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Question: So did -- because everybody, when I get to this point, they -- they can't tell me about it. Do you remember where you were in the -- were you in the middle, the front, the back of the landing craft?

Answer: I was probably two or three, as you go back, about third one back from the front. I wasn't the first guys that stepped off, I was the second two or three that stepped off, I was the third two or three that stepped off.

Question: And you're packed tight?

Answer: Oh, yeah, it's pretty tight. You're not (gestures) like that but you don't have a lot of elbow room, no. They're -- they were trying to get you -- as many in there as they can. And the beach was already -- when I got there -- was already starting to be littered with uh.. shells are hitting the landing craft. They took in what you call buffalos, like Amtraks, you know, they're tracked vehicles. They call them buffalos. They don't hold as many people but they -- they can go, you know, the water and go right up on land. But when they got to the terraces of those -- that volcanic rock, what they called the black sands, some of them couldn't -- they couldn't track up those. So you had -- the guys had to jump out. Well, some of the landing craft were hit, of course, by Japanese fire. Cause they had everything zeroed in. They pre-zeroed for artillery and the machine guns and 20 millimeters and everything. So with a lot of people coming in there, it's pretty hard to not hit somebody, you know. Most of the time. And that's why we took, and again, this is not to demean -- it's just a poor way to make a living. But we took just about the same casualties first day on Iwo that they took in Normandy. Not that means that we're better than, worse than, it's just to give some relative comparison because people, I think, know more about the landing in Normandy in a general sense than they do about the landing in Iwo, per se. I'm just trying to convey how intense it was, how rough it was. You started to ask me. I got off. I saw this guy flying through the air, I make a left turn cause we were supposed to gather to the left and up to the top of the -- the terrace. They're kind of like this (gestures). And then -- and then -- but artillery's coming in. So you flopped down in the sand for awhile, you know. There's no way to cover but you just get down so you don't get loose shrapnel going through you or a sniper or whoever's shooting at me I don't want you -- I don't want them to hit me. (laughs) But we got to rendezvous, to get your stuff together. Well, probably an hour and a half, maybe two hours before we got all our -- our team, together. And found each other, you know, cause there's all kinds of people there and there's dead guys around, you know. And so out of the 28th Marines, the regiment, 20th Regiment, had the job of going across the narrowest part first. That was down near Suribachi. That was to cut -- cut the dragon in two, if you will. And so then we could turn -- the 20th turned towards Suribachi and part of the 27th Regiment, to start with, would turn to the north so that we protect our flank then, and so forth. And then we came in and then we filled in with the 27th, turning to the right. But look back up like this and here's this crazy mountain, you know. And they're looking down like this at you. And it's uh -- for them for awhile it was like shooting fish in a barrel, sort of, you know, it wasn't quite that bad but it was. And, but eventually our -- our Naval guns knocked out some of their big heavy stuff, even -- and gradually the attrition. And we got our own -- we couldn't -- the first day we didn't have much in the way of tanks. I think we had a few tanks got ashore. A little bit of artillery got ashore but I know one shipment of -- one landing craft, probably a landing ship tank come in with tanks. Twelve tanks, they only got two ashore, the others -- got sunk. I mean they foundered and sunk. The second day we had tough weather. And the seas were high and they were broaching the landing craft and it was totally littered so the Seabees and the engineers, the Pioneers, they call them. They come in, they had to get cables on that stuff, in some case dynamite, just blow them out of there. So that we could get supplies, ammunition in, take the casualties out. Because right at the start there wasn't any place to set up a field hospital. I mean, not

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too long, though, we had doctors in there working, just on tables. I mean they dug down and they had some helpers and they're laying these guys on the table. Cause you got to take -- you got to take a leg off and it's got to go now. You can't wait to get him to ship. Why, you better do it now or he's dead, you know. So God bless them. Then I remember going up the first night. We weren't really in communication yet, with the ship, you know. Confusion reigned. I mean they -- the initial landing. They had this done and then it was hunker down for the night. And the old story was, anything that moves at night is fair game. Cause you don't know who they are. They had spider holes they'd come out of, you know, come out of old yet undetected bunkers and what not. And so you -- and everybody's nervous as a cat anyhow. And, but we're gathered there and I can remember just -- just dark -- just about dark. And here comes Lieutenant Cohen. He crawls over there and says I just got a report that there's an enemy tank maybe coming over the end of the airfield. And we're -- just right -- right where we were only we were back this side a little bit and we had (gestures & laughs). He says, and I'll always remember this. Oh Owen said, "Now don't give any ground". Well here I am, I wasn't carrying an M-1, see I'm carrying a carbine, 30 caliber carbine, because they're lighter. Cause I've got all this other crud (gestures) radio and -- and you're weighted down with -- and I thought what am I going to do to stop an attack with a 30 caliber rifle? (laughs) It was almost funny, you know, even under the circumstance. Well it turned out it was one of the few tanks that we had got -- put ashore, but had gone up and turned around and was coming back. And so that soon was identified as OK, but I don't know what we'd have done if the tank had run right straight at us. I mean, throw all my -- throw my hand grenades at it, I guess, but even that might not have stopped it, you know. You've got to have something pretty potent to get --

Question: And it sounds like -- so it wasn't that -- I mean cause you basically threw a city's worth of people on the beach --

Answer: Hm-hmm.

Question: And now said figure out where you are and get everything organized.

Answer: Well they had to plan, but all plans never work exactly, especially when you got people interrupting you with heavy artillery and mortars and rockets, and the night was full of flashing, all the time, you know, going like -- you couldn't sleep. I didn't sleep for -- I didn't sleep, I don't think, for at least 48 hours, maybe a little longer, before I finally just keeled over, you know.

Question: And were you moving or --

Answer: We -- we didn't that night. The next morning we moved in, we moved up a little bit around the end of Motoyama One, this was the first airfield, towards the north. And we moved there and we dug in there and started getting in communication. Then they pulled us up because -- I think I know what happened. I say I think I know. Fourth Division -- now we're pointed north, going up. The Fourth Division came in on the right, at the quarry, we called the quarry, the cliffs and that part going up, the 5th Division had the left side. They had the right side, we had the east -- the east side of the island to go up. But we were taking a lot of casualties and couldn't get reinforcements in. Couldn't get -- you know, it's -- it was kind of chaotic at that time. They -- they called in -- the 3rd Division came in. And I think their orders were to slide into the middle, center, which is where they did stay during the rest of the campaign. And we -- but we had orders to move in -- that's where we were -- right under the airfield, and then we moved up, kind of on top of that, to try to position ourselves to find a place to kind of hide but call in fire. That's when Troute got killed. The colonel. I think -- I think the -- and I'm not sure it was the 3rd -- 26th, 26th, 27th, yeah, 26th, no, 22nd or

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23rd Regiment of the 3rd Division. Anyhow, they were trying to slide them in there. The 4th was trying to pull out and swing, you know, compact more, give room to them, and we had been ordered in there. So then they could see all these troops milling around in there. No wonder they were just tearing us up with as much fire power as they could lay in there because you've got this concentration of troops. Well we finally got orders then to pull around and get out. That left the 3rd to spread its wings a little bit in there and fill the gap. Then we could better support the 5th and the 4th could better support the 4th. That's my interpretation of it and I don't think I'm too wrong. But you'll never get them to admit somebody really screwed it up because (laughs) it's -- and it could happen -- it could happen inadvertently. I mean it could happen because -- just confusion. But whatever, it happened. And then we pulled over and down more below the first airfield and dug in. And then started calling fire in from there. And -- we had a ship -- we used to call in -- my call in sign generally was Charlie 263, which is 263 is 26th, 3rd Battalion, and Charlie was just a code name, Charlie 263. And so then I'd get a ship and it could be -- I don't remember all the code names we had now, but one I remember well, we had it on line for two or three days, four days maybe, Foxfire. So I'd call out "Foxfire, this is Charlie 263", and they'd -- they'd answer "Affirmative". And then I'd say coordinates are -- and I'd give the coordinates, given me by the lieutenant to whatever he thought was a target. This is telephone line running from him, or -- or my friend, John Shaw, who was this lineman. Or they had -- he also had with him most of the time was a sergeant who carried a Thompson sub. And he was kind of -- protect the lieutenant while he craned his neck to find targets. I mean. And those were the three, and then they'd give it to me and then I would, (gestures) you know, send the message out to the ship. Or -- and then transport it -- from there I would give them the telephone if there's something they wanted to know. Most of the time then we'd move -- was wrong, then we'd say "Foxfire, Charlie 263, last -- no, just say down 20, left 20". So it would pull it on the target. Soon as we thought we were on the target, then I might call "Rapid fire five salvos". Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, you know, out they'd pump them you know. And then we'd assess damage and see if we still needed more, why we'd do it or maybe say mission, no I wouldn't even -- see, I wouldn't even call them back if everything's okay. I didn't want to be on the air because I've got this radio and this antenna and I've got to try to hide it because I didn't want them to put, one, a sniper could see me, two, a range finder get on you. You stay around too long, and ships used to get nervous at night cause we'd fire star shells, see illuminate the front. The artillery did some of that, but they would gunfire a lot of it over our battalion. We had star shells every night. So they would call in if they didn't hear from me for awhile. They'd say, "Charlie 263, this is Foxfire"., or whatever the ship was. Living Good or Happy Days, or whatever it was. And I wouldn't answer them, wouldn't answer them. They'd get kind of panicky after awhile, you know. Finally I, you know, connect power and say, grind up, and at night, and the generator we had, sounded like a thrasher machine. Karoom, karoom. So I didn't want that thing cranking at night particularly any more than I had to. But I'd tell them, stay off the air, I'll call you, don't call me. Cause I'm calling the shots, you know, I mean -- I don't know, at least calling for the fire. And -- but they'd get nervous, you know, cause they figured they lost contact. And I'm sure the captain of their ship says this is our mission, so you got to supply shore fire to these people. You be sure we don't lose them. Well, what are they supposed to do. Only way they don't -- they haven't lost me is talk to me once in awhile. They put a little music on a couple of times. They said would you like to hear a little music. And so they piped through the music. But I would -- I never asked them for it or anything, they just did it. So there was a couple nights there, maybe for half an hour, they'd play a little music for me.

Question: I'm cutting ahead a little bit here cause I do have to get over and get this other gentleman, unfortunately -- I mean I --

Answer: Okay. Talk about dead guys?

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Question: No, I want to know -- I want to know why this project is so important to you. This being the fact of this message that we're going to leave for the generations that you and I will never meet.

Answer: Right. I think you're called to do certain things in your life, I mean that feel important. Is it important to be kind to my wife? Is it important to have children and if you have them, to treat them nice, you know uh, discipline, but, that. What is important is to try to hopefully live your life without staining your reputation terribly. I mean, you want -- there's things that are important to you. I think to most people. And making a lot of money is important to some people. I think making enough is important but not --. And others may have a different vent for that, you know. This project -- I think the story needs to be told in an honest way, and be left for my grandchildren, their grandchildren, their children's grandchildren, simply because it was a horrendous time in our history when our whole country came together. I say that by and large, they did. And they gave it the war effort. They supported the right causes. And I think our children and grandchildren and everybody needs to know this country stood up for the right thing. They made sacrifices, both in lives and the style in which they lived. And -- and they displaced themselves. They moved. They went to where it was needed, if you will, like to the war industries and everything they could do. In the main, sure there were a few people that we'll always have around that don't do the right thing or don't think the right way or something. But to me, I think it is really important that you be able to leave this as a legacy, that they understand that a lot of people paid a dear price for the freedoms they have. A lot of them, I think, which is normal, naturally, take for granted. They assume that if they want to speak against their president, they can speak against him. They can speak against their congressman, their legislator. They can say anything they want about a very important personage, if you will, and they can be very critical of their government, without fear they're going to be in the local bastille, jail if you will, or persecuted in any real meaningful manner. They might -- they might get some hot arguments, but that's okay as long as you have some civility and you remember your right to do that was bought at a very dear price. I don't know. Maybe that's not important in the world. But I'd like to see this project completed and left, not just my story but from a collage of stories or different people, different, all ethnic, genders, races, tell the story as they saw it. Some of it was good, some things that our generation did was not so good. But on -- on balance, I think we gave a great gift to our country, United States. I think we gave a great gift to the world. Because I recall, and with little knowing but I used to read a little bit, after World War I, the one thing that we did that was right, I'm not so sure we didn't insist that there be a little better treatment of Germany and a little less reparations. But we didn't take reparations. This country, after World War I. We did go over with the Hoover Commission, and Mr. Hoover became later a president and became also sometimes disliked because he happened to hit a very economic downturn rather than an upturn, and I think not of his own making. But Hoover Commission went over and helped feed some of the Europe starving after World War I. And they were in tough shape. Then came the Great Depression. A lot of people don't understand what the Great Depression was. It wasn't a hole in the world. It was an -- it was an economic hole and a social hurt for a lot of people that didn't have jobs. They didn't have enough food, they didn't know what the future held. Then following that they did not lose their courage totally but we -- we sort of lost our way a little bit. There was a lot of disturbance. Labor disturbance, there was problems with theology and what is it about, is there a better way, and -- but all of that, after World War II, I think left this country better off than it was before. I hope so. Morally, economically, and spiritually. Truly there was a little broader thinking. People moved around this country would never move before. Very frankly we brought, if you will, there's nothing wrong with that, that's the way they were. There were poor blacks or poor white people that lived in different parts of our country, particularly in the South, the Midwest and the Eastern Appalachian areas. Those people moved to better jobs,

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better money, and they got to see something of the world. And found out, hey, it can be better. Well I think World War II made it better. In the broad sense, if you want to do that, this country again did not take reparations, we helped rebuild Japan, we helped rebuild Germany, and we've helped other, innumerable countries around the world. Some agree and some agree but that's what some of our taxes went for. So I'm -- I want my children to be proud of what was given them, understand the price that was paid, and there are no heroes. The only heroes of this whole thing, the only heroes, as far as I'm concerned, were buried someplace with a white cross or a Star of David or whatever their religion was. They are the heroes. I got to come home. So want to leave something better, a story. That's it, done.

Question: Good. Thank you very much.