

**PROOF**



**Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Oral History Program**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Keifer Marshall, Jr.**

**United States Marine Corps**

**Date of Interview: December 1, 2014**

**National Museum of the Pacific War  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with  
Mr. Keifer Marshall**

**Mr. Cox:** Today is December 1, 2014. My name is Floyd Cox. I am a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today I am interviewing Mr. Keifer Marshall concerning his experiences during World War II. Mrs. Sammie Marshall is also in attendance and hopefully I will get an interview with her later. This interview is taking place in Mr. Marshall's residence in Temple, Texas. The interview is in support of the Education and Research Center for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

**Mr. Cox:** To start out with, Keifer, I want to shake your hand and tell you "thank you for your service to our country."

**Mr. Marshall:** \_\_\_\_\_ Thank you. Thank you for your service to our country.

**Mr. Cox:** And I appreciate that you're taking the time to visit with me today.

**Mr. Marshall:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Cox:** If we can, I'd like a little background: where you were born, when you were born.

**Mr. Marshall:** I was born right here in Temple, Texas in 1925. September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1925. I grew up here, went through high school here in public schools, and we grew up during the Depression. Lots of folks haven't ever heard about the Depression but we lived it and things were pretty tough but we had a good life and a good community and the big thing back then in Temple was high school football. I started playing football when I

was in junior high school. Had a great coach that was... came to work every day in a suit and tie, a real gentleman named Sinclair, and he got us started on the right track and then we went to high school. We had a coach here then that had been here maybe three years, four years, something like that, and served in World War I. So he kept telling us that there was going to be another situation where we'd have to go to war and sure enough, everybody on the teams that was in school with me went to war somewhere during World War II. But he had worked us out hard and made us know how things really are when it's a tough situation and how you handle it.

**Mr. Cox:** What position did you play?

**Mr. Marshall:** I played center and linebacker and I was a younger guy on the team for a long time. Then when I was a junior, I was... had been able to stay over for another year because I had been there for... I will be... my birthday was after the... was before the end of the year and they wanted me to stay over, but I had the opportunity to go to Texas and play football for Dana Bible.

**Mr. Cox:** Wow.

**Mr. Marshall:** He was a great coach, a great man. In fact, he gave me an Eagle Scout... I was an Eagle Scout in Temple in 1939. He came here and gave us the Eagle Scout \_\_\_\_\_ badge, and we had a group of my friends that became Eagle Scouts. In 1943 I went to the University of Texas, in January of '43 as a... on a football scholarship at the University of Texas and played the year of '43 and then '44 came along. It was time to do something about my war experience and so we were interested in what branch of service to get in. I had always been impressed with the Marines. Didn't know anything about the Marines, but I thought they were a good, tough group.

**Mr. Cox:** They had nice uniforms.

**Mr. Marshall:** They had nice uniforms, \_\_\_\_\_ uniform, and my coach thought Marines would be good for me. So I joined the Marine Corps and went to boot camp in San Diego.

**Mr. Cox:** When was this?

**Mr. Marshall:** In 1944. I was joined in January of '44 or February of '44 and they called me up in June of '44. So that's when I went in, June of '44. It was a long trip out to California to go to boot camp there.

**Mr. Cox:** How'd you get out there? By train?

**Mr. Marshall:** By train and of course, the trains had windows all open. You go through the desert out there. That dust was coming in, the smoke of the engine. It was some kind of trip. We got to California and then the bus picked us up at the train and took us to the... to recruit depot at San Diego and as soon as we got on that bus, this big fine-looking Marine, weighed about 250 pounds, started yelling at us. He yelled at us the whole time we were there, which was good for all of us probably.

**Mr. Cox:** Tell me about the first day at boot camp. Did you get bedding and shots? Take me through the whole thing.

**Mr. Marshall:** We got shots everywhere we went. In fact we'd get the shots there and be transferred someplace else. They wouldn't know you had 'em, they'd give 'em to you again, some of the shots. But we got bedding and t-shirts and dungarees and boots, heavy boots, shoes.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you get your rifle, too?

**Mr. Marshall:** No, not then, but we got a hat, kind of a... not a real helmet but kind of a hunting kind of hat. We started marching everywhere we went. We marched to breakfast. We marched to lunch, marched to dinner and we marched all day long. So get you lined

up, it'd be in your group and got to know each other then. I was the only one from... I didn't have anybody with me from here that got in at that time. I had a couple of friends that had already been in the Marine Corps, so I knew something about how to expect some of it was going to be pretty tough, but it was from the word "go."

**Mr. Cox:** You probably heard language you'd never heard before.

**Mr. Marshall:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Cox:** Some words that you...

**Mr. Marshall:** That's right. All kinds and from all over the country. Different people talking different ways too.

**Mr. Cox:** Especially that sergeant.

**Mr. Marshall:** That's right. The sergeant was very gruff. Never did say kind things to you. Always demanding, very demanding, but they did a great job. \_\_\_\_\_ We were there about eight weeks and then they sent us to Camp Pendleton for infantry training and we got to learn about the rifle, how to take it apart, put it together, and got to train on mortars, hand grenades and crawling underneath a barb wire fence and going on long, long marches over the hills of Camp Pendleton. You get a 48-hour pass after you've been there for ten days. Every ten days, a 48-hour pass, but we were so far from the gate that it took you a long time to get to the gate. We'd go to Los Angeles and go to some place up there. In fact, the fellow that I got to know real well was from San Antonio. His father was a judge in San Antonio. He had just finished high school. He hadn't been to college.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you remember his name?

**Mr. Marshall:** His name was Jimmy \_\_\_\_\_ (Tafoya?) and Jimmy got killed on Iwo Jima. He wasn't with me. He was in our outfit but I wasn't with him at the time. But he was a

good friend of mine and a big loss to everybody, I'm sure to his family, because he was a fine person.

**Mr. Cox:** Now in your training did you do any "live fire?" Did you crawl under live fire?

**Mr. Marshall:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Cox:** Tell us about that.

**Mr. Marshall:** You did some of that and of course you had marksmanship to be a sharpshooter or expert rifleman, high-caliber sharpshooter.

**Mr. Cox:** Oh my.

**Mr. Marshall:** But we had training on how to throw a hand grenade and "live fire" was something you had to go through and see how that worked and of course you stayed underneath it. You kept your head down.

**Mr. Cox:** If you put your head up...

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. That wasn't good.

**Mr. Cox:** It was bad.

**Mr. Marshall:** You didn't put your head up.

**Mr. Cox:** Let me ask you about this learning to throw hand grenades. Did you do like John Wayne and pull the pin out with your teeth?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh no. \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Cox:** It's too hard, isn't it?

**Mr. Marshall:** It's hard to do and it's also... you saw so many things with hand grenades. Sometimes they'd go where you wanted them to go and sometimes they wouldn't. You always worried about the guy next to you not getting rid of that thing. Of course the Japanese had a lot of hand grenades throwing at us while we were there. It was a real good weapon for everybody but it was something else. But the Marine Corps made a man

out of you in a hurry. You either got that way or they got rid of you. \_\_\_\_\_ If you couldn't go through all those things, then you got... you didn't... the worst thing was to be held over for the next group, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** Oh my.

**Mr. Marshall:** I think they did that with some people, but some people just didn't fit their bill. They got out.

**Mr. Cox:** Can you imagine what it would be like going through the second time?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh boy! I don't think the drill instructors were all the same, stamped out the same way.

**Mr. Cox:** Right.

**Mr. Marshall:** They were something.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, you learned the rifle and the hand grenade.

**Mr. Marshall:** Mortar.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you learn the pistol? Did you learn a 45?

**Mr. Marshall:** A pistol. No I didn't have a pistol.

**Mr. Cox:** Sub-machine gun?

**Mr. Marshall:** No.

**Mr. Cox:** Machine gun?

**Mr. Marshall:** No. Not a machine gun. I had an M-1 rifle, that's all you needed. A lot of people had carbines. That wouldn't kill anybody. It would knock them down but it wouldn't kill them. But the rifle \_\_\_\_\_ it would do what you had to have it do.

**Mr. Cox:** So that's a garand.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. Your hand grenades the same way. They were good \_\_\_\_\_ but you had to be sure about the guy that was throwing them, \_\_ got 'em in the right place.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you happen to remember what your serial number was on your rifle?

**Mr. Marshall:** I can't remember the serial number on that. I know my number was 9-9-1-double O-7.  
That's not on my rifle though, was it? That was my...

**Mr. Cox:** Serial number.

**Mr. Marshall:** That was a serial number. \_\_\_\_\_ the rifle number.

**Mr. Cox:** Well after you finished your boot camp, then tell me what happened.

**Mr. Marshall:** Went to Camp Pendleton for infantry training...

**Mr. Cox:** Right.

**Mr. Marshall:** ...and we stayed there for probably... well, I think we left Camp Pendleton about... do you remember, Sammie? Was it October? Or maybe September? We left Camp Pendleton?

**Mrs. Marshall:** I don't remember.

**Mr. Marshall:** Must have been October because we got to Guam about... a little after... we spent Thanksgiving on the ship and Christmas on the ship so it must have been late December we got to Guam. I was on a ship called the *Rochambeau*. Was a converted luxury liner the French had. There were 8,000 of us on that ship. There were two replacement drafts. I was in the 30<sup>th</sup>, I think. The other was the 24<sup>th</sup> replacement draft. We all were going to Guam and we got ready to leave and go to Iwo Jima but we didn't know where we were going. They didn't tell us but the plan was for us to go to Okinawa on the Third Division. Some way they changed the plan. Thank God they did because two divisions couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ what happened at Iwo Jima by themselves. But we went to Iwo Jima and "Howlin' Mad" Smith was the commander of that Marine Corps detachment. Did you ever read about "Howlin' Mad" Smith? He was tough, tough, tough! We had... there were three regiments. We had the Second, Third and the... one of the regiments was the Third Marines in Third Division. He sent them



back to Guam because he wanted them for the next invasion of Japan. They were planning all that for the future. So our replacement drafts got assembled into this company pretty quick after that.

**Mr. Cox:** When you went to Guam, was there any fighting going on?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh, yeah. In fact, we spent one... early part of the time we were there, we were going through the jungle to get Japanese that were still holding out.

**Mr. Cox:** So that's when you saw your first action.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. We did.

**Mr. Cox:** Somebody shoot at you there?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh, yeah. \_\_\_\_\_ and they got shot at, too. So it was good. Then we got back on the ship. Let me tell you about *Rochambeau*. My memory of this is different maybe than a lot of people. But we got two meals a day. You got breakfast. Then you line up for supper and that was all. We had supper, whatever it was. You ate it. Lot of mush and stuff at breakfast. It wasn't real great. It was an old ship, you know. It was hot down underneath and we couldn't get up on the deck because the Japanese had submarines. In fact, we spent a lot of time on the way over there by stopping in San Francisco from San Diego and then going to Hawaii, stopping there for a while. We came up against a... next to a troop ship full of army people and the marines here. First thing they did was start changing uniforms, throwing dungarees over each other and then \_\_\_\_\_. Then when the captain of the ship found out, they made them give them all back and everybody got their old ones back and everything. So we spent \_\_\_\_\_ time there and then we left there going to the Marshall Islands and there was a lot of Japanese submarines out there during that time. They were very careful to move slowly through there to get us to Guam. We finally made it

to Guam and everything turned out all right. But they did sink a Japanese submarine on the way there. We saw them throw those things over there. The tanks exploded underneath the water and stuff came up to the surface.

**Mr. Cox:** Depth charges.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. We saw that.

**Mr. Cox:** Kind of made you think about it, though the possibility of being sunk.

**Mr. Marshall:** It sure made you think about it \_\_\_\_\_. Sure did.

**Mr. Cox:** So were you assigned to a specific unit while you were on Guam?

**Mr. Marshall:** I was assigned to F Company, Second Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines and Third Marine Division and my first experience was with this fellow. We had our picture made together and he was a weapons company guy. I was an infantryman.

**Mr. Cox:** Right.

**Mr. Marshall:** We had one time together, that's all, when they made that picture. Next day, we got separated. I never saw him again until 45 years later at that meeting in Washington. But as I told you, we had... I had a different foxhole friend nearly every day up there because we had lots of people wounded. Lots of people killed in action. Lots going home.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, when you landed on Iwo, were you in the first wave or were you sitting offshore for a couple of days?

**Mr. Marshall:** Well we were offshore for a day and then we tried to go in the second day. Couldn't get in. There was junk there on the front base of the thing, lots of equipment, bodies and everything. So we went back to the ships and the next morning we went in.

**Mr. Cox:** What kind of craft were you in to land?

**Mr. Marshall:** Higgins boat.

**Mr. Cox:** Higgins boat.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. Had the front end came down, got the... That too was an experience on a Higgins boat. \_\_\_\_\_ had lots of... got lots of people around the world \_\_\_\_\_ islands \_\_\_\_\_ Higgins boat.

**Mr. Cox:** We just got one at the museum.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. That's good.

**Mr. Cox:** Now did you happen to get seasick at any of this time, going on the ship over?

**Mr. Marshall:** I was lucky. I never got seasick but everybody was seasick around me, you know. I couldn't stand that. In the daytime, we could get up to get at fresh air but at night, everybody was down there together \_\_\_\_\_. Woo, that was a crowd. Six thousand people on that ship and it was just all together, you know, and gave you lots of... little bitty bathroom about the size of that corner, one shower and one commode. That was it, for fifty people in each one of those things.

**Mr. Cox:** And you were on the sea for quite a long time.

**Mr. Marshall:** Several days.

**Mr. Cox:** So what did you guys do in the meantime?

**Mr. Marshall:** Wasn't anything to do except just while away your time. That's all. A lot of them played poker. I didn't play poker.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you sharpen your bayonet or anything?

**Mr. Marshall:** You could do that but we were there a long time on that ship as I remember it. There wasn't a lot to do but you ... if you get fresh air, that was great. That was a great thing for you. We had lots of good people that we got to be friends with, you know, and of course we got separated when we got over where we were going but...

**Mr. Cox:** Can you remember, you're on the landing craft the second day after the initial invasion and you're riding in, you're a young man, do you remember, possibly remember what your thoughts were?

**Mr. Marshall:** I remember we left that second day, the sailors were having meat and eggs and they gave us... a few of us got... they gave us what they had to eat. That was the best meal I had for a long time up to then but when we got ready to go in, you could tell, we tried to get in the day before and see what that was like. You could see the shells coming \_\_\_\_\_ everywhere. They bombed the island for twenty-some-odd days. All that did was shift the dust to sand on the beach. It didn't do much and when you got on that sand, you were up to your knees in it, you know, and so you had a heck of a time getting off the beach.

**Mr. Cox:** What kind of sand was it?

**Mr. Marshall:** It was just black sand. It's like being in an oat bin. Have you ever worked in an oat bin?

**Mr. Cox:** Yeah.

**Mr. Marshall:** Yeah and it just grabs you and tries to \_\_\_\_\_. Or you'd have a foxhole, it would start to fall in on top of you, you know, so the best place to get was one of these places where a shell had hit in a big area. That was pretty... you felt secure a little bit sometimes. But the Japanese... we got through the second airfield there and into Cushman's Pocket. We hit against that thing for days and days and days. Couldn't make any advantage at all. They had it so well defended.

**Mr. Cox:** Was that down around one of the airstrips, number 2?

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. Number 2.

**Mr. Cox:** Number 2 airfield?

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** What was stopping you?

**Mr. Marshall:** On 2, machine guns coming right across that airfield going everywhere.

**Mr. Cox:** Were those pill boxes or...?

**Mr. Marshall:** Pillboxes. There were parapets they dug down into the sand and fired up at you underground like that.

**Mr. Cox:** So basically you're advancing probably inch-by-inch, weren't you?

**Mr. Marshall:** That's all. That's right. We had one attack where we got... they'd never had a pre-dawn attack and they took... got word up to general, said we're going to have a pre-dawn attack this time. We're going to do the shelling early before daylight and we'll attack then. And we went about, I guess, two hundred yards without any resistance and then we were closed in after that and that's when we got to Cushman's Pocket. Got cut off up there and had one heck of a time getting out of there.

**Mr. Cox:** Now you call it Cushman's Pocket, where did that name come from?

**Mr. Marshall:** Cushman was the regimental commander for the Ninth Marines.

**Mr. Cox:** So if I understand you correctly, the Japanese let you advance, basically kind of trapped you in there.

**Mr. Marshall:** Well they did because they didn't expect us to come that early and we got in up in there early. In fact we were holding the hand of the guy next to you going up this way into this area and the first few fell about fifteen feet down below at the end and all our guys went into that hole.

**Mr. Cox:** Wow.

**Mr. Marshall:** We got out of there and went on up and got in this big old, well, it's Cushman's Pocket, but the Japanese were all the way around us with artillery and they had a great big

weapon that looked like a car going through there. You could see it coming. It made a terrible noise.

**Mr. Cox:** Was it a mortar or was it artillery?

**Mr. Marshall:** It was a big mortar. I never did know whether it was artillery shell or a mortar mover. I think somebody said it was a mortar. Huge thing.

**Mr. Cox:** You could see it coming through the air at you.

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh yeah! Of course it was raining most of the time and the weather was bad and cold. It was cold at night and warm in the daytime and the sulfur underneath that island kept the foxhole warm on the bottom but it was cold up on top. So it was a \_\_\_\_\_. Lots of people died not knowing what it would be like to be in a comfortable place. It was tough. It was really, really something.

**Mr. Cox:** Well when you... the second day you landed, you said there was a lot of debris and bodies still floating...

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** Was there any opposition gunfire on the beach?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh absolutely. We were getting it all the time and it was... they had the high ground. Mount Suribachi was back there. They had all of that. Then the northern part of the island was all elevated. So they had that and we... they made some mistakes about trying to take different objectives, you know, and that was one reason Cushman's Pocket got so bad because we were going the wrong way and we were supposed to be taking out Hill 62, but we didn't get that way. Somebody else was doing that. We got up there in the middle of that thing and almost didn't get out was what happened. Not many of us did get out.

**Mr. Cox:** Looking at this map right here, Keifer, where was Cushman's Pocket located?

**Mr. Marshall:** This area right in here. Up in there.

**Mr. Cox:** For the benefit of the person who might be listening, we're looking at a map of Iwo Jima.

**Mr. Marshall:** North end.

**Mr. Cox:** North end of the... about how far was that from the beach?

**Mr. Marshall:** It was not far from the beach. We were up close to the beach \_\_\_\_\_. We were up in this area here. The rest of us were back over this way.

**Mr. Cox:** So that's around airstrip number 3, I guess.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** What ultimately broke you guys loose to get up and get out of there?

**Mr. Marshall:** We got a tank up there with us and this Captain \_\_\_\_\_ (O'Banion? O'Bannon?) had radioed back to the regimental commander that we were trapped in there and needed help. We needed a tank up there. Tank came up and some of these people were in a foxhole and the tank ran over them and pulled them up through the bottom of it. The rest of us were in a big place a big shell had hit, a big hole, and we were getting shot from every direction and we got behind the tank and got out of there with the tank. Were able to get out that way. Of course the tank was firing ammo all the way through, but if it hadn't been for the tank, we never would have gotten out. I think this guy \_\_\_\_\_ (Croggy?) that I'm talking about, the one that got that tank up there. The captain that was there, he was with us. Yeah, I never saw... I saw a lot of people shake and get upset but I never saw anybody that couldn't move. He couldn't move. Had to get him out of the foxhole and get him on a stretcher. They took him away.

**Mr. Cox:** Was it like what they used to call "shell shock?"

**Mr. Marshall:** Shell shock. They call it PTS or something. It's just where you can't take any more. He'd been... he was the only officer we had. The rest of them been\_\_\_\_\_. We had officers coming from... lieutenants from Quantico out there during the battle, coming in. We lost all of the officers in the beginning and it was unbelievable what the casualties were in that thing.

**Mr. Cox:** What do you think the casualty rate was? Dead and wounded?

**Mr. Marshall:** Out where I was, it was... it's the only battle the Marines ever fought where they had more casualties than the enemy. The enemy had 20,000 people so there was 6,800-and-something killed and 30-some-odd thousand wounded. These were not little wounds. They were big wounds. It's unbelievable what the body can take.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you see any of the Marine medics in action? What did you think about them?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh, there wasn't anything like them. They were something. A+ excellent. You'd hear some guy get hit and hurt, be screaming "Corpsman! Corpsman!" They'd get right there to him and do something with him. Then when we were up in that area, they'd come back... you'd have second line of perimeter and front line. They'd come back to that second line. If you were in the second line, you'd get the stretcher, take them back to the aid station and come back up there. So as long as that went on, they had help getting those boys out of there. But it was one heck of a mess. It really was.

**Mr. Cox:** How about sniper fire? Was there a lot of Japanese snipers?

**Mr. Marshall:** Always. Sniper fire everywhere. Of course, Japanese, when you got up in this area with them, they were desperate because the big fortress of the thing is back on this side here so they'd come out and they'd try to come back in and a P-51 squadron came in here and landed or down here, I don't know which place but they all came in and



landed there and they had this banzai, the last banzai charge. There were about 700 Japs came out and killed some of those people and wounded some others.

**Mr. Cox:** The American P-51 fighters had landed on, I guess it's probably airstrip 2, yeah airfield number 2...

**Mr. Marshall:** uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** ...and you're saying that the banzai charge, they took out some of the pilots.

**Mr. Marshall:** Right out there. Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** Were you ever subject to a banzai charge where the Japanese \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Marshall:** Not really, but we were in the middle of all that.

**Mr. Cox:** Yeah.

**Mr. Marshall:** But they weren't... they were going after the pilots, is what they were doing. They wanted to get that airstrip.

**Mr. Cox:** What is your rank at this time, when you were over there?

**Mr. Marshall:** I was a private. I got to be PFC after the battle. We had a lot of people didn't make PFC though. \_\_\_\_\_ private, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** So you lost a few friends there.

**Mr. Marshall:** Lots of friends. You lost \_\_\_\_\_. The one good friend I had was that boy from San Antonio. I hadn't... didn't know him well, but there was a fellow I had met at the university \_\_\_\_\_ that I knew, named \_\_\_\_\_ (Nardecchia?) He lives in Georgetown now and he's not well. I don't know what's wrong with him. He's not right. He worked for years in Chicago doing something, retired down here. His uncle had a restaurant on the drag in Austin. He worked there. Sammie used to eat with him, (Nardecchia?) What was that restaurant, that Italian restaurant where you had pecan pie and coca-cola every day? Spaghetti. Chester's or?

**Mrs. Marshall:** Victor's...

**Mr. Marshall:** Victor's Italian.

**Mrs. Marshall:** ... was right off Guadalupe sort of behind... going toward the Pi Phi house. Did you tell Floyd about meeting Victor's nephew when you were on Guam?

**Mr. Marshall:** We were playing football, playing pass \_\_\_\_\_ He was throwing the ball around with me and I met him. And after I got back to the University of Texas that semester \_\_\_\_\_ player, but for the fact after I got out, I went to work with the city doing things in the community. I got elected to the Hall of Honor which they count all those things as well as the fact that you lettered and played football there. And \_\_\_\_\_ (Nardocchi?) was in the stands that day and, boy, I could hear him all over the stadium when they introduced me, all the way out there. "Hey, Keifer, how ya doin'?" "Doin' good! Doin' good!"

**Mrs. Marshall:** It was in the paper. He sent you a paper.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you remember how many days you guys were under fire? Intense fire?

**Mr. Marshall:** All the time. All the \_\_\_\_\_. If you were on that place, you were under intense fire all the time because 'til the very end, this part was firing back this way. This they knocked out. You know, they took that hill but this area, all this over here, was never knocked out 'til we finally got to the end of the thing up there.

**Mr. Cox:** So the north end of the island was...

**Mr. Marshall:** uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** ...firing all the length of the island.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. The divisions were like this. We were in the middle, right here, and the Fifth Division was over here and the Fourth Division was over here. So that's the way they were. Third, the middle.

**Mr. Cox:** So you were right about the middle \_\_\_\_\_.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. All the way through.

**Mr. Cox:** Wow. Well, how was your supplies at the time? Were you getting ammo regularly or did you ever get to a point you got short on ammo?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh, we were getting short on ammo at that Cushman's Pocket but we finally got that tank up there and got out of there but it was getting short, but what we were trying to do was keep from getting killed, everybody, you know. That was what you had to do because they were up here in these caves, firing stuff at us from every way and from pillboxes all the way around. They had it perfectly defended. That fellow that took this thing and defended it was in the rape of Nanking. He brought those soldiers back to Iwo Jima and built... spent two or three years defending... \_\_\_\_\_ to defend it. And it was a lot more defense than I think the Marine Corps ever figured on but it was really a well thoughtout plan he had to try to hold the thing.

**Mr. Cox:** Yeah because you had a lot of interlocking fire, didn't you?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh yeah, those ships, they were all over here, you know. They were firing in all the time. Of course, artillery was firing from every direction and mortars were fired from every direction.

**Mr. Cox:** Then the Japanese get in their caves until the fire let up.

**Mr. Marshall:** That's right. They stayed in all the time, but you know what, we had those things that really were able to secure that island was those tanks had flamethrowers. You'd shoot that flame probably a hundred yards out there. And when that would do that to these

people, it scared them to death and when one of them up there and started doing that, you could hear them scream and try to get out, couldn't, and they burned, their skin burned off, nothing but their bones, all that was left of them. That's a horrible death for them, you know. That's what that guy, Williams, had a flamethrower he was using on those pillboxes but he's a miracle. He made it through that long without getting killed himself, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** He and... as we were talking, we were talking about Woody Williams that was on Iwo. He told me out of the six that were in his support group, two of them survived, he and another one. They got the other four.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** But it was quite bad. Well, how about food while you were in this battle?

**Mr. Marshall:** Well, you weren't very hungry the whole time. I don't remember much about it. Our k-rations and c-rations weren't very good compared to what they later were. By the time we got back to Guam. See, we got off of the island... we left... I think ours was probably April... 15<sup>th</sup> of April, something like 14<sup>th</sup> of April, sometime late in April, we got on this brand new ship, a troop transport. Had freshwater showers. We hadn't bathed, hadn't done anything. We got to get that and we got good food. That was wonderful, but the food on Iwo Jima wasn't too good.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, how about water supplies?

**Mr. Marshall:** We had plenty of water, thank goodness. Thank God, you got to have water. Japanese ran out of water. They'd come down at night trying to get our water out of our foxhole. They kept the thing lighted with these flares, you know, at night. It was an eerie deal. It was always cloudy, kind of rainy and you'd see those lights and you'd see these guys crawling around and if you got out of your foxhole to try to do something, they'd cut

your throat. It was something because they were desperate. They didn't have water. Or they were just about out of water.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, I hadn't asked you, did you happen to see the raising of the flag on...

**Mr. Marshall:** Absolutely. Everybody saw that.

**Mr. Cox:** Was that the first flag they raised or the one that Rosenthal...

**Mr. Marshall:** I'm not sure whether it was the first flag but the flag went up and all the ships... hundreds of ships around there honked their horns. We fired guns and everybody was raising cain as best you could without getting killed by Japanese, but that was a great thing to see that flag go up. You know it was.

**Mr. Cox:** Was that on about the second or third day?

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. Maybe end of the first week.

**Mr. Cox:** That would be really eerie, Keifer, at night with knowing somebody was trying to kill you. Kind of spooky, wasn't it?

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. Very spooky. It was.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you ever dream about this when you got back to the states?

**Mr. Marshall:** Yeah, I did. Had a little trouble that way.

**Mrs. Marshall:** Yes, it scared me. He woke up one night running and said, "Get over! Get over behind that rock." I was so frightened. I didn't know what was happening, but he was dreaming and did that for some time, but that finally faded away.

**Mr. Marshall:** \_\_\_\_\_ When I got back to Austin in 1946, the year, I roomed with a boy from Temple that I had grown up with, a year ahead of me in school and I'd wake him up at night, screaming, running, doing something, you know. He said... he was Air Force. He was a pilot. He understood it was tough being over there all that time.

**Mr. Cox:** Oh my. Yes. You didn't happen to contract malaria while you were over there?

**Mr. Marshall:** No, thank God. I didn't catch it.

**Mr. Cox:** My goodness. You didn't catch any of those...?

**Mr. Marshall:** No. Sure didn't.

**Mr. Cox:** Dysentery or anything. You were quite fortunate, that's for sure. Well I recall hearing that the former coach at the University of Texas was killed on Iwo.

**Mr. Marshall:** He was.

**Mr. Cox:** Is that correct? What was his name?

**Mr. Marshall:** Jack Chevigny. He was a Notre Dame graduate. He came to Austin to coach at the catholic school down there. He was a young man, too. I'd say he was in his early 30s or late 20s. I think he stepped on a land mine. One of the Baylor people who played at Baylor was killed the same way. We had to... going through those mine fields trying to find where those mines were. We did some of that. That's very exciting for you.

**Mr. Cox:** Okay, explain to me how you'd do that.

**Mr. Marshall:** Well you take your bayonet and you tap on it to try to find it.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you crawl on your stomach?

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh. Yeah. \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Cox:** So it is inch-by-inch.

**Mr. Marshall:** Inch-by-inch, that's right.

**Mr. Cox:** What do you do if you hear "click, click?"

**Mr. Marshall:** Well, you're in trouble. \_\_\_\_\_ You're in real trouble.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, if you find a mine, what would you do about it?

**Mr. Marshall:** Well when you'd find one, you'd try to mark it, where somebody'd come and destroy it, get rid of it.

**Mr. Cox:** So it wasn't your job to remove the mine? You just...

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** You marked the location of it.

**Mr. Marshall:** Tried to. Where they were. That was pretty primitive. The roads were not too great all the way around the island. It was pretty \_\_\_\_\_ to get all the way through. Everything but the tunnels that they had dug out of there for... They kept up with what was going on here, if they were over here. They knew what was going on all the way over the thing. It's just amazing we ever took that island completely. It really is because that guy had it figured out 100% and Tokyo Rose was always talking to you on the radio about \_\_\_\_\_. In fact, on the ship one day, we were listening to the radio before we went ashore. She got on there and said, "The beautiful music, Glenn Miller record," and she come on and say "All of you Third Marine Division \_\_\_\_\_." Said, "The Fourth, Fifth Division already here and they could have their roll call in a telephone booth." Said, "Not many of them are left," you know. That was something. They finally got rid of her though, thank goodness, some way.

**Mr. Cox:** Hung her.

**Mrs. Marshall:** Did you tell Floyd, this was in your talk when you talked at the military affairs luncheon, how all the Marine Corps battles that there were more casualties...

**Mr. Marshall:** I told him that already. \_\_\_\_\_ the Marines had more casualties than the enemy. Ours was over 30,000 and theirs was 20,000.

**Mr. Cox:** Well when you first go into combat like this and you see your fellow Marines dying around you, do you remember how it affects you at first and how it affects you later on?

**Mr. Marshall:** Horrible deaths, you know, where... just blow their whole stomach out or right in the head. Get shot in the head, take the back of your head off. It was just the whole thing is horrible but it affects you. I don't know how. I can't explain how it affects you, but

it affects you. It's something you don't get over. You don't ever forget. I thought at one time if I drank enough good scotch, it would take care of it, but I found out... Sammie convinced me that wasn't the way to do it. But you do... you get kind out of it that way but it's not the answer at all.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, Keifer, was it easier for you to accept after you'd been there say two weeks than it was the very first day?

**Mr. Marshall:** Unh-uh.

**Mr. Cox:** These guys were still losing their lives.

**Mr. Marshall:** It got worse. It got worse and worse, right after that \_\_\_\_\_ because you could be next, you know, \_\_\_\_\_ didn't have any guarantee that you were going to make it all the way through.

**Mr. Cox:** I'm going to talk to your wife about this when I visit with her, but did you get mail very often over there?

**Mr. Marshall:** Not very often. It would be probably six weeks then I'd get three or four or five letters at the same time from her.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you read them all at the same time or did you kind of spread them out?

**Mr. Marshall:** Read them all at the same time. It would depend on what you were doing. Of course we were getting ready to invade Japan so we were busy all the time, too.

**Mrs. Marshall:** Keifer, I wrote you every day.

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** They just didn't catch up with you very often.

**Mr. Marshall:** That's right. They didn't.

**Mr. Cox:** While you were over there, President Roosevelt passed away. Do you remember hearing about that?



**Mr. Marshall:** I remember hearing that very well and I was sad about it. I thought he was a wonderful man. Did a great thing. He \_\_\_\_\_ on that American Airlines flight to the World War II Memorial in Washington. I got to do that one time. My grandson took me \_\_\_\_\_. Said Sammie was too old. She couldn't go.

**Mrs. Marshall:** I'm too old to carry the bags.

**Mr. Marshall:** My grandson, he's a big, strong guy so he took care of everything. That memorial is something else. It really is. It's about Iwo Jima. That Iwo Jima monument out there where they've got it is beautiful. Have you ever been up there?

**Mr. Cox:** No.

**Mr. Marshall:** That picture is of it. Where is it?

**Mr. Cox:** Yes, they had the same thing down at Harlingen, Texas. They had a \_\_\_\_\_ of it.

**Mr. Marshall:** They did.

**Mr. Cox:** The raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi.

**Mr. Marshall:** We were there. Clinton was making the talk and Clinton... I told Sammie this, he's the best politician I've ever seen. You'd have thought he was on the ship going both ways. Made a great talk.

**Mr. Cox:** You mentioned General "Howlin' Mad" Smith. What did you think of him as a leader?

**Mr. Marshall:** Well, I don't think this was planned as well as it could have been planned, but I don't think they expected it to be the kind of battle it was. I don't think they realized how much protection they had underneath the ground and how they defended it, because that guy was genius. Everywhere you went, they had you in line of machine gun fire or mortars or artillery.

**Mr. Cox:** Caves and tunnels.

**Mr. Marshall:** That's right. All over the place. From one end of the island to the rest.

**Mr. Cox:** Were you there when they got the last Japanese defender or had you been pulled off the island?

**Mr. Marshall:** I think I was there when they got the last one, thank goodness.

**Mr. Cox:** Now were you ever wounded while you were over there?

**Mr. Marshall:** Not wounded at all. Got my feelings hurt some but \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Cox:** Got your feelings hurt! Wow, that's wonderful.

**Mr. Marshall:** I think what really and truly did that thing was the spirit that we had back here in Temple with my coach saying, "World War II is going... y'all are going to be involved. You gotta get ready. Get ready." So my mind was pretty much \_\_\_\_\_ but I never expected it to be what we were in there.

**Mr. Cox:** Did your unit ever capture any Japanese?

**Mr. Marshall:** No live Japanese. But I really, as years go by, I feel sorry for those guys that were dying on the other side and getting wounded too, because they wanted to get out \_\_\_\_\_ wasn't anything they could do about it. They had families and people. War is hell any way you look at it and it's not what people ought to do. There should be a better way. Well, Reverend Hagee says it's going to be when we all go to heaven. We're going to have everything straightened out with everybody at that time. I hope that works out that way.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, that's the promise.

**Mr. Marshall:** I hope I get to go to heaven. I've worried about whether I'll get there or not.

**Mr. Cox:** Well if Sammie has anything to do with it, you will.

**Mr. Marshall:** She's going to get there.

**Mrs. Marshall:** I know he will.

**Mr. Marshall:** She won't have any problem.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, have you ever been back to Iwo since 1945?

**Mr. Marshall:** No, I've had a lot of chances to, but I haven't wanted to. It's just I was so happy to get off there, I really don't want to try it again. I'm afraid I'd step on something, blow me up \_\_\_\_\_.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you know how many of your friends you lost on Iwo?

**Mr. Marshall:** I lost a lot of people I was in boot camp with. I wasn't with them then. But they lost a lot of people. My main friend was that boy from San Antonio that I knew real well and Nardecci, he came back all right. He's confused mentally but other than that, he's all right.

**Mr. Cox:** You were quite fortunate, Keifer. You didn't get any jungle diseases and you didn't get wounded.

**Mr. Marshall:** No. That's right. I was very fortunate.

**Mr. Cox:** You were one of the very few. Sure were. Well, after they considered the island "secure," is that when you got to get off?

**Mr. Marshall:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Cox:** Where did you go and how did you get there?

**Mr. Marshall:** Went back to Guam on that brand new troop ship, the small ship. We had plenty to eat and warm, freshwater showers. On the *Rochambeau*, we had saltwater showers. Have you ever tried to bathe in saltwater?

**Mr. Cox:** Yes.

**Mr. Marshall:** They give you that black soap, you know, to get you... just get you where you scratch all over.

**Mr. Cox:** That's right. You just get soap.

**Mr. Marshall:** That's right. You can't get it off. It doesn't come off.

**Mr. Cox:** When you got back to Guam, what did you do on Guam?

**Mr. Marshall:** Well we were getting ready to invade Japan for the first two weeks and then finally, you know, they said the war's going to be over soon. Really and truly before this all was ever taken, they were defeated. They had... the ships out there could bomb them all the time and they had airpower just... they had it all over Japan. Of course they didn't have the big bomb. When they dropped a couple of those, that put it all behind. So do you think Iran is going to get the nuclear weapon? Are they going to let them do that? I can't believe that.

**Mr. Cox:** That's going to be bad.

**Mr. Marshall:** That's terrible.

**Mr. Cox:** Speaking of nuclear weapons, were you on Iwo when they announced the atomic bomb was dropped?

**Mr. Marshall:** No, we were back in Guam.

**Mr. Cox:** What was your feeling?

**Mr. Marshall:** We had a great joy. We were getting ready to go to China (possibly meant Japan?) and I got to come home. But there was... \_\_\_\_\_ a keg, made a lot of noise, drank a lot of beer and did everything you shouldn't be doing. We were so happy the thing was over because we knew that this was like it was. If we had to invade Japan, it would have been worse \_\_\_\_\_.

**Mrs. Marshall:** But they were training you all to kill every man, woman & child old enough to hold a gun.

**Mr. Marshall:** We had an old \_\_\_\_\_... when I got back to Guam, we had an old master sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ said, "Boys, when we hit the beach, flip the coin. Half of you will make it. Half of you won't." I knew that was true, and he said, "This is going to be a

tough deal getting there.” It would have been. That would have been... because he said “You’ve got to kill every man, woman and child. You can’t...” Because where they had Japanese families, they couldn’t... on Saipan they’d jump over the \_\_\_\_\_ and commit hari-kari and it was something. It was really something.

**Mr. Cox:** You said you were on Guam getting ready for the invasion. What did this entail in getting ready? Did you do any maneuvers?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh, yeah. We were doing maneuvers and doing the same thing Marines do everywhere. \_\_\_\_\_ Check your weapon. Check everything. We were ready to go. It was ready to happen. It would have been all five Marine divisions and three Army divisions invade that thing. It would have been something. Really would have.

**Mr. Cox:** You heard about dropping the atomic bomb, so then how long was it between that and when they said, “Keifer, you’re going home”?

**Mr. Marshall:** It was about a month probably. Uh-huh. Got to come home. My mother... I was the only child. She’d had a bad surgery here and she had friends that were interested in getting me home to help her. So I finally got the call that said you’re going to get to go home and so I said, “That’s fine.” Well, tell me about it. I got on a fast ship that seemed like we just... two or three days we were all the way across the water, you know. I’ll never forget going out from under that Golden Gate Bridge though and looking back is all you could see it and you couldn’t see it anymore, and not knowing whether you’d ever see it again, you know. That’s a feeling that you don’t forget.

**Mr. Cox:** You know you’re leaving home, don’t you?

**Mr. Marshall:** Right and there was lots of boys that never did get to see their country again.

**Mr. Cox:** Now how did you feel when you saw it when you came back?

**Mr. Marshall:** Oh delighted! Delighted. The ships were all shooting water and everybody was happy. I got on a train to come home and they had every car filled with soldiers, sailors, and marines. Each car had big wood-burning fireplaces in them. It was cold because we \_\_\_\_\_ to Colorado and then down to home. That was some experience, that trip home was. It really was. But it was wonderful. I got home Christmas morning 1945 at 4 o'clock in the morning. I met Sammie at the station in Waco the next day and she came down to see me and we got back together, thank God. I was glad to be home. I really was. My mother got all right. She was doing fine.

**Mr. Cox:** Good. Well that was quite an experience for a young man from Texas, wasn't it?

**Mr. Marshall:** \_\_\_\_\_ Having been there to see what people went through to do that, makes me want to be... have things right in this country. We don't have them right now, and the more you get involved in politics, the worse it gets. You know, I've tried to do things politically but you can't count on anybody. I thought Lyndon Johnson hung the moon and he fought that Vietnam War knowing he was never going to win. That doesn't make any sense at all. Those were the best Marines that ever lived, those Vietnam Marines. Every time one calls me the last thing they say is "God bless America!" God bless America. They keep saying that, and the Army generals that made it \_\_\_\_\_ since then, most of them are Vietnam people. Colin Powell and this guy that just resigned from being Secretary of Defense, Hagel, was Vietnam. They're great Americans. They really all are. What happened to them should never have happened.

**Mr. Cox:** Well, I think from what you have told me, nobody can really describe how it was on Iwo unless you were there.

**Mr. Marshall:** You can't do it. It's just impossible. I told Sammie that everybody always wants to know "how was it?" You can't tell how it was. You've got it up here but you can't... You've just got to get over it. That's what you have to do. It's like everything else in life. Some things are harder than others.

**Mr. Cox:** My goodness, yes. Well is there anything you'd like to add before we conclude this?

**Mr. Marshall:** It's a great country and a great world. I'm just hoping that we can take care of some of the problems we've got and make it so that our young people will never forget what was done to keep this country alive and well, to keep it going, because we've got to have that. Every time I'm around the Army people that are stationed here at Fort Hood, I'm impressed with them. They're probably the best educated. My group wasn't educated. Most of them hadn't been to college, you know, or not finished high school. But these are educated people and if they'd just get the right \_\_\_\_\_ things for them, and I think they will, then we've got a great future. Really do, because this country has been through a lot but it has got lots still to do and we ought to be about doing it. That's what I feel, but I think you've got to be careful about the politicians. I don't care whether they're local, state or national. You've got to be careful about who gets elected. I've worried about this lieutenant governor we've got coming in. Do you know anything about that guy, Patrick?

**Mr. Cox:** No, I don't.

**Mr. Marshall:** \_\_\_\_\_

Oral History OH04289  
Transcribed by: Carole Gillespie, Volunteer  
San Angelo, Texas  
August 2016