Sorry.

EM: My understanding of what I remember about the story of Okinawa was that the Army was having real problems taking...

AA: Yes there was. See, that's when we moved down to help them out. They needed it.

EM: Because most of the really tough resistance was in the south. In fact, it was more mountainous, and apparently the Army guys were really getting torn up. So, they brought in some Marines to help.

AA: Yeah. It was a lot worse, and we moved down there to take over. That's right. That's exactly right.

EM: So, was there any feeling amongst you Marines that --

"Well, you know these Army guys just don't have it. We need to go down and bail them out"?

AA: Oh, yeah. You'd have a gun-ho feeling that "Okay. We can do it. If they can't handle it, we'll handle it," and we did that. You know. Well, Saipan had some Army on it, and they had problems too. So, yeah, I got to be honest, which as you look back, again, a [sidekick?] was there that helped us be what we were, and we had to be better. We couldn't not be better.

EM: So, you looked so roughed up that they decided that you were a casualty as well, whether you felt like you were or not.

AA: Well, I really didn't at the time, but then I found out. Well, yeah.

EM: So they took you where? To Tinian for a hospital?

AA: Yeah. Tinian, and I was [interviewed?] and all up at Tinian, and then we went back to Aiea Heights in Hawaii -- hospital there in Oahu.

EM: Were you on a hospital ship?

AA: I was on a hospital ship. In fact, the doctor that was in charge of me was guy by the name of -- I imagine it was Doctor Hepburn, because he was Catherine Hepburn's brother,

and talked and looked just like Katharine Hepburn. It was funny.

EM: Is that right? Except he shaved, right?

AA: Except he shaved. He really was.

EM: You could tell they were brother and sister? Really?

AA: Really. He kind of looked like her, and talked -- you know. He had that, wherever they were from, the East accent, and so forth.

EM: Yeah. They were from Boston, or Massachusetts, or something.

AA: Massachusetts, and then when I got back to Aiea Heights, I ran into -- one of the corpsmen was a guy I went to school with, and he had a buddy that was up in school with me, and so in (inaudible) hospital, I had two buddies there.

EM: As I remember, you felt like by chance, in a lot of ways, you ran across a whole lot of people that you knew from back in the States.

AA: Well, I ran across a guy who was a Marine flyer, and was aboard ship with me to find an airplane, because they didn't enough. They had more pilots than airplanes at the time, and he's the one that gave me the fifth of whiskey and made me a hero aboard ship for a few days, until the whiskey was gone.

EM: You were a special guy there for a while, weren't you  
(laughs)?

AA: (laughs) I really was.

EM: Until the whiskey ran out. Now, if I remember, his name  
was Freddy [Bland?].

AA: Freddy [Bland?]. He became a policeman in El Paso after  
that. He came back, and it's just going off on a tangent,  
but Ed Layman and I, as much as we went through the war,  
and as much as we talked about the funny things like him  
trying to put me in the closet while he brought a girl  
upstairs one time, but we talked about those type of  
things, but we never talked about the war. He and I were  
as close as two guys could be, and we never did sit down  
and talk -- and we visited. I went to see him, and he and  
his wife... I dated his wife before they got married, but  
we never did sit and talk about the war, until this  
Ainsworth. He recalls all of these things. I don't know  
if Ed didn't remember, but we talked about the funny  
things.

EM: I don't think that's all that unusual. I mean, who wants  
to relive the ugly part?

AA: Well, I don't know. I didn't. I could have cared less. I  
wrote that because I just felt, well, I got to. We were

making up a scrapbook of the kids and all this, and --

"Well, you know, I'll try and get something to..." My wife wasn't (inaudible).

EM: So, you really did get in the Marines -- and I'm sure it's true in any of the other branches -- you get to where you are so committed to your fellow soldiers that it almost drives you beyond just looking out for yourself. The band of brothers concept is real.

AA: Oh, I think it is. I think it is.

EM: You felt it is.

AA: He must have, or he wouldn't have want me to go to Guam, go out there with him. I (inaudible).

EM: I think you ought to go, but that's just me. It's easy for me to say.

AA: I would, but it's just such a God damn long plan ride that...

EM: I know. I know. Well, look. Now, when were you released, or discharged?

AA: Oh, then I hit the United States V-J Day. Literally on V-J Day. In fact, they took us to a receiving depot, and I can't even remember -- in San Francisco, and they wouldn't let us out, and for some reason, this Lin Sullivan, who I joined the Marine Corps with, got my name. I don't know

how in the hell he found me, but he gave me a call, and he said, "My gal and I," -- and he was going with a band at that time -- ", we're going to come by and see you, because we're restricted." I said, "Okay. I'll be here. I'm not going anywhere." Well, I waited. The only bad part was I had to wait for him to come see me. Guards were putting ladders on the fences, so you could go out and go on duty.

EM: The guards? It's a whole new way of thinking once the war is over.

AA: The guards. The war is over, and so V-J Day, I'll never forget. So, I didn't. I stayed there that night, and then we were shipped to Klamath Falls, Oregon, and that's where I was discharged from.

EM: Of all places.

AA: Of all places. It seems kind of weird. It really is.

EM: So, how did it feel when you came back in under the Golden Gate Bridge?

AA: Oh, it was great. I still thought there was a possibility -- it's V-J Day, but I hadn't heard at that time.

EM: The war was still on as far as you knew.

AA: Yeah, and we might go back out there. I didn't feel like I was necessarily through with the Marine Corps as we entered, but then they announced. We found out it was V-J,



which was after we got in. We didn't get out of the scuttlebutt at that time.

EM: You were the last to find out.

AA: We were the last to find out. So, then when we got there and it was V-J Day, God, it was wonderful. "Now do we have to go someplace else." "Well, we'll see." They didn't know when, why, or where at that particular time.

EM: Did you receive letters from home, and write letters home during all of the time in the Pacific?

AA: Yeah. We got -- in fact, it was kind of funny. When I got shot in the back, I didn't say anything. Well, Goddamned Ed Layman wrote my mother and mentioned "Al is all right. He's doing okay."

EM: Yeah. "Don't worry about Al. He's wounded but he's okay."  
(laughs)

AA: Goddam it (laughs). So, she was a little -- she wrote me a letter.

EM: So that's when you told her.

AA: Oh, yeah. I told her I'm doing fine.

EM: It just missed my spine by one-fourth of an inch. Don't worry (laughs).

AA: (laughs) Oh, I didn't tell her much. "Oh, don't worry."

EM: How do you feel like the war experience changed you as a person and the way you look at things?

AA: That's a good question. I'm so sorry you asked (laughs). No. Seriously, I think it made a man out of me, in my opinion.

EM: Well, that's what I'm asking for, is your opinion (laughs).

AA: You didn't want anybody else's (laughs).

EM: No. I just wanted to know. I've got some guys that say, "Well, I came back and I went to work, and married my wife," and other guys that say, "I was a different person. Suddenly I valued life, and I knew what real brotherly love was." I've heard everything. So, I guess the question was: how did it affect you?

AA: Well, to me it affected me positively. I needed to be -- at that age, if you look back and think about it -- I needed that experience to make a man out of me.

EM: Uh-huh. And it did?

AA: (laughs) I'd consider it myself, but some people might disagree with you, but I've got three good sons, and they're doing great. They're successful. I think you met two of them.

EM: That's great news. I did. Well, look, anything else we can talk about now? I've got you live here, and I want to wring everything I can out of you.

AA: Well, I can't think -- I mean, seriously, I've told you to the best of my ability. Now, I might out of here and go to the bathroom and say, "Goddarn, I should have told him about so-and-so." Seriously, I don't know, but it's been good.

EM: We've covered a lot of territory, and we've got back-up documentation from your memoirs that will go into the file.

AA: I really am glad. I would have never been able to give this interview, seriously, if I hadn't organized my thoughts years ago.

EM: It helped. I think it helped a lot.

AA: It took me a little time to write that. You know. I'd write, and then I'd change it. I think I mentioned that I had to quite, because if I kept on modifying and modifying as the years go by, and so for my kids... I don't how many years old. 15 years old or something.

EM: Oh, you did that 15 years ago?

AA: Yeah. I did that a long time ago, and then I have other things to do. I got it out of my mind. Then I had to go on in my life. I had 64 years of my life.

EM: That's good. That's good. Well, I'm ready to end it then,  
if you are.

AA: As soon as I go to the restroom.

EM: Okay. I'll let you out. Let me just finish up by thanking  
you for spending the time. I appreciate it, and I  
appreciate your being so open and telling all of the  
stories, and I want to thank you again for what you did for  
our country during the war. We don't thank you guys  
enough. So, let me end it by thanking you for what you did  
for our country.

AA: Well, it did a lot for me too (laughs).

END OF AUDIO FILE