

516 W. Nugent
Temple, TX 76501

Transcription: Keifer Marshall

I'll start off by saying today is January 13th, 2009, and my name is James Crabtree and today I'll be interviewing Mr. Keifer Marshall at his home in Temple, Texas. This interview is being done in person and it's being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. And, sir, we just want to start off first by thanking you for giving us this time to interview you and record your story for posterity and for future generations.

Keifer Marshall: Well thank you James, and thank the Veterans Land Board for doing this project. I think it's an excellent thing to record the history of people who were at World War II, Vietnam, all the wars we've been, as long as they're here. Unfortunately, my generation is dying off pretty quick.

Sure.

Keifer Marshall: So it's great that we have this opportunity, yes it is.

Tell us a little bit about just kind of your background and a little bit maybe about your family and your boyhood and that sort of thing.

Keifer Marshall: Well, I'm a native Texan and native Temple-ite. I grew up in Temple, went all through the public schools in Temple, and I was an only child in my family and lived with my mother, my father and my grandmother all my life, and graduated from high school in 1942. In January of 1943 I went to the University of Texas on a football scholarship, which was very important to me at that time, and I had a year at the university, and then I joined the Marine Corps in 1944 after my 18th birthday. DOR 1926

Wow.

Keifer Marshall: And it was a great experience, the fact that I had been at Texas for a year and been away from home for a year, so it wasn't as hard on me as the separation was on a lot of people that got into the service. But we made the long trip from San Antonio out to San Diego, actually Los Angeles I think. They had picked us up and took us to San Diego and we went to boot camp in San Diego, and that was probably one of the most defining moments of my life is what they do to you in boot camp. If my memory serves me correctly, got there say in the middle of the night sometime. They put us up like gave us someplace to sleep and got us bedded down, and I think about 4:30, everything went off and we were up and ready to go under the Marine Corps rules. So I went through boot camp at San Diego. Then I got a seven-day furlough and in those days, it took two or three days to get home, and get back, so we didn't have long at home. But we went back and then went to Camp Pendleton. Now you're familiar with Camp Pendleton.

Yes sir, and MCRD San Diego.

Keifer Marshall: And the recruit depot, too. Camp Pendleton was an experience for us. We had a, we work in 10 days with a 48-hour pass, and we were there I think about five weeks or six weeks, something like that, and then one day they said we were going overseas. So we trained hard at Camp Pendleton, like 10 days on, then 48-hour pass. We were so far back at Camp

Pendleton, it took 48 hours to get to the room so we'd get booked for Los Angeles where a lot of us went. And I was with a great group of guys that were from all over the country of course. And I'd never been out of Texas much, so I got to experience the New York, Minnesota, and Iowa and California, all the people. It was a great experience. And we trained hard. We'd make, did you train in the riverbed? Was the riverbed dry out there when you were there?

Yeah, I was there in the summertime, so we didn't have any rain.

Keifer Marshall: Walked in that thing for sometimes 10, 15, 20 miles, you know. Then we'd stop, we've had bull in the ring. You know, we'd get, they'd get it knocked out. We did all that, and then we learned how to shoot the rifle and a little bit on hand grenades. And then we left to go overseas. They put us on a graveled up truck. I'll never forget this. Took us down to the dock, we got on the ship, we started out. It was a Rochambeau, it was a converted luxury liner, the French luxury liner. They made a troop transport out of it and I remember there were two replacement rafts on that ship. About 6,000 men on the ship. But we sailed up the coast. Of course we could see the lights of Los Angeles and everything, and got to San Francisco, docked there, stayed a week in San Francisco waiting I guess for escorts to take us out to go to the Pacific. Then we sailed out under the Golden Gate Bridge and on the way to, we were going on the way to Guam, and we went and stopped at Pearl Harbor, there for a week and we tied up next to a transport of Air Force personnel that were on the way to the Pacific area. We were there about a week and then we left and got a convoy to take us and went to the Marshall Islands. We stayed there for two or three weeks. We were there a long time waiting to go on to Guam. We got off the ship one time there to play a little baseball and drink three-two beer, and I didn't drink beer at that time, so we had cold drinks and things. Got back on the ship and then went on the way to Guam and it was the kind of ship with so many people, we lined up for breakfast and then you had nothing to do the rest of the time but line up for supper.

And what unit were you with?

Keifer Marshall: Well, we were not in a unit. We were in placement drafts, we were a replacement group, going to Guam to join the 3rd Division. And we finally got the submarines and the destroyers to take us all the way out to Guam from Marshall Islands, and we got there in I think December about the time we got there. We left California in maybe the latter part of October or first of November.

Of '43?

Keifer Marshall: '44. And so we got to Guam, and then they didn't put us into the 3rd Division. They took us and did a sweep of Guam. There were still stragglers that were hiding out and we went through and found a few of those and did an Infantry sweep all the way around. Incidentally, when I joined the Marine Corps, they said all you have to do is tell us what you want, you'll be in the Air Force, you'll be in the Air Force. Want to be seagoing, you'll be seagoing. Communication, you'll be in communication. We all went to Fleet Marine Force which means we were going to get to do some fighting. So we got there and then we were told we were gonna go somewhere and we wouldn't be gone long, and we probably wouldn't be involved. And we got on a ship and helped load the ship, the supplies that they had, and we sailed up to what was Iwo Jima, and they told us we were going to Iwo Jima and I never heard of Iwo Jima. Nobody on there had heard much of it. But we then got there and then the 4th and 5th Divisions had done the initial landing on the 19th of February, and we were still in reserve and when they called on the 21st, the 3rd Division went in, and the 3rd Division had three regiments and

the Infantry – the 9th, the 21st, and the 3rd. And for some reason, General Smith said we're gonna hold the 3rd in reserve and commit the other two in there, and of course there were, when we got, we started ashore and the first thing we were doing was unloading the ships, the supplies, and out on the beach. But it was just chaotic, so chaotic because they were shelling that beach still – that was the third day of the _____. That went on forever. And so finally we got in there and I got assigned to the 9th Marines, the second battalion, F Company, the 9th Marines.

So F Company of 2-9. Second 9 –

Keifer Marshall: F Company 2-9. And Colonel Canyon was our colonel. I saw him one time I think. But we were, the island was small, 5 by 2 I think they said it was, and shaped like a pork chop, and Suribachi was the volcano on the high point, so the landing was made I think on the west side, or east side of Suribachi, and the 4th and 5th Division were lined up, and the 3rd Division was in the area there, and the 5th Division went across to take Suribachi, and they did that, got that secured. The 4th Division was on our right and the 5th Division was on the left, and we were in the middle going up the island to the north, and made some progress. We got along pretty good and then we got up to the north, it was the second air field, and it was a shell hitting somewhere all the time. I've forgotten somewhere I heard the casualties amounted by the second on there, and we had a tremendous amount of casualties. I've always told my wife I just happened to be in the best time and place where a shell didn't hit because they hit everywhere, and there were very few of them that made it all the way through there with us. And as we got to the north end, that's where most of the history of the battle, half the casualties were made trying to take that north end. Cushman's pocket, Hill 362, those different areas of Iwo Jima. And our outfit got cut off up there and we were cut off for about 36 hours, and the only way we ever got out, we had, the only officer we had left was Captain Obanyan I believe his name was, Obanyan. And he was at a radio and he'd radio back to where the Colonel was the kind of trouble we were in. And the Colonel said save yourself and get out of there. Well, he wouldn't do that. He took the rest of us, mighty few of us, took those that we had left and we were in a shell hole and he'd call for the tanks to come up and the tanks got up there and helped us get out. Some of us, they pulled us up underneath the hatch of the tank and the wounded that way, and then the rest of us walked behind the tank. But we were surrounded. That's the way it was on Iwo Jima most of the time. When you'd take 100 yards of ground, they were behind you and on each side of you. You'd take the people in front, but they were everywhere and they were all underground. We never saw very many people during the daylight. So what we had was hand grenades and we had M1 rifles and carbines and we didn't have any officers. I think in my platoon that I was in, we had maybe seven or eight second lieutenants. Some of them had been in Quanaco and they flew 'em out there after the battle was started and came out there, but it was a pretty tough engagement.

What was your rank at that time?

Keifer Marshall: I was a Private.

Private, just a Buck Private?

Keifer Marshall: Private, that's right, and most of us were Privates or maybe a few Corporals, but we lost all the Non-Comms, we lost most of the officers. Captain Obanyan was not one of them that had been lost. And we got right back behind, we were in the second line defense about 50 yards behind the front lines. We all dug in for the night and he came around to see that everybody had something to eat and were located, and there weren't many of us, very few of us.

So the next morning, we all got up and got ready to go. Captain Obanyan was lying in the bottom of his foxhole and couldn't move. His eyes opened, just had complete combat fatigue. So they had to take him off and I think he got the Navy cross for his, what he had done that day. But then we were still trying to get rid of that Cushman's pocket is what Colonel Cushman was our battalion command, and he ended up being a Commandant in the Marine Corps later on I think. Well we finally got the thing secured after 20 some odd days, and then we had a lot of mopping up to do. We were the last troops to leave the island and turn it over to the Army, by the 9th Marines were the last ones off of there. So it was an experience you'll never forget and you wouldn't take anything for it, but sure hate to go through it again. And my wife knows that I've always been concerned about everybody in Vietnam and Iraq and everything, what they're going through over there. The thing, the Falusia that upset me so much was that Marines were ready to go and they kept 'em for two months or six weeks?

Yeah, they initially were gonna invade, then they pulled them back, and then ___ months later.

Keifer Marshall: Pulled 'em back, yeah, and it's just horrible.

That was politics.

Keifer Marshall: Yeah, and it, that's not the way it ought to be run.

Sure.

Keifer Marshall: But Marine Corps is a great outfit and we had had very little training when those of us that were in that replacement rep went in there, but we knew how to use a rifle and use hand grenades. In hand to hand combat, that's all you need to know really. And we had first time I had ever experienced rockets. We'd always been on artillery, you know, and that island, the ships around it were everywhere, all kinds of ships with all kinds of weapons, and they just bombed it, bombed it, bombed it. The Air Force bombed it for 80 some odd days. But the Japanese were all underground.

Yeah, the catacombs and caves –

Keifer Marshall: That's right, the caves. And you had to dig 'em out, and there at the end we were trying to get 'em to surrender and none of 'em would surrender. I've got great admiration for the Japanese Army because they were dedicated and they knew at the end they didn't have much chance, but they never quit and -

Where were you when the infamous flag was raised? Could you see that?

Keifer Marshall: I could see it and it was a great experience. Every guy got out of what they were doing and looked at it, all the ships blew their horns, their whistles, and it was euphoric. But that was just, it was just beginning at that time. And it really got, but that was about the fourth day I think, the flag went up.

Yeah, three of the six flag raisers died.

Keifer Marshall: That's right, before they could get the thing completed. But it was, that was a great, that was a great photograph for the war boy drive that year, it really, it raised a lot of

money, and those poor guys that they had all that, the Indian you know, he had to bring him back. He couldn't stand it.

Yeah, Ira Hayes.

Keifer Marshall: And he ended up an alcoholic and died in the snow in New Mexico which is really sad, but he wanted to get back with his outfit and it was a sad deal.

Have you ever had a chance to go back to Iwo Jima?

Keifer Marshall: We've been to three of the reunions, and in 1975, they started calling, I was, my family and my mother and father had moved to San Antonio while I was a Marine. So when I got out, they put my name down as Robert K. Marshall. I go by Keifer all the time. And they were, I was in a picture that I didn't know existed, and they were trying to find this other fellow and I, and he and I had been together for one night in this fox hole, and I'd never been with him before with just the confusion and everything going on. We got in there and we spent one night together. He was from Levelland, Texas, and he was in Weapons Company and I was in the Infantry part. And we got together that time. Well, this guy came up to our fox hole and took our picture. It's all around behind the parapet of the fox hole, took our name, rank, and serial number. Either one of us, he ran off and a shell hit right over about that time, and this fellow said we'll never see that picture. So in 1975, they found him and he told me he thought I'd been killed, but then they found out that I was in Temple some way, and they called Miss Marshall here, said do you know Robert K. Marshall? Said she knew Keifer Marshall. That way is the way they found us, wasn't it? And so then they flew us up there. The Marine Corps paid for our trip up there and had a real great reunion and the 25th anniversary. Then Sammy and I went back for the 50th and took our son and his boys, and then we went back for the 55th and every time they have a trip going back to Iwo Jima, she said don't you want to go? And I said no, I prayed so hard to get off there, I don't want to go back.

So you've never actually been back to the island.

Keifer Marshall: No, I haven't been back at all, but I've known people that have been back and of course it's not, it's all green and beautiful now, like an island should be. We were there, it was just blown to hell everywhere, and we had so many, so many people that were killed and wounded and it didn't make any difference where you were, you were in harm's way all the time because Japanese had great snipers and they had these spider hole kind of things, and they had pill boxes, and whoever designed that defense, and the whole thing was honeycombed underneath the island in caves and tunnels, and it was a great defensive effort they had. If they had had any Air Force or any ships to help 'em, they probably, I don't know if we'd have ever taken them.

Mrs. Marshall: James, we were flying from Bangkok to Tokyo one year, one summer, it was 1975 I believe, and we were on Pan Am, and the pilot was great. He would announce as we would go over historical places, and he announced about 30 minutes before we were to fly over the island of Iwo Jima, and I was sitting on the window, see, and I said Keifer, do you want to trade with me so you can look down? And he said no, and he didn't look down. He said I don't want to see it. That's the only, he had no desire to go back to the island.

Keifer Marshall: Well you know what kind of training you get in the Marine Corps, and I'll say if it hadn't been for that training well you really learn to depend on the guy on your left, the

guy on your right, and if it hadn't been for all those people on my right and left, I wouldn't be here, and hopefully I helped save some other people like that, but it was so, it was just the fighting was just unbelievable.

How many days were you on the ship and could see the shelling of the island before you went ashore?

Keifer Marshall: Probably two.

Two days then at least.

Keifer Marshall: We didn't go in the 19th. We went the 21st, and it was, we could see that. It just obliterated the island.

What were the thoughts of you and your fellow Marines when you were on that ship knowing that you were getting ready to go into battle? Maybe tell us what your thoughts were or what your mindset was before you hit the beach?

Keifer Marshall: Well, really most people were pretty quiet, didn't do a lot of talking. But those that were talking were talking to their best friend or buddy, and said you know, if something happens to me, this is where I live and go tell these people about it. And it was unbelievable, it really was. But the courage of people in that situation was also unbelievable, and we didn't have anybody that quit. Everybody stayed with it completely.

Mrs. Marshall: He was on, he fell on the island of Iwo Jima for 45 days. Of course they declared the island taken, but then they had -

They had to clear it.

Mrs. Marshall: The Division stayed more days to clean up. And then on this Cushman's pocket and the history of the 3rd Marine Division, Keifer was talking about this Colonel Obanyan, wasn't his name Obanyan?

Keifer Marshall: Captain Obanyan.

Mrs. Marshall: Captain Obanyan, they were only three or four left according to the 3rd Marine Division history on the island.

Keifer Marshall: 9th Marine Division.

Mrs. Marshall: And the 3rd Marine Division.

Keifer Marshall: 9th Marine was a regiment of the 3rd Marine Division.

Mrs. Marshall: Right. But there were only three or four out of his company that -

Keifer Marshall: What you need to remember is F Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine. That's what it was.

And let me ask you too, sir, when the battle was all over, when was the first time you were able to get a letter from home or have any contact with home?

Keifer Marshall: As I remembered, at the end they set up a post office and we were able to get some mail then. Of course that was, but they didn't know where we were, back here they didn't know where we were. They suspected it. In fact my mother and father were still living here when that thing started and had friends with the Santa Fe Railroad, one, this man called my mother and said there was going to be a train of Iwo Jima veterans coming through here on the way to the hospital in New Orleans, and get a group down and see if anybody knows your son. Of course I didn't know him, but these were all people that were shell shocked apparently. Sammy was there. She had called her and she came up, but I don't think they talk to you, couldn't get much conversation out of him.

Mrs. Marshall: Well they were troubled people. They were on their way to a hospital. They were shell shocked. I was at the University of Texas in Austin and Keifer's mother and father called to see if I could come up and we met this train at the Santa Fe station.

Here in Temple?

Keifer Marshall: About 2 o'clock in the morning, wasn't it?

Now you all I guess had already met then before you went?

Keifer Marshall: We met at the university when I was down there as a Freshman. She was a Freshman, I was a Freshman. We met there.

Now were you all engaged when you entered the Marine Corps, or married?

Keifer Marshall: Not formally, but we had talked about it. We were planning on it. We got married in 1948. I came back and went to school on the GI Bill and she worked for Dean was his name?

Mrs. Marshall: ____.

Keifer Marshall: Dean what? Dean Bradford Placement secretary. And she had me, I got special jobs all ____ doing and everything.

Mrs. Marshall: ____ Keifer at school, but we, I wrote him every day.

Keifer Marshall: Yeah.

Mrs. Marshall: I wrote him every day. Then our letters might take six weeks to get there and they were censored, and his letters.

Keifer Marshall: I always played football in high school and we went to state finals my junior and senior year and got beat by Amarillo one year and by Wichita Falls the next. But we had a good team. I went to Austin and played as a Freshman there in 1943, played 60 minutes in the 1944 Cotton Bowl. I think the only record I ever had then is I'm the only Freshman that ever played 60 minutes in the Cotton Bowl.

Wow. So you played offense and defense?

Keifer Marshall: Offense, defense. And then we came back after that, I was there in '46 and '47, and we had some good teams back then, too. But I think that background helped me in the Marine Corps. But the Marine Corps training as you know is really great. And what they do for you mentally is really a part I think, too. I'd recommend it to anybody. I just don't, I don't want anybody to have to get shot at.

How did it come about that you went in the Marine Corps? Did you choose it, or were you drafted?

Keifer Marshall: I was going to be drafted. I chose the Marine Corps when I got down there. One of the recruiters came up to me and said would you like to be in the Marine Corps? And I was thinking I'd be in the Navy. I said well, I might like that. He said well come on over here with me. So I did and that's the way I chose it, and I'm glad I did. It was just a great outfit, great background.

Did you have any friends from Temple that you knew as a high school student?

Keifer Marshall: That were in the Marine Corps?

Yeah.

Keifer Marshall: Yeah, in fact with the war was, in fact after we got back from Iwo Jima, like I said there weren't many of us left in our outfit, but the 6th Marine Division moved into our camp, so we had to build a new camp, and I think that saved my life. I got busy that first day we got there building and digging and doing things we were doing.

Mrs. Marshall: You were on Guam then.

Keifer Marshall: Guam, back to Guam. But we had two or three people from Temple that were on Guam. We were all going to Japan for the invasion, and there were two or three, I've got a picture in there of four or five of us that played football here in that picture all getting ready to go to Japan. And boy I'll tell you, that was gonna be a blood bath. The people that say Truman made a mistake when he dropped the bomb are crazy, completely crazy.

Do you remember where you were when you found out that the bomb had been dropped?

Keifer Marshall: On Guam, yeah, we were training every day. We had enough, we had an old top sergeant that had been on Guadalcanal, yellow from malaria, and he got up every morning and he'd flip the coin and said we hit that beach, boys, tails you win, heads you lose. Half of you won't get off the beach. Of course we knew that. But it was a great, great experience. I got a book from Jerry about Iwo Jima, about whether or not it was worth, *The Ghost of Iwo Jima*. Have you read that book?

No I haven't.

Keifer Marshall: It's a great book. This guy is pretty intelligent and he was making studies in history and everything, seeing if it was really worth the people that were saved in the B29's, and I think there were about 6,000 people that were saved. There were 6,000 ____, they had 7,000

killed in the Marine Corps. But that picture though Rosenthal had is I think really, well the Secretary of the Navy said it'd be before it got back said it'd be today for the next 500 years.

Yeah, the Marine Corps for the next 500 years, that's right.

Keifer Marshall: Be the Marine Corps for the next 500 years.

It was just such an iconic image and an iconic battle.

Keifer Marshall: It really was, and then the fact that those two guys got killed right after that, you know, it was something.

Yeah, three of the six were killed shortly after that, and yeah, it's still taught today in boot camp and officer candidate school. I mean all of the Marine Corps history, but Iwo Jima is kind of the defining moment in Marine Corps history. It really is.

Keifer Marshall: I'll tell you, I never saw such tenacious fighting people as we had there because boy, it had to be that way if they would ever take it because you had to really dig the people out of the ground to get 'em to gain any, distance at all.

You were talking about UT football, and I've read that there was a UT head football coach that was a Marine -

Keifer Marshall: Jack Shagmanee.

Yeah, Sagmanee.

Keifer Marshall: He was about 50 yards from me when he was killed.

Really? OK, yeah. I was gonna ask you about him.

Keifer Marshall: I never met him and he was there before I got down there, but he was head coach there before Mr. Bibo came I think.

Yeah, he played at Notre Dame -

Keifer Marshall: Played at Notre Dame -

Coached at UT for a few years -

Keifer Marshall: Apparently a great individual, but there were lots of them killed that were great.

But when you were there though, you didn't know that there was a football head coach that's here, too.

Keifer Marshall: There was no way. But there were two or three there that were, had been there when I was there, but I wasn't with 'em. They were the artilleries and everything. And we got back and got ready to go to Japan, I got adopted into a rocket detachment on these where those one-ton trucks that run up with the rock, and boy, that was in the infancy of rockets at that

time. You put those little things on there to try to get 'em to go where they were supposed to go. It might fall right in front of the truck or somewhere, but it was something. But that was a great experience, too.

Mrs. Marshall: You can tell him how President Truman, people that criticized him. There's so many young people that were not aware of you know, they were trained, those young men when and take the island of Japan, and trained them to kill every man, woman, and child enough to hold a gun. Well, when President Truman made the decision to drop the atomic bomb, it was a horrible thing but it saved thousands, millions of lives.

Yeah, millions, sure.

Mrs. Marshall: Of Japanese and American, and he will always be my hero because I definitely think that even though he's gotten criticism from a lot of people who were not, don't remember -

Those people weren't there.

Mrs. Marshall: That's right.

That's absolutely right.

Mrs. Marshall: But if you had someone over there that you loved it was the right decision.

Yeah, absolutely. Well, after VJ Day was declared, how long was it before you were able to come back home?

Keifer Marshall: I got to come home in December. I got home Christmas Day 1945. So I got home pretty quick. I was supposed to be going to China, but like I say, I was the only child. My mother had a serious operation and the Red Cross let me know about that, and I got to come home right before I had to go to China. And so I got home Christmas Day, which was a new experience by sailing up under that Golden Gate Bridge and coming back in under it. Of course the thing now, the way you went, they put you on an airplane, you're there, and then you get on the airplane over there and you're home first thing. I think that was hard on the Vietnam people because they got right from in the middle of all that mess and had to come back and they were being criticized so much for what they'd done and it was just bad, bad deal.

One thing I know that they did change in Iraq and I think was a good thing, in Vietnam they would send guys individually, drop them into a unit where they were, didn't know anybody, and then when their time was up, they would leave and other guys would remain behind, and the way it works in Iraq now is you train with a unit, you go over with a unit, and unless you're wounded, you come back with that unit. So you go en masse, so I think that helps for the unit cohesiveness. You don't have new guys showing up halfway through or guys leaving halfway through, and also they do a lot of training when you get back, the chaplain and the others talk to the guys, try to identify anybody that has the post traumatic stress disorder or any of that sort of thing. And so I think they're very aware of that and I think in Vietnam you're right, a lot of those guys would just get on a plane and come back, and it's just a kind of culture shock to suddenly be back in a civilian world in the United States. It's definitely different. And I'm sure when you got back, it was no different than when I got back. You're just so thankful for all the things you take for granted in everyday life. You just cannot believe how blessed we are and unless somebody's been there, they really can't, I remember getting back and going into a Whole Foods grocery

store and just being overwhelmed at all the choices of food and you know, it's an embarrassment of riches.

Mrs. Marshall: A different set of values.

Sure.

Keifer Marshall: Well, you never, you don't understand life until you've been shot at in anger. I've told Sammy many times I think before a fellow ought to be President of the United States, he should've been in combat somewhere for a while because I really do, there's nothing like that and you can't explain to people that haven't been through it. I had a lot of friends who were in high school all have been in the service. We all got back home. We started talking to 'em. Most of 'em didn't have combat and back in World War II, they were doing something else. But they don't, there's no way to relate to that unless somebody's trying to kill you or you're trying to kill them, and it's a, and that thing over there was having to be involved with all those civilians was, must've been tough, too.

Yeah, in your case, I guess you didn't see any Japanese civilians.

Keifer Marshall: No, not at all. The only place they ever saw that was on Saipan, then Okinawa they had some civilians there. But there weren't any civilians around where we were.

Mrs. Marshall: ___ the Japanese Iwo Jima is I remember reading they had been on that island for years.

Keifer Marshall: Then they got some feds built it up. That Kuribachi was some kind of a general. They'd had time to build it, the defense of it. It could've been more perfect. He had it completely so anywhere you were, they could hit you, you know. It's really something. General Nimitz said it, said uncommon valor was a common trait, virtue, and it was true. These corps men, unbelievable what they did, and stretcher bearers that'd have to go get those guys and take 'em back and see all that firing, and then at night, the Japanese were out active. They'd try to get in a fox hole with you, you know, so there was lots of hand to hand stuff with them. And at the end of the thing they were desperate. They didn't have any water, didn't have any food, but they never quit fighting, never quit trying.

Did your men have the flame throwers?

Keifer Marshall: Oh yeah, we never would take ____. The tank flame throwers what really helped us, you know.

But the ones on your back –

Keifer Marshall: Oh, we had those, too, yeah. They were great, particularly for the pill boxes, but in those caves, they could take that tank and be back 75 yards and put that fire out before that cave.

Then I guess you probably saw as well certain cases where they just had the bulldozers would just have to close in the caves and seal 'em off.

Keifer Marshall: And that's what happened, they had most of the people that surrendered said they were Koreans. You never could tell the difference if they were Koreans. They felt a concern one day and we tried to tell them to go back and tell the Japanese people that we want 'em to come out and nothing would happen to 'em. He went back in, came back and said they said they'd blow up this whole thing. Sure enough, they blew up the whole area and near killed all of them, killed some Marines that were around it outside of it. But they were something else, they really were.

When you were there, I know a lot of Marines came back with Samurai swords and things like that. Did you, were you able to bring back - ?

Keifer Marshall: Never wanted to.

Didn't want to.

Keifer Marshall: Didn't get any gold teeth or any Samurai sword or Japanese flags. I didn't, I didn't want to.

But did you see guys that had the swords?

Keifer Marshall: Oh yeah, lots of them.

Amazing, you know -

Mrs. Marshall: It was an interesting thing, Keifer was Mayor of Temple when he was on city council for 9 years -

Keifer Marshall: James was gonna run for the city council in Pflugerville.

Mrs. Marshall: But we had so many friends from Fort Hood because Temple and Fort Hood were so closely together, and there was a General, Leon LaPort, who was commander of the whole fort over there, and he and his wife were two of the nicest people. Well General LaPort left Fort Hood and went, had an advancement and went to was it Georgia or some place, and then -

Keifer Marshall: Florida.

Mrs. Marshall: Florida? And then from there went to Korea, and was -

Keifer Marshall: Asiatic Pacific Commander.

Mrs. Marshall: Commander of the Asiatic Pacific. I've always had in my mind it was a little bit like MacArthur in World War II, and was it MacArthur? But when Leon and Judy were in Korea, of course he went to the different places and different islands, and their chief, and he, they flew to Iwo Jima, and he had the United States flag flown, they were having lunch at the time on Mt. Suribachi and had this flag flown for Keifer, and Judy picked up black sand off of the beach, and he mailed it to Keifer after he got back to Korea. It came in a box about this big and had the nicest letter. But I thought what a thoughtful thing to do and he has said so many nice things at different times when we've been with a group of people at Fort Hood, he said so many nice things about this young man who fought.

Keifer Marshall: We'll show James that. I want to show him that picture that they gave us.

Mrs. Marshall: Right, that picture that Keifer, when they called him to Washington on the 25th anniversary, you can show him that book, that is it upstairs?

Keifer Marshall: Downstairs.

Mrs. Marshall: And then that picture was, it's in one of the, I think it's Britannica – not world book, but one of the --

Well one thing we can do if I can find a copy of that, we can put that on our web site as well along with your interview and that would be great.

Mrs. Marshall: I'll have a copy of it and I can get one made.

Yeah, we can mail it back, just scan a copy or whatever. Yeah, I'd love to see that, and I think that's something, too, that all the pictures from that battle I think really brought home to people, you know, a small sense of what had occurred. That's right, like Joe Rosenthal's photo we talked about.

Mrs. Marshall: Well, it was the happiest time of my life. We've had the most wonderful life together. We've been married 61 years this month, and the happiest time of my life the day he got home from overseas.

Do you remember when you got the word that he was coming home? Were you able to wire - ?

Keifer Marshall: Called the dock and – of course I got off the ship in December and had khaki's and had to go in at that 100 Harrison Street I believe, where the headquarters out there and get my green, wool uniform, and I called her from the dock, it was a pay telephone on the dock when we landed.

Mrs. Marshall: It was from a tiny little town in northeast Texas between Mt. Pleasant and ____, a little town, it was Omaha, it had 500 people. So Keifer said when he got off the ship and put in a call to me and the call went through very quickly, and the telephone operator said well, Keifer, Sammy Nancy is not at home, she's at the drug store. And Keifer said he almost fell back in the water. He had been gone two years. He said how did the operator know my name and how did she know where you were? And I said Keifer, when you live in a tiny little town like Omaha, you have to be good all the time because the telephone operator knows where you are.

Oh, that's funny.

Keifer Marshall: __ was on that trip on the Rochambeau, like I said, there were two replacement rafts on there, and we were all going to Guam and you didn't get to know a whole lot of people. I had a good friend that I'd known in Camp Pendleton who was on there with me, and then we got separated. I went in the 9th Marine and he went in the 21st, and he was killed, and he got killed in action. And I'd been to, we'd been to Los Angeles two or three times and in fact, my folks came out to see me before we left, the week before we left. They were out, they had a hotel room and Jimmy and I, we was working real hard, we went up and slept in their room. They stayed down in the lobby that night. I'll never forget that. But he was from San

Antonio, Jimmy Faryo, wonderful guy, and he just finished high school and got in the Marine Corps. But in going to these reunions we went to, I never met anybody I was with. We were, we never became part of a unit because there was so many changes in people in our outfit, and I remember we met this John Cole at this, last name Cole?

Mrs. Marshall: Cole, C-O-L-E.

Keifer Marshall: He was, he and I were on the Rochambeau together on this trip and we'd get over there and they put him in graves registration and it really affected him. He's different than you could ever imagine, but that's all he did was get people buried. And I never will forget, we were leaving, went by the 5th Marine Division cemetery there and on a rock out there, somebody had chiseled this thing that says when you go home, tell 'em it's safe, for your tomorrow, we gave our today. And it was pretty emotional, and every time we've been to reunion, particular the first two or three reunions, people would come in and have the name of somebody and say this was my father. I never knew him. He was killed before I was born. Was he in your outfit?

Mrs. Marshall: Yeah, very emotional. That was the 50th anniversary, and people would come, of course the Marines had name tags with their division, their company, and their outfit, and people would come to the table or we'd walk out of the hotel and they would stop and ask if by chance you remembered someone by the name of whoever, and they were 50 years old. It was closure for their lives because they were born while their fathers were on Iwo Jima and were lost. But that was an emotional, it was a feeling of thanksgiving and devastation to see those people so saddened.

Keifer Marshall: When did you join the Reserve?

I joined in '97 when I was in college.

Keifer Marshall: Were you a Freshman when you joined?

No, I was, finished my Sophomore year and I went in the summer time for 13 weeks and then graduated on a Friday and the next Tuesday, I was back in class. That's how I spent my summer that one year, and then we'd drill one weekend a month and then in the summer, the next two summers, I went to officer candidate school in Quantico. So I spent three straight summers getting my head shaved and going through a boot camp type environment while my buddies were goofing around.

Keifer Marshall: Where are you now?

I'm a Captain now, and I'm in the IRR which is the Individual Ready Reserves. I'm not drilling every month. I just do muster once a year.

Keifer Marshall: And you was Infantry?

While I was an Adjutant and Legal Officer and I started off, well I was an Infantryman when I was enlisted in the Reserves, and I got commissioned and I went active duty because all officers that get commissioned at least at that time had to go through an active duty and I was with an artillery battalion out at Camp Lejeon, and then I finished my tour and came back home to Texas and rejoined my old Reserve unit that I'd been enlisted with and not been with them for more than a few weeks before we got the activation notice that we were going to Iraq. So really I

never left active duty. I just went from one battalion to another in that unit. The one I went to Iraq with was an Infantry battalion.

Keifer Marshall: That's interesting. I was looking at the Waco paper this morning. There was an ad in there for anybody that's a college Freshman I think, if they want to take a four-year course in the Marine Corps Reserve, they'll pay the tuition and pay all the expenses, which is a great thing for people.

I had the Reserve GI Bill which helped quite a bit, and in '97, the Marine Corps was a lot different than now. You know, there was no conflicts at all but I really wanted to join and I've always thought the Marine Corps has done the best of all the branches with its traditions and its history and being the smallest and most elite unit.

Keifer Marshall: It has, it's unbelievable. They still are the top group I think.

Yeah, I think you won't get any –

Keifer Marshall: Quality's come up a whole lot, but then not saying -

It's not, and I think anyone that's been around Marines I think knows that.

Keifer Marshall: That's right.

That it really is –

Keifer Marshall: How many Marines do you have working at the Veterans Land Board?

We've got quite a few, you know, the Commissioner and James LaGrande was a Marine, and Jim Bob Mickler who works in the Veterans Land Board was a Marine, and I'm speaking of the General Land Office, but Jim Darwin was a Marine. I believe we have a new guy who was head of all of the maps and archives that was in the Marine Corps, so it's quite a few Marines.

Keifer Marshall: Were you there with Gary Morrell at all?

No. He was gone.

Keifer Marshall: Well, the fellow that was with him that lived up at Buchanan Dam, what's his name, he died?

I don't know.

Keifer Marshall: He helped us get the court deal over here and was really a neat guy, and I think he commuted from the Buchanan Lake up to Austin every day.

No, I'm not familiar with who that is.

Keifer Marshall: I've forgotten his name and he's really a great fella.

No, I wasn't there when he was there, but -

Keifer Marshall: He was the very best today and he's the kind of politician, he's not a politician. He's the kind of person we need in office I think, Jerry Patterson.

He's a good guy.

Mrs. Marshall: He really is _____ and James, he said a lot of nice things every time he's been with you.

Oh great –

Mrs. Marshall: I told him we met you.

Well I met Commission Patterson before I even went in the Marine Corps. I was working as a, when I was in college, I was working as a Senate messenger and he was a state senator at that time, and I remember asking him for advice about boot camp and all that sort of thing, and so yeah, I've known him for quite a while, and I remember his one big piece of advice is just be able to run. And I've always been a pretty decent runner and that was true though. I mean if you could run and run pretty well, you could get through anything the Marines threw at you in boot camp or OCS.

Keifer Marshall: You had to be able to do that.

But boy, for the guys that weren't good runners, it was just really tough on 'em. And there's just some people that just aren't good at running, and boy, it was tough. But if you could run, you could, you'd have the strength to get through almost any of the other things they threw at you.

Keifer Marshall: Well we, I was very fortunate I didn't get scratched during that whole thing, but since then, I've had a stroke and a heart attack. I've got a pacemaker and fibrillator and double knee replacement. So I've had a good nurse all the time through all that.

Well that's good. And you said too, sir, that after you got home and went back to school, you went back to playing football. What was it like having had the experience that you'd had in the Marine Corps and the war going back and playing football with guys that were right out of high school?

Keifer Marshall: It was different. I say that because I didn't have my heart in it like I did before. It was, any kind of experience like that, it doesn't take anything out of you. I don't mean that, but it changes your perspective on things, so it was different, and I was in love, so that's always a different thing, too. I've been so fortunate all my life and just lucky to be here.

Yeah, and you've been I guess back in Temple, you lived in Temple?

Keifer Marshall: I graduated in 1950 and we moved up here and I went in the insurance business. I've been here ever since.

That's great. And you were Mayor of Temple for a number of years?

Keifer Marshall: Two serves, on the city council 10 years. I was on the junior college board and president of the junior college here for a long time, back 20 some odd years ago. We got a great junior college here. And they've got a lot of good things going on in Temple now. In fact,

I wanted to see the commissioner before he left the other day. He came up for that court deal, but he left real quick. I guess he had something he had to do. I didn't get to visit with him .

Well we'll get him back up here again soon.

Keifer Marshall: Temple is a good spot and I'll tell you, you've got I don't know how many people work at the Veterans, the Land Board, but Dick Archer is the best I ever saw.

Oh yeah, he's a great guy.

Keifer Marshall: He covers this territory and he covers all over Texas, he gets around.

He knows everybody, too.

Keifer Marshall: He really does.

We went to lunch today and he --

Keifer Marshall: He take you to Cheeve's?

No, we went to McKeska's BBQ. And I think there must have been, I'm not exaggerating, at least maybe close to 10 people there that he said hi to that knew him, and yeah, he knows everyone. He's a good guy, very gregarious.

Keifer Marshall: A good person.

Yes sir. Yeah, he's a real asset for the Land Board because he believes in what the Land Board does and he really gets out there and talks to folks and lets 'em know

Keifer Marshall: Have you seen the cemetery in Killeen?

Oh yes sir.

Keifer Marshall: That is beautiful, it really is.

Yeah, it is. Yeah, I'm proud of that and the job they've done on that is great.

Keifer Marshall: They just announced this week that Texas A&M is gonna have a campus at Killeen.

Yeah, and --

Keifer Marshall: Does Jerry know that? Tell him.

I think he does and I think some of that land is gonna be I believe somewhere close to where the cemetery is located.

Keifer Marshall: It is, that's right.

Yeah, that cemetery is beautiful grounds and as the trees grow and the vegetation takes hold better, it'll really look beautiful, and there's a whole, that cemetery, there's plans that they can double that. They don't even have half built of what it will ultimately be. There's a whole another set of blueprints for it.

Keifer Marshall: It's a beautiful place, it really is. They got this well taken care of, well cared for. Tell the commissioner they have __ practice up there.

Yeah, he's a big Aggie. Well sir, I really appreciate you for taking the time.

Keifer Marshall: Well, we appreciate your coming up to do this, really do.

Mrs. Marshall: Why don't you show James the flag and –

Keifer Marshall: I will.

We'll do that. I'll shut down the recorder here in just a second, but I guess since we're saving this for posterity and future generations can listen to this years from now, is there any final thoughts you'd want to leave them about your service or any of your memories of being in the Marine Corps?

Keifer Marshall: I just say God bless the Marine Corps and the training, they way they teach young men and young women now to perform their duties and God bless the United States.

Well sir, we really appreciate your time, letting us talk to you and do this interview, and I know on behalf of Commissioner Patterson and everybody at the Land Office, the Veterans Land Board, appreciates your service and especially at Iwo Jima. That's one of those events that can't be overexaggerated, the importance it had for this nation and the world, and it's such an iconic moment, and for me personally, you know, you're the first person I've ever actually had a chance to talk to that served at Iwo Jima. So that is amazing because in the Marine Corps, that's something that we really study and I've read a lot of books about it and so it's an honor just to be able to sit down and talk to you and hear some of your memories.

Keifer Marshall: Well bless your heart, I appreciate your interest and appreciate the opportunity to visit with you and proud of what you're doing and what you're doing for our country is fantastic. We have the greatest country in the world. It's always gonna be, always will be, but the Marine Corps and what they've done through the years and the history of it is unparalleled.

I think that's right.

Keifer Marshall: And it's an outfit you can believe in, believe in everything they do.

Absolutely. Well sir, again, thank you for your time, and ma'am, thank you for sitting in on this interview, too. I really appreciate it. And I'll go ahead and turn this off now, so this will conclude the interview.

[End of recording]