RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAYMOND B. MORGAN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Raymond B. Morgan on December 16, 2005, in Neptune, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Michael Vallone: Mike Vallone.

SI: Mr. Morgan, thank you very much for having us here today. We appreciate it. To begin, could you tell us, for the record, where and when you were born?

Raymond Morgan: I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, August 2, 1922.

SI: What were your parents' names?

RM: Father's name was Anthony, Mother's name was Anna.

SI: Your father was a St. Louis native.

RM: Both were St. Louis natives.

SI: Do you know how their families arrived in St. Louis, why they wound up settling there?

RM: Well, the grandparents settled there. My grandfather on my father's side was German. My grandmother was also German, but she was raised in Illinois. [On] my mother's side, the grandmother was born in St. Louis. The grandfather was adopted and no one knows where he was born. He was Polish; at least they said he was Polish. They didn't know for sure, but he spoke Polish and they assumed he was.

SI: Your father worked for the City of St. Louis. Do you know what he did?

RM: He drove a sprinkler truck. Later on, he worked for the railroad, worked inside the office, in St. Louis.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

RM: No, not to my knowledge.

SI: Not before …

RM: Not before I left.

SI: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

RM: I have three brothers and a sister. [My] sister and two [of my] brothers are deceased.

SI: What do you remember about growing up in St. Louis?

RM: The main thing [is that it] was hot in the summer and cold in the winter, [laughter] but it was a nice place to live. People were friendly, very little crime, compared to today. It was very pleasant. We were into sports. I lived right across from the park, Fairgrounds Park, where the 1904 Exposition was held. … We spent, we, my friends and I, spent most of our time in the park, playing soccer. I played soccer with an intermediate team and we had a lot of friends and did a lot of different things, until I joined the service.

SI: What was your neighborhood in St. Louis like? Was it a middle-class neighborhood, a working-class neighborhood?

RM: Middle-class working neighborhood. [We] spent a lot of time with the grandmother in St. Louis's big lot, about a hundred-and-fifty-by-four-hundred. They had a lot of fruit trees and we spent a lot of time there, with the cousins.

SI: Where did you go to elementary school?

RM: In St. Louis, Holy Name, right on Grand Avenue.

SI: Which high school did you go to?

RM: Central High School, also in St. Louis.

SI: You went to a Catholic school while you were growing up.

RM: Just … to the eighth grade.

SI: How big was the church in your life growing up? Was it the center of your social activities?

RM: No, there was very little social activity in the church itself.

SI: Youth groups, that sort of thing.

RM: They had some group things. Every high school in St. Louis had soccer teams, baseball teams, even though we were under thirteen years of age. So, you're introduced to sports at a very early age.

SI: That was how you spent your days, playing sports.

RM: Most of it, yes.

SI: Did you ever work while you were in high school?

RM: I worked for General Electric for about six months before I went into the service. That was it.

MV: What was the Depression like for you and your family?

RM: Well, it wasn't easy. My father lost his job and he was on WPA [Works Progress Administration] and there were seven of us in the family. We always had enough to eat, but we had no extras for anything and I caddied for a while, to help bring in [money]. That's how I got interested in golf.

SI: What about the impact of the Depression on your neighborhood? Did you see people losing their homes?

RM: Well, we had a 1923 Chevrolet and my father took [us to see] a place down the river called "Hooverville." People built cardboard shacks and a number of people lost their jobs, homes, any automobiles or any other assets they had.

SI: There was a Hooverville nearby.

RM: Right, … a few miles away from us, but it was present.

SI: People who we interviewed who lived in New York City at the time have talked about the bread lines and men selling apples in the street. Was it similar in St. Louis?

RM: Well, where we lived, we never saw any of that. Maybe downtown, but we weren't aware of it, because we didn't have the transportation and the car just sat there. In fact, it was sold.

SI: Growing up in the 1930s, before entering the service, what did you know about what was happening overseas?

RM: Very little. My grandfather, he was born in Germany, used to tell us about it, but that's all we were aware of.

SI: You did not follow the news about Hitler and Mussolini taking over Europe.

RM: We were aware of it, but it didn't mean much to us at that time. Europe was way off. It never involved us, really.

MV: What did you and your family think about Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s?

RM: Well, my father didn't want him to get in, because he wanted to vote for Hoover, because that's how he lost his job, because it was a city job. … After that, he never expressed any [opinion], one way or the other, but he thought that WPA that he [Roosevelt] founded was great for the people that lived there.

SI: You actually enlisted before Pearl Harbor.

RM: July 28, 1941.

SI: What motivated you to enlist before Pearl Harbor?

RM: Well, when I graduated from high school, jobs were scarce in St. Louis and, every place I went, they said, "Well, go into the service. [When] you come back, you'll be able to get a job," because you had a preference. So, that was my incentive. … I went in the Marine Corps because the Marine Corps was on the first floor, the Navy was on the twelfth floor and it was a little more accessible. [laughter] … I had a cousin in the Marine Corps, too, though.

SI: Before enlisting, had you had any interest in military affairs or the Navy?

RM: … My cousin joined the Marine Corps in 1940 and, in fact, he was taken prisoner in Tientsin, China, and he was one of the reasons I went into the Marine Corps.

MV: Were there any subjects in school that you really enjoyed? Is there anything else besides the Marines that you might have wanted to get into?

RM: History … and, well, geography, but they don't have [geography] today, and I hated math.

SI: Aside from going into the service, was there a career path that you would have liked to have pursued? Were you just looking for direction?

RM: Well, when I first started high school, I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer and, [to get into] the Hadley School, which is like a technical school, you had to have two years of general courses before they'd accept you. … By the time that was over with, I went into the Marine Corps.

SI: It is interesting that you wanted to be an aeronautical engineer. Several men that I have interviewed recently happened to say that they also wanted to be aeronautical engineers. Did you have an interest in aviation, a love of flying?

RM: Well, Hadley had all these airplanes in there. … When you start the school, they take you around [to] different schools in St. [Louis] and I saw all these airplanes and talked to some of the people and I just thought it was very interesting. I wanted to be part of it.

SI: Can you tell us about the process of actually joining the Marine Corps and going to Parris Island? Did you go to Parris Island?

RM: No.

SI: You went to Pendleton.

RM: No, San Diego, Marine Corps Base San Diego.

SI: Okay. Can you tell us about that process?

RM: Well, it was a lot different, a lot of regimentation. First thing, they set you down in a chair, this is the next day after [you arrive] there, and they just clip. I used to have long, curly hair, like

yours, only longer, and they shaved it right off. In about two seconds, you had a haircut and the discipline was a lot different. Every second, you were doing something. [The] only time [of] your own was after hours, when you went to bed, until five o'clock, when they woke you up, but it was good for everybody. When I went in, I weighed 132 pounds. [When] I came out, I was about a hundred-and-fifty-something.

SI: Most of the Marine Corps veterans that I have interviewed trained at Parris Island. They talk about the verbal abuse and all the ways the instructors tore them down. Did they have that in San Diego as well?

RM: Well, there was some of that. That's part of the training, that they don't do now. … You mentioned Parris Island; if you lived east of the Mississippi, you went to Parris Island. West of the Mississippi, you went to San Diego. That was how that [assignment] arrived.

SI: Was it a shock to go from civilian life to the Marine Corps?

RM: … It was different and you're a little homesick, but you got over it after a while. You had to.

SI: Being in the military before Pearl Harbor, could you see that something was brewing over the horizon? Did you have that feeling?

RM: Well, the people that'd been in the Marine Corps, who were with us, knew something was going on. They figured we'd be in a war eventually. They didn't know when, where or with whom, but the Japs, or the Japanese, were the likely ones.

SI: The Marine Corps, before the war, had the "old salt," leatherneck image and, after the war, it projected more of a young, clean-cut image. Do you remember that?

RM: I wouldn't say that. I didn't know; there really wasn't much [out there]. The Marine Corps changed after the war. I don't know if I should say this. When I went in the Marine Corps, there was not a black in the Marine Corps. They didn't accept them at that time, until Truman [ordered the Armed Forces'] integration, but they always talk about the "Old Corps." If you're in a week ahead of somebody else, you were in the "Old Corps" and he'd tell the next guy behind him [that] he was in the "Old Corps." See, this is going on today. That's what they speak of all the time, the "Old Corps."

SI: One Marine veteran that we interviewed said that everyone wanted to get older equipment, because it would distinguish them as the "Old Corps."

RM: Well, years ago, they used to put (blanko?) on it, so [that] everybody's looked the same. That's all changed now, too, of course.

MV: Can you tell us a bit about the physical training that you received?

RM: Well, physical training, you started right first thing in the morning. You did physical training with your rifle, … push-ups and things like that, and you had constant physical training. … You were marching constantly. So, you had pretty good physical training. [When] you came out of boot camp, you felt [like] you could do things that you couldn't do before. They convinced you of that.

SI: Do you remember your drill instructor? Was he a memorable character?

RM: Oh, one of the names was Foster. That's all I remember. He was a corporal, I believe, and there was a sergeant who was in charge, but I think his name was Hare, H-A-R-E.

SI: Were these the older breed?

RM: Well, they each had about; the corporal had about eight years in, the sergeant had about twelve. …

SI: They were the old breed. What did these guys teach you? Was there anything that they taught you that you found particularly useful later on?

RM: Well, teamwork, I think, [would] be the main thing, work together and learn to trust your buddy and have your buddy trust you.

SI: What kinds of activities or training exercises would they have you do to develop that sense of teamwork?

RM: They had all sorts of things. They had different problems; by problems, I mean, go out in the field and pretend to attack the enemy. … One time, you'd be defending, one time, they'd be attacking, go back and forth over that. … They'd give you some classes on those various subjects, what to do if this happened or that happened.

SI: After San Diego, did you go for more advanced training?

RM: Well, I joined the mortar platoon. I went to Camp Elliot, which is right outside of San Diego, and that's where I was when the war started. In fact, the day the war started, they sent us out into the field and we had no ammunition. So, if the Japs had landed in San Diego, they'd have gone a long way before they could have been stopped.

SI: Can you tell us about the day Pearl Harbor was attacked? How did you hear the news?

RM: Well, I was in Los Angeles at the time, in a movie, and they announced [it during] the movie and everybody had to go back to camp and they were taken back by private vehicles, any way they could get back, and then, we went out in the field, after that. Well, we knew that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. That's all we knew.

SI: Was it a shock that war had broken out?

RM: Oh, naturally, everybody was [shocked], but very few people even knew where Pearl Harbor was.

SI: It is interesting that you were sent out into the field without ammunition. There has been a lot written on how poorly funded the military was before the war. For example, men had to train with broomsticks instead of rifles. Do you remember that from your prewar training?

RM: Well, we had a captain that liked to make dummy machine guns, because we didn't have the proper equipment. We all had rifles and we had machine guns and mortars, but we test fired them … after the war started. Some of them didn't function, because they'd been in use for a number of years.

SI: Was it World War I-era equipment?

RM: Well, the rifle was a 1903, machine guns were 1911 and the mortars were about 1937.

SI: What type of mortars were you trained on?

RM: "81s" and "60s;" that's millimeters.

SI: In some mortar crews, everyone had a specific job; in others, each man was trained to do every task. How was your crew set up?

RM: Everybody is supposed to know every job in there. You know at least two jobs. If you're the low man, you have to know a couple higher, and I was fortunate. I became a gunner right away, because I memorized the range chart. … Somebody'd give you a range; I could give you the number of charges and what the setting was on the slate and I drew five dollars a month extra for that.

SI: Really?

RM: Because I was the gunner, specialist's pay.

SI: I did not realize that.

RM: Well, they do it for the rifle, too. If you're a sharpshooter, you got three dollars a month, expert, you got five dollars.

SI: Okay.

RM: And, in 1941, five dollars extra was a lot of money, since you were drawing twenty-one dollars.

MV: Going back to your training, I have read that the Japanese were looked upon with more hatred than the Germans in many situations. Was that true?

RM: I would say so. They were at that time, because they [Americans] heard about the atrocities in Bataan and all those other places, the Death March. I think it was. It took years for people to accept the Japanese for what they are today.

SI: During training, did you have a chance to talk with anyone who had actually been overseas, such as a "China" Marine?

RM: Oh, we always had some in our outfit. In fact, when we were building up, a group came back from Iceland who were old-timers, who had gone up there to prevent the Germans from whatever they were doing at that area, and there were a lot of old-timers or "salts," as they preferred to be called. … They'd talk to us about different things there.

SI: Is there anything that you can remember them telling you that proved particularly useful? Did they tell you what to expect when you got out there?

RM: Well, they said they were sneaky fighters and always be aware or be cautious, not to take chances. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: What happened after Camp Elliot? Where were you assigned next?

RM: We hiked from Camp Elliot to Camp Pendleton. It's about close to forty miles, went out the back roads, and we were the first troops to move into Camp Pendleton.

SI: It had just been constructed.

RM: It was under construction. It was still under construction while we were there.

SI: Did you have to help in building any part of it?

RM: No.

SI: I have heard that before, where you arrive at a new camp and they enlist you in the construction of the facilities.

RM: It was all set up when we got there.

SI: You were still assigned as a mortar man, a mortar gunner.

RM: Yes.

SI: Did you have any further training at Camp Pendleton or was it just a staging area?

RM: Training area. In fact, it's the biggest training [facility] on the West Coast now. When I first went in, I was in the Second Division. That was on the east coast, at Camp Elliot, at the

time. Now, they're on the west coast. That's Camp Pendleton. … About, I think it's February of '42, we were re-designated Third Battalion, Ninth Marines.

SI: Was that still within the Second Division?

RM: No, that's the Third Division.

SI: How long were you at Camp Pendleton?

RM: About six months.

MV: Throughout your training, did you notice if anybody could not handle the training? Did anyone drop out?

RM: We had two. We had to scale a cliff and this person just couldn't do it. The other one finally went down with … the aid of someone. They put a rope over your shoulder and under your legs and [you] slid hand-over-hand. They call it rappel[ling], now, I guess.

SI: What was it like to meet men from all over the country? How did everyone get along in your training units?

RM: I never gave it a thought. … Nobody seemed to have any trouble, because you're constantly moving in and out. I mean, it'd take you a while to really get to know someone. Some, you never knew and you selected your friends and that was your little group.

SI: Was there a lot of bonding in your mortar section?

RM: I think there was. Well, why I remember this, [I do not know], April 11, 1942, I made corporal. In the Marine Corps, if you're a corporal, you're supposed to associate with corporals. If you're a sergeant, you associated with sergeants. Now, [in] one instance, a sergeant was observed gambling with privates and the CO [Commanding Officer] caught them and said, "If you want to play with privates, we'll make you a private." … So, whatever rank you were, you stayed with that rank. I mean, you were courteous to everybody else, but you didn't associate [with] them socially.

SI: There was a very strict hierarchy.

RM: Right. Well, if you're friendly with them, you're reluctant to give them orders, or someone else is going to get all the scut work and this guy's going free. So, for that reason, they don't want you associated with them.

SI: The Marine Corps seems to have maintained most of its traditions, hierarchy and customs throughout the war. Do you remember any of the Marine Corps traditions that you were exposed to? There is, of course, the *esprit de corps*.

RM: All the traditions; there must have been some, but you did it without even thinking about it. … The Marine Corps' Birthday, November 10th, was a special occasion. Even [when] you're in combat, they try to get you hot chow. I mean, sometimes, they couldn't, but that's the main thing, I think, is just the *esprit de corps*. … To this day, most Marines, when they see another Marine, they stop and talk to them, where [in] other branches, they just sort of ignore each other.

SI: There is that sense of, "Once a Marine, always a Marine."

RM: Right. I have a hat [that] says just that. [laughter]

SI: You mentioned that you were on leave in Los Angeles when Pearl Harbor was attacked. How often would you get to go off base?

RM: … Before the war started, you'd get off every night and every weekend. It was like a nine-to-five job, or not nine-to-five, but seven-to-five or four, whatever it was, just like a regular job.

SI: What would you do while you were on leave?

RM: Well, I was only nineteen or twenty, whatever. My big thing was going up to drink an orange juice and go into a movie.

SI: Did you go to any USOs or canteens?

RM: I don't even remember if there's any there. There was one in San Diego, but, if Los Angeles had one, I wasn't aware of it. We did go to radio shows. They used to let the servicemen into the radio shows, which was very pleasant. [I] saw some very fine shows.

SI: San Diego, particularly, had a reputation during the war as a wild town, a real military town, where all the Army, Air Force and Navy guys clashed.

RM: Oh, there was some of that, but I sort of avoided San Diego. I mean, in the early part, we weren't making that much money and … I couldn't drink, because I was too young. … I didn't have the money to spend doing different things. When I went to the movies, it was a big deal. … At that time, for about two dollars, you could buy a monthly show pass. So, why go in[to] town, spend a couple of bucks on a movie, when you [could] get one for whatever, ten or fifteen cents, whatever it was?

SI: After you completed your training at Camp Pendleton, where did you go next?

RM: Auckland, New Zealand.

SI: How did you get there? Do you remember the name of the ship?

RM: USS *Mount Vernon*.

SI: What were the conditions like on the ship?

RM: Crowded. We had the whole regiment and I guess it was a former cruise ship, but it was converted to a troop transport. … We had no, what do you call them? no other ships with us.

SI: You were not in convoy.

RM: Not in convoy, just by our[selves], because it was very fast, and we went right straight to New Zealand. It was about almost a two-week trip and we were stationed in a little town forty miles from Auckland called (Parada or Paeroa?), living in little wooden buildings about as big as my shed out here.

SI: Were those Quonset huts?

RM: No.

SI: They were smaller.

RM: They were about ten percent of the size of a Quonset hut, enough for two bunks, that was it, and it was crowded.

SI: Do you remember approximately what month you arrived in New Zealand? Was it in the latter half of 1942?

RM: Latter part of '42, December, maybe January of '43.

SI: Guadalcanal had been invaded by that time.

RM: … They were still on Guadalcanal when we got there. We went to Guadalcanal from New Zealand. The actual fighting was over. We just were subject to bombings.

SI: As these early battles were taking place, was anything filtering back to you, as a Marine who would be going into combat later, from the front about what to expect?

RM: Well, they always did that. There was always an after-action report and we were all aware of that and we trained accordingly.

SI: Do you remember anything specific, such as, "The Japanese are doing this on Guadalcanal, and therefore, we are going to compensate for it by doing this?"

RM: Well, they always brought that up, about the night fighting. The Marines, I guess all Americans, we'd move during the day and we'd set up our lines where the Japs would attack at night. … They mentioned how they would call out, "Corpsman," [the Japanese] spoke better English than all of us, I guess, and not to fall for those tricks. … They also [said], "If a man is wounded and you're advancing, don't wait. Someone behind [you] will take care of him. Keep advancing," because once you get the initiative, you want to keep pushing.

SI: Aside from these very small huts that you had to live in, what were the conditions like in New Zealand?

RM: Well, every week, we had sixty-mile hikes, with full gear, and we only got out every eleventh day and the train left at eleven o'clock in the morning and it returned eleven o'clock at night and you'd better be on it, but we did nothing but train there. I mean, most of it was physical training, the marching, and we had problems going over fields. … One thing, New Zealand is loaded with sheep. To this day, I won't eat any lamb [or] mutton, because our cooks were terrible. We had a man who was a chief mess man. One month, first, he was a mess man, second month, he was a chief mess [man], third month, he was the cook, and mutton, to me, is greasy, and then, they never had [good] cooks.

SI: I have heard that from many men who served in Australia, New Zealand and New Guinea. Were you going through jungle training in New Zealand?

RM: Sort of. … They'd try to find an area that was similar to the terrain on Guadalcanal. Guadalcanal wasn't all jungle. There were open areas, too, but it was high grass. … They'd try and find something similar and they'd make up a problem similar to what the terrain [was] up there.

SI: At this point, you were still in the mortar crew.

RM: Yes.

SI: What did you think of your non-commissioned officers [NCOs] and your officers?

RM: Oh, they were all very efficient, as far as I was concerned, because we'd been together for a couple of years by then. … Our officer, … he was our ex-platoon sergeant. He was commissioned shortly after the war started.

SI: While you were in New Zealand, did you get a chance to talk to any of the locals?

RM: Oh, all the time. In fact, we used to go over to a place called (Birkenhead?). … [The chief of police] used to invite us over. When we got in, we used to go over there quite a bit. I took a tour of (St. Albert's?) College there. Of course, at [the] age of twenty or twenty-one, you're interested in school and they gave us a tour of that. I was still too young to drink and that's what most of them went for.

SI: Many people have talked about how they picked up bad habits when they went into the military, like smoking and drinking. Was that the case for you?

RM: I don't even know how to smoke today. [laughter] Oh, I have a reason for that. When we were kids, we had pennies. I spent mine on candy. My friends bought a cigarette. You could buy a cigarette for a penny. Then, during the war, these people had to have that cigarette. When you light it up, it looked like a bonfire at night and I didn't want any part of that.

SI: A very practical, survival reason. How were you deployed from New Zealand to Guadalcanal? Can you talk about the process of getting ready to go into a combat zone?

RM: Well, they told us to pack up, "We're leaving." You know, you don't know where you're going. You get on the ship and they told us, "We're going to Guadalcanal," and, from there, you climbed down the cargo net into … a landing craft. You go to the beach, the ramp drops and you're there. That's when you set up a camp [and] you have to build it yourself.

SI: How were you briefed before going to Guadalcanal? What were you told about what you were going to do?

RM: They didn't expect any fighting, but be aware of the possibility. … We set up not too far from Lunga Point, in a coconut grove. Everything was very quiet when we got there, except [that] the first night we were there, I think somebody missed the airfield and dropped three bombs in our area. If I had a couple of shovels, I'd have been a millionaire today.

SI: What was it like the first time you came under fire?

RM: Scary, it was very scary. … Anybody that says he gets used to it is a liar. You're frightened all the time. At least I was.

SI: Some men have talked about how, in training, they were disconnected from what they were training for and what it would actually be like in combat. It does not hit you until you actually get into a situation where you are shooting at people and you are getting shot at.

RM: … I was disconnected, but it's entirely different. You can do anything; I can't think of a way to describe it, but, once you're in combat, it is entirely different. You only know what's going on in your little area. You can hear shots over here; you don't know what's going on. You're over here. Now, I'm getting ahead of myself, though, this happened to me on Bougainville, I was the forward observer and the left flank was being attacked. I'm in the center and I didn't know what was going on and you're wondering, "Is it coming here?" … That's the way people think and you always say, "Nothing's going to happen to me. The next guy's going to get it." You're convinced that you're going to be safe.

SI: Can you describe this camp that you set up on Guadalcanal? What did you have to do there?

RM: Well, they had what they called pyramidal tents, six-man tents. We put them up and that was it. They put them in a row and they went by squads. Each squad had their own tent, headquarters had their tent and that was it. Everybody put up their own and, at night, either coconuts or palm fronds would fall down on the tents and people thought they were [bombs]. … They had a lot of malaria on Guadalcanal. They had a patrol go around at night. They slept with mosquito nets and a patrol went around; if your leg was touching the mosquito net, they'd push it and wake you up, because you were subject to [mosquito bites]. … At night, you wore a net over you, with oil of (Citronelle?) on your hands, you tucked your … trousers under your socks, trying to prevent malaria, because there was a number of cases of malaria.

SI: Fighting in the jungle was its own hardship. You were not just fighting the enemy. You had to deal with all these different dilemmas.

RM: Well, you'd get the noises and there's birds [that would] come in there, making noise, and things are falling out of trees. Right away, people think it's a Jap and they start shooting, give away their position. It's just human nature. You're not going to stop it.

MV: Did you encounter any booby-traps?

RM: Well, a few of them, not too many, only if you went into a built-up area, where you'd find most of them. It's kind of hard in the jungle. They did put different things in where a spike would come out or something, but very few.

SI: Guadalcanal was more training.

RM: … More training yes.

SI: Were you or other men from your unit ever sent out on patrol to try and pick up Japanese holdouts?

RM: They went up, but they never found much there, seen where they had been, but they'd all been evacuated by then.

SI: You mentioned that you became a forward observer later on. Was that something that you trained for at Camp Elliott?

RM: Camp Pendleton. … It was ongoing in New Zealand.

SI: That was part of learning everybody's job.

RM: Right, and then, I made sergeant in New Zealand. …

SI: As a sergeant, what kind of responsibilities did you have?

RM: Well, as an observer, you have very little responsibility. You're responsible, of course, for directing the guns, but you had … some communication men with you. You had a wireman and a radioman. Sometimes, you didn't have the radioman, but, if you're the sergeant and you're in charge of the squad, you're in charge of the gunner, the assistant gunner and all the ammunition carriers. You direct … where the gun is going to be set, make sure they do everything properly, have ammunition, put the correct reading on the sights, the correct number of charges. There are six charges and that determines how far they go.

SI: After Guadalcanal, were you sent to Bougainville or another island?

RM: Well, we went to Efate, New Hebrides, first and, something I'll never forget there, when we came into the harbor, all these black natives come out singing *You Are My Sunshine*,

[laughter] but that was just training for Bougainville. We landed there on November 1, 1943, and that was one of the worst parts for me. You couldn't dig in. As soon as your shovel went in the sand, water came up and the beach was strafed by Jap planes. In one incident, an American plane was going over the beach, a Jap plane was on his tail, [had an] American plane behind him; the people on the beach shot down the American plane. You had a lot of that, unfortunately.

SI: Can you take us through the invasion, how you loaded up, what they told you in preparation?

RM: Well, there's two different types of loads. Administrative load, you just threw everything in. Combat load, you loaded it where any object, any item you want, you have access to it. So, you can't carry too much that way. … When we landed on Bougainville, the Jap planes came over, the ships went out to sea and what a sight that is to see, the ships going out to sea. You don't know what's going on, when they'll be back, or if they'll be back, and the jungle that's there was thicker than anything on Guadalcanal. You didn't dig a hole. They had these banyan trees that have the roots like this, [growing above ground]. That was your foxhole, and the jungle got worse as you went in. Now, we didn't take the whole island. We went in a few miles. We got to Hill 1000. We formed a perimeter there and, two months later, the Army relieved us and we went back to Guadalcanal, set up a camp, again, in the same area.

SI: It is interesting that you mention the Navy leaving. Guadalcanal veterans also feel as though the Navy abandoned them. Was that how you felt?

RM: That's how we felt, at that time. We didn't know why or anything else, because you only have what's in your pack. You might have three, four meals in your pack, a clean pair of socks and that's it.

SI: Was there a rivalry between the sailors and the Marines at that time? Was there any distrust?

RM: No. … They all had a job to do and they all wanted to do it, at least it seemed that way to me.

SI: There was none of that interservice …

RM: Camaraderie, really. That's the way I felt, anyway.

SI: What do you remember about the actual landing at Bougainville?

RM: Well, when you climbed down the net, they have to form up in waves. I think we were in the third wave. You circle around and you're so darn glad to get on the beach, you'll do anything to get out of that tractor [landing vehicle, tracked (LVT), or amphibious tractor], when you're in there for hours, inhaling that diesel fuel, and a lot of people do get sick. … We couldn't wait to get to the beach and you want to push in immediately, get off the beach, because of the strafing, and that's what I remember about it. I couldn't get in far enough.

SI: Which wave were you in?

RM: At the third.

SI: How far had the previous waves gone in before you got there?

RM: Just a few yards. If they hit any resistance, the whole thing stops and they did hit some resistance and they stopped. Another thing I remember about [Bougainville], because I was an observer, I was on an outpost on the right flank, about two hundred yards in front of the lines, and my job [was], because of [my being an] observer, if any boats were coming down through that area, I was supposed to inform the proper authorities of any patrols coming towards us. … At night, you didn't move, because the people behind you two hundred yards, if they saw you move, they didn't know who you were, they would shoot. So, once you got in that hole, you stayed there.

SI: What was it like being in that forward position?

RM: Frightening.

SI: You usually had one or two guys with you.

RM: We had three of us, a total of three, two with me. Oh, another [thing], because I was an observer, I used to have to go on patrols with the rifle companies. … We'd go on patrols in waist-deep water and thank God you never saw anything, because you couldn't do much fighting that way, [in] that type of water.

SI: What else do you remember about the conditions on Bougainville, in terms of the climate and the landscape?

RM: Well, there was very little food. You had no water and, if you wanted anything, you had to walk two miles back and bring a five-gallon can of water, which was very heavy. In fact, on Marine Corps 10th, [the Marine Corps' Birthday], they had hot chow down back [there]. Nobody went back for it, because it was too far to walk and they expected you to carry a big load back. … Of course, there's no bathroom facilities. … If you're going to be there a while, you didn't want to go to the bathroom right near your position. … Everybody got a lot of what they called jungle rot, particularly in the crotch area and under the arms. … Where my observation post was, there was a big tree [that] went up and that was where I would direct fire. … One day, I was in this tree and I was itching all over. I looked down; I was covered with red ants. I jumped out of the tree and they thought I got hit. I took off my clothes. I had bites all over me. That was the worst thing that happened to me on Bougainville.

SI: What about the jungle animals?

RM: The only animals we saw, they have what they call a koala bear. He'd run through the jungle and you'd swear a regiment is coming after you. It was just a little bear. They're about that big, about two, three feet tall.

SI: Like a cub?

RM: Well, they were grown. … I think they call them a kola bear.

SI: I just read a book about jungle fighting in the South Pacific. You mentioned earlier that the roots of the trees made for a good foxhole, but they also made it very difficult to get around.

RM: Right. Well, the Marines cut a field of fire. The Japanese didn't. They somehow would get their guns in position where it [was] difficult to see, where we would cut everything away and expose our position, and I think that changed later on in the war, too.

SI: What do you remember about this first combat encounter? What stands out in your mind about what you saw and what you experienced?

RM: Well, the thing I hated most to see [was] a Marine wounded or dead. I could see all the Japanese and it didn't faze me, but, you see, the Marines, many of them were just kids. I was considered old and that was twenty or twenty-one. You see a seventeen-year-old get his legs blown off or something, I don't know, it kind of chokes you up a little.

SI: At that point, were the Japanese resorting to *banzai* attacks or were they still fighting as a regular Army?

RM: It was mostly small unit. They'd attack one position, maybe it might be the left flank or it might be the right flank, never an all-out assault. Of course, each campaign was a little different.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

SI: We were talking about the flanking maneuvers.

RM: … Usually, in the Pacific, very rarely did they fight along one front. Some of them, they did, but, on Bougainville, it was usually a small group on the left or right flank or in the center. It varied with each campaign.

SI: As a forward observer, did you carry a weapon?

RM: Oh, yes, everybody carried [one], everybody but the corpsman.

SI: Was it a smaller weapon, like a carbine?

RM: … Our carbine was our weapon. Now, going back [to the] early part of the war, the squad leaders carried BARs and they found them too cumbersome. … It's good in a rifle platoon, but a squad leader of a mortar platoon can't carry it. So, they changed it to [the] carbine; any, like, tank driver, any crew-served-weapon man, carried a carbine.

SI: Were you the only forward observer?

RM: No. We had two.

SI: Would you take turns?

RM: No, we'd go with the rifle companies. We always had two, because there were three rifle companies, usually two forward [and] one back in reserve. So, we would go with the rifle company that was up front, stayed with the company CP [command post], and, if they wanted fire on anything, we would try to direct it for them.

SI: How far back would the rest of the mortar platoon be positioned?

RM: It varies. If you're in an advance, they're as close as they can get. If you're in defense, they're [as] far back as you can get. The reason for that [is], if you drop back, they can still fire. So, there's no set [distance]. The terrain dictates where they set up, because they've got to have clearance for the trees. They must have muzzle clearance.

SI: Did you ever have to fire your weapon?

RM: Yes, several times, not too much on Bougainville, but later on.

SI: I would imagine that your job took up most of your time.

RM: Yes.

SI: From what I have heard from Army forward observers, the infantrymen would protect the forward observers while they did their work, basically. Is that how it worked in the Marines?

RM: No, I don't think so. Infantry would request fire on it. They'd tell us where it was. We went there, where we could see what the target was. … The wireman would come up with me, with a reel of wire, and we'd connect our phone. I'd call back and give what I thought was the range, and then, the azimuth of the [target], and then, we'd go from there. … There were several ways we did that. There's a formula. I still remember the formula, … M equals one thousand times W, divided by range, but there's a much simpler way. … Your position's here, the gun is here, the target is here. This is fifty yards. You shoot an azimuth fifty yards here, parallel line method, and you want to get the first round out immediately, because they need it in a hurry. … That was the main purpose of it. That's what we tried to do and ranges are very deceiving in jungles. … You didn't want to get it too close to [our] troops, so, you added a hundred or two hundred yards to the first round, just to make sure.

SI: Was friendly-fire a big concern?

RM: Yes. That's always a big concern.

SI: Was it something that you compensated for?

RM: Well, you tried to make [it safe]. You always gave a little extra for the first round, just to prevent friendly-fire, and, in the jungle, a lot of times, you fired smoke.

SI: The infantrymen would have ways of signaling where they were or where the enemy was.

RM: Well, you could see them. You're right with them, because, usually, it's a small area where they want this fire to be located.

MV: Did you notice if anyone "found religion" during their combat experience?

RM: … They all do. There's more praying in the foxholes than anyplace, than in church, including myself.

SI: As you remained in combat for a long period, did some men become superstitious?

RM: Some do. They claim the odds are [against them]. The more you go into combat, your odds keep diminishing.

SI: How long were you on Bougainville?

RM: Two months, two months to the day. New Year's Eve, we went back to Guadalcanal.

SI: How much of that time was spent in combat? How quickly was the island declared secure?

RM: Not until three months later.

SI: Okay. There was still fighting going on when you left.

RM: Well, we didn't try to take the island.

SI: That is right. The Army …

RM: The Army went in. In fact, we had to build bunkers to their specification along our line and they came up to inspect them before they relieved us.

SI: Was that the 27th Infantry Division?

RM: I think the Americal. Is that the 77th? I'm not sure. I think it was the Americal [Division]. … I think it's 77th.

SI: That would have been the 23rd Infantry Division.

RM: Maybe it was, I don't know.

SI: The 77th was the Statue of Liberty Division.

RM: I don't know.

SI: What did you think of the Army?

RM: Well, we had very little contact with them. The only time we were ever with them was on Guam. The others were strictly a Marine campaign, until they relieved us on Bougainville, of course.

SI: After Bougainville, you went back to Guadalcanal.

RM: Right.

SI: What was your next move?

RM: Well, then, we boarded LSTs, [Landing Ship, Tank or Large, Slow Targets], and we were on LSTs for forty-seven days. We were [the] floating reserve for Saipan. One night, around the Caroline Islands, our convoy was attacked by Jap planes. They were shooting at them with all these ships, but not a plane was hit. The next morning, six Grumman Avengers came over, flying about three, four hundred feet off the ground, or off the ocean, lights on, tipping their wings. They shot down all six of them before you could turn around. They found out they didn't need us … on Saipan. We're still steaming back and forth. We ran out of food. We're eating our rations. So, they took us back to the Marshalls for provisions. Then, we proceeded to go to Guam. We landed there around the 25th of July of '44.

SI: Had the invasion been launched by then?

RM: … We were the invasion.

SI: What do you remember about that landing? How did you feel going into that landing, having already been through Bougainville?

RM: Well, going into the landing, the tractor I was in caught fire after we crossed the line of departure. I stopped a tractor from the first wave; we were in the third wave again. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

… [We transferred] this thing to the other tractor and we went back in. We were one of the few that didn't get shelled going in, because we didn't present enough [of a] target, but we had trained so much on where we were supposed to go, we arrived there ahead of the people that should have been there, and we fired on what you call targets of opportunity, if you see something and you fire on it, and so, we did. … One battalion would land, the other battalion moved through. Our battalion was the one that made the initial landing. The other one's supposed move through us. They ran into some obstacles there. We were supposed to go to Cabras Island, which is a little island off of Guam, but we didn't go there until the next day. … Guam was constantly push and red clay, and everybody had red hair. … After the campaign was over, we brought replacements in. Then, they formed a skirmish line, because they bypassed a lot of people. … Hundreds of Japanese soldiers were still in these caves and whatnot. … We

had a trail going like this and I was set right at this trail. At night, this Jap came running down this trail. He got from here to me and that's when I shot him.

SI: Are you usually that close, where you can actually see the enemy?

RM: No, just that he was running down this trail at night and you couldn't see. … When I got a glimpse of him, why, I shot the rifle from the hip.

SI: In mortars and the larger artillery, you are firing at an enemy that you usually can not see, but it seems like you could see the effects of your shells as a forward observer. Did that affect you at all?

RM: … Not really, no. You were just doing your job. You never gave it a second thought.

SI: After Bougainville, did you have to integrate replacements into your unit?

RM: Yes.

SI: How smoothly did that go?

RM: No big deal. … They're dispersed so much, you don't even know [they are there]. You know they're there, but they're not that many.

SI: Was it the case that you did not want to get too close to them?

RM: Nobody paid any [attention], not in the Marine Corps they didn't. I don't think they did. He [the replacement] was accepted like anybody else. He did what everybody else did. We had one fellow that he made two campaigns and never got on the beach. He got shot getting out of the boat.

SI: Do you remember any close calls on either Bougainville or Guam?

RM: Well, on Guam I did. … We were in some high grass. I was sitting on the helmet and I heard this tank and I tried to get … [off] of the helmet. My butt was too big, I guess, but, as I got up, the tank had knocked over a tree and [it] hit me right in the middle of head, here, and I got a few little cuts and everybody thought I was shot again, but I wasn't. It was just [that] the tree hit me on the head. … We had a lot of shelling, but I was always in the right place at the right time. Somebody was looking out after me.

SI: You said that people thought you had been shot again. Had you been shot earlier?

RM: Well, when I was in that tree on Bougainville and I jumped out of the tree, when you come out of a tree, they think you're hit, when I had the ants.

SI: Yes. Can you give us an idea of what an average attack was like or what an average day in combat was like for a forward observer?

RM: Well, every day is different. Sometimes, you might move a hundred yards, some days, you might move a thousand, depends on the opposition. … If you're going [forward] well, you just keep going until dusk and you dig in and form your lines, set up your fields of fire, in case they attack at night. The next morning, you start all over again, just repetition, just depended on the terrain again. If it's hilly, you're going to take longer. If it's open, you want to get away from that.

SI: Did you find that the terrain was easier, harder or the same on Guam?

RM: Well, there were some easy ones and they had the Santa Rosa Mountains, which was difficult. Now, we stopped in reserve at the Santa Rosa Mountains and they had a heavy rain that night. The guns were set up. It washed this gun fifty yards down. That's how heavy the rain was and you always had rain there, during the rainy season, anyway. It's kind of hard to say one [day was average]. It's never the same. It's always something different.

SI: Did you feel that you were always well-supplied with everything you needed to do your job?

RM: Well, we had everything we needed. … The biggest thing is water. They have things they (cull more?) as they come in. Water's number one, ammunition is second, rations [are] third. That's how important water is. You're so dehydrated and dry. That's why they started carrying two canteens. You couldn't get fresh water. … That's what they practiced in New Zealand. When you'd go on these hikes, they wouldn't let you drink water, to get water discipline.

SI: Did you find that your training prepared you well for what you actually encountered?

RM: I would think so. … I think we were well-trained. Everybody knew their job and somebody else's job.

MV: You said that you encountered the Army the most on Guam. Did you feel that you had more responsibilities than your Army counterparts?

RM: We don't know what their responsibilities were. … They were on the other side of the island, actually, with another division. We were on one side and they were on the other, so, we don't know. We didn't even come in contact with them.

SI: As a forward observer, were you relaying coordinates only to your own mortar crew or would you be sending information to, say, the US Navy's guns?

RM: No, just our own.

SI: Did you get to know any of the infantrymen that you were with?

RM: Oh, I always knew them, because we were with them in training and you knew them by their first name and they knew you.

SI: Was that what the training on Guadalcanal was for, to get acquainted?

RM: Getting acquainted, … where you could work together and where they had confidence in you and you had confidence in them.

SI: I am curious if this comes out in your training or if it was something that you picked up in combat, but many veterans stress the need to recognize your own guns, the enemy's guns, the voices of the men around you and how they look at night.

RM: Well, I don't think [we learned] the voices too much. The guns, I agree with, [but] the voice, if you're excited, your voice is going to be entirely different from what it normally is, but, if you can recognize the sound of their gun, you know it's not yours, so, you want to avoid it or try and take it out. So, from that respect, I'd say it's important to know how your guns sound, how their guns [sound], know the capability of yours and theirs.

SI: That was just something that you picked up.

RM: You pick [it] up. It's a knowledge you gain through experience. Later on, they had some captured weapons and they would shoot them off, so [that] people would recognize the sound of that particular gun. Another fallacy, the Japanese [had] what they called a knee mortar. It wasn't a knee mortar. … It looked like it fit over the knee, but several Marines tried it and they broke their leg, from the recoil. You set it on the ground and fired it that way.

SI: Were you shocked by the tactics the Japanese used?

RM: Well, I guess I was. I knew I didn't want to be taken prisoner. I think everyone felt that way, but some of the Americans were as bad as the Japanese, unfortunately.

SI: There was not much mercy on either side.

RM: Well, they did things they shouldn't have.

SI: What about mass attacks?

RM: You mean from them?

SI: Yes.

RM: Well, they had them. They were almost fanatics. We had one that I remember on Guam where there were three or four of them. One was an officer. His hand had been amputated here and he had a stump just all wrapped up. He charged a machine gun with just his sword and they just kept shooting him. His momentum just carried him forward. He finally fell over right in front of the gun. So, their outlook on life was just much different than ours.

SI: What happened after Guam? Where were you pulled back to?

RM: We stayed on Guam. From there, we went to Iwo [Jima] and that was different from anything else, entirely different. You very rarely saw a Japanese, they were so dug in, nothing but caves. When we were advancing there, on Iwo, I took over a platoon, a rifle company, on Iwo, and, as we were advancing, we came across this big tunnel that had been hit by a sixteen-inch shell and [it had] knocked off one corner, but there was a truck in there loaded with ammunition and a gun alongside of it. … In fact, their whole bunker had, like, a circle with azimuths on it. They could fire [from] anyplace on there and they have ranges down there and they had some kind of mortar. It looked like a fifty-five-gallon drum coming at you. Having been in mortars, I was more afraid of mortars than anything else, because they come down. … They're high trajectory. Most of the others were flat trajectory. I had one mortar hit on my parapet, that's the top of the dirt, and a piece of shrapnel hit my pack and it rolled off and it was burning me and I imagined all sorts of things. I could imagine this blood-[filled sight]. It was burning so bad, I had to reach back, knocked it off. I … just had a little burn, but it scared the devil out of me. I thought I was hit. I was one of eleven of our original company that wasn't killed or injured on Iwo. … I would not want to go [through that again], I don't think. At this age, I could not go through that again. There, you advanced [slowly]; some days, you wouldn't advance. Some days, you'd go a few yards. I mean, the Japanese powder didn't show flash like ours, didn't smoke, and it was very difficult to see them. That's why mortars, artillery and naval gunfire did more damage than the riflemen did. That's my opinion.

SI: For Iwo Jima, was the Third Division the unit that was held in reserve and went in later?

RM: Yes.

SI: While you were on the ships, did you see Suribachi fall?

RM: We were going in when the flag went up.

SI: Did you actually see the flag go up?

RM: We didn't know what was going on. I went up to Suribachi after it was over and it was amazing what you could see from up there. They had the whole island [sighted] and, until they knocked out their observers, who were directing fire all over the beach, that's where all our casualties, not all of them, but a lot of them [were hit], and the beach was just littered with tracks, boats, gear of all kinds.

SI: Where was the first position that you moved into? How far off the beach was it?

RM: Oh, we were about twenty yards off the beach, right near, what was it, Airfield #1 or #2? I don't remember which one it was, and the Third Division moved [in]. We were in the center and moved all the way as the center, too. We were the first ones to reach the sea on the other side. I would never want to go through that again.

SI: In terms of terrain, it was a lot different.

RM: Oh, it was just rocks, crags and whatnot. It was hills. They weren't high hills. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were discussing the terrain on Iwo Jima, how it was so different from the other islands.

RM: … It's a rise as you go in and it's volcanic ash, two steps up, one back, and you sink in. … It's a volcanic island and, [when] you get up around the sulfur mines, you get that smell. In parts of the island, you could take your ration, scoop out the ground, put your can in there, you'd have hot chow and, at night, certain parts, when you dug a hole, you took your blanket and put it down, because it's so hot. … I can't imagine anybody living there. … After the campaign was just about over, we went around closing up caves. You'd blow this cave [and] you'd see smoke coming out four or five other ones, and it's just not a place I wanted to see.

SI: They would fire mortars into the caves.

RM: No, a mortar wouldn't go into the cave. …

SI: Were they collapsing the openings?

RM: Well, the openings were so small, you couldn't even see them. A flamethrower was the biggest weapon there. You see an opening, the flamethrower went in there. Then, they had a big sled; oh, it must have been, what? twenty-foot wide, and it held a shell about this big, like that, [could] hold about twenty of them. They'd pull it up with a tank. The tank would take off. They'd fire these rockets out of it. They were very effective. In fact, I've got some film on Iwo that shows these rockets and, as soon as the rockets start firing, if you were near those rockets, boy, you wanted to get away, because you knew the shells were going to come in there. … You never had a decent night's sleep, of course. You're always at fifty percent alert and, if they were shelling when you're supposed to be sleeping, you just lost out and you were tired constantly. At the end of the campaign, they built a shower there and the shower was so hot that I could not take a shower. I'd stand on the outside and get a little water, [Mr. Morgan makes scrubbing noises], and then, you're so dusty after that, it didn't make any difference.

SI: How often would you have access to amenities like showers and hot food?

RM: Well, on Iwo, it was a month. Bougainville, it was over a month. You didn't even have water to brush your teeth.

MV: Was there anything that the Marines did to lift your morale during this period?

RM: Well, there's not much they can do to lift your morale. Just to go on reserve made you feel good, but, … now, the Japs were great for infiltrating. So, you still maintained the fifty percent alert. So, you never really got a good night's sleep. I mean, it depends on who you're with. Some wanted to do it two hours, some wanted to do it four, but it was very difficult to stay awake for four hours and a lot of people were killed because they couldn't stay awake.

SI: You mentioned that you were one of eleven that survived basically unscathed. After a while, did you start to think, "I am going to get hit eventually?"

RM: Well, you still feel that [way]. I, for some reason, was extremely lucky. If we were here [and] we moved over here, this place got shelled and I was always in the right place at the right time. I would come close, but never [got hit]; just, as I said, somebody was looking out after me.

SI: Did you have access to chaplains and religious services when you were in the field?

RM: Yes. When you went in reserve, usually, there was a chaplain. If he was Catholic, he would do the Catholic service, he would do the Protestant [service]. Even the Jewish chaplain would do different things. The chaplains took care of everybody, regardless of what his denomination was and regardless of what your denomination was. He was available for you and they were wonderful people.

SI: What about corpsmen? Did you get to know any corpsmen?

RM: Yes. Each platoon had one attached. If he couldn't handle any problem, he would send you to sick bay. Corpsmen, you couldn't beat them. Each platoon had their own corpsman and I imagine their casualties were higher than anybody else. … They're affectionately called "Doc" and they're great people. They're all Navy, incidentally.

SI: Did anyone look for souvenirs or collect souvenirs?

RM: A lot of people did. The primary ones are the ones in the rear. If you're in the front, moving all the time, you didn't want any extra baggage. The people in the rear got any souvenirs.

SI: Was there any tension between those of you at the front and the men who were further back?

RM: There was a little, because, … when something came in, be it food or whatever, they got it first, before it went up. This was particularly true in Korea.

MV: During this time, did you have any knowledge of how the war was going in Europe?

RM: Well, we used to get a [bit of news]. Of course, like, when you're on a ship, you always got a newsletter, they called it, [that] they put out and, if you're in training, you always got some news. … Some people had these Zenith radios that'd get broadcasts from different areas and you tried to keep up with it, best you could. I mean, sometimes, you'd go a month and not know what's going on. It just depends [on] where you were and what you were doing, but you looked forward to, [when] you get on a ship, they'd pass out this paper, about like [what] you have there, [several sheets of paper stapled together], and you couldn't wait to get your hands on it. [laughter]

SI: You mentioned radios. Did you ever hear any Japanese propaganda broadcasts?

RM: Well, Tokyo Rose used to play some of the best music. Like, when you're in the reserve or in a camp somewhere, but [not] while in combat, why, people would listen to that and she actually called some people by name.

SI: I have heard that.

RM: I mean the higher-ups, not we peons.

SI: She would say something like, "This unit is moving here. We are going to attack you."

RM: Certain outfits, right.

SI: Did that ever happen to your unit?

RM: Not to my knowledge.

SI: Some men were pretty spooked that Tokyo Rose knew what they were going to do before they did it.

RM: Americans are great for shooting off their mouth.

SI: Did they impress upon you the need for secrecy, the need to not write certain things in letters?

RM: Yes. In fact, when you go on patrols, you're not supposed to carry any letters or anything like that, just [so that] in the event you are captured or something, … they don't know what [you are up to], that old thing, "Name, rank and serial number."

SI: You went out on patrols.

RM: Yes.

SI: For some of these other actions, I assume that there was a need for mortars and they called you up to direct fire.

RM: Right.

SI: On the patrols, were you just looking for positions to shell?

RM: Well, primarily, if they needed fire, you … kept in contact with the back base. … You're looking for other positions where you could set up your guns. If you advanced out there, this is always in front of your lines, where you're patrolling, … you saw any positions that were likable, where you could set up your guns without hindering anything.

SI: What are your most vivid memories of these campaigns in the Pacific?

RM: Most vivid, I think, there was a friend I grew up with; I went through the cemetery at the end of the campaign and [ended up] finding his grave, and I'll never forget that, the sight of that. I couldn't believe it. He was in another outfit. He was in F Company and I was in I [Company] and we used to get together. I was a platoon sergeant then and he was a corporal and we'd get together and talk about home and things like that. … When I saw his grave, then, when I came back to the States, his family wanted to know what [happened]. I tried to find anything I could and all I found out [was], he had gone to get something and he never came back. His family thought I should know more and wasn't telling them, but I didn't.

SI: How often were you able to write home? Did you do that often?

RM: Depends on where you were, again. On Iwo, I wasn't able to write until about a month later, some time in March, late March.

MV: How important was getting the mail?

RM: … Extremely important. That's when they had the what they called V-mail. Anybody could read your letter, it was all open, and you looked forward to it. All your mail could pile up somewhere. Usually, when you got back to an area after a campaign, you might get ten, twenty letters, but, all that time, you don't know what's going on at home and they don't know what's going on with you.

SI: Do you think the letters were more cursory, since you could not say much?

RM: Well, they were all censored and they [the recipient] would receive letters with certain things cut out, if you said something you shouldn't. …

SI: Did you do a lot of self-censoring, "I should not write about this or that?"

RM: Well, you didn't write anything, because you knew it would be taken out. You couldn't say where you were or what you were doing. So, you kept it general.

SI: Were there other things that you did not put in there because you thought it might upset the people at home, your parents?

RM: Well, they wouldn't let you put that in. That would be cut out.

SI: In combat, did you ever see anybody who could not take the stress and had to be sent back?

RM: Yes. … The first one I saw was on Bougainville. This was a big Mexican sergeant who was a prizefighter. He said, "If I can see something, I'll fight it. If I can't see it, I can't handle it," and they had to send him back and every campaign had some of that. On Iwo, people would [take themselves out], because they'd grab a wire and they'd say they're checking wires. They'd go back to the rear and some of them would come back, some wouldn't. Some just couldn't take it. Everybody was frightened, but you just went because you knew you had to. In the Marine Corps, [this is] something, if you're an NCO or an officer, you know what you're supposed to do

and that's still [in] the back of your head and you do things that you wouldn't ordinarily do, because that's your job, and I think it's still that way.

SI: Was the need to take care of your men first impressed upon you?

RM: Yes.

SI: How do you think your own officers performed in combat?

RM: Some did very well and there were a couple that did very poorly. … On Iwo, we didn't have many officers, because they didn't last long. I was the second senior man in our company. There was the gunnery sergeant, he had half the company, and I was platoon sergeant and I had the other half.

SI: I actually interviewed another mortar man who was on Iwo Jima. He said that during some of these night attacks, they would have to fight as infantrymen, basically. Did you ever have that experience?

RM: Well, I wasn't in the mortars on Iwo. I was in a rifle company.

SI: Oh.

RM: I was in I Company. One reason on that [was], they had such a shortage of NCOs and they had no officers, so that I went from the mortar company to a rifle company.

SI: How soon before the invasion did you make that switch?

RM: [I] made the switch on the island.

SI: Was it difficult to take charge of a whole new group of men? Had you known the men of I Company beforehand?

RM: Well, I had been attached to them through part of that, and so, it wasn't a real big deal. … Most of them were replacements coming in, so, you didn't know them anyway. You just knew them as a person.

SI: How did you adapt to being a rifleman NCO?

RM: I had no problem with it, because we'd been trained in it. I had always had an infantry MOS [military occupation specialty].

SI: How was it different from your forward observing activities?

RM: Well, you're constantly on the lines. … As a forward observer, when there's no action, you're with the company CP. As a rifleman, you're up there constantly. Of course, you're in your own little CP, which was somewhere right behind the line. … There, again, it depends on

your troops, how well they're trained, and, unfortunately, some of these replacements had very little training to speak of, not sufficient, in my opinion.

SI: Do you know if any of them were draftees?

RM: That, I don't know, because I was only with them a month and I came back to the States.

SI: What happened after Iwo Jima? Where were you sent next?

RM: … From there, I went back to Pearl Harbor, went to San Diego, then, went home to St. Louis. We went on the troop train. They wouldn't give you your orders until you got off the train, but people were getting off anyplace the train stopped. They didn't care if they had orders or not. It wasn't for me. I was anxious to get home.

SI: In the time between the end of the Iwo Jima campaign and returning to the States, did you think that you would have to be a part of the invasion of Japan or some other island?

RM: Well, we didn't know. I went to Washington, DC, and I didn't get there until July and, a month later, the war was over. So, it didn't really … enter my mind, one way or the other. I had known, if the war had lasted, I had to go to, probably, some replacement depot, or whatever they call it.

SI: You were detached from the Third Division.

RM: As soon as I went back to the States, I was detached.

SI: What was your new assignment?

RM: I went to 23rd and Constitution, doing duty at the Navy Annex, across the street from Henderson Hall. I was commander of the guard and was there when the war ended. They sent us to 3801 Nebraska Avenue, Naval Communication Annex. … We had so many NCOs there, they transferred half of us out, went to the Navy Department, 17th and Constitution. Then, from there, I went to China.

SI: What were some of your duties? What was it like to be officer of the guard?

RM: It's commander of the guard.

SI: Commander of the guard, I am sorry. What does that entail?

RM: You were in charge of all the guards. You checked them, to see if they were, supposedly, proficient in their duties. You questioned them on what their duties were. If they had any problems, they would call the sergeant of the guard and, if he couldn't handle it, you were supposed to take care of it. … It was the same thing at [the] Naval Communications Annex, but, in the 17th and Constitution [assignment], it was the Navy Press Section, where I carried

documents around to various [offices], Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations and places like that.

SI: Did you get to meet any of the higher-ups in that position?

RM: Yes. I met all of the officers in there and [many were] ex-newspapermen. You ever hear of Walter Karig?

SI: No.

RM: Or [William J.] Lederer, [co-author of] *The Ugly American*?

SI: Yes.

RM: He was there. He worked there and they were all newspapermen and wrote articles and that's where all my books come from. Every book published by the Navy was sent there and I had a copy of it. It was pretty good duty.

SI: What do you remember about V-J Day?

RM: V-J Day, let's see. We were at 23rd and Constitution, just ready to go out, and everybody on the street was [going wild]. All the women were grabbing men and kissing them, people giving you bottles and, like everybody else, I went out and celebrated with them, went back. The next day, I had nothing to do.

MV: What was your view on the atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

RM: I was at 23rd and Constitution and I was glad they dropped them. … I knew it had to do some effect, [with] what they said about them, killing all that many people. The Japanese had to surrender. I just couldn't figure out why they didn't do it sooner. I mean, I'm not in favor of it now, but, at that time, I was.

SI: Did you expect that the war would go on for much longer?

RM: I thought it would. Well, to give you an idea, my enlistment expired in '45 and, thinking the war was going to last a while, I reenlisted, like a fool, and I was stuck, and then, [when] I was going to get out after ten years, the Korean War broke out and I was frozen. So, I had sixteen years in before I was eligible to get out, and I had been commissioned by then. So, I spent the next five years in.

MV: How did you feel about civilians in America when you returned home?

RM: Well, I was a little disappointed. I'm not a prude, but, on the way home, I caught the streetcar from the railroad station. Some girl came up to me and she wanted to go out. I says, "I can't. I'm engaged." I wasn't, I didn't even know a girl, and she said, "That's all right. So am

I." I was just disappointed. I'm old-fashioned, in some respects. I always thought the man should be the aggressor, not the woman.

MV: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill when you returned?

RM: Not right away. Later on, I did.

SI: After being posted at the Navy Department, you were sent to China.

RM: China.

SI: What was your assignment there?

RM: … I had a machine gun and mortar platoon combined, in B Company, Third Marines, at Tsingtao, China. … One month, we would train, the next month, we did guard duty. … While I was there, I went to naval … aerial observation school. They wanted one from each battalion. I'm a tech sergeant now, but they wanted [one] from each battalion to be qualified to direct fire from ships. So, I went to naval air, oh, it's with flying; anyway, you're flying in airplanes and direct[ing] the fire, just like you do with the mortars, and, of course, [in] true Marine Corps tradition, after that, I never worked in it. [laughter] … Then, later on, we went up to Shanghai, to evacuate all the Americans, anybody [who] wanted to be evacuated. We took my platoon and we were supposed to have a battalion of Chinese infantrymen. The infantry never showed up, but neither did the other [side]. The Communists didn't show up either, so, we were all right. We evacuated Americans, went back to Tsingtao, came back to the States, went to Camp Pendleton.

SI: In Tsingtao, were you working with the Nationalist forces, training them?

RM: Yes. In fact, when we were at the airfield, they were fighting in (Mukden?) at the time, they were jumping out of the aircraft while it was taking off. … They have a great draft system. A truck drives down the street. If they see you, they throw you in the truck and you're in the Army.

SI: I get the sense that the Marines did not have a very high opinion of the Chinese Nationalist forces.

RM: No. Well, they were ill-equipped, yes. They were starving to death. Most of them weren't paid. When we were there, they had the CNC currency, [Chinese National Currency]. Ten dollars, you could fill up a big sea bag with it and it'd equal the ten [US] dollars. Then, they went to the gold *yuan*. That started at four-to-one. A week later, it was eight-to-one and it just kept progressing higher.

SI: Were you able to meet regular Chinese locals?

RM: Not really.

SI: Were you able to get into the culture at all?

RM: No, very little contact with them, other than a rickshaw boy to take you to the club.

SI: The Americans self-segregated themselves.

RM: Yes.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Raymond B. Morgan on December 16, 2005, in Neptune, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

MV: Mike Vallone.

SI: Before the tape cut off, I was asking you what you thought of the overall mission in China. You obviously knew about the Civil War. Did you think that the Nationalists would win?

RM: Well, I didn't really know. I did not personally think much of the Nationalist Army and we knew nothing about the Chinese [Communist] Army, at that time, and we thought it was more of an internal affair. We never gave it much thought, really, but we were supporting the Nationalists, so, we were hoping they would win. That's just a personal opinion.

SI: How did the evacuation in Shanghai go?

RM: It went very well, because there's no opposition.

SI: Did anyone give you any trouble? They were going voluntarily, correct?

RM: Voluntarily. They didn't have to if they didn't want to. Some of the British stayed there.

SI: In World War II, the Armed Forces indoctrinated its trainees to hate the Japanese and the Germans, to get them psyched up to fight. In the early Cold War period, were they training you to dislike the Communists? Were they overtly teaching you that Communism was a threat?

RM: That was never really [necessary]. I mean, they would give you lectures, when they had current events. Some officer's always designated current event officer and he had to give lectures, periodically, and they talked about the Communists, but it was over there. We didn't know about it and we weren't really concerned. We got the very small picture. … Overall, we were not aware of it.

SI: What stands out most in your memory about your time in China?

RM: The cold, the training, the people. There was no [middle class], either very rich or extremely poor. They weren't very clean. A child didn't wear diapers. They wore a pair of pants that had slits in it. [When] you've got to go to the bathroom, they'd hold them in the street.

Their sanitary conditions were, … oh, disgusting. In fact, we stayed in (Tsangtung?) University and the bathroom was a trough. They had concrete footprints. That stuff would lay in there overnight, in the barracks we were in, until the coolies came, the next morning, to wash it down. Then, they'd take it in these what they call "honey carts," [had] big buckets on them, and they'd go out in the field and dip it on their [crops]. They had radishes that big, but we couldn't eat [them]. … Well, you could eat it, but nobody would. … Tsingtao was a resort city at one time. The Germans had built a number of bunkers there and they had a bunker as big as this house and about ten-foot high. There might be five or six families in there. They'd build fires in there and smoke'd come up; everything is black. They'd go right outside the door and defecate. They should have been sick, I don't know if they were or not, and … most of them around Tsingtao weren't too clean. They were black. I mean, they were yellow-skinned, but they were black from dirt. … You couldn't drink the water, just not a nice place to be.

SI: Was there still a German community living in Tsingtao?

RM: No, there's very few Germans there, no, but it could have been a beautiful city. When the Japs were there; in fact, I lived in a house, later on, that was built by a Jap general. I'd like to have that house here. [laughter]

SI: Did you see a lot of destruction in China, any evidence of the war with Japan?

RM: No. … Tsingtao had very few roads. The roads consisted of a granite or some kind of concrete, about this wide, with ruts down the center, but there's very few vehicles. They were all oxen-drawn, light horse, oxen. They're very back in the '20s.

SI: Were you in China for one year?

RM: Two years, two years.

SI: Had the Communists pretty much taken over by the time you left?

RM: Well, they had shortly after we left, in 1949. We went to Japan after that, but those people, I don't know how they lived. When you see them eating bark off a tree, you know things are pretty bad.

SI: At this point, were you happy with your choice to stay in the Marine Corps?

RM: I never gave it a thought, one way or the other. I was there and there was no sense brooding about it. I made the choice. I'm happy now, because I get a little pension and it made me independent.

SI: I was curious because you reenlisted because you thought the war was going to go on longer. It sounds like perhaps you would not have if the war's end had been clearly in sight.

RM: I probably wouldn't have, if the war was over.

SI: You went to Japan next. Were you there for any length of time?

RM: Only there for about a month.

SI: Then, you went back to Pendleton.

RM: Back to Pendleton.

SI: What was your next assignment?

RM: I went [to], let's see, I guess Korea.

SI: The Korean War broke out in 1950.

RM: … By then, I made master sergeant. Then, I was first sergeant. … I was in H & S [Headquarters and Service] Company then and, when I got to Korea, I had a stupid notion; I didn't want to be in a headquarters company. I became first sergeant of G Company. For some reason, I had an 0319, which is an infantry chief, as my MOS. So, I thought I should be in a rifle company and I became the first sergeant of a rifle company. That's when I got commissioned.

SI: Were you commissioned as part of the field commission program or was it a battlefield promotion?

RM: Well, I took over a platoon. So, after about two weeks of that, I got called down to regiment and I had master sergeant chevrons here [on his shoulder] and a gold bar here [on his cap].

SI: How soon after the start of the war were you sent in to Korea?

RM: Oh, it was several months, because … they were going to send me to school. … I had an enlistment that was going [to] expire. So, they waited until I reenlisted in July.

SI: You had an option to …

RM: No, no option. I could have either reenlisted or gone "at the convenience of the Government." Then, you're in for the duration, plus six months, and you got a couple of hundred bucks for reenlisting. That was big money to me.

SI: When you first got to Korea, where was your position?

RM: I don't have any idea. I only remember a few places in Korea. (Wonson?), that's where the beer was, we went through Seoul, and that's the only towns I really know. I don't even remember the town I was commissioned in, because they had such strange names. I couldn't pronounce them if I saw them.

MV: What were your initial impressions of Korea when you first arrived?

RM: There, again, cold, and snow about four and five-foot deep in places, and hilly. You couldn't go one hundred yards without running into a hill or a mountain.

SI: Had the Chinese entered the war by the time you arrived?

RM: No. They did later on.

SI: At this point, the Marines and the Army were still advancing up the Peninsula.

RM: Going up north, right.

SI: What were those actions like? Was it a period of rapid movement?

RM: Some of it was rapid. Then, they set up defensive positions and you'd go up, back and forth. Then, finally, they set up one position and stayed there for quite a while. When that happened, they brought us back near Panmunjom, not too far from it. I don't know the name of the town. We used to go up on an outpost. We'd patrol during the day and they'd patrol at night; couldn't wait to get out of there.

SI: How far up did you go in Korea?

RM: I have no idea where. I don't know any towns at all. We'd just go; we followed the group and they didn't tell you the name of the town.

SI: Do you think that you were fighting mostly around Seoul?

RM: No, Seoul is more to the coast. When the Marines went from one coast to the other; they were on … the west coast and went to the east, or they were on the east and went to the west, I don't remember now which, because I had no idea where we were. I just knew we were there and I didn't want to be there.

SI: What do you remember about the first platoon that you were placed in charge of? What was that like? You had spent many years as an enlisted man and, now, you were an officer. Did that change your attitude?

RM: Well, no, because, as a master sergeant, you do that quite a bit. It was a little different at first, but you didn't have contact with the privates. You tell the sergeant, "Take your squad here and do this or do that." So, you had contact with three people, three sergeants, and you had a platoon sergeant in-between them. You could just tell him and he would tell the sergeants, but, usually, you'd get the four of them together and tell them what was expected and what we were going to do. The more you can keep informed, the better off you are and, when you set up at night, the sergeant sets his squad in. He tells them where their field of fire is, so [that] you have interconnecting fire. This one is going this way and this one's going this way and they keep that [going] all along the line, where you've got everything in front of you covered, and you

emphasized keeping awake, because the North Koreans, a lot of times, they were just looking for water, but they would try and sneak through the lines.

SI: How were the North Koreans, and later the Chinese, different, as an enemy, from the Japanese? Did you notice a difference?

RM: The North Koreans weren't as aggressive as the Chinese or the Japanese. … You couldn't tell [who was] a North Korean. Was he North or South? You didn't know. We had Koreans, supposedly, with us, the ROK [Republic of Korea] groups, and they'd be with you one day and, the next day, they'd disappear. You didn't know what they were or what they were doing. We had some that were supposed to be with us; we were advancing up this thing, [a hill?]. We found this bunker in the snow. It was the ROKs that used to be with us. They were just out there just goofing off. They'd come back and give you some fairy tale of what they saw. So, you had to be … leery of everything they said, take it with a grain of salt. That's when you … sent your own patrols out to find out what was going on. That would be some colonel's job, back at regiment, or S-2, G-2, whatever it was.

SI: I have heard several times of ROK units being sent out to take a position, taking it, but, then, being pushed back immediately. Did that happen to you?

RM: It happened. There's an incident I can remember. It's funny now, but it wasn't then. Are you familiar with a base of fire?

SI: A little bit.

RM: … One platoon's assigned a base of fire. He fires on this hill so [that] this one can advance. This one lieutenant decided that General [Robert E.] Lee wouldn't do it that way. So, he didn't provide his base of fire and the other group [that] went up there had a few casualties. When that particular skirmish was over with, the company commander got a hold of this lieutenant and, when he informed him that General Lee wouldn't do it that way, he [the company commander] was chewing him out. He punched the company commander and, when I was the first sergeant, they had me put him under guard and he disappeared. We don't know what happened to him. I mean, he was taken back by somebody, but you can't get away with that in any time, but particularly in combat, when you put somebody else's life in jeopardy. So, these things do happen, unfortunately.

SI: I am interested in the relationship between officers and NCOs. You saw it from both angles. Most of the officers that I have spoken with say that, basically, their sergeants took care of many things so that they do not have to. Was that the case when you were a master sergeant?

RM: Well, a lot depends on the NCO. Some, you wouldn't have to say anything to. They would take care of these things. Others, you had to push them. That's true of anything. Some were better than others, but, [in the] Marine Corps, any branch of service now, they're going up too fast. They don't work in their craft long enough to really become acquainted with it the way they should be and, normally, in the Marine Corps, if you come up through the ranks, you get a

little more respect than the other one, [other officers], because they know you've been around a little bit, you know a little bit [about] what's going on. … At least that's the feeling I have.

SI: Do you feel that your combat experience in World War II helped you in the Korean War?

RM: I'm sure it did, to a certain extent, sure. It had to.

MV: How would you compare what you experienced in Korea to your experiences in World War II?

RM: Well, it's entirely different. … In World War II, you're always in a warm climate and, in Korea, it was a cold climate. You had to adjust. The rifles would freeze up if you don't take care of them properly. You had to constantly check that. You're always numb. You wore these big mittens with the fingers hanging out and you never had anything like that [in the Pacific]. You weren't so restricted with your clothing in World War II as you were in Korea and, when you're frozen, it's pretty difficult to do what you're supposed to do. [When] your feet are cold, you don't feel like marching. That's my opinion, again.

SI: In World War II, the climate caused casualties through jungle rot, malaria and so forth. Did you have to deal with many cases of frostbite and so on in Korea?

RM: A lot of them got correct before they had frostbite. Some lost their toes and we had a lot of malaria. In fact, I had dengue fever on Guam. It's similar to malaria and it's all caused by the deadly anopheles, mosquito.

SI: In North Korea, were there other things that affected you?

RM: Just the cold weather. You never had water, because your canteen froze, and, later on, they brought out; [when] it started out, we had shoe packs and your feet were constantly cold. They brought out this boot. People in the rear all had them. By the time they got to the front, why, it took a year or two to get them all up front.

SI: You mentioned earlier that there was more tension between the front and the rear in Korea.

RM: Right.

SI: Were there any similar incidents that you remember?

RM: Oh, there's always a little bit of that. … Even [with] the chow getting up to us, the people that bring it up don't want to bring it up there, for one thing. You can't blame them. Why go up and get shelled when you don't have to? If they'd see something like that, where the people congregate around the mess thing, that was inviting a target when you're up front. I'm sure they have observers out looking. I know, if we saw something like that, we would fire on it.

SI: Being an infantry lieutenant is one of the most hazardous positions in any war.

RM: It can be.

SI: Were you constantly at the front?

RM: Right. Well, unfortunately, you're carrying a map case and binoculars, usually, and the enemy can see these things. … You do the same thing. You shoot for their officers and their NCOs. Now, [in] the American [military], … a private can take over things, where the Japanese private couldn't. They were lost without their leaders and you did everything you could to disguise what you had there, so [that] you wouldn't [draw fire], and, [when] you're up there, anybody pointing or doing this or that, you're a target. So, you had to be careful how you do it and where you do it. You get accustomed to it after a while and you have hand signals. … There's a whole list of hand signals you can use.

SI: Were you pleased to become an officer? Were you reluctant to take the position?

RM: Well, I was at first. Then, I found out I'd go home about a month early and that was a big incentive for me, but it was a feather in your cap. I mean, not everybody gets … to do that.

SI: Had you ever been offered the opportunity, previously, to go to an OCS program?

RM: I did when I was in China. Anybody [that] had a GCT [general classification test score] of more than 120 was called into the office. In our battalion, there were only three of us and they wanted to send me back to school and I thought I was getting out of the Marine Corps and I declined. I kick myself now for not doing it. That's when they had, I think it was the V-12 program, but they were going to send you to the school of your choice. A lot of them that did that lost their lives in Korea, though. The life of a second lieutenant in combat … isn't too long.

SI: When you were in the field in Korea, was it a situation where the enemy held one position, you held another and you just slugged it out back and forth?

RM: Yes.

SI: Would you say it was similar to trench warfare? I have heard that comparison often.

RM: I wouldn't say it was like trench warfare. I remember, one time, we were in this line. They were about fifteen hundred yards away, over on another hill. So, they set up a .50-caliber machine gun in a trench. … I don't know, it must have been a North Korean or Chinese, I don't know what he was, when they would come out of this hill, they had it all sighted in and they'd get the gun up, one round. It hit him, and then, you'd see him go tumbling, fifteen hundred yards. … They didn't get very many that way, but they got a few, to let them know you're still around.

SI: You said that you felt very lucky in World War II because you always managed to avoid being where the enemy fire landed. Was it the same case in Korea?

RM: Pretty much so. I was very fortunate. I've always been lucky, all my life.

SI: Were you exposed to as much fire in Korea, or more?

RM: No, not in there as much.

SI: Did you think, "Now that I am back in combat, my odds of getting hit are even greater?"

RM: Oh, it was always there, but you tried to get it out of your mind. The worst thing you could do is think about that. You don't function properly if you're thinking about that.

SI: How long would you be on-the-line, consecutively?

RM: There, it could vary, but usually about a month. It depends. If you're advancing, it might be less than a month. It depends on the amount of casualties you're taking. You can't say. Sometimes, you wouldn't get off. Other times, you might be there a couple of weeks. Sometimes, you might be there hours, and then, [it depended on] what the opposition was doing, what you were doing, how many casualties you had, how difficult it was to advance. Some of these things, you can't really say, then.

SI: How were the casualties in your unit in Korea?

RM: Sometimes, they were pretty heavy. Sometimes, they were light. Here, again, it depends on what you were doing. A lot of the casualties were [caused by] landmines and, in Korea, I'm sure that a number of Koreans are running around without legs, because landmines, when you plant a landmine, you're supposed to mark it on a map. … Apparently, some units, either North Korean, South Koreans or Americans, put these landmines in and there's no record of them anywhere. So, a lot of people lost their limbs because of this.

SI: Were you able to tell a difference between when you were fighting North Koreans and when you were fighting the Chinese?

RM: You couldn't tell the difference. Sometimes, they might have been dressed a little different.

SI: Were the Chinese more aggressive or better trained?

RM: Oh, I think the Chinese are a little more aggressive. The Chinese were more offensive and the North Koreans were more defensive.

SI: Did you feel as though the enemy's forces were well-disciplined?

RM: The Communists definitely were. The Marine Corps' problem [was], at that time, [they] brought in a lot of the Reserve units, the same thing is happening in Iraq right now, and the Reserve units are not up to par. [Editor's Note: Mr. Morgan is referring to the activation and deployment of Reserve units to Iraq in the years following Operation: IRAQI FREEDOM (2003).] Now, let me give you an example; this happened when I was recruiting. I was assigned

to go to the Reserve unit to give some lectures on military subjects. The first time I went there, they couldn't do it because they're going to watch the Army/Navy game. The second week I was supposed to be there, they were going to have a beer party. So, I told my CO that I wasn't going back, because, when I went there, they were never ready. So, that was the training they had. Then, the Korean War broke out and they were drawn in and a lot of them, unfortunately, didn't know what to do, particularly [in] cold weather. There's a lot of things you have to know if you're going in cold weather. They used this [acronym] C-O-L-D, "Keep it Clean, avoid Overheating, wear it thick and in Layers and keep it Dry," and these people didn't do it.

SI: Did you ever serve with any Reserve officers or any Reserve units?

RM: Oh, most of the Marine officers during World War II were [from the] Reserves.

SI: Okay. What about in Korea?

RM: There must have been. I never asked them if they had the "R" behind their name or not.

SI: I was just curious if they expressed any resentment over the fact that they had been called up.

RM: No. Well, you know, before the war, Reserves were looked on as a low class [outfit]. They used to line up for [things], "Alphabetically, according to rank, Reserves to the rear," but I'm sure that's changed now.

SI: The Korean War began a few years after President Truman integrated the Armed Forces. Were there any African-American Marines in your unit?

RM: We had a few then.

SI: Was there a conscious effort to integrate the forces or was it just as it happened?

RM: Just as it happened. There was no [plan]. They wanted whatever was available. Most of them, unfortunately, went in the infantry.

SI: Would you say that the integration process went smoothly?

RM: I thought it did. I've only seen a small scale of it, though. Maybe another small [area], some choice posts, might be a little different, but, in Korea, it was no different. Now, in World War II, some of the Spanish had trouble, didn't want to go. I'm not saying he's Spanish; he spoke the Spanish language. I don't know what nationality he was. As I remember one incident on Iwo, this one fellow, we were going to take some ammunition up to somebody and he didn't want to go. So, someone pointed a rifle at him and said, "Go or …" He went. I didn't mean to change the subject. …

SI: No, that is fine.

MV: Going back to World War II, when you were onboard ships, did you fear being attacked by submarines?

RM: Well, yes, because … they'd close up the ship. They'd batten down the hatches and shut all the doors, airtight doors or watertight doors. If you're down below, you can hear them firing. You don't know what's going on. … Speaking for myself, I was leery. On an LST, you're up [on deck], you can see what's going on, but they had such a shallow draft that a torpedo would go right underneath them, but the Japanese invented a [new torpedo]. That's how they … bombed Pearl Harbor. They developed one that went kind of … high in the water.

SI: When you left Korea, were you on the one-year rotation system? Did the Marine Corps do that?

RM: Yes.

SI: At what stage was the war in when you left? Was it during the middle of the war?

RM: Middle of the war. They were getting to start talks about Panmunjom, with stuff like that.

SI: When you left, did you think that you might have to return for another tour?

RM: I never gave that much thought, really. I thought it'd be ended by then. You hoped it would. I still was connected with it after that. I went to New Orleans on recruiting duty and I was casualty assistance officer. Anybody coming back from Korea that was killed, the Marine Corps would send them, the parents, a letter with a card in it. If they wanted some assistance, they'd send it to New Orleans, where I was, and I would contact them. Anybody in the State of Louisiana and three counties in Texas, I had to go visit them. If they wanted a military funeral, I made arrangements for that. Then, I went to the naval supply center after that. Every week, they brought some caskets back from going out and I had a detail. We'd go in, make a little ceremony for these fellows that were killed. So, this was in '52, '[5]3, I guess. So, I was still connected with it.

SI: Was it difficult to deal with the families at that time?

RM: Yes. … Well, in New Orleans, most of them are black, unfortunately, and, if they had a military funeral, the first two questions [were], "When do I get the ten thousand dollars?" … One time, we were at the gravesite. The grandmother raised this boy. She was really hysterical. The father, he wanted the money and there was a lot of conflict. That's something they had to work out among themselves. You'd try to smooth it over. Not all of them are like [that], don't get me wrong; just a few. The few that did it made the job much more difficult.

SI: You were getting sucked into family problems.

RM: [Yes].

SI: What are your most vivid memories about the Korean War?

RM: Just being cold and miserable and not wanting to move when you had to move and being scared, … frightened all the time.

SI: Do you remember any close calls?

RM: Not real close. I mean, people near you would be hit, but I was never hit. It makes a believer out of you after a while.

SI: You mentioned that landmines caused many casualties. Did artillery or rifle fire inflict substantial casualties?

RM: Both. Most of them were artillery, I think. I would say most of them, because you've got to be up close to get the rifle casualties.

SI: Was it a case where you were trying to push forward and encountered the enemy or were these mostly clashes between patrols sent out by both sides?

RM: A little bit of both. … Sometimes, you advanced. Sometimes, you'd come back. This is when they couldn't really make up their mind [on] what they wanted to do.

SI: Could you sense that on the ground, that you were not fighting to win?

RM: Yes. You weren't fighting to win. The artillery was limited in how many rounds they could fire per day. You'd see the planes flying over every day. They had the … Shooting Star, they used to call them, see them going up north. … They couldn't go too far, either. I think, if we had gone all-out, we could have won that war. Unfortunately, MacArthur had the right idea, but we'd have been engaged for a number of years.

SI: Were you there when he was relieved of duty?

RM: Yes.

SI: Was that big news?

RM: No. MacArthur was not a man favored by the Marine Corps. "Dugout Doug," they called him.

SI: What did you think of President Truman?

RM: I personally liked him, being from Missouri myself.

SI: Yes, of course.

RM: But, that old saying, "The buck stops here," [if] he said something, he meant it, not like this guy we have now.

SI: You had this assignment in New Orleans. You were basically in for another five years. You reenlisted before you went over to Korea.

RM: Right.

SI: You still had four years left.

RM: Well, … once you're commissioned, you're not on an enlistment. I was just in the Marine Corps then. I had to serve at least a year because of … the commission.

SI: After your casualty assistance assignment in New Orleans, where did you go next?

RM: Naval supply center, Oakland, California.

SI: That was still during the Korean War period.

RM: Right. I had a good job there. I was custodian of the confiscated liquor locker. [laughter] … I'd have to give the CO a list of everything we had in the locker. Then, after we kept it thirty days, you destroyed some of it. So, every week, whatever's thirty days old, we destroyed.

SI: Did it actually get destroyed?

RM: It got destroyed one way or another, [laughter] but we had to sign certificates that it was destroyed.

SI: One thing I have picked up from these interviews is that soldiers, sailors and Marines are very good at hiding liquor and other contraband.

RM: Well, this is jumping ahead; my next tour of duty, I had a tour aboard ship. We had a Navy chief there who was an excellent chief when he was sober, but, anytime he went ashore, he got drunk and they wouldn't let him bring any booze aboard, so, he'd stick it in his socks, tape it. … The officer of the deck told him one day, "Chief, I know you've got bottles there. Take them off and throw them in the water. I want to hear two splashes." He took his shoes off. The OD, who was busy, heard the two splashes; he was happy. The Chief was happy; he had his two bottles of whiskey, but no shoes. [laughter] There's a lot of things like that [that] people do.

SI: After the naval supply center, you served on the ship.

RM: I went to, what was it? embarkation school, they called it. I was on the USS *Bellatrix*, AKA-3, only Marine on the ship.

SI: Is that an attack transport?

RM: Yes, and, in a war time, they have two [Marines onboard]. You load the ship and you're liaison between any passengers and the crew. … That was really good duty. Our home port was

Long Beach. The only trip they made while I was aboard was, they went to the Pribilof Islands. We'd go down to San Diego quite a bit and the ship was going to be decommissioned. While I was on the ship, for some reason, the Marine officer is always the legal officer on a ship, I don't know [why], so, they sent me to Newport, Rhode Island, to attend justice school. So, [when] I came back, they made me the legal officer after that.

MV: How did you feel about being the only Marine?

RM: Well, I had a lot of fun with the naval officers. I used to kid them, they'd kid me and we just had a good time. I mean, there's only about; oh, let's see, we had two tables, so, maybe fifteen officers on the boat and the Navy has a strange tradition. … Nobody sits down or eats until the senior man is seated and, at the second table, I was the senior man. So, we had a great time going back and forth. … So, that was good. … Of course, the Captain always had his stateroom. The Executive Officer had the other table. He only had a few people there. We had about ten on our table and I never ate so good in my life.

SI: What was life aboard ship like, in terms of living quarters, your daily duties and so forth?

RM: I enjoyed [the] living quarters. We had staterooms, actually, two to a stateroom. Everybody had a desk and a chair. I was on the 02 deck, which is right above the gangway, had a porthole here and one over here and it was great, the best duty I had. … Of course, I had to stand watches. Mostly, it was gangway watches, but, then, when they found out the ship was going to be decommissioned; I was bored, because, when we'd go to sea, I had no duties. I attended the Navy schools and I became qualified underway, and they found out that I was qualified [to stand watch]. The Executive Officer wanted to know if I'd mind standing watches. … I only did that for a short period and I was transferred. The ship was decommissioned after that.

SI: Where were you sent after that?

RM: Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

SI: What were your duties there?

RM: Started off as assistant base inspector and legal officer.

SI: How often would you act as a legal officer?

RM: Not too often. [For] any court-martial, you prepared the papers, but, [for] any general court-martial for anybody at Camp Lejeune, I was on the board and, periodically, had people that weren't performing properly. They'd have them in, to try and put them in another field, and I sat on that board. Then, General [Homer L.] Litzenberg came aboard and didn't have an aide. I got drafted as his aide and, fortunately, let me tell you a story about that; the first day, Mrs. Litzenberg said, "Would you like to meet the girls?" "Oh," I said, "I'd love to." I was a bachelor. She takes me upstairs. There's two big cats on the bed and here are the girls. I guess my face dropped and we became good friends after that. [laughter] … This is when Sergeant

[Matthew] McKeon, I think his name was, [was in the news], when those recruits were drowned at Parris Island. [Editor's Note: Mr. Morgan is referring to the "Ribbon Creek Incident" of April 8, 1956, when Sergeant McKeon led a platoon of recruits on a disciplinary exercise through a swamp creek which resulted in the deaths of six Marines who could not swim.] General Litzenberg went down to relieve General (Burger?). He wanted to know if I wanted to go to Parris Island. I said, "I'd rather go back to troop duty." So, I went to ITR, Infantry Training Command, and I became a company commander. Later on, I went in the S-3. While in the S-3, the Marine Corps was just starting their vertical envelopment [program] and they had very few pilots. So, I went to helicopter school. It was only about a three-week course and all they taught us was how to land the aircraft. The reason for this [was], if the pilot were injured or incapacitated in any way, we could land the aircraft. Once you landed the aircraft, you went off with your troops, but, again, [in] Marine Corps fashion, we never worked in that either.

SI: You attended a number of schools while you were in the Marine Corps.

RM: Right.

SI: What did you think of the Marines Corps' educational system and style?

RM: I think it's good. It's a good policy. … I had a lot of variation in mine. I thought that was great. It gives you a more well-rounded thing [perspective] and you're better qualified, in my opinion, to do these different duties and the Marine Corps is great for education. Even before the war, the senior officers … had what they call officers' call and he would lecture these officers, the junior officers, on various subjects and made them more qualified than they were before. I don't know if the Marine Corps still does that, but I thought it was a great idea.

SI: How would you compare the Marine Corps you knew during World War II and the Korean War with the peacetime Marines? How did the culture differ?

RM: No comparison. Discipline's not the same. They changed some ranks. The pay is greater, in the Korean War, and the people are just different, like, the draftees started coming in. They didn't want to be there. The discipline's the big thing. I mean, prior to World War II, the drill instructors could do just about anything they wanted. Now, you can't talk down to them, [the recruits], you can't do a lot of things, but some people need that, unfortunately. … Usually, the drill instructor was a great big, strapping individual. Nobody gave him any back talk and I think that's the big difference.

SI: Where did you go after helicopter school?

RM: Well, I stayed right there, with the training regiment. Then, from there, I went to crypto school. Then, I went to France for two years. … I met her [his wife] here, but we got married in France.

SI: How did you meet?

RM: She's a nurse and the doctor she worked for was a friend of mine, so that one thing led to another. We've been married, what? forty-seven years now.

SI: Was she still in the Army then?

RM: Yes.

SI: Where was she stationed?

SI: She's stationed at Fort Monmouth.

SI: Why did you go to France? Were you sent there?

RM: I was sent there. Well, see, we were going to get married. Her father had died, around this time of the year, and, by January, I went to France. Because he had died, we'd put off our plans.

SI: Where was your assignment in France?

RM: St. Nazaire and Poiters.

SI: Was it a Marine or Navy unit that you were assigned to?

RM: No, Army.

SI: How did that feel, being assigned to an Army unit?

RM: You adapt. That's what this commander said I was good [at]. When I was aboard ship, he said I had good adaptability. You accept what you have and make the most of it.

SI: What were your duties in St. Nazaire?

RM: I was a crypto security officer.

SI: What did that entail?

RM: Decoding messages, maintaining files. … Of course, you had people working for you. I had warrant officers working for me, just overseeing them, strictly a paper job.

SI: Was it more like a nine-to-five job?

RM: Pretty much so, unless they had alerts.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

SI: We were talking about these alerts.

RM: An alert is just a dummy run for in the event something happened. If they had one of these alerts, I was supposed to go down to Spain and help evacuate the people who were coming down. People [American personnel] from Germany and France went down to Spain to be evacuated and that was my job.

SI: What did you think of serving in Europe? Most Marines are centered in the Pacific or the United States.

RM: Well, I enjoyed it, [was] able to get around a bit. Since then, we've traveled all through Europe and I enjoy Europe. The culture is different, [the] people are different.

SI: Was your wife still in the Army when you were in St. Nazaire?

RM: Yes. She … had to come back here after we were married. We were only there a short while. Then, because she's married, she got discharged and we spent the rest of our two years there.

SI: I was going to ask if it was difficult to get two people from two different services assigned to the same area.

RM: She … resigned and I retired right after that.

SI: That was your last assignment.

RM: Yes.

SI: Did you just decide it was time?

RM: Well, everything changed. … It's so different that … I had difficulty accepting the changes and I wanted to get out before I was too old to get a halfway decent job, because, once you're past forty, it's difficult to get a job.

SI: When you say changes, do you mean the fact that you were married or changes in the Marine Corps?

RM: Changes in the Marine Corps, and getting married makes another thing. We had a family a year later and started a family. … [The] Marine Corps was not conducive to a marriage, because, when I was at Camp Lejeune, these Marines are there six months, they make a Med [Mediterranean] cruise, they're back for six months, then, they go to Vieques for six months. … A lot of these were young people and, … at that time, they weren't making any money and these poor girls are left somewhere, almost to … fend for themselves. … I didn't want anything like that to happen to me, but I should have stuck [in] a little longer. I'd have made major if I'd stuck around. I didn't know it.

SI: You retired as a captain.

RM: Yes.

SI: What was your next move, getting back into civilian life?

RM: Right here.

SI: You came to Neptune.

RM: Yes. Well, she was stationed at Fort Monmouth and she was still in the service when we came here and she got out shortly after we moved here, some time in '61 or '62, whatever it was. We've been here ever since.

SI: You decided to live here because she was stationed at Fort Monmouth and you liked the area.

RM: I didn't want to go back to St. Louis.

SI: Why not?

RM: Well, when I left, St. Louis was about a million. Right now, it's about three hundred thousand. It's very hot in summertime, the humidity is terrible, worse than Washington, DC, and it's very cold in the winter and I could do without that and we both liked this area. So, she's from Pennsylvania. She didn't want to go to Pennsylvania. So, this was it.

SI: Mike asked about the GI Bill earlier. Did you make use of it after you left the service?

RM: Later on, years later. I guess it was in the '60s; I think it was. I took business courses.

SI: What was your first job?

RM: First job was the one in St. Louis, working for … (Emerson?) Electric.

SI: I meant after leaving the service.

RM: Oh, I bounced around here for a while. I guess one was with sales, with supermarket services, I think, went around to grocery stores and [would] take their orders. I sold beer for a while, became the office manager. The owner died and sold his business. He brought [in] a whole new crew. Then, I worked for the post office. I did the books for the post office. That's it. I retired there, I guess, in '71, '72, somewhere around there. That's it, here I am.

MV: During the Vietnam War, what were your views on the war?

RM: Oh, like most people, I was against it. I thought we had no business being there, just the way I feel about Iraq. Why are we spending billions of dollars over there when we could be taking that money and helping the people here, the people from New Orleans, for example? [Editor's Note: Mr. Morgan is alluding to the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina in August

2005.] There's no need, and over, what? two thousand young Americans died over there, for what? That's, again, the way I feel. We went in there, went to Afghanistan, to find [Osama] Bin Laden. We didn't find him; pull them out. We went to Iraq to look for these weapons. They're not there; pull them out. That's my opinion. I'm stuck with it and I'm staying with it.

SI: Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life, after being in the military for so long?

RM: I did at first. I mean, I didn't know what I wanted to do. The first few months, I didn't do anything. It was difficult at first, but we managed. Well, we had a small child; we had to manage.

SI: How many children do you have?

RM: Four. … The oldest is about forty-six now, I guess, and [they all arrived] right after that. The children are all off doing very well. Oldest one works for a pharmaceutical company, the second one's a housewife, the third one, … the boy, works for AT&T and the other one was … some kind of planner for the town of Ashland, Virginia. My daughter, [who] works for the pharmaceutical [company], makes more money working part-time than I made full-time. Apparently, she's very good at what she does. She was a liaison between the FDA and Johnson & Johnson. When they [have] a new drug, she goes down and presents it.

SI: My director's husband does that, takes a lot of man-hours.

RM: Well, she only does it part-time, but they get nice bonuses.

MV: Did you ever want any of your children to get into the military?

RM: Well, my daughter, when she graduated from college, didn't know what she wanted to do and we went down, talked to the Air Force recruiter. They were going to send her to school to be a navigator and she got … a job with the pharmaceutical company and she declined, but I thought it'd be a good thing for her. [She has] got a good head on her shoulders. … She's doing well for herself now.

SI: Many veterans I have interviewed report that they did not talk about their experiences until recent years. Was that the case for you?

RM: Well, I didn't say much about it. As the years go by, it's over with. I mean, when you first [leave], first few years, you think about it and you dream about it at night, but, then, it's a thing in the past, just like a bad dream.

SI: Do you think that you deliberately pushed anything out or suppressed anything?

RM: No, just the way it worked out. We have great friends and you don't have time to think about it. We're always busy, always doing something. I mean, at this time of year, we have about six parties to go to, different groups and organizations. We get together at each other's

house once in a while; like, I didn't go bowling this morning. They called up, wanted to know why I didn't show up. [laughter]

SI: Do you still stay in contact with people you served with?

RM: No, never have. I don't keep track. I write very few letters. I'm starting to do more now than I ever have. I was never one to keep in touch. I don't know anybody in St. Louis. … Most of the people I knew all moved away or passed away and I just keep [in] contact with our group here. Of course, the family is different. …

MV: How did your time in the military shape your life after the war, both negatively and positively?

RM: Well, I think positively, because I had a little pension coming in, it made me a little independent. I didn't have to take a job I didn't want or didn't like. I waited until I found something I enjoyed. That was the main thing for me. I mean, I still go to all these [functions]. Every November 10th, I go to every Marine Corps' reunion there, things like that. We have an I Company reunion every year and I just got back about; I think when I first spoke to you, I was going to Birmingham, Alabama. … We had about fifteen people, all from the same company, all World War II, but anybody [who] serves in this company from World War II to [the] present is invited, if they wanted. So, you get different generations in there and get a different look on combat, which is good, but, this time, all we had was the World War II veterans, though, and I was very depressed. I think of myself as young. These fellows come in with canes and they have to get on top of you, like this, to see you and I'm a young eighty-three, I think, because I'm active. I bowl. I play golf in the summertime. Years ago, I played in this weather, but not anymore, but I stay reasonably active.

MV: What do you think about the war movies made on the Pacific Theater or Korea? Do you think they resemble the war at all?

RM: Well, some of them do. I've got, what is it, over there, with the famous actor? Most of the war movies are kind of staged, I think, like the one at Iwo Jima with John Wayne, [*The Sands of Iwo Jima*]. That was nothing like Iwo at all. … They made one about Korea. It was made at Camp Pendleton and they spread white all over the mountains there to make it look like Korea, but I'd take it with a grain [of salt]. I watch them, don't get me wrong, but … most of them were too much baloney. They don't do that and the people don't bunch up the way they do in the movies. Famous thing, you say, "Spread out." There was a reason for that. If a shell does come, you don't kill off the whole group. You might kill one or two and you don't find somebody running up with the machine gun. That barrel gets pretty hot. … They give you asbestos gloves and these guys never have gloves on and, if you look at a machine gun, if it has something sticking out of the barrel, that's the muzzle thing there, you know it's firing blanks, so, it's not real.

SI: I was just looking over the notes that you sent us. I think we have covered everything, but I wanted to ask you about when you were discharged. There was some kind of situation where you had to retire and the Army allowed you to retire as an officer.

RM: Yes.

SI: Can you explain that?

RM: Well, I was a temporary officer in the Marine Corps, I wasn't permanent, and they guaranteed I'd retire as an officer and, at that time, a master sergeant was getting $137.50 a month [in] retirement, because they only had E-7 then. They didn't have E-8s and E-9s, like they have now, and that made a difference, from 137 [dollars] to two [hundred]-something as a captain, or whatever it was, and that was better, what? seventy-five dollars a month more, but it's a lot more than that now. That was the reason, though, strictly financial.

SI: You were discharged from the Army.

RM: The last one.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for the record?

RM: I can't think of anything.

SI: Is there anything that we skipped over?

RM: I can't think of anything.

SI: Okay. Thank you very much for having us and answering our questions.

RM: This took a lot longer than I thought it would. [laughter]

SI: Most people say that.

RM: Well, you think of things. Probably, after you leave, I'll think of other things.

SI: If there is anything else that you want to talk about, we can come back or you can put it in the transcript. Again, officially, thank you very much.

RM: You're welcome.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Michael Kuzniak 2/14/06
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/27/06
Reviewed by Raymond Morgan 3/14/06