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NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

Vol II

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Harold Y. Foster

Window Rock, Arizona

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DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

An Interview By

Ernest Bulow

July 10, 1971

Doris Duke Number 1164

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

Western History Center, University of Utah

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Duke Indian Oral History Project

University of Utah
Salt Lake City 84112

INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Harold Foster

Birth Date May 15, 1925 Birthplace Newcomb, New Mexico

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships Tse'ta'ui (Bed of Canyon People)

Kinyichii'nii (Redhouse People)

Informant's Occupation PHS-Interpreter

Extended Comments Code Talker

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No

Language of Recording English Translator

Interviewer's Name Ernest Bulow

(PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR EXTENDED INFORMATION)

13-12-72

27

FOR OFFICE USE

Date Received _____ Tape Reel No. 1164

Disposition of Tape University of Utah, Western Americana Division

Rough Draft Made By Geoff Stevens Date 11/29/71

Proofed By Richard Dalby

Final Draft Made By Pearl Myers Date 6/9/72

Index Card No. 1164 No. of Pages 14

Distribution of Copies University of Utah, Western Americana Division

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Gibson, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971.

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The following is an interview with Harold Y. Foster, conducted by Ernest Bulow, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971.

HF: "My name is Harold Y. Foster. And my clan is Tse'ta'ni and Kinyichii'nii.

And in 1942,'43 I enlisted into the Marines in May. May. And we were shipped to San Diego on a bus and we got to Albuquerque and from there we went to Santa Fe for our physical. And from there we went home for ten days. And then they give us some tickets to board a train to San Diego. And we caught Super Chief from Gallup to L.A. And we got to L.A. and they ship us, we got aboard another train to San Diego. And October, 1943, I was in San Diego boot camp. And everybody lined up. We got there around eleven o'clock and they threw us sheets and blankets and they show us how to make beds and stuff like that. And then, just by the time we went to sleep, they got us around three o'clock in the morning. Next day we went to check our uniforms and we have to send all our personal items back home. And, then the following day we got our haircuts. They ask us what kind we want and a certain boy said we want a little trim, stuff like that. So we got a good trim, which was a very much experience. And the, the training, however, was real tough. I didn't have any other Indians in my platoon. I was the only one in my platoon. Only Navajo boy in there. And we, in our platoon we, you know, participated in different, different, against platoons, like sports or swimming and stuff like that. And that eight weeks was pretty tough. And then, of course, we took our swimming classes and stuff like that. I learned how to swim in a swimming hole back home at Toadlena. So I didn't have

HF: trouble with swimming. But some white kids that didn't know how to swim, they had to go to that swimming class each evening, certain hours, and they learned to swim. For our qualification you have to jump off, you know, at first you go up ten feet and then you continue fifteen feet and then at the end you have to jump off leg first-- down fifty feet up. That's supposed to be the maximum height of the ship, they told us. When you stand up there and that little pool down there, if you don't, they just shove you off with the whole combat equipment. That's part of my experience at the San Diego recruit depot. And of course, when you're there you go to Camp Mathews to, to rifle range. Then there you sat and you almost break any part of your body trying to sit, sitting position, kneeling position, prone position's real hard. As short as I am, you have to break almost your left arm to have that thing stabilizing you. There I was highest in my platoon. I got an expert. Out of 3 possible, out of 340 I made 327, I believe. Out of 340 possible.

EB: When you went in, you didn't know you were going to be a Code Talker, did you?

HF: No, I didn't know anything about it. See, I just went in and then at, after our graduation they, they ask certain boys what field they want to go into, but automatically they said, 'You're going to communications.' So they sent me to camp, Camp Elliott. And then they move, they see the, they move from Camp Elliott to Camp Pendleton. That's where

HF: John Benally, Rex Kontz, Johnny Manuelito, those three--Ross Hoski, those four were instructors there. And, of course, Sergeant Johnston was there. And then we learned, like they said, there's about four hundred and some words that you have to walk around like a--- That was quite an experience to memorize all that. And then you don't have any papers to show, everything's up here. Nations, clans and everything like they said. For ships, there, for ships and tanks, and you know, stuff like that. And you can just memorize about that and then you're okay. Sometimes boys, you know--of course there I met quite a few boys that were coming in, you know, from San Diego, which were in a different platoon, I guess. They have to get about 30 or 40 in a group before they can start the class. And after you're finished there'll be another one coming in. Then as we finish, one of the completing team would be out in the field. And, and then you'll continue on through, you know, something like rotation. So that was the experience there. Of course there we started off, we were assigned to a different units then after that. And I was at, I was assigned to 5th Marine Division, in the 27th Marines, 3rd Battalion. And then they got us into pairs, you know. There's two each. There's four in Division and then there's two in each platoon. No. Two in each battalions. So then there's two in 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Battalion.

EB: Who was with you?

HF: There was a boy by the name of William Yazzie. He's I think he's out at Chinle. I haven't seen him yet, though. So, and then our, our order came out to, to go overseas. And we spent about eight months in Hawaii, the biggest island in Hawaii. Then there we took our advanced training there. Then after that we were ordered to go to Saipan, but they are, are, are divisioned. Third Battalion supposed to be the reserve, for the reserve. Then they changed our order. And then we stayed. As far as we been was to Pearl Harbor and then we came back. And then a couple months later the whole Division sent away. It was Iwo Jima that we were supposed to hit, and we didn't know anything about it. So they just ordered us to leave. So we took ----We were aboard ship a couple of days and then we made some practice landing next to Hawaii. There's an island there. And then we went to Pearl Harbor and they gave us the order and we moved out. And then first we went to Tinian, and Saipan and refueled on up north. And we took a tidal wave there for a while, and after tidal wave was over I've spent two days behind with them. On February 19, 1945, that's when we hit Iwo Jima. I was in the second wave, made Beach 2. And that was rough. The sand was, the island was nothing but sand. You don't know where the Japs are coming from. They pound and bomb everything they can, I guess. And then we were ordered to move up. We, I, I had my radio with me all the way through. And we sent messages to Division and other Battalions. And there're a couple of instances where I was sending messages and then 'bing,' something happened. The

HF: radio didn't work. And [whistle]--that's what happened. They figured that something else might have happened, because I was sending the message and that message broke right in half. So I, so we started getting parts together to repair that radio. While we were doing it, I had one guy with me, a white guy that way my--and my sergeant, he didn't know him. He panic. So, so we finally fixed that radio. And then we moved on. And we were so penned under that it was--you, you'd be praying at the same time, you know, what to do. And when that shell starts coming in--artillery. You either won't be living one minute to the other, it was so, you know. Just talking about it, it seems like it's not, not very much. But when you're actually out there it's, it's something to--I'm glad that I'm here instead of there. You know, one night we were all in our foxhole, and when the Japs are coming you can smell them about 25 to 30 feet away. It's some kind of a odor. And there's a white boy that I was with in the foxhole and you take turns sleeping. And then he, he's supposed to be awake. See, I took the first watch, and then he's supposed to take 7 hours. From early in the evening you take probably up to midnight. And then the other guy supposed to take the other one until morning. And I didn't know that he fell asleep. And I woke up all of a sudden. Then here comes one of these Japs coming in, into my foxhole. I have one of these combat knives and I just went like that and cut his throat off, like that. And it was either me or him, so--

HF: And the, then, I didn't know that he was asleep. He was supposed to be on--It was around in, late in the morning, I guess, when it happened. And I just woke him up and said here. I just gave him the --I completely cut that, the neck off. So I just gave it to him and then after that he never, he never did, when he's on watch he never did sleep anymore. So further we went on. And then you'll be going along and then sometimes you'd see a Jap laying. He, he could lay there for five, six hours at a time but he'll be alive, you know. Part of him will be full, you know--he'll put sand on himself. See, sand on Iwo, there was nothing but sand. So when you turn, he'll get you from behind. And then this sergeant was, Sergeant Kelley was our sergeant, platoon sergeant. He was going and then we saw this Jap just, just going to shoot him in the back. And I had one of these knives, you know. I had my knife all the time. I'm good at throwing knives, you know. I had learned it at home. So I just went like that and I got him through the neck like that. And then he, he missed him. He shot and everybody hit the deck, like that. Stuff like that, you know, it's something to talk about but, still, I don't usually like to talk about these things, since it's really are terrible. You know, we, we spent about six or seven days on that little island at the time. They finally secured it. They took almost a month, I guess, a little over. I didn't have very much experience during, you know. We usually attend radios most of the time in the front lines, you know.

EB: Did the other guys kind of watch out for you since they knew you were the communications man?

HF: Well, sometimes, mostly, they--like most of the boys, I think, when they start, when you start sending message, messages and when it's correct, you know, everything correct--they start treating you like you're a queen, a king. They'll, they say, 'Chief, let me carry your, your radio for you. Let me carry your rifle for you.' Anything. Just to do anything.

EB: They knew how important you guys were?

HF: Yes. Yes. And then you, you be right in the midst where you don't kind of stay back. They guard you like, like somebody, you know, that you're something very important.

EB: It would have taken them a long time to get another, another guy if you had gotten shot?

HF: Yes. That's right. 'Cause they, after they trained, they send them to Pearl Harbor which is a transit center. From there they, they send them to different units where they're, they're needed. Actually, we sent quite a few messages actually in combat.

EB: Did you ever make any mistakes?

HF: No. Well, not a major mistake. But when you're sending messages, if you're not sure, you, you repeat. You just tell 'em, you know--there's a word for it--repeat, after a certain word. But you have that thing all pat and down correctly.

EB: So, usually, there were very few mistakes?

HF: Very few mistakes. So after, that was the only combat I went. Like some of these other boys said that they, you know---They were going to ship me to Pacific, South Pacific to those other islands when I finished training. But they didn't need us down there, so they just formed another division. So they just sent us to each, each battalion. And after, after combat, you know, everything's secured everywhere, you seen some, some of your old buddies there and some of your, you know, you never see them anymore. We had about three or four counter attacks. I figured that I wasn't even going to be there, or even get off the island. Once in a while they would send us behind the lines to check on them and then send a message back. And we were cut off one night. We were behind the lines for two, two days and one night. With the radio they knew us. You know, I checked in, checked in every now and then and give them where we are and where the vital points of the certain, you know, like big artilleries are mortars and stuff like that. Where the main snipers are coming from.

EB: Did you know at the time, I mean when you were in service, did you know about the importance of the Code Talkers? I mean the fact that that was the only code that was never broken and all that.

HF: Well, they, they didn't tell us that. Well, they told us that this wouldn't, couldn't be broken because the---And I knew that, they told us that this was very important. That we, that's why we didn't even have, have it, you know, on the paper. And, it was in our minds, you

HF: know. Everything, we have to memorize everything. And then they told us this is one of the very important, vital, you know. Even these top brass, if they question you, you not supposed to even--- Especially on liberty we was told not to, to, to verify or mention anything, any of these thing to other, you know, on liberty when the guys would get stewed and stuff like that. They, they were not told to reveal any of this to anyone. Can't mention anything. So from the start we knew that this was very confidential and very important.

EB: Yeah. Did it surprise you that they decided to have this, this reunion in honor of the guys after all these years?

HF: It was kind of a surprising, but I, like one said--I don't know who said yesterday that this should have been done maybe five years after. Every five years would be good to have a reunion. But, you know, like some of these guys I have never seen since 26 years ago or 27 years ago. Of course like some guys, like William McCabe and John Benally and Rex Kontz, they're here in the Fort. Like I see them all almost every day. Some of these others that are far, I, the last time I saw them was either in Japan or in Iwo or in Hawaii. So I'm just glad that they start this reunion.

EB: Did it bother you when you came back that not too much was made out of it? I mean, you guys, in your way, were critical to the war in the Pacific. You were all really heroes in that you did things that nobody else could do. Did it bother you that most of you stayed privates

EB: and were never honored?

HF: Uh, yeah. Most of the boys probably think the same way I do. They'll, they'll promise you something. Then if they don't come out with it ----See, in the white culture, verbal's not good enough. It's got to be in black and white. If they give you in black and white, sure. When they just tell you that it couldn't be done, it seems like you're getting cheated out of something that was, was given to you at first, you know. And like what Johnston said, I think that was the, the platoon that Mr. Johnston mentioned that most of them were turned down. I think I was either--it was after me or during when I was there that they, they told us that. I know some of those boys who were, were on liberty were talking about it. See, there's at least one week apart in training. One would finish and then the other one. As they finished they turn 'em out on the field and then they get their weapons training on the field. From classroom to the field, you and from the field to the divisions.

EB: But most of you never got any rank or any medals or much of any recognition.

HF: No. No recognition or anything.

EB: That's too bad.

HF: The only thing we got was pat on the back, that's about all.

EB: I think that is a part of Navajo history that should make the young people really proud. But most of them don't even know about it.

HF: Well, here the young ones mostly don't want to go into the service just

HF: for on account of that. There is no recognition. There's nothing. They've been there and then come back, they don't get anything.

EB: And yet the Indians are usually the best shots--I mean almost all the guys, the Code Talkers, they all have expert rifle medals. Most of them were good shots. Good soldiers.

HF: These are the things that we do, been doing at home. You have to, our parents usually tell us to do these things. And in later life you'll, you'll benefit from this. Like say, 'Go out and hunt. You know how to shoot a rifle, shoot bow and arrow or throw a knife, this will come in handy.' That's how I saved this sergeant's life, when I threw that knife and got that Jap there.

EB: Yeah. Most guys couldn't have done that. Did you have your Enemy ceremony?

HF: Yes. You know, when you're young, what your parents tell you, you have to go along with. See, when I enlist, my mother and my father kind of disagreed, at first. When I was still in school at Wingate, during Easter vacation I went home and I asked my mother, said, 'I'm going to join the Marine Corps.' 'Cause my, one of my oldest brothers and my three oldest cousins were in the Marines already. So I said I'd like to join. And then my mother said, 'Why do you have to go? It's not your war it's white man's war. Why do you have to go?' And my father said, 'Let him go. If he wants to, if you keep him back, still he gonna, somehow he's gonna go anyway.' So that's how I. Then right

HF: after I graduated, that's when I left. That's when Mr. John Benally was the recruiter, recruiting around these various parts.

EB: Are there any other things you remember that you want to talk about?

HF: Well, that's my combat experience. But, of course, you know, when I was in school they talk about Japan. So I went to Japan for occupation force for eight months. I knew where, that's where I met--I didn't know he was going to be a vice-chairman then--Skeet. We all, at Sasebo we all slept in one, one room--one of those Japanese barracks. Then we went to Nagasaki. We spent four months on Nagasaki and four months at Sasebo. That's the southern part of Kyushu. But the, the history that I learned, it's similar to what I learned, where it's overcrowded, and every land area is farms, and nothing but rice fields and stuff over there.

EB: Did you ever have any problem, like Mr. McCabe mentioned, about being mistaken for a Japanese or something, you know?

HF: Yes, quite a few times, but your own outfit won't mistake you. It's the other, the other outfit that has new replacement or something. Those are the guys that are, mistake you for--But if you come, if you manipulate, you know, get in with the other, the rest of the boys, they'll get to know you. Every call, everybody calls you 'Chief' and stuff like that. So that's how we--But if you're kind of a, a lonely, like some of the other boys, that's when they, if they don't know you, that's when they feel like you're one of the enemies or something.

HF: Because when they, when you go aboard ship or even after advanced training center, they give you a booklet to learn Japanese. I learned how, pretty good Japanese. And then some, sometime, just to, just to throw things off, why at night I usually, just to let them know where the Japanese are I usually talk in Japanese. And then sometimes they answer. Now and then they sent a flare up and then there'll be quite a few killed that way.

EB: So you could trick the Japanese?

HF: Yeah. With their own language.

EB: Hmm. That's pretty good. You could learn their language but they couldn't learn yours.

HF: It's because Japanese, they got booklet, it's all written for Navajos. It's what we'd learned, to code and stuff like that. It's not in any book or anything like that. The experience that I had, I had more but I couldn't think of all the stuff. It's so many years ago that I couldn't remember all the incidents. Some of these boys probably stayed up all night trying to think of it.

EB: Yeah. One guy told me he was taking notes so that when I talked to him why he could write, or tell it all.

HF: Yeah. Well, see, I tried to think of all of it. I had company after that. I couldn't--when we got back from the picnic I started thinking about it, but some interruption that I get--That's about all the experience I had. I had more experience but I couldn't think of all the experience that I had.

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INTERVIEW: Harold Y. Foster

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EB: Well, thank you very much."

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Reverend R. O. Hawthorne

Window Rock, Arizona

DATE July 9, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Interviewer's Name J. D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

Birth Date February 13, 1924

Birthplace Ganado, Arizona

Religion, Race or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships

An Interview by

J. D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

Doris Duke Number 1158

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

Western History Center, University of Utah

Duke Indian Oral History Project

University of Utah
Salt Lake City 84112

INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 9, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Reverend R. O. Hawthorne

Birth Date February 13, 1926

Birthplace Ganado, Arizona

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships _____

Informant's Occupation Reverend of Baptist Church

Extended Comments _____

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No _____

Language of Recording English Translator _____

Interviewer's Name J. D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

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Date Received July 28, 1971 Tape Reel No. 1158

Disposition of Tape University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

Rough Draft Made By Geoff Stevens Date 9/13/71

Proofed By Christy Owens

Final Draft Made By Christy Owens Date November 15, 1971

Index Card No. 1158 No. of Pages 29

Distribution of Copies University of Utah Library, Western Americana
Division, and one copy to R. O. Hawthorne

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The following is an interview with Reverend R. O. Hawthorne, conducted by John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 9, 1971.

JS: Your name? Your full name?

RH: My name is Hawthorne. R. O. Hawthorne.

JS: R.O. Hawthorne. Where were you born, Mr. Hawthorne?

RH: I was born in Ganado in the Presbyterian Hospital there.

JS: Presbyterian Hospital in Ganado. In what year?

RH: It was 1926.

JS: Which clan were you born into?

RH: The Red House.

JS: Red House Clan.

BL: Kinlichii'nii.

RH: Right. Kinlichii'nii.

JS: Kinlichii'nii.

RH: Uh huh.

JS: And into which clan was your father born?

RH: My father was not an Indian. He was an Indian trader.

JS: Oh. Uh huh. This is where the name Hawthorne came from, I see.

RH: Yes, I suppose so.

JS: Do you know which background he is from?

RH: He's from the lineage of Nathaniel Hawthorne and that line of Hawthornes.

JS: That line of Hawthornes and very English. In other words I mean it would go back to England.

RH: That's right.

JS: Uh huh. Where did you attend high school?

RH: I attended both elementary and high school at Sanders.

JS: Sanders, Arizona.

RH: Sanders, Arizona.

JS: Was this a denominational or public?

RH: No, it was a public school. In fact it was one of the very few public schools available to the Navajo in that day.

JS: And especially in that area.

RH: In that area, yes.

BL: How far is...how far did you have to go to school?

RH: We traveled 18 miles in one direction. We had a school bus.

JS: Uh huh. Were you living in a trading post? Was your father still a trader at this time?

RH: Yes. Yes, he was at that time still a trader, and we were living at the trading post.

JS: Which post was this?

RH: It was the Three Hogans Trading Post, which is in the Lupton Community. And the name Three Hogans came from the buildings that were there. He built three hogans there. And we moved there from Wide Ruins where he had another trading post. And he and some of his Navajo friends cut pine logs from...on the mesas there and built the hogan. The large hogan, out of pine logs was, oh, it was a huge hogan. And this hogan he used for a

trading post. Then he built two other hogans on either side for living quarters and living room and a kitchen and so forth, which we used.

JS: Is that trading post still standing today?

RH: It's still standing today. The hogans are not there any longer but...

JS: The post itself is.

RH: Uh huh.

JS: Were you finished with high school when you were recruited into the Marine Corps, or were you already in the Marine Corps when you became a Code Talker?

RH: No. I had to leave high school during my first year and I didn't graduate there at Sanders. I later finished through the USAFI. So I like to think of my campus, my high school campus, as being all over the world, you know.

JS: Surely.

RH: Because it was sort of in that manner that I gained the knowledge whereby I could get a high school diploma. But I volunteered for the Marine Corps when I was seventeen. And after I held various jobs to help support the family, then I went in. I didn't know anything about the Code Talkers at that time.

JS: What year was this that you volunteered for the Marine Corps?

RH: In 1943.

JS: In 1943.

RH: Yes.

JS: And did they talk to you about the Code Talkers at the time you volunteered or was it after you had been in the Marine Corps?

RH: It was at the time I volunteered. They had an induction station in Phoenix and it was there that I was told about the Code Talkers.

JS: Uh huh. And was that your first option once you found out about the Code Talkers? Did you decide that was what you wanted?

RH: I decided that was what I wanted, but even if I decided it wasn't what I wanted it was what they wanted. And it was sort of a hard, fast rule.

JS: The Navajos that could, would sure go there.

RH: That's right. Yes. One thing I never understood was why some Navajos didn't go into this organization of Code Talkers. I had other brothers -- one other brother was with the Code Talkers. And another brother went into the Army and of course, they didn't utilize the Code Talkers there. I don't know why this was. Perhaps it was because he went in at the very beginning of the war, that may have been the reason.

JS: The one that was in the Army or the one that was in the Marine Corps?

RH: In the Army.

JS: In the Army.

RH: That could have been the difference. It may have been before they organized the Code Talkers.

JS: From our information the Code Talkers were organized in 1942.

RH: 1942.

JS: Actual recruiting and training of battalion strength of Code Talkers was in October of '42, almost '43 in other words.

RH: Well, he went into the Army before that. I believe it was in 1940. So that would explain it.

JS: That would explain his. You said you had a brother that was a Code Talker also?

RH: Yes, that's right.

JS: Is he at the reunion?

RH: I haven't seen him here. He may be here later. He lives at Lupton. He's the District Councilman for the Lupton district, and he served with the Fifth Marine Divisions, Division rather.

JS: And which division did you serve with?

RH: I served with the First.

JS: You were in the First Marine Division.

RH: Yes.

JS: What is your brother's name?

RH: His name is Raymond Smith.

JS: Raymond Smith.

RH: Yes.

JS: Where did you take basic training, Mr. Hawthorne?

RH: I took boot camp training there at San Diego.

JS: At San Diego.

RH: Yes.

JS: Was this Camp Elliott? Or Camp Pendleton? Do you remember?

RH: No. We were at the Marine Corps Depot at San Diego.

JS: Oh. The Depot.

RH: Where they gave all the recruits their boot training. And from there we went to Camp Elliot for some exercises. And then when we finished the required boot training we went to Camp Pendleton.

JS: For the Code Talker training.

RH: For the Code Talker training, yes.

JS: Uh huh. And how long a course was this? Do you remember?

RH: I don't, I don't remember exactly...it wasn't a real long course, but it seemed to be a concentrated course.

JS: Very intensive.

RH: Very intensive, yes. And I remember that I wasn't in Camp Pendleton very long. And when it came time to go, it came real suddenly.

JS: Uh huh. And where were you...you did not...were not able to return home after training before you went overseas?

RH: I returned home after...on furlough...after the boot training, between the boot training period and the Code Talker training.

JS: Uh huh. And then once you were finished with Code Talker training you were shipped out almost immediately?

RH: Almost immediately, yes.

JS: Where did your duties take you in the Pacific during World War II?

RH: I went to Guadalcanal. However, this was after the island had been secured. There wasn't any fighting there when I was there. And we did more training there. And then from there, the first combat experience that I had was on Okinawa. And actually that was the only combat experience that I had in the South Pacific was on Okinawa.

JS: This would be in '45 or '44.

RH: It would be the latter part...it was April of '45.

JS: April of '45.

RH: Yes.

JS: What were your duties? Were you with the Communications Battalion of the First Division, or Headquarters?

RH: Well, the assignments of the Code Talkers went something like this. There would be two men assigned to each regimental headquarters. And I was assigned to a regimental headquarters; it was the Headquarters Company of the Seventh Regiment. I and another Navajo boy were assigned there.

JS: Do you remember his name?

RH: No. I don't. I don't remember his name. I don't remember what area of the Reservation he was from. But we worked in teams of two. Sometimes we were left mostly to our own discretion as to what order we'd work in. Sometimes one would work during the

day, and then other times we'd work together. But we'd talk on the radio and on the telephone with the other Navajo Code Talkers in the other regiments. And this was our primary duty. However we'd have other duties as well. We'd work on the field wire teams and we'd go on combat patrols with the radio, of course. And so it was a very, I found it to be a very diversified experience. Much of it was in the actual combat and some out of combat.

JS: Were you ever fired upon, yourself?

RH: Yes. Both by personal weapons and by the heavy artillery. And this was a real, a real experience. It really was. One thing that I remember very distinctly is that when we went to Okinawa, we landed there, there was hardly any fire at all. And we had expected, we had expected a real battle coming ashore. Because as we came up near the island, perhaps a day before or two days before, we would hear this person what they'd call, that they call Tokyo Rose, and of course there was a lot of propaganda there and that how, she made mention how that no one would leave the island alive. So we thought that there'd really be a battle there. But we landed and there were very few shots. There was no casualties there on the beach. But after we went inland a little ways it changed. And this was my first experience under fire. And it was a real experience. I didn't really know what to expect. But you find out real quick to dig.

JS: Learn how to dig your foxhole.

RH: You learn how to dig. Yes.

JS: Did you ever act as a forward air observer or artillery observer?

Is this...was this one of your duties. As to spot and be ahead of the group and spot more or less...scout for the group and send it back in code information?

RH: We acted as forward observers for artillery. This wasn't...however this wasn't our main...our real function. We would double for that sometimes because there were others who were assigned to the other teams. But we did have occasion to function as forward observers. And of course the movement of the fire and the location of the elevation and so forth. All this was transmitter in the Navajo code.

JS: Fascinating. Were you wounded in any action?

RH: I wasn't wounded as a Code Talker. I was wounded later. I might clarify that by saying that after I was discharged from the Marine Corps, I volunteered for the Army Paratroopers. I served there for ten or twelve years. I served in Korea. And I was wounded in Korea. And I was wounded by a mortar shell. And of course the mortar shell peppered me all over, but it mainly hit me in the leg...in the right leg. And my right leg had to be amputated below the knee. So then after that I served for two more years in the Army. It was to me a life that I liked and I wanted to continue there. So I kept on and served for two more years, until I decided I would be...go into the

gospel ministry. And then I took a discharge from the Army.

JS: In what year was that that you took the discharge?

RH: I'm not too good on years, so I'll probably make a mistake on this. But I believe it was in '58.

JS: 1958.

RH: I believe that. I could be way off there, but...

JS: Around in those years, though.

RH: Around in those years, yes.

JS: You were in Okinawa. Where did you go from there with the Marine Corps, Mr. Hawthorne?

RH: The Division went to North China from Okinawa. And of course I went with them. We stayed, I stayed there for about a year, I suppose. The division stayed on after I left.

JS: Which part of North China?

RH: We landed at a place called Tsingtao. And from there we went on up to Tientsin.

JS: Tientsin, yes.

RH: Tientsin, and Peiping, that area in there.

JS: This was during the fight between the Nationals and the Communist Chinese, was it?

RH: Yes. That's right. For sometime most of the troops didn't really realize what the mission really was because nobody told us. We were just there. But later on we came to know that it was to, mostly to hold the railroad that ran through here. To hold

it free from Communists.

JS: Uh huh. And you said you were in China for almost a year. Is that correct?

RH: Yes. That's right.

JS: And then, were you discharged from the Marine Corps after that, or did you go elsewhere with the Marine Corps?

RH: I was discharged from the Marine Corps when I left China.

JS: Uh huh. Were you discharged in China, or in the United States?

RH: In the United States.

JS: Where were you discharged?

RH: In San Diego.

JS: In San Diego.

RH: Uh huh.

JS: And this would be in 1945?

RH: '46, yes.

JS: Did you join the Army right away or did you return to the reservation?

RH: I returned to the reservation and I stayed here for perhaps a year. And my brother had just returned from the 82nd Airborne Division and he had all these stories of their activities. And it intrigued me, so I volunteered.

JS: You volunteered.

RH: Yes.

JS: And where were you stationed, first of all with the Army?

RH: With the Army? Well, first I went to a camp in California, near Salinas...Fort Ord I believe it was. And that simply was a holding camp for us. And from there we went to Fort Benning... where we took airborne...basic airborne training. Then I went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, with the 11th Airborne Division. And I stayed there until they formed the 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment. And served with them there and then from there I went to Korea. At that time they didn't have any airborne troops in Korea, so I went as an infantryman.

JS: You went as an infantryman, in Korea, with the 503rd?

RH: No, with a replacement group. What were your duties in the Army compared with those in the Marine Corps? Your...infantryman, rifleman, or...

RH: Well, I was an infantry rifleman.. However, I didn't serve in that capacity...wholly, that is entirely. I was assigned to a communications detachment, and here I had to do with field communications, primarily field wire. And I served mainly in that capacity there.

JS: And where were you wounded in Korea?

RH: I was wounded at a place called Choonghwa Valley.

JS: Choonghwa Valley.

RH: Yes.

JS: Is this...do you remember what year that was?

RH: This was in..probably '56. I believe it was '56. Anyway, it was the year that the Korean War was halted.

JS: Uh huh. 1954 I believe was....

RH: It was that early?

JS: I believe so....1954-'55.

RH: Dates get away from me.

JS: They do from everybody. And then you retired from the Army two years after that. Is that correct? About two years after your time...

RH: Almost two years, yes.

JS: Were you hospitalized in Japan or in the United States?

RH: I was hospitalized mainly in the United States...in Walter Reed in Washington.

JS: In Washington.

RH: I spent a year there. Of course there was the interim places, the different hospitals in California and in Hawaii and in Japan. And of course in Korea itself.

JS: Do you have any vivid memories of your experiences...any specific stories about the experiences either as a Code Talker or in the Army that really stick out in your mind?

RH: I don't really recall anything like that. I do remember sort of amusing incidents, and that was the many times that our own troops would capture some of the Navajo Code Talkers and take them in for interrogation, because they thought we looked like the Japanese.

And this happened with much frequency.

JS: Much frequency. That's....

RH: Yes.

JS: Hope nobody...no Code Talkers were shot for being in a Marine uniform.

RH: Fortunately, that never happened.

JS: That never happened?

RH: No, that never happened. But of course there are many experiences that I remember. But I don't know, I don't have any that really stick out.

JS: Really stand out in your mind?

RH: No.

JS: What was it like coming from the area of the Reservation and then into the white man's world? How were you accepted in what was at that time pretty much an all white Marine Corps?

RH: Yes. Well, we were accepted very well. I think real well. Perhaps we were accepted more if we might say that, if we might use that term, more than the other Marines who were not Indian. I think we were sort of a novelty to many people. And we were accepted. Everybody would call an Indian 'Chief' you know. Everywhere. I was talking with Chairman MacDonald here a year or two ago, about some of our experiences. And he was telling, he was telling me of the time that they went on liberty for the evening or the weekend, whatever it might have been. And they

went down to one of these amusement galleries. And of course there were some of the white boys with them, and they said to the Indian boys, they said 'Chief, you pick this up...pick up this bow and show us how to shoot.' The white boys weren't hitting anything, you see. So they said 'Chief, you pick this up and you show us how to do it.' And they weren't joking...they really thought that...well, Indians could shoot bows and arrows, they were marksmen with them. And this put the Navajo boys in sort of an embarrassing situation, because they had never touched a bow. They had never used them. And as they tell these boys, 'No, we can't shoot.' And so they kept pressing them until they had to shoot. And they found out that they were no better than their white comrades. I remember on the rifle range that... in boot training. Of course everybody had to go out and qualify on the rifle range. And out there it really put an Indian to the test. I mean, he really had to work to even measure to what the people thought he ought to be. And of course we know that everyone in the past regarded the Indians' eyesight to be keen-- just like an eagle's. And of course today we know it isn't that way at all. But then, the other troops thought that this was the case. And so you really had to work. You had to work almost double what the other boys did in order to measure up to what they thought you ought to do. So I remember that particularly. I wasn't much of a marksman before I went there, and so I had to

to work hard to score a good score. But to the other boys, they thought that this was natural, you know, just the natural thing.

JS: Surely. The misconceptions you found were quite great then.

RH: Yes. My father with his trading business also had as a part of his business...selling to tourists as they came by. And so we would see the white people, the white man and their families come by. And I had a totally far off misconception of what people were like. I had the idea that the white man could do no wrong, you know. I thought it was, well, he did right...he was upstanding, upright in everything that he did. And this was a real letdown to me when I went into the Marine Corps that they were different...no different than we are, you see. And I suppose on the other hand, it worked the same way.

JS: It was a surprise to find out the similarity. Yes.

RH: Yes. Well, you know, most people believed in the past that Indians...he walked a straight line. And his word was truth. And of course the white boys probably were taken aback to find out that this wasn't always the case. And I was taken aback to find out, on the other hand, that it wasn't the case with them either.

JS: You were in the Army during a very crucial period in the Army...that period of integration between the white and black races. The Indians have usually been accepted as has the yellow race into the United States Army, but the black had not been accepted as equal and until recently...maybe not yet. But how did you find

that in your first unit that you were assigned to that had Negroes and whites? Was there a racial problem early in....?

RH: In the units where I was assigned, integration didn't really have its effect during those years. I know that there was legislation that was passed to integrate. But you know, of course, just like in the schools they were slow about implementing these things. And so while I was in Fort Campbell we had no integration there in our units. When I went to Korea, I found that there was integration. But here in Korea it seemed the thoughts of the men were entirely different than they have been while they were stateside. They were thinking of winning the battles that they would be engaged in. And there wasn't too much thought concerning the racial differences there. While I was in Korea I was assigned to, I believe it was the 65th Infantry Regiment, which has been an all Puerto Rican regiment. So there were many Puerto Ricans in that regiment. And when I got there they had the integration...the integration had begin to be put into effect and it was no longer an all Puerto Rican regiment. But there were men of all races that were being assigned there. And there in Korea, it was working well.

JS: You think that the combat situation allowed for it to work better than maybe it would have stateside?

RH: I would say that was true, yes.

JS: After you retired from the Army you mentioned that you decided

that the gospel ministry was your life. Can you explain that a little further? What church or denomination you're with? Where you are working, and some of your experiences as a minister.

RH: I'm a Baptist. And here in Window Rock our church is known as the Navajo Capitol Baptist Church. And I've been working here for ten years as a missionary. And I find it to be very rewarding work. It's a work where you can meet many people. And of course I become involved in the problems of people as they come to you for solutions. So I find it not to be an easy work by any means, but a very rewarding work. And I thoroughly enjoy it and I imagine that I will be here in that capacity for the rest of my life.

JS: I understand. Did you come back to Window Rock to begin your missionary work? Is this the first place that you've worked with missionary work?

RH: I came to Lupton to begin missionary work here. And I went there because that was the area that I was most familiar with. My family of course had lived there for many many years. And the land there they had traditional use rights for it. And there'd be no problems for me to go there and begin doing what I wanted to do. So I went there. But we went to build an indigenous church with our people. So we came to Window Rock because we feel that it's already a population center and it will be more populous as time goes by.

JS: Uh huh. Now you say 'we'. Is this you and your wife, maybe, or your church?

RH: Ministers have that habit of saying 'we' even though they are talking about themselves, individually.

JS: I understand.

RH: Yes, my wife shares in the ministry with me. And of course, our churches do. We are associated with what is called the American Baptist Association. It's a loose association of independent missionary Baptist churches. And we are autonomous here at Window Rock. We run our own affairs and control our own destiny and so forth.

JS: How large a congregation do you have?

RH: We have on Sunday mornings, we have 40 or 50 and we run as high as 60 sometimes. And our building is small, but we're raising funds right now for a building that will seat 350. And this building is...will be constructed in the manner of a hogan. We wanted something that would fit in with the local ideas and the culture, and so forth. And so we came up with this idea and had the blueprints drawn. So we are going to be building this very soon.

JS: Very good. Have you found it a problem at all to blend that part of the Navajo culture and religion and that part of Christianity? Has there been...can you blend Navajo religion and Baptist Christianity

together and not say the.....if they are Baptist they don't have to give up all of their Navajo...if they believe in Navajo they can still attend church and take part...is there a clash, I think I'm trying to ask.

RH: There is a clash, yes. Some religions, rather I should say, some denominations have attempted to cause a blending of the Navajo, or the traditional religion, and that particular denominational beliefs. And it does work. However, we don't do that, we stick to the Baptist beliefs. And we teach these. Now when people, when Navajo people come to believe in these things, they come all the way, they believe all the way in these things.

JS: It's a true conversion, then?

RH: It's a true conversion, yes. And the traditional beliefs concerning religion...Navajo religion...stay with them, but not as a religion, but just as a cultural experience, you might say.

JS: You do.....they do not continue then to practice any of their Navajo religious beliefs?

RH: No. They leave that completely aside.

JS: No more ceremonial, or...well, I guess I should say....

RH: Yes. All of that is set aside as just cultural experience, you might say.

BL: I wonder...I was thinking in your position it's sort of unique to be what you might call bi-cultural. To be born of an Anglo

father and a Navajo mother. To maybe get back a little further to your mother...was she full-blood Navajo?

RH Yes, she was. Her father was a medicine man. I forget what Way that he practiced. I believe that it was the Mountain Way. But nevertheless, he was a medicine man and they were very traditional.

BL And I wonder if you might relate to us the incident that brought your mother and father together. Or how...at that time it would seem like not many of the Navajos were that much acculturated to be getting married to the people of the Anglo society.

RH: Uh, well, of course my father, being a trader, visited and lived in some of the real remote areas, and became acquainted with a great many of the Navajos, and of course spoke the language very fluently. And I always said from my experiences with my father that he was...at heart he was an Indian...he was a Navajo at heart, although by birth he was English. But at heart he was a Navajo. And he had trading posts in different parts of the reservation. It was at Fort Defiance where he was operating a trading post that he came to know my mother. She had gone to school here at Fort Defiance, and had some sort of a job in the boarding school at that time, and they came to know each other in that way.

BL: Fine. And another question I was going to ask you was what on your mother's side, your grandparents or your relatives on your mother's side, what was their opinions or thoughts as you entered the Marines?

RH: Well, you know I found that when a young man entered the service, I think it's still that way, that the parents and the grandparents and so forth, have a real deep respect for that person. And I remember when my brother went into the Army, and after six months he returned on furlough, that all of the relatives came over and had him relate his experiences. And instead of the usual way of the older people giving advice, they called on him to give advice. And they asked him to give advice to his brothers and his sisters and the other relatives. Of course many of them were older than he. But through that respect that they had just because the simple fact that he was serving his country as a soldier they had this deep respect for him.

BL: I sort of find this a little unusual, I guess, because we've talked to quite a number of the people who have said that, well I guess after their children being gone for some time, that they started getting a feeling of anxiety wondering if they would come back and calling on different people of authority to try to get their sons back. Now was this...this wasn't the case in your...?

RH: Well, there was...I think that there was this feeling of anxiety, because the parents naturally wanted their son to be at home. And then they realized that he was experiencing new things and things that might be enticing to him and keep him away from the reservation. So there was that feeling, that they wanted to get him back. My mother and father and relatives didn't call on anybody to get him

back. Some did. I know of some that did. But my people didn't.

They let him go out and serve out his time in the service.

BL: Then you were saying that having come back from the Marine Corps you spent about a year here on the Reservation and then signed up into the Army.

RH: Yes.

BL: You did say, I think it was, this was your life, or this was your line.

RH: Yes. The service, yes.

BL: I was wondering what interested you in continuing with it...the experiences, as that? Or the training? Or...?

RH: You mean in the service?

BL: Uh huh.

RH: Well, it probably was a combination of several things. But it was really a fulfillment of my boyhood dreams. I had always dreamed of being a soldier...being in the service of my country and so when I finally accomplished that it was a fulfillment of my dreams and I simply wanted to continue it. It turned out that my dreams were of being in the service. That is, the actual experiences were actually exactly as I pictured them and wanted them to be.

JS: May I interrupt here with just another question? Get back... when Ben got back to the service...what was your highest rank you attained?

RH: I attained the rank of staff sergeant in the Army.

JS: And in the Marine Corps?

RH: In the Marine Corps I attained the rank of corporal. In the Marine Corps, I might be entirely wrong, but my understanding was and is that in the table of organization that there was no place for the Code Talker. So the only place that a Code Talker advanced was as an instructor. There were corporals and sergeants and so forth, as instructors. But out in the field in the combat units, I never knew of any Code Talker advancing, although he was qualified for it. I remember in my particular case that my platoon sergeant petitioned the platoon leader for an advancement in grade for me, and for the man that I worked with, and the answer that came down from the regimental headquarters was that there's no place in the T.O. And the words that they were, were that they're extra baggage. So we were never promoted.

JS: I see. I can under...I see how that would work. The Marine Corps promotions seem to be much slower in the lower ranks than the other services anyhow, even today.

RH: Yes. That's true. That's very true.

JS: And a lance corporal is equivalent pay, anyhow, of a sergeant in the other ones today.

RH: Yes.

JS: Even though he's still a corporal.

RH: Uh huh. That's right.

BL: Are either of your parents still alive?

RH: No, they're not.

BL: Your grandparents?

RH: No, my grandparents have been dead for a long time.

BL: Then I was going to ask you another question on your taking up ministry. You had what...two years from the time you returned till the time you took up missionary work?

RH: Approximately two years, yes. I didn't go directly into the missionary field. I, of course, went to Bible College and to seminaries. And from there I pastored churches in Oklahoma City and Colorado.

JS: Which part of Colorado?

RH: East part of Colorado...in the wheat field country...a place called Anton, Colorado.

JS: Yes. Uh huh.

RH: And then I was in Colorado Springs also. I was in Oklahoma City. And from Oklahoma City I came out here.

JS: Which Bible Colleges and seminaries did you attend?

RH: I went to the Orthodox Baptist Institute at Ardmore, Oklahoma. And then I went to the Clarksville Bible College in Tennessee. And I attended the Ohio Christian College in Ohio.

BL: Was your father a missionary other than being a trader?

RH: No. He was a full time trader. He came out here and worked as a cowboy on the Hashknife Ranch. And the Hashknife Ranch covered a great area from west of Holbrook to the Arizona state line, at

Lupton and north almost as far as the Wide Ruins. And there were very many interesting stories connected with the...with the cattle industry and my family on my mother's side, and the rustling and all this stuff. And it was very interesting.

JS: Would you care to relate some of it?

RH: Certainly. I'm told that my grandfather, as a medicine man, of course he didn't have much of an income, and most of the years were dry like this year is. So he had a large family that he had to feed. And to do this the only thing that he could was to go out and rustle some cattle now and then. So he would go out and find a calf that was stray. And they would kill it and cut it up in quarters right there on the spot. And then the different men would take it back into the hills...in the area that is known as Bidihochi. And these are some sandstone cliffs and just plain hills with a lot of places where you can go up and never be detected. And they'd hide there for two or three days and the Hashknife riders would come looking for them. They'd never find them. And so this would go on and on for a long time. And my father was a cowboy with the Hashknife outfit. And of course some of these cattle were being used to feed my mother. So I say to people, sometimes that I'm thankful to the Hashknife people for feeding my mother, you see.

JS: I understand, yes.

RH: I was talking with...in the Indian way she's my grandmother.
But in the white way she wouldn't be...she'd be another relative.
But in the Navajo way she's my grandmother and she's oh, maybe
90, 95 years old. But she's straight as an arrow and still goes
out and herds sheep every day. But she was telling me, did you
know that your grandfather used to go from Wide Ruins..go all
the way down to Roswell and go down there and he'd kill the
Mexican shepherders. Just kill them and take the sheep. Sheep
and horses. And then he'd bring them back. And she said that
these sheep that you see here were started from flocks that he
returned with from Roswell. So it...

JS: What years would this be that he would be doing that? I mean,
about what years? Was this prior to the Long Walk?

RH: Oh, well, let me see. She's about 90, 95 years old now and she
was probably 15, about 15 years old when this was happening. So
it would be prior to the Long Walk. No, no it wouldn't be. It
would be after the Long Walk.

JS: Very interesting, very very interesting.

RH: I suppose that he was very observant and when he was down there at
Roswell he saw these things and he said 'I shall return.' And he did.

JS: Uh huh. I understand.

BL: What stimulated your interest in the ministerial field?

RH: Well, I think it was the Christian witnessing of many people. I
wasn't a Christian when I went to Korea. And I wasn't a Christian

when I returned. And there were many people that talked to me about becoming a Christian, and the need for it and the ways to do this. And finally it came through to me and I could see what they were talking about. And it seemed good to me and it seemed the only way and the way that I wanted to go. So I was converted to it. And from that point I felt that...of course, a Christian feels that the Lord has his hand on him as an individual and that his destinies are fixed by the Lord. And I felt that God would have me to do this. So I gave myself over to it.

BL: The gospel work now is your full-time occupation.

RH: That's right. I've worked at other jobs since I've been out here. Because in the ministry it's not a job that you receive a regular salary. And so I had to supplement my income by working at other places. I worked with the Navajo Tribal Police for awhile, for a number of years, and then I worked with the O.N.E.O. I worked there in several capacities.

JS: Are you holding down another job at the present?

RH: I'm not now. I have been fortunate enough to interest other churches in helping us here, that I don't have to have another job.

JS: You can devote full-time to your work.

RH: Yes, that's right.

JS: I wonder if I might ask you a little bit about your present family?
I guess your wife is Navajo?

RH: No, she isn't. She's from Nashville, Tennessee, and her family has

Cherokee heritage.

BL: Uh huh. Do you have children?

RH: I have four sons. One is in the second year of college, he's in Denver. And the others are here...well, one other...he's a junior, he will be a senior this next year. And he's here and he's working over at the radio station KHAC now, this summer. Then I have another son who's a freshman and he's visiting in Tennessee. We adopted a small boy four or five years ago when he was four years old, and he's visiting with some friends in Oregon.

BL: This is as extensive as your family is..you haven't had any grandchildren yet?

RH: Not yet, no.

S: When were you married...while you were attending school?

RH: No, I was married shortly before I went to Korea, about a year before I went to Korea.

JS: And which school is your son attending in Denver?

RH: He's going to the engineering drafting school in Denver.

JS: I see. I'd like to thank you, Reverend Hawthorne, for sitting down and talking with us. And we'd be glad to send you a copy of the transcript of this if you would like it.

RH: Well, it's been a real pleasure to sit down and talk and recall some of these things, and I want to thank both of you for inviting me to come and so this. I believe I would appreciate a transcript.

JS: I'll get that information on the interview sheet."

SAMUEL T. HOLIDAY
Window Rock, Arizona

DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Interviewer's Name Ernest Bulow

Birth Date Airplane

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationship
An Interview by

Ernest Bulow

Interviewer's Organization
July 10, 1971

Extended Comments

Doris Duke Number 1167

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

Western History Center, University of Utah

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1971

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University of Utah
Salt Lake City 84112

INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Samuel T. Holiday

Birth Date 3/23/72 Birthplace

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships

Informant's Occupation

Extended Comments

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No

Language of Recording English Translator

Interviewer's Name Ernest Bulow

(PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR EXTENDED INFORMATION)

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Date Received 7/28/71 Tape Reel No. 1167

Disposition of Tape University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

Rough Draft Made By Geoff Stevens Date 9/14/71

Proofed By Richard Dalby

Final Draft Made By Claudia Ashton Date 3/29/72

Index Card No. 1167 No. of Pages 20

Distribution of Copies University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

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INTERVIEW: Samuel T. Holiday page 2

The following is an interview with Samuel T. Holiday, conducted by Ernest Bulow, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971.

SH: "Well, uh, my name is Samuel T. Holiday. And a lot of people, uh kind of curious about my name, too. How I got that, uh, Holiday. I was told by my father that, uh, we, we were, a bunch of boys was working for him, when I was working for my father in irrigation. And I sent some boys to get some wood so we can have, uh, sweatbath at noontime. And so, uh, while we were there having sweatbath me and one of the boys ... most of the boys were, uh Holidays, they named them Holiday. And I guess one of the boys kinda got curious about it--the name--and asked my father, "How did you get the name?" And my father told us that his father got the name from Mormon. He said that some of the Mormons got lost in Monument Valley area, and, uh, they asked my grandfather where the other Mormon were. I guess that, uh, Brigham Young once were, came through there. And, uh, I don't know how far in Utah State. Anyway, they want to get back on that trail. And my grandfather's name was Todich'ii'nii. And uh, they couldn't pronounce it or they have, they have a hard time to pronounce the name. So, uh, my grandfather and another man that took them back across the San Juan River. And, uh, anyway Mormon, they have a hard time to name of my grandfather .. was Todich'ii'nii ... they couldn't pronounce it. So, one of the Mormons suggested, "Why don't we just give him, uh, you know, easy name, English name?" So 'Tom' was very easy. So they call him 'Tom'. Tom at first, you know. Everytime. He likes, too. Everytime when somebody say, "Tom," he'll be run over there. And,

uh, when they got back on the trail, uh, the Mormons were really appreciative. And they decided that, uh, give him a last name, too. And they talked over a little bit. And, you know, something like, you know, like Holy, or something like that for a name, you know. So they think of Holiday. What of Holiday ... just like Thanksgiving Holiday, you know. This man give us a nice ... bring us back on the trail and we ought to appreciate it. So, uh, they give him Holiday...for last name. So that's how I got the name Holiday, or else I be name would have been Samuel T. Todich'ii'nii. So that was it. And, uh, how I got into the Marine Corps. Uh, I didn't have very much schooling. I just had about five years of schooling. I was going to school in, uh, Tuba City. I was in school at Tuba City when the Japs bombed the Pearl Harbor. I didn't think, too, of...I didn't think of the war at the time. I was seventeen years old. And I was heard that some of the older student have been drafted or volunteer into the armed service. That summer when I came back from school, I didn't hear much of war, uh, again. Because I was at home. Way out there. We hardly got any news out there. I was either herd sheep or horses or cattle for my father. My father live in... they separate, uh, my father live about 20-25 miles away from town. Over in San Juan River area. And, uh, she married, he married another woman there, and they have children. I liked the white horses. That's the reason why I used to go out...I'd sneak out from my mother and go over there. The only way, um, I heard that so-and-so, this boy, went to the war. And my father used to have visitors, mostly, he was

a medicine man. Mostly he have a lot of visitor and all... mostly older folks. Now and then I hear.. they told my father that so-and-so's son is back on furlough and saying that the Japanese was real bad, you know. They cut your tongue out and they pull your fingernails out. And I heard some of the boys volunteer and that if you volunteer it wasn't half as bad as getting drafted. So, uh, I was sure of one thing, that I wasn't, that I didn't want to go into war. That fall, instead of going back to school, I hitchhiked, into Utah, you know, Utah State. And I work here and there. And I spent the winter in, uh, working here and there, and, uh, I end up at bus depot in Provo, Utah. I stopped there and, uh, I was sitting around. And there was some soldiers, you know, some young boys, my ages they were. And they were with their sweetheart or the parents or with their kids. Well, there was lots of crying going on, you know, these, uh, sat in the corner of the coach, you know. And, uh, either drafted, or, uh, San Diego, you know. So I wait there about...but the bus was leaving in about 30 minutes. So I wait there. That's when I decided that I have to go to, uh, volunteer, you know. And I tried to buy a ticket, you know...ticket salesman, he say, it was mostly for, uh, didn't have much room, you know...didn't have much room, you know. So I finally told them that I was a volunteer. So I can get ticket, see if you can find the room. So I stand most of the way. Then I went to Flagstaff... they sent me on to Phoenix. They just give me one day, uh, one week to go back home, you know. I went, uh, first off I went to San Diego boot camp. It was all white. Only one

Indian...he was Pima. Uh, I went to boot camp...there was nothing very hard for me there. Uh, I used to swim in the San Juan River and used to ride a horse, you know. And I was kind of athlete, you know, and when I went to boot camp and all that, I passed with flying colors. Then, uh, my instructor says, uh, "you want to go to Camp Pendleton with other Navajo Code Talker, and learn how to operate the radio?" I said, "Yes", and they sent me over there. I was always a kind of black sheep at that time, see. I was... boy, I liked to gamble, you know, and I usually played dice. And, uh, Monday morning come in about...late. Anyway, John Benally, he was instructor there. One time I came in late, and, uh, and I, I think it was about two, three, fourth time I came in late, you know, Monday morning...half drunk, you know. Anyway, finally they sent me to, uh, one of the commanding officers there. And they told me from here on, uh, after every, after mess..night.. I have to scrub the, uh, all the barracks where we live. So he gave me the note for Sergeant Benally...John Benally. I gave him the note, you know, I just folded instructions in half..uh, what should be done with me. Take a look at it. And, uh, I used to gamble with John...John Benally and always getting in gambling, you know... dice...poker. And, uh, well, I guess you know what to do. I look at the note and I got the broom and start sweeping. And, uh, when I come to a room, you know, where they's...they always gamble in there. It was poker going on. There was one place missing there. Anybody want to play poker? John was there.. I put the broom away

and start..give me a hand. So, that was the end of my punishment.
Just one day.

EB: You didn't know about the Code Talkers when you enlisted, though, did you?

SH: No. No, I didn't. Anyway, uh, I was told that that was our last... that was our only furlough that we was going to get there. And, uh, I didn't get very much. I get about 29, 28 dollars every two weeks, I think. Anyway, tomorrow, it was Friday, payday, you know. And the next day I was supposed to go on...go home. Take ten days leave. Anyway I got about 29 dollars, or 28 dollars and that wasn't enough, so, right away I start gambling. I lost it in about two minutes. Uh, I said I forget about my furlough. I just stay around, maybe go to Oceanside. And somebody loan me about five dollars... I make it to Oceanside. So that night I woke up, about two o'clock in the morning, and I heard there was gambling going on upstairs, you know. I went there and John Benally was in it...and rolling dice. And I asked John Benally for two dollars. He's here now. He give me two dollars and I start throwing dice with them. And in about 15 minutes I won about 190 dollars...like that. And next day I took off for home. Then, uh, I like to gamble. Once, I think, almost thousand dollars, you know.

to go with him, you know, to Code Talker meeting. We were in H & S Company. He knows, he knows that I really gamble, you know. And, uh,... let's see...when we were, uh, when we were, when we were going to war, they stop us, uh, Marshall Islands. And, uh,

they didn't, uh, I didn't, have a, didn't have much difficult time, you know, there. Anyway, when I, when I, when I was on there ... hit the beach ... there was some Japanese shooting. I was come up standing, you know ... everybody was down and somebody say, "Hey, get down!" So unconsciously, you know, I just walk up there. I didn't know I should be down, you know. Well, we spent about a month, I think, Maybe less. About 25 days there on island. Came back to Maui. We rest, you know. Then we have to prepare for another war with the Japanese. But we didn't know where we gonna go next. And, finally we took off again ... on ship. They used to, uh, sent me up on the bridge, you know, where those big shots are. I sent message from there. Some of these, uh, general, we used to know them. By first name. He called me Samuel Holiday. Sometimes he called me 'Geronimo', or 'Chief'. And, uh, when he ... when we hit Saipan, now, the other Code Talkers ... Ben _____ he was first wave, you know. I came from, uh, our ship ... it was when they hit the shore, you know ... I was supposed to sent message down to the platoon ... our platoon. And the first thing, the first thing I asked Ben was, "How's everything down there?" He said, "They kill the Marine, left and right." Uh, he had kind of ... his voice was kind of shaky, you know. So there was, I don't know ... about in the morning, I think, they hit the beach. I got sore until, uh, we beat them, Uh, our boat turned over about three hundred yards away from shore. And we had to swim across to shore. I was, my pack cut down to the gas. I,

I cut down, you know. And I had a hard time getting out. I was almost passed out, anyway. When they dragged me on shore I was passed out. They laid me down flat, like that, and the water was coming out of my nose.

EB: You were carrying the radio and everything at that time?

SH: Well, some, I believe it was, uh, the other man carry. He usually carry radio. The one that is generally code talker, they call him. And, anyway, one of the men, one of our men got me by the hand. We went about, oh, a half mile inland. I didn't have nothing. I was dragged down. It was night, you know. But we didn't know where to go. That night they were really, uh, counter-attacking. I was just freezing to death. I didn't do much. I was standby...get message you know. Next day, uh, me and another guy went down to the beach to get our stuff. There was a pile of pack and guns. And they set up medical center there. And saw a lot of Marine laying along the beach. We got our gun there and our packs. And on our way back there was a tank came ashore and we followed that tank, you know. The Japanese tried throwing a mortar shell on us. I guess they were going for the tank, you know. Me and my partner jump in the Japanese track. I went away from him about ten, about twelve feet away from him. And all of a sudden we, uh, heard the mortar shelljust barely missed me, you know. Anyway, I had sand all over me, you know. This guy tells me, "Get down. Get down!" And, uh, my habit was just, you know, to dig. I feel funny, you know. I

didn't kind of like that, you know. I hear bells, especially on this side. And uh, that's, uh, most regret that I have now. That I didn't report this, you know, even when I got out of the service. And I have funny feeling on the side of my head, you know. And it caught up with me after about 20, 20 years. I was working at, for the BIA at Arizona. I was working for the powerhouse. And, uh, I worked in, I started working in the engine room, you know, where the real noise is. I worked in the engine room for maybe two years. Then, uh, I started having headache, losing weight, and vomiting at night. Finally I start dreaming about the Japanese, you know. Always something fall on me, And almost break down two times. And, uh, so I report to hospital. They could do nothing. So finally they decided, sent me to Tucson. And I came back. And second time I broke down. And then break down again, right down there again. And one of doctors told me that from here on get out of that noisy place, you know. And work somewhere it is not too noisy. And they gave me janitor's job there. Low pay. And I told them that I was, get that way when they almost dropped shell one me. So they said, "You don't have enough food.". But Dan Akee was with me then, and I couldn't get the name of this guy that was with me. Anyway, his name was, Wireman, his name was Raymond, or something. Anyway, I think about 20, 24 days I think it was on that island trying to get all the Japanese. Anyway, about two, three, four days later on that hill...they'd been bombed where we were...and they was mortar

shell holes, you know. Water accumulate in those holes. One day I was told to send message from another company, for another company. So I went over there. There was another white operator. When we came back from, uh, my company, platoon were having, having ball, you know. They was taking baths in those holes. And we were kind of, you know, some other company kind of advance and give us a rest there. We were bathing, you know. And I still have a funny shaking feeling when I, when I decided if I only take a bath, wash my hair, I might feel better. So I took my clothes off. Just when I jump in the last Marine came out, you know. And right there, right when I see MP ...some prisoner...with MP all around. I was there washing away and, uh, all of a sudden a, one of the MP...I didn't know it was him...I was washing away and I says: (Japanese) We learned a little bit of Japanese and also those MP they learned Japanese. And, I think it means, "get out". I turned around like this, you know, I kind of got shocked. I thought it was a Japanese, or something like that. Turned around and they had the bayonet right between my eyes. Say, "Get out of there". I said, "I'm PFC Samuel T. Holiday. I'm one of the Marines." And just about that time one of the, one of my own buddies see me. He came over, he says, "He's Samuel Holiday. He's one of the, uh, he's one of our man". And, Captain Key, he was our commander. He came over and, uh says, "He's PFC Holiday". So I put my clothes on. Another...oh, we

advancing, and uh, one day Major Mayer, he's a real good friend of mine, Major Mayer. We used to get crabs, you know. Japanese crabs. He used his knife, open the can up. And, boy, they really ... he liked the crab. And one day we stopped, there was sniper shooting around here. "Geronimo, come on. We're gonna throw some hand grenades in these holes". And so I went over there with a hand grenade. Start throwing the hand grenade where the house was but it was all tear down. And we, we start throwing the hand grenades into this hole here. I think that two prisoner came out. We got two prisoner. And, uh, our platoon was back about 100 yards, maybe 200 yards. And he told me that, uh, take these prisoner over there. If they start doing any funny business, shoot. Don't give them a chance. And at 20 yards, I have a feeling of shooting, you know. I have all kind of mixed feeling thinking about it ... whether to shoot them or not. But, anyway, they had their hands up like that. Anyway, then, actually one of them, a Code Talker who's here now, him and that guy, they laugh about me when I caught that, take that prisoner out there. "Look like these are all Jap." They was saying, "Which is Jap?" And another time we're, we're at the front, you know, and even all of, all our platoon kind of withdraw. We were right on first and, uh, the Japanese was throwing, uh, shells and also just shooting, you know. At night time they were throwing the flare. And everytime when I hear shooting, again. I look around and they throw the flare up ... I look around ... I got out of the hole

and look around. And, uh, Dan Akee say, "You better get down, they gonna shoot you." Anyway, the new, new company came in. They were kind of green, you know. They shoot at anything. We heard a pig crying, you know. I guess they were shooting at pig. There was pig and horses and chicken. I don't know. If the Japanese attack us, we don't have a chance", I said. "We don't look around. I like to look around," I said. Then I decided to put my helmet on my rifle and raise it up, like that. And I raised it up. Boy, they start shooting. They was our own men.

EB: Your own men were shooting at you.

SH: Yeah, The new bucks, they just came in. Just a little way from us, about 100 yards. Then, uh, I think that Dan Akee, he was kind of worrying, you know. And so we just stay down in foxhole. Pretty soon I hear something, you know. Like that. And Dan Akee said, "I think I got shot." And I look up there and there was a frog.

EB: A frog jumped on his head?

SH: On his head. It was funny. You know it was next morning, there was a bunch of them went through the lines the next morning. The next morning they were way out there. They start shooting. One of the man shoot some Japanese right close by, you know. They was going through. We didn't do much shooting that night. One of the companies from the 25th, the 25th Regiment, were resting right beside us, and I was told that George Chavez, another Navajo Code Talker, was with us. And I decided to go over and

visit him. He was just a little way. Before that, my G.I. shoes were hurting me, my field boots were hurting me. So I took it off and I put new Jap shoes on ..with spikes on their sole. I had these on and I decided to visit George Chavez. I went over there. I asked for George Chavez. "He's down there," somebody told me. I was walking over there and I look around, it was a ring all around me. "Raise your hand up." So I say, "I'm looking for George Chavez." He took me over there and he told his buddies he was one of the Code Talkers. I had a body guard when I go back to my own platoon. It was another fellow. It was another funny incident. Anyway, it took us about 24, 25 days to secure that island.

EB: Saipan?

SH: Saipan. Then we went, attacked Tinian. It was right across. And then after they secured Tinian, there were still snipers, you know, around, shooting at Marines. And this was the first time that they had secured Tinian. Our company decided to have hot chow, you know. While they were fixing the chow, we decided, me and Dan Akee decided to go up there to those caves that were up there. There were a lot of souvenirs, you know ...shoes, boots, things like that, laying around there. And I told Dan Akee I was going in that cave. Dan Akee say, "No, I think there's some Japanese in there." So I step up, just look around and came back out. We went down to where our platoon was and start eating. While we

were eating I said, "There's a cave up there." Then, uh, three Marine buddies, they want to go up there, including the radio, our radio sergeant. Sergeant Harkin was his name, I think, And, uh, when they went up there in a few minutes, boy, we heard the shot. And pretty soon they carry him down, you know. Sarge ... with his leg hanging down. And uh, we heard that the Japanese got hold of him with the hand grenades, you know. Leg ... blow himself. So, the sergeant's leg, he died about two days, later.

EB: The Jap ... these were the Japanese from that cave you saw?

SH: Yeah.

EB: Could have been you.

SH: Yeah. Could have been me, yeah. And, it was kind of tough. It take us about thirty week to secure the island. There was a Jap ... he was a doctor ... he went to school in one of these big universities here in California. He was a prisoner. We have some prisoners there. They talk perfect English, you know. They know all about Americans. Some of these Intelligence, they were with us, you know. They asked questions. I used to listen to them. They did talk English ... they talk Japanese and talk different language. Anyway, we, when we secured island, we went back to, uh, Maui rest camp. And we were told that we were going into war again. Just in short time. We didn't know where we were going until we were at sea, you know, on our way. We find out that

it was Iwo Jima. On Iwo Jima I was, uh, with the first wave. Dan Akee, I think, was second wave. There was real fighting, too. They really killed them. First night there, I hear that somebody fell. Japanese got on the frequency with a stolen radio, or something. They trying to interfere with Code Talkers you know. Every time when we start talking they try to interfere. They talk funny ... sing ...

EB: Just trying to block it out.

SH: Yeah, But, uh, we didn't have trouble ... we went through. The next day they found a Japanese rifle. On shore there was an old ship. And we find a Japanese in there. We have C.P. there. Boy, they were really born on that place. And, uh, I went in front line on Saipan, you know, I mean, uh, Iwo Jima. It's there, I think it was safer. I mean, the guns not too loud, not too noisy, you know. I know there was small arms. That's what they used. I, I was scared, you know. I was kind of scared. But, uh, when you kind of warm up, it's like anything you do. You're too scared to gamble, you know. But when you're in it, you kind of warm up. I guess it's the same way with war. When you get warmed up, you know, you don't get scared as much. That's when you start going "wug". Anyway, we, uh, when we secured the island we came back. Straight for States ... from Iwo Jima to California. I was still sick, and my head was still aching. I'm sick, sick when I came back, You know, when I got, when I got discharged I didn't tell them nothing,

you know. I want to go back home.

EB: Did you have a ceremony when you got back? The enemy way?

SH: No. I didn't. I used to go to Los Angeles on weekends, you know, from Oceanside. And I think it was something, you know. I decided I was going to live in Los Angeles when I got out of the war. But, I, when I came back from war I want to go there. I can't settle down, become restless. And I went back to Los Angeles. But, uh, I spent there a week and I decided that wasn't for me. Too noisy..people don't know you...they don't pay attention to you...jobs kind of scarce after the war. And I been working on the railroad here and there. I been to Oregon, Oregon State. I work on the railroad there. I didn't like it there. Too much, wet, you know, on coast. Rain all the time. So I came back.

EB: But you didn't go back to the reservation right away?

SH: No. I, I came back, yes. But I went back in ...

EB: You mean you didn't stay there on the reservation?

SH: After about ten years, I guess. I wander around in California.. Oregon...Idaho..Utah...Colorado. Took me about ten years, though. Bum around and came back to the reservation. Got married. Then I got settled. Then I got kids now. I have seven kids now. I have to work. I have to earn money, somehow.

EB: Did you ever think about having the ceremony?

SH: What?

EB: The enemy way ceremony? Did you ever think about having one... when you came back? You know, from the war?

SH: No.

EB: That would have helped your condition. If you had that, maybe.

SH: Yes.

EB: Most of the guys did didn't they... when they came back?

SH: Yes. Most of them.

EB: To get, you know, to get rid of... maybe that would have helped your head.

SH: Could have done this. I guess a lot of people, lot of people... they's back and I think they got sick from war, like me. They got sick and, uh, they have a sing, have Squaw Dance. I guess they believe in it and they got well. Lot of them.

EB: That's what I was asking about, you know.

SH: Yes.

EB: Because I know a lot of people, you know, veterans, that had that ceremony and then it doesn't bother them so much.

SH: Well, I have a top...top working doctor over there at Prescott. And he keep telling me that, uh, forget about the war...you thinking about the war...just forget...just work in quiet places. And don't ever think about war. Don't ever think about danger. Just be happy...try to be happy, you know. Think about the future...think about your kids...think about your work. I have little... It helped me a lot, you know.

EB: What was the dog fight you mentioned, you and Dan saw?

SH: Oh, that was, uh, that was on Saipan. They have dog fight right over us. Boy, it was fast fight and all. In about... within ten minutes about three Japanese Zeros been shot down. I was, Jimmy Fox, I think, was his name...that baseball player ...he was, uh, his squad was there. He was in Marine Air Force. And I think that one of the Thunderbird been shot down... that's Marine airplane. And about three Zeros been shot down.

EB: Right over you?

SH: Yeah, right over us. Boy, everybody was on their back, you know, cheering away...when the Japs...when the Jap plane gone down.

EB: Uh, you said, you said Dan was always keeping you out of trouble. What were some of them?

SH: What?

EB: You said Dan was always keeping you out of trouble. What were some of the things that you did?

SH: Well, I don't know...mostly, I was, I usually restless. Ever since we met, you know, in California...Oceanside...Camp Pendleton. Lot of time and we had to...you know, I used to drink alot. And he used to take me home...take me to...back to the barracks, you know.

EB: You guys were good buddies all through the war, then?

EB: Together all that time?

SH: Yes.

EB: Did you ever know of any of the Code Talkers being captured?

SH: Were any of them ever captured?

SH: Yeah, I guess they been trying. But they never catch a one.

EB: Never could catch one, huh?

SH: No.

EB: I guess that's because Navajos are pretty good fighters.

SH: Well, I guess the natural for them to protect themselves.

Know where to hide, you know, stuff like that.

EB: Did you know at the time how important the code was?

SH: Uh, I'm not too sure, but they always asked for Code Talker when, either from ship, or on land, or from different companies.

EB: But did you know how important you were?

SH: No, I didn't. I didn't think I was.

EB: I see you've got one of the big medals...you went to Chicago.

SH: Yes.

EB: You were in the Fourth Division?

SH: Yes.

EB: Did you expect that?

SH: No.

EB: Came as a surprise?

SH: It was a surprise, yeah.

EB: Nobody had said anything about the Code Talkers for more than

20 years.

SH: I thought it was forgotten.

EB: Nobody ever asked you about it...in all those years?

SH: No. No. I sort of didn't care, you know. When I got out of war, nobody...feel like nobody's out. We weren't important. I been trying to get the job. I been trying to get trade, you know, school. I came to Window Rock for it three times...trying to get to trade school, and all that...heavy equipment, which I know a little bit about...truck driver, mechanic...a little bit. I, but they turned me down every time. Some other places this is a big paying job. I trying to get it. They got the expert there. Got to be at least two, three years experience with the equipment. So I don't have any luck.

EB: Have you ever told your children about it?

SH: A little bit, yes.

EB: About your experiences? I think it's something that the young Navajos should really be proud of. And a lot of them never heard about it, even. You know, nobody ever talked. I think you guys should go around to some of the schools and talk to the kids, you know. You really did something important and it's just been forgotten about. Maybe now, though.

SH: Anyway, finally, I got the feeling that these, uh, you know...when they ask for something, like jobs, important jobs, these, whoever run the organization...project...he give you a funny

look if you say that, "I'm a veteran". I got a feeling that they, all the veterans, most of them, they kind of oddball, you know, to these organizations, or whoever runs the project, you know. I got that feeling.

EB: You know, most of the Code Talkers never got any rank except private.

SH: Yeah, mostly. I was a PFC. I was a...when I finished boot camp, I think, I got PFC. But after I took advanced training...I had to learn code and a little bit about radio...I never get a rating. I was just PFC all the way.

EB: Not many of them got medals either.

SH: No. I guess the, ..to most of these big shot, you, this Indian was just like a horse, you know. Just use a horse for working... something to be useful. At least, I got a feeling, I know that, we were something like that.

EB: And then afterwards just forget about them?

SH: Yeah.

EB: That's really bad. But you did something important, anyway. Now they recognize it.

SH: I hope.

EB: I think so. After all these years.

SH: Well, I guess that's it.

EB: Well, thank you very much."

William McCabe
Window Rock, Arizona

An Interview by
John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee
July 10, 1971

Doris Duke Number 1171

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke
Western History Center, University of Utah

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Informant's Name William Medina

Birth Date May, 1915

Birthplace Canada, Arizona

Tribal Band or Other Affiliation Navajo, Deer Water and Salt Clans

Family Relationships

Informant's Occupation

Extended Comments

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No

Language of Recordings English Translator

Interviewer's Name John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

DM

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Duke Indian Oral History Project

University of Utah
Salt Lake City 84112

Date Received July 28, 1971

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INTERVIEW SHEET

Disposition of Tape University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

DATE July 10, 1971

Rough Draft Made By Geoff Stevens

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Proofed By Beverly Eichwald

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Date Received July 28, 1971

Tape Reel No. 1171

Disposition of Tape University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

Rough Draft Made By Geoff Stevens

Date 11/8/71

Proofed By Beverly Eichwald

Final Draft Made By Christy Owens

Date 12/9/71

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Distribution of Copies Navajo Tribal Museum, William McCabe, University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division.

The following is an interview with William McCabe, conducted by John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971.

JS: Where were you born, Mr. McCabe?

WM: Ganado.

JS: And when, or where I mean, and when were you born?

WM: 1915...May.

JS: May of 1915. In Ganado, Arizona. Into which clan were you born?

WM: Deer Water Clan.

JS: And what was your father's clan?

WM: Salt.

JS: Salt Clan. Where did you go to school?

WM: I went to Fort Defiance.

JS: To the boarding school there?

WM: Yeah.

JS: And how far did you go in school...did you graduate from high school?

WM: Yeah. Fort Wingate.

JS: At Fort Wingate. What year was this?

WM: 1935.

JS: 1935. What did you do right after the war? I mean, right after graduation, before the war?

WM: I took up pre-engineering school, run by the Soil Conservation Service and Indian Service.

JS: Where was this?

WM: At Fort Wingate.

JS: Also at Fort Wingate.

WM: Uh huh. I was drafted in 1942 and I didn't want to do it because

JS: Were you going to school when you found out about the Marine Corps?

WM: No, from then I went to college in Santa Fe and then I went to college in Fort Lewis.

JS: Fort Lewis College. Was that out at Hesperus at that time?

WM: Yeah. Uh huh. Two Navajos going to school there.

JS: Who was the other Navajo...do you remember?

WM: He's dead now. His name was Bowman.

JS: Bowman. The recruiting officer, do you remember?

WM: Ernest Bowman. Oh, see what I forgot his name. I thought I had.

JS: Ernest Bowman..yes. Uh huh. Major. Oh, I don't remember.

WM: Just two of us going to school then. Where was your first

JS: And did you graduate from Fort Lewis?

WM: Well, I joined the Marine Corps from there.

JS: From Fort Lewis.

WM: Uh huh. From then we took the Grayhound down to Fort Apache

JS: How did you hear about the Marine Corps? What made you want to join?

WM: Well, I didn't want to be drafted, that's the main reason. But I didn't know whether the Marines would take me or not. I was way up in years there already. I thought they just took guys from around eighteen. I was way past eighteen then.

JS: What year was this? Do you remember?

WM: 1942

JS: 1942.

WM: And then I was drafted in 1940 and I didn't want to do it because I was going to school. I got deferred in World War II three or four times, but all the time I didn't want to get drafted. I wanted to do something else, get in and volunteer. So when the chance came on that they were conscripting Navajos in Fort Defiance I did my best to join.

JS: Did your best to join. Where did you join, here at Fort Defiance?

WM: Fort Defiance, yeah.

JS: Who was the recruiting officer, do you remember?

WM: Major....Major...oh, gee whiz, I forgot his name. I thought I had... I remember him for a long while. Major...oh, I don't remember.

JS: Uh huh. Where did you go when you joined...where was your first place you had to go in the Marine Corps?

WM: Well, we got sworn in at Fort Wingate.

JS: Fort Wingate.

WM: Uh huh. From then on we took the Greyhound down to Fort Apache and down through, oh the southern route and on to Phoenix and then on down to Central, way down in Mexico, and we came on to San Diego.

JS: San Diego.

WM: At night time. They said we was top secret so we...

JS: You traveled at night.

WM: Traveled at night. Got sneaked into Marine Corps base.

JS: You were in San Diego for boot camp then?

WM: Yeah.

JS: And then from there where did you go?

WM: We went to Camp Elliott.

JS: And that's where you went through Code Talker school?

WM: Yeah. We got there, there was nobody to lead us. Nobody to take...

to give us training. And I was the only one that had some college training so the captain integrated everybody. And finally they come out by elimination method that I was the one qualified to take over. So I took over. So they gave me thirty minutes to think something up or else call the whole thing off... 'cause there was nobody to tell us what to do. So I took over. And I invented... I invented the Code. And from my experience with the Navajo language and my interpretations and preciseness and conciseness and everything else involved, I had to think of a way to code the Navajo language. So we gave, I gave, well, at first I told the men that what I was going to do, I was going to name all the services like the Army, and division and companies and battalions, regiments... instead of giving them regiments, regimental interpretations into Navajo, which would take a long time. And if you want to interpret 'division' every time, 'division' comes up, why you'll have to interpret the whole thing, all the, all of what it means. So instead of doing it that way I just gave them, we just gave them clan names.

JS: Clan names. do for artillery pieces?

WM: Uh huh. Like 'division' is named after the Salt Clan.

BL: Ashiihi.

WM: Uh huh.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: And then regiment, and battalion -- Tachii'nii, and section --
Bibelizhin, Black Sheep. And we went all the way down the line
till we run to the last man. Battalion and section and companies.

BL: What gave you the idea of, I mean, I think it's really, really,
I think it was really a bright idea to name these after clans.
I was just wondering what brought the idea?

WM: Well, the idea is that we better use something that we're familiar
with. We better not memorize anything else that we don't know.
We already know what clan is. So....(inaudible)....they can learn
faster by using their own, the ones who already know, they might
think that their mother was this and their father was this, you
know. And that way they think the code after their mother was this
or their grandpa or something. Then we got through with that.
It took us, oh, all day long. And the airplanes, we name them
after birds. And like the buzzard is the bomber and the hawk is
a dive bomber and the patrol plane is a crow, and the humming
bird is the fighter. And all those things we just came down with,
we already knew what...it just seemed like they would have a name
like that to us if we ever think of something like that. It just
came to me.

JS: What did you do for artillery pieces?

WM: Artillery pieces...we name after, well, after the pieces that we knew on this side--on reservation, which we already have guns. We already know what it is. We just, we didn't name those pieces secretly, we just name them right outright. What it is...what caliber it is. It's not important about the weapon. But what's important is planes and the men and all the stuff that's involved there appear to me was top secret. The amount of men you got there means, well, anybody can say how many military pieces they have.

JS: Sure. I see.

WM: So it didn't matter. Airplane, why, if they know what, if it's a fighter or bomber or transport, well, they figure it out right now what it's meant for.

JS: Oh sure, uh huh.

WM: So we have to have a code name for those.

JS: Now did you have code names for these ships of the Navy also?

WM: Yeah.

JS: Did you name them after fish?

WM: Yeah, we name them all after fish.

JS: All of them?

WM: All of them, yeah.

JS: Let's see, I remember seeing in the paper: Iron fish was submarine, things like that. How many different parts of the code did you have to get done that first time around?

WM: I imagine we just named the services one day and the alphabet the first day.

JS: You had an alphabet that you changed over into Navajo words? Is that correct?

WM: Yeah, we have an alphabet, we made the alphabet in which a boy by the name of Wils Bitsey -- he didn't come around here.....

JS: Is he still alive?

WM: Yeah. He and Oscar Efmore, this fellow, he was half German...this Navajo guy, he was half German. He was in...his father, I think, went to the First World War and he told us how they did it in the First World War -- on the alphabet. So we use that one that they use in the First World War. But with different names -- Navajo names. And we done all this for about a week and then we have to give them correct Navajo names -- on spelling. They done the second day. That was twenty-six...seven...thirty years ago I was talking about. Golly. Well, in Navajo everything is in memory...from the songs, prayers, everything...it's all in memory. So we didn't have no trouble...that's the way we was raised up.

JS: To memorize everything, uh huh.

WM: We didn't have no trouble. Now I'm relating the same thing thirty years since. But we got everything down pat and then we still hadn't tried it on the telephone. We tried it on the telephone first. And after a week or two, we practiced, we memorized. Everybody

goes to school -- we memorized, and I went...I grade papers, giving guys grades. I don't know what they done with all the papers like that. And the guys that make the low grade, well, we keep them separate. And all the guys that have the higher grade, we keep them separate and then when we send codes we put them up against each other. And I can see something that the slower, the slower men would try to tell something to the faster man and the faster man would be going like that and he says, "Come on. Hurry, it hurry." That's how. I got the idea that it would be better that way than to try to keep the slow guys together. Because when you get a fast guy and a slow guy up against each other, the slow one's always trying to do his best to come up. And at the same time the faster one is trying to pull him up. It comes out perfect.

JS: Help him become faster. Uh huh. How many men were in this original platoon, Mr. McCabe?

WM: Twenty-nine.

JS: Twenty-nine of you.

WM: Uh huh. And nobody knew for sure how it was going to go. And I thought...they thought we all, that all he had to do was talk Navajo. And it did...it's not like that. That's a long translation if you're going to translate every word that comes in the message and everybody else has their own translation and you have a message you sent them, it would be different on the other end. But when we made that code...code within a code...the message comes out word

for word on the other end, and including the semi-colons, commas, periods, question marks, everything. We get all those. So when we stop practicing, these messages were coming out the way, the way we read it here it came out the other end the way we have it here.

JS: Uh huh. Just like this afternoon up there.

WM: Yeah. Then they bring it back and we compare it. And I was never so surprised. You know, it just...I couldn't figure out how it works. You know, it's a code within a code, but I didn't think we could memorize that far to write it down. And the general was coming down there. They sent a message, 'send this', and we sent it. They send a runner down there, 'Bring the other message back!' And he compares the message we sent, it comes out perfect. They said, 'I don't understand it. You seen your buddy over there, so why don't we go in the next room. Get behind the house or something where you don't see him.' So we go over and try again, and send the message. He'd be behind the house hiding and he'll have a guard over him so that nobody will come and tell him what kind of message he's supposed to be receiving. They think that we was trying to give them sign language or we was trying to...

JS: They didn't think that you were getting it across.

WM: Yeah. They thought that we have a man already seen the message here and then he runs over there and tells them. But that's the reason it was perfect, you know. But so this officer, I don't

remember their names...there was a whole bunch of them going through there, they wonder, they really wonder what....it was really something. They just...I was more surprised than anybody else. I didn't know it would work that way.

JS: You didn't think that it was going to be that perfect, uh huh.

WM: Yeah, I didn't know, I didn't think it was going to work that way.

And so this officer, he got a dash, a comma, and an exclamation point and a semi-colon, all that, and a question mark and a star. He says, 'Let's see you send this message.' So they got all those guys back over there, just me sitting there, send it over to the other guy. I just name them right off there and come over here and then send that star. That was the easiest message they ever could make out. So they have a man over there waiting.

They say, 'Just as soon as he writes, just pick it up.' As soon as he writes he just picked the paper up, and he brought it back and there it was -- they were the same. 'How in the hell, how in the heck it works, I don't know.' he said, 'but it's working.' So we was doing everything that the Signal Company...just nobody knows how we was doing it. And they wanted to know exactly how we was doing it. And we was showing them right there while we was doing it, but they didn't believe how we was doing it. I don't know how to explain it. They said, they don't know how... 'How can you say 'salt' and it comes out 'division' at the other end?' Say, 'How can you say patrol, I mean, how can you say crow? God,

you're right here and it comes out patrol over there?' So that's what mess up the....what got them the most. He say, 'What is 'A'?' I say, 'Wola'chee'. Well then he says, then picks up the phone, he call that guy and say, 'Wola'chee' in the telephone and then the runner came back and says 'You got 'A' over there.', He said, 'All I say was 'Wola-chee'. And then this guy brings back an 'A'. It's an 'A' right here,' he says. But he says, 'How can you translate in the air? How does it come out that way?' I said, 'We just memorized it. That's just from memory. That's a walking coding machine over there and I'm the walking coding machine over here.' And I say it just codes and decodes in here and just carries it across there. And so while we was in there I imagine the United States Naval Intelligence Service, Intelligence Service, the biggest in the world, I think they said -- breaks down any code anywhere. They recorded it when we was talking and they got their heads together and put that recorder in the middle of them, round table, and everybody had their paper and pencil, paper and pencil and they memorized that message for three weeks. They memorized it. Even when you say it, even what it's saying, how it sounds, everything. But they still couldn't break it down. They got the message but they can't break it down. 'How does it...what does it mean... how do you break it down.' They got the sound, you know, but every time they...that there's no, there's no repetition, there's no sequences in there, there's no pattern, it just comes out and

they had this message round and round for three weeks, they couldn't break it down, so they came up to Camp Elliott. They wanted to know the Signal outfit. They said, they tells us they were from San Diego, 'Want some man down there, from here. See if it's your, one of you, one of your'...the Japanese is breaking the codes or something. They didn't know what was going on. It stumped them for three weeks.

JS: They stopped you for three weeks.

WM: Stumped them. Stumped them cold. They couldn't break it down.

So they, I sent John Benally, he was my assistant...I chose him to be my assistant. He's the area engineer now. And he went over there. And he went through the guards and had to be recognized and all. Went through to the coding machine, the coding room, or decoding room, I don't remember what it was. Anyway, he said there was just a bunch of white-haired guys sitting in there and they had this thing going. And they had him in there with the guard, he had to be in there with the guard. He wasn't going in there by himself. So then they turn it on...see if he can break this down, who is, who is talking and all that, you know. Then he recognized the voice, it was a guy by the name of Allen June was talking to the 7th Marines about some artillery support, and that's just a practice message. He said 'That was a practice message.' They said, they shut it off and they tell him to get.

JS: They had taped it while you were practicing. Is that how they got it?

WM: Yeah. Well, they got it through the radio, see. See, they had to

listen on radio on all of them, I guess. When we get on, when

we started on delivering radio messages one day, why they got us

taped down there. They tape everything that comes along...Japanese

and all those...then they break those codes down, see if it means

anything. And they couldn't break the Navavo code. And I have

never heard to this day whatever happened to that bunch that tried

to break that code down. They never said a word. They never ad-

mitted that they had it and they couldn't break it.

JS: Did they think you were Japanese doing this?

WM: Yeah. Some sort of enemy. But they wanted to know if it was

Navajo. So he said it was Navajo and what the message contained

and who it was and who was saying it.

JS: How long did you stay there and train at Camp Elliott?

WM: From July to September.

JS: Of 1942.

WM: Yes.

JS: Who did you go over with? Which division were you in?

WM: First.

JS: You were in the 1st Marine Division.

WM: Uh huh.

JS: And where did you go?

WM: I went to Guadalcanal.

JS: Did you take place in the first landings there on Guadalcanal?

WM: Yeah. We went on and we looked for... we was just by ourselves... eight

JS: Were you in Headquart....

WM: We was in, not first line, but replacements. We went in as replacements.

But we would have gone in with the whole bunch if they wanted Navajos,

bad. But after they landed, well, then they knew that they was up

against somebody they couldn't whip. They were breaking messages

down right and left. It was awful. The Japanese had, they think

they have captured some papers, secret papers that tells them

what day, what signals to use. What code names...they have code

names for every day of the year, one zero to the twenty four hundred

and they changed and they have a big book. And they have to go by

those dates. And if they ever capture one of them then they know

how to set things up, what's going on way ahead of time.

JS: Yes. Uh huh.

WM: So when we went in, went in as a replacement we didn't have no

outfit. We didn't have no outfit when we landed. We just had

a presidential order that we was supposed to report to the commanding

general on Guadalcanal.

JS: Who was that general, do you remember?

WM: Len Greff.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: And he went out just when we got there. Another general went in.

And there's General Smith and General Curtis. They were, one was

Division Commander and the other was Assistant Division Commander. And we went on and we looked for...we was just by ourselves..eight of us...going here and there trying to find out...we never been in war before...we don't even know what's going on there and we was just green..we didn't know...we was going around happy, kind of happy-go-lucky guys...just walking down the road and say, 'Where's so and so, you know, general?' 'He's not here, he's somewhere else.' And finally we come up to the front lines and the people stop us, 'You either go in or you get out.' So we told them we was looking for the General and they say, 'General never comes here, never seen a general around. Get out of here.' So we took off and went back where we started. We got strafed over there that day by the Jap, Jap Zeroes.

JS: Did any of your men get hurt?

WM: No, we didn't get hurt, but got scared quite..

JS: First time under fire.

WM: Oh yea. Boy, I seen it coming. I seen it coming right at me... real low...black Zeroes, they were black color...coming right at me. But it stopped, it stopped strafing a ways and just when it was about ready to come over my head it started strafing again but naturally the bullets, they were way over here.

JS: Behind you.

WM: Yeah. And we was trying to be as thin as the coconut trees.

JS: I'm sure of that.

WM: But they go through coconut trees, those bullets. They don't stop. We found out later that they go through anything. But they didn't tell us that...we were trying to hide behind coconut trees. And we went and then we got bombed that night and the shelling that night. Everybody went in their foxhole. We just took off on a high place and look at the show. It was like Fourth of July.

JS: Like the Fourth of July.

WM: Yeah. Night time, boy, they just...the Japanese...the white fleet, you can tell them it's white. They just bombed and shelled the hell out of Guadalcanal...November 11th, I think it was November 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, I think it was...maybe it was 15th. All that time. The Japanese Navy was in command up to there. From then on the same that, on the 15th I imagine, some here in there in the middle of November, we heard President Roosevelt mention on the radio that they demolished the Japanese fleet. Coral Sea. And we seen that battle.

JS: You were watching the battle from that hill there. That was the Fourth of July, I take it.

WM: Oh yeah. Boy. That thing was just lit. That whole works. The United States Navy and the Japanese Navy, they just coming point blank at each other. Just point blank. You can see the ships going up in flame and light. We had one tin can -- something that went into the Japanese fleet with everything ablazing. Of

course he got sunk, but he sunk about twelve of them before he went down. We seen that one. And when we was coming, coming over we met the Japanese submarine and they shell us for a long time. We couldn't do anything, we was on a transport ship. On transport ship when the navy submarine, enemy submarines attack you, you just..

JS: You just sit and wait.

WM: You just sit and wait for the wooden box. Boy, that's terrible. You can't even shoot back when they start attacking on sea.

JS: So the first experience you had in combat there was Guadalcanal. I take it was quite a scary time at first.

WM: Scary all the time. I don't think I would go through it again.

JS: Uh huh. Did you ever find your general?

WM: And then we found the general. We got to him and showed him the letter. He says that we not supposed to be coming around here... this is secret area around here. I said, 'Well, we been sent by the President of the United States...the letter says so right here.' 'You're not supposed to come here. You're supposed to see my Signal Officer.' So he chased us out of there and we went back to Signal Officer, Colonel somebody, I think it was. I can't remember that name anymore. I can't remember anybody's name. The Signal Corps guys, white guys, they're all from Quantico, Virginia... we see them in those, in that year all 1st Marine Division was made in...

JS: Quantico?

WM: Yeah. In the East. So that everybody that he knew in the 1st Division were from the Eastern Coast. I know a lot of guys from New York and I used to know a lot of guys from Georgia and Florida, St. Louis and Buffalo....wherever we have...they used to call me Irishman. And finally we got to the coding officer. And I went to the chief of staff. That's the only one I remember, Lieutenant Hunt. And about night time this time, but he says, 'Well, you guys come back tomorrow.' This is night time and we don't do anything at night time.' I said, 'They told us to report here, and start talking. We're supposed to talk the enemy to death.' I said, 'We're not here to fight. We just come here to talk. That's what the message says.' He says, 'Who are you to talk to me like that?' Well, I said, 'I was sent by the President of the United States to do the talking over here.' So he said, 'We'll try you out right now.' So we went and we got some men scattered to different...they brought in some jeeps from different areas. And I send the guys over there...I divided them up. And naturally I stayed with the general...and then the picking is good when you're way up in there. I always tell the guys that way.

JS: That you had good pickings.

WM: Yeah. And...

JS: We were talking about the lieutenant trying you out.

WM: Oh yeah. We sent some men out to different units and then he send

a message -- routine message. And before we could get through we had the whole island come up, start phoning in to see if the Japanese were on their frequency. And he caught on to more than he could chew. He thought he would get us by and make us go to bed and he's return to his sack. Well, it was the other way around. We couldn't keep the island quiet 'cause messages were going through their channel. Some of them were even screaming and whistling in there to try to, they tried to...

BL: Blot out the signals.

WM: Yeah, they tried to blot the signals out. Interference.

JS: Uh huh. Jamming or interference.

WM: They was jamming. Then the lieutenant had to go over there and phone everybody else to, not to jam the frequency...that they was our own men that was talking. 'I never heard of our own men talking that way,' you know. 'What's going on over there at Division? You guys drunk?' And we really had it out. And finally it was close to midnight when we bedded down. In the morning we start out again and we tried to calm the whole island, but somebody was coming in their frequency. And they wanted to find out who was doing all that. And the 1st Marine Division I have known that they're the only outfit that completely relied on Talkers.

JS: After that time they completely relied on you.

WM: They completely relied on us. But they still didn't know how we was doing it. 'As long as it's going through I guess it's all right,' the general said.

JS: That's what he said. off. And he had his watch and he was timing.

WM: And we got the next day or something, he said he was going to make us compete with the coding machine. They going to encode their own message and the same message we going to send by Navajo and see who is going to be the better. The better ...we was going to either use the coding machine or the Navajo. I said, 'How long does it take for the code to go out to the units?' He said, 'About four hours.' And he says, 'How long will it take you to take message?' I said, 'About two minutes.' And he said, 'Are you going to deliver, bring it back and then telling me it's delivered...give it to the coding officer over there and he signs it, brings it back...be two minutes?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Oh yeah, uh huh.' And he laughed.

JS: He didn't believe you for sure.

WM: And he said something that we're not supposed to say on the air.

JS: Well, I'll turn it off then.

WM: He said, 'Bullshit.' And he was in two and a half minutes. And

JS: He said, 'Bullshit.'

WM: And 'This coding machine will outdo any coding machine there is... anybody can make.' But so we sent. And I said, 'Has he started? He said, 'Yeah, he's already started.' He had his coding machine rolling up and down like that. And he said 'Are you gonna start?' I said, 'I'll just give him a good running start. We can do this in two minutes.' 'Go on and do it in two minutes.' So I picked up the

phone and rattled it off. And he had his watch and he was timing.

And I send the message and they gave it to the coding officer.

He initialed it and he tell the guy, read it back. And he say

it's 'rogered'....it's 'rogered' for. And I said, 'That's it.'

He says, 'Two minutes and thirty seconds,' he said.

JS: Oh, gee.

WM: And that guy's still coding.

JS: He hadn't finished coding it. They haven't even decoded yet over

there. They have to decode it.

JS: They had to code it and then send it and then decode it.

WM: Yeah.

JS: And then initial it.

WM: And then initial it and then they had to send it back.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: See if we...see if everything's all right.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: But we send that message there in two and a half minutes. And

he still didn't believe me.

JS: Still not believing.

WM: He says, 'You must have read this message somewhere,' you know.

'Well, you wrote it.' 'Well, you must have seen me write it and

you must have told them or something.' And I said, 'I don't

know,' I say. 'I'm not allowed to tell you,' I say. 'We're

just a walking coding machine...that's all. Whatever we say

comes out coded. Whatever the other guy says it goes through his ears, it comes out uncoded.

JS: Did you ever have to prove it again to him?

WM: No, not then. Not after that. He said, 'Okay, I'll buy that.' So that was it. And we started in the main force. The main part of all this messages was Navajo. Whatever they went to send off fast...whatever they want the other guy to know right away--we sent.

JS: All of it was through Navajo Code Talkers.

WM: Yeah. Routine...why they, if it's gonna take them an hour or two or three hours...they don't care when it's delivered, why...

JS: They'd put that in English.

WM: Yeah.

JS: Deliver it. Uh huh.

WM: But all the fast ones and top secret, we...they used to run...they used to have runners, oh, fuzzie-wuzzies, they were runners...they had more rank than we had.

JS: They had more rank than you.

WM: They were all tech. sergeants. And we was only corporals and PFC's. And they come in...they'd have the band around their legs, to put the message in there and then they'd tear off with a rifle over their shoulder to deliver a message to the next sergeant, I don't know how many miles away -- maybe a mile, half a mile. So this was a top secret message that this guy was going to carry. And it didn't get through. And they don't know what happened to

the man. I just heard that he never went through. So we sent that message through to the 1st Marine Regiment. Got it through. Got it 'rogered' for. And then another case, we had, we were contact the...this guy was over behind the enemy lines on a patrol and I had contact with him. And there was some food...places they'd hidden--food and ammunition. So on the map it's marked out and they got a map that's marked out. So I just call over there to this guy and they were without ammunition and no food. And I direct them to another cache where they have the stuff hidden.

JS: Is this a Navajo man out on patrol?

WM: Uh huh. He's dead now. Sam Begay.

JS: Sam Begay. Uh huh.

WM: He said that the stuff they were getting came in the nick of time and saving their lives and his men. And that he hired some 'fuzzie-wuzzies' to take care of this...take care of Sam that nothing could happen to him.

JS: His lieutenant was making sure Sam was all right, then.

WM: Yeah.

JS: You bet.

WM: So he is a valuable man. And he made the 'fuzzie-wuzzies' carry his pack, his gun, his water, everything...ammunition and sometimes they carry him around.

JS: Ha ha. Carried Mr. Begay around.

WM: Yeah. And he was 'Mr. Begay' too. And he was telling me on the radio that "You'll never believe that there's a Navajo being carried around by 'fuzzie-wuzzies.'"

JS: Sounds beautiful.

WM: And so after we, we got through on that one...all the things I can think of are pretty...well, we had a lot of experience there on Guadalcanal. We really went through a lot of things that are more natural to us. The way we do around here, that's what we do over there. We just lived on nothing. That's what we do here. We live on nothing. Like my wife says, we're gonna, I'm building a house in the summer. My wife says, 'What are we going to do for water? There's no water, My family's been hauling water twenty miles all my life.' I said, 'That's what we'll do out there.' Say, 'I'm not gonna carry water.' I said, 'I will.' So....

JS: You're gonna be carrying water.

WM: Yeah. But the water's down there about 5,000 feet.

BL: Where are you building your home now?

WM: On the Summit.

BL: Up the Summit.

WM: Yeah. So we just was ready to move out by then...in November, '42.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: We was getting pretty relieved by the Army. I don't know what army it was. Anyway, the ships came in and they were unloading

and getting all their gears set up. And as soon as they get through we board the transport they left. Get out on it to Australia. They said we'll have a nice place to set aside to go for a rest. Australia. So the transport came on, and everything, everybody's going and we was waiting on the beach and this, oh chow dump was about as high as that house there, and they dumped all the guards all around the place. We sneak in there through the guard line. And we was trying to find some cans of food...we was hungry. Hadn't eaten for...well, they told us that we'd just get to the beach and we'd get on this ship.

JS: Get on your transport, yeah.

WM: But something went wrong and we had to wait there for about four or five days before we could board the ship. And we hadn't been eating for a day, day-and-a-half, something like that. And to do this, to eat we'd have to set up our mess hall over again. We already broke the thing down...already packed. And we couldn't eat with the Army...they didn't want no Marines out there. So I went in the chow dump and I was sneaking around back there and open up can, open up boxes. These guys that went with me took what they want. You know, they just took a can of meat or can of fruit or vegetable or something...what they want they took off and went off. But I got choosey, I wanted to get me a can of orange juice. Damn right. I wanted an orange juice. So then that, I got lost among the big chow dump and I got caught

back there. All of the sudden somebody say, 'Halt,' and I kept walking. 'Hey, you! Halt, or I'm gonna shoot!' And I thought somebody was playing a joke on me. I turn around and there was a big rifle all cocked and ready to shoot. And so, 'What are you doing here?' I said, tell him, 'I'm just from my outfit. I was coming here to get something to eat.' And he said, 'I think you're a Jap. Just come with me.' And we went down there and he blew the whistle and everybody came jumping out of nowhere... took off. And I had about fifteen guys around me with machine guns. We went to provost marshal and provost marshal say, 'I got enough trouble on my hands.' He say, 'Go off and shoot him.' And he says, 'Well, he talks English, sir.' He says, 'He talks English real good. He says he's a Marine.' And he says, 'All the Japs talk English. I heard they were going...they had been going to Ohio State.' It was really funny...afterwards.

JS: Afterwards. But right then I suspect you were scared.

WM: I didn't even know what he was talking about right then. I was ready to do anything right then. He says, 'Do you know how to bow down,' you know. I said, 'I'm an American. I don't have to bow down to nobody.' And I said, 'I'm a Marine. I got dog tags around me right here.' 'Aw, you could have stole it. Well, get him out of here. And get his...see if he's got an outfit. If he don't have no outfit, if you can't find an outfit, shoot him.'

So I went. I had my hands up in the air. Finally I'm getting along, I'm real tired, I come down here this guy ram that damn rod in my belly and I think he was...he had that thing cocked and he was pushing me with it. I said, 'It's cocked.' And he said, 'You're damned right it's cocked.' you know. 'I'm gonna blow your guts back if you do something...if you do something wrong you're gonna get it.' And then some other guys over here, there's about five over here...Oh, I imagine about five on this side, there's five in the back and this sergeant. They had fifteen men with a sub-machine. They took me through the jungle all the way to the beach there where my outfit was. 'Right here is my outfit.' And I thought they were going to let me go. 'Here's your outfit, go on.' But instead they took me right up to the guys that were playing cards there. And he says, 'Is this one of your men?' He didn't say it but he just thought, he just thought that he was talking to some stateside guys. Boy, these guys were criminals. They don't talk English no more, see, they're just murderers. The Japanese call them 'First Marine Butchers.'

JS: Butchers.

WM: That's what they call the 1st Marine Division. 1st Marine Butchers. It comes on the radio. 'We know where we at,' you know, that lady that used to talk Japanese.

JS: Tokyo Rose?

WM: Yeah. Tokyo Rose. She comes on. 'I know where you guys are, you

Guadalcanal butchers, I know what place you're at.' But....

JS: Did it make you feel funny when she knew where you were?

WM: Yeah. And then she says, 'And you probably know where we are at.

And we are having dances here, and wine, and beer.' Oh, I could smell that roast beef frying, you know. They says, 'Tokyo Rose brings it all over here.'

JS: She a pretty good propagandist?

WM: Boy, was she. Anyway, we got over there. Said, 'Is this one of your men?' This guy, his name was Bonner, Sergeant Bonner, a good friend of mine. He look up, he got a bald head, say, 'Hey, yeah, he's one of our men,' and starts playing cards again. And he says, 'Hey, is this one of your men?' This other guy, his name was Mills. And he way, 'Yeah, he's one of our men. and start playing cards. 'Are you guys gonna identify this man or am I gonna have to shoot him? I have orders to shoot him if nobody identifies him.' And Mills, he used to stick up for me... the Indians...this Mills. He got up and says, 'Well God damn it, if you don't know the difference between American Indian and a Jap, you go board those transport out there and get the hell out of here.' That still didn't make me feel any better. I want to tell him that I was one of the outfit so they can go. And they almost had a fight over me over there. But funny, the lieutenant came around, say, 'What's going on,' you know?

JS: Was this Lieutenant Hunt again?

WM: No. Lieutenant somebody. I don't know. Ummm. Lieutenant Hays He come around. He wasn't a lieutenant then. He was just nominated to be lieutenant. We call him Lieutenant Hays before....

JS: Before he got it.

WM: Before he got his bars. He just made it out in the field. And he say, 'Yeah, that's one of our boys. He's the best man around here. Nobody's better than he is. He's first American.' Said, 'Okay. That's all I wanted to know. But if he ever comes around that damn dump over there...if he ever comes around again, we're just gonna shoot him down. Gonna shoot him down like dogs.' 'Get out of here. You're not gonna shoot one of our men.' Mills came up and jumped on them again, 'You ain't gonna shoot one of our men. You're gonna have to shoot everyone of us before you can shoot anybody else. All right, get your rifles, you guys. Let's shoot these guys.' So they took off. They almost had a fight there. If that lieutenant didn't come around they could have gotten in a fight.

JS: Suspect you were sweating a little bit.

WM: Oh, not a bit. I was soaked.

JS: Not just from the heat, either.

WM: No. Not just from the heat. Boy, I finally...after they left I just laid there. So they detailed one of the boys...one of the white guys to guard me. Everywhere I went he went, everywhere I

went he was there. I went down to the toilet, he was there. I went down to take a bath, he was down there. He was everywhere. He'd go to sleep and I'd start walking and he'd say 'Where are you going?' 'I don't give a damn. You just come follow me.' And he had to follow me....he had orders to follow me everywhere I went. He tried to tell me to stay in one place, but I'd just roam all over hhere. 'He goes again. There he goes again. God damn Chief, why don't you sit still, stay put? My legs are hurting.' And then we went on ship. It was in the Australian paper when we got there. Somebody put it in the newspaper.

JS: Your story.

WM: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

WM: I didn't even...I didn't even know what it was going to be put in. Somebody told me that it was in the paper. We looked at it, laugh about it, but it was real funny. But the army captured one of the men. We went out there, went into a rest camp. We rested for a long while. In November till about....

[side two]

JS: You were in rest camp and in Australia for quite awhile.

WM: Yeah. Then we got some more replacements and then we got some more, they added some more code names. And we took schooling there and we memorized it all over again. And after that we took off for Goodenough, Goodenough Island. And we stayed there,

we were regrouped there and then we hit New Britain, Cape Gloucester on Christmas Day, 1943. And that's where we lost two of our men.

JS: Two of your Code Talkers?

WM: Uh huh.

JS: Was this in the landing?

WM: No, in the....during the bombing and on the land.

JS: Who were they? Do you remember their names?

WM: His name was Morgan. I forget what his first name was. His name was Morgan, Ralph Morgan, or...y, I seen him the first day I was

JS: Ralph Morgan?

WM: I think it was Ralph Morgan. It was a funny way he got killed.

They had their foxhole right under the tree, right under the, I right under this coconut tree. Or some kind of tree...a palm tree. They hit that palm tree right square in the middle. Right so the bomb didn't explode. Instead, it split the bomb I guess. The tree didn't...it just broke off the top. And then a knife-like thing about this long...just a little bit twisted...it's a little thin...about this thin. It just came...I guess it left the bomb...the bomb didn't explode except that piece that came off. It whack him right in here in the nose and chin. It landed on him so fast that it just cut his head off. Split his head clean off. It was just clean and you can see his brain and see his tissues in there and the covering around there. And then his

hair on that...he just laid there...he's got.

JS: He never knew what hit him.

WM: He never knew what hit him. After about two or three minutes, then you could see the blood coming out around the scalp part... beads of blood came out. Boy, that was something. We didn't know what to do. We just stood there and looked at him. And finally...

JS: Well, if the bomb had gone off a lot of you would have been killed.

WM: Yeah, probably. And he was in the 7th Marine. And he got killed that night. Then the other guy, I seen him the first day I was here. His name was Cleveland...Bennie Cleveland.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: And he hit the bottle hard, I think. I seen him one time. I don't know where he went. And then they, oh, Captain or the Major of the 7th Marine Force, everybody in there under fire. Forced them in there to bring out the, bring out the wounded. See, they hid it, they hid the Japanese machine gun, machine gun nest. They walked right into it. Just moved them down. They had to withdraw. A 'strategic withdrawal.'

JS: Uh huh. Retreat.

WM: Them Marines, they don't retreat, we just...

JS: A strategic withdrawal.

WM: Yeah.

JS: Yes, I understand.

WM: And so they, then he forced these guys in there to get these wounded out. And they gave him cover. But when he got, when he got over there, the Japanese open up. And all the guys that were forced in there, they ran the other way, they ran back. And this Cleveland, the Code Talker for that bunch there, he start running and this wounded Marine grabbed him, grabbed him and grabbed his legs. And he just fell, fell there. When he fell there the machine gun opened up and just mowed them guys running back to the outfit...just mowed them down. Well, he got saved.

JS: By the wounded Marine. down. He said he was then from the hip.

WM: Yeah. 30-30, you said it was that time that.

JS: Yeah.

WM: So, after the gun, the machine gun quieted down, why he pick up the Marine, drag him to safety. And you never seen two buddies so close together after that...they just went everywhere together.

JS: Uh huh. Mr. Cleveland didn't get...

WM: He didn't get wounded. on him. Cause they couldn't do it any

JS: Wounded at that time. came out and cleaned out that unit. It never

WM: No. So that's the way it was on that New Britain. And then another thing right there on New Britain, this pillbox they trying to get. They couldn't get the pillbox. It was strongly fortified by the Japanese and they couldn't get it. And this Navajo guy named Tom White, he went in there to clean out the pillbox himself.

JS: Uh huh. How did he do that?

WM: He just walk in there. He just walk up to the pillbox. He looks like a Japanese anyway.

JS: He had to take his uniform, I take it.

WM: Yeah, he just strip down to the waist and right then he went inside. He went indoors.

JS: I'll be darned!

WM: When he went through the door, these guys have their own openings, they have their own openings that way...

JS: And he just mowed 'em down.

WM: Just mowed them right down. He said he shot them from the hip. It's a regular .30-.30, you can't carry that damn thing.

JS: Oh, my gosh, no.

WM: He carried that .30-.30 in there.

JS: The sub-machine gun.

WM: Yeah. Uh, machine gun.

JS: Machine gun, yeah. .30 caliber.

WM: He took it in and mow 'em down. 'Cause they couldn't do it any otherwise. And so he came out and cleaned out that next. He never got any citations for it...never got anything for it. He cleaned out that nest for them. Nobody ever knew what happened. And it's over there, it's just taken for granted, you know. When it was cleaned out, 'Why hell, let's get going.' And he went through there and he got killed on the next landing.

JS: Which was that?

WM: Pelilieu Then right there at New Britain this, oh, the tank outfit was stranded. They were boxed in by the enemy, and they went low on ammunition. They knew they couldn't hold out any longer, but they had this Paul Begay, a guy, this Navajo Code Talker with them. I don't know what he'd doing with the tanks. they kicked two times

SS: Yeah. then -- so he said he just kicked them two times like that.

W:: But he stripped, stripped and got these g-strings on for this thing around his neck, his head, and he looked like he was a Japanese. He just run out there and went right through the line.

JS: I'll be darned. to pull on the other side. The tanks were

WM: Went back, they were behind, went right through the Japanese line, and when he got through he went and headed for Division Command Post. on our side he took off and went back to his

JS: He got the message through that way. Did he have a radio? away

WM: Uh huh. The radio was knocked out and the phone was knocked out and there was no way. The only way he can do was run out. But who was going to run out? So he volunteered to run out. him

JS: Amazing story. out in the middle of nowhere he was herding

WM: And he got the tanks, the ammunition they wanted, the equipment, the things they wanted. he had about four, five hundred head of

JS: Uh huh. by himself there

WM: They got the men through that way. And there was a funny part of this other story, was this guy by the name of Cattlechaser. He started out when it was raining, lightning and all that, and he

got lost with his...he didn't know where the line went, the front line, so he thought it was up ahead. He kept crawling ahead. When lightning came on again, all he could see was Japanese heads, coming at him you know. And he looked like Japanese anyway. So the lightning went, somebody gave him a signal -- they kicked two times like that -- so he said he just kicked back two times like that. He knew it was that, that was the code, you know, or their password. So he went over there to the other guy and kicked him two times...the other guy kicked him back two times. So he just waited for them to quit on the other side. The Marines were shooting. See, they have to keep shooting. And after they, when they reload or renew another round, why they quit firing. So when everybody quiet down he took off and went back to his unit. And when he took off somebody grabbed him and he got away with it, and somebody grab him by the feet, they already knew that he was one of them. He got over the line...I seen him herd sheep way out of Tuba City about ten years ago, I met him over there. Way out in the middle of nowhere he was herding sheep. And I says, 'Is that all your sheep?' And he says, 'yeah, that's all my sheep.' He had about four, five hundred head of sheep, all by himself there.

JS: All by himself, out in the middle of nowhere, now.

BL: Is he still alive now?

WM: Yeah, he's still kicking around. Cattlechaser.

JS: Cattlechaser's his name.

WM: Yeah.

JS: I suspect he was glad to get back to his own lines.

WM: Yeah. Then we went and withdrew back to the rest area after that.

Went back to a place by the name of Pavuvu.

JS: Pavuvu. Uh huh.

WM: Can't even spell it now. You hit the strangest places, you know.

JS: You sure do in the Pacific.

WM: Gollee. So there was a lot of rats. Big rats -- about this big.

They'd just go around like ants. And we'd try to kill them all and they couldn't kill them all. Night time you could hear them playing on the tent. Boo-bomb, boo-bomb, like that. And they running around. Big fellows. And crabs, big crabs, land crabs.

JS: Wouldn't want to walk around barefoot.

WM: Oh gee, what a big mess.

BL: Ten toes missing if you did.

JS: Anybody ever get bit by the rats?

WM: Yeah, a lot of them got it. Gee, that was the dirtiest place I ever been. And we got settled down and everything. They told us to clean out the latrine. They told all the Navajos clean out. They always told us to clean out the dirty part. The sergeant, he told us to clean out the latrine. Scrub it out. So I was the only one that was kind of seasoned among the group there. And I says, 'Sergeant, you better clean it too.' And he says,

'That's an order,' he says. 'You go clean it.' I said, 'I give you the same order. You help us clean it. You use it too. And if you don't, we'll see that you're going to have to clean it by yourself. But now we'll help you if you help us. You use it too, by God, you help us clean up.' So the sergeant and I, we scrubbed the latrine out.

JS: You...the two of you scrubbed the latrine out, huh.

WM: The Navajos. All the Navajo guys clean it out. So another time they told me I was the corporal of the guard. And I have to station the guards. So I told this big Texan that he was going to carry the graveyard watch on one of them places that he didn't want. I call his name, got all my musters for the night, night duty and I stationed them all. I said, 'You go push number so-and-so,' number five I think. 'Take care of that part.' And he didn't want to go. So he grabbed me by here...he was a great big Texan, his arm right here was as big as my leg. Great big Texan, about six feet five, six feet six, something like that, big fellow, big Texan. He come over and grab me by the dungarees out here, pick me up. And I says, 'Don't you pick me up.' He put me over here and says, 'Who's gonna order me to do it?' And so I just put the bullet in the chamber and I said, 'This guy's gonna tell you to do it. The corporal's gonna tell you to get doing.' And I put the bullet in the chamber. 'Now,' he said, 'Chief, I was just kidding. I'll go.' 'You'd better go, when

I say you go, you go.' Some places like that I had to turn on, oh, real...I don't like to do that, but I always did it that way. But most of the time I don't bother nobody. I just let anybody do just what they can do. Otherwise, in the case of emergency, that's the only time I...

JS: Give orders.

WM: Yeah. Just real extreme measures. Even around here. Even like that time when we went in to Marine Corps...that was an emergency. Then when I went down to Parker, I found that everything was disorganized. I organized the Indian Association down there. I got that thing to going and I got the Farmer's Association down there, and I came back, and I've been around here. That's what happened there...I sent him on his...so we got ready to go land on another place. They hadn't told us the name when they said, they always say that, 'We're going to a place that you never heard of. You can't spell it anyway.' So that's the way it was. And they took us to this tent area and we had this, in this tent they had the place that the island that we were going to take. It's all done in clay. And they had these long sticks sticking in and everybody around there. I was in the back there, I didn't know what they were doing, but I wanted to go. All the captains, general, and all that, but they want us over there, the Talkers. But they were having a...the officers were having their beaches assigned to them. And our assignment was Orange Beach. And then

I heard my name. He said, 'Front and center.' And after awhile he says, 'McCabe. Front and Center.' Gee whiz, what do I do now? So I went over there and this general, I don't know, general or major, I don't know who it is, he said, 'Here's the Division flag. Take this Division flag, go in the fourth wave. Pick out this area right here.' Right there they had a long stick pointing to it. Right here...he put that thing right in there. 'When you come ashore, take this Division flag with you.' And everybody come up and say, 'Good-bye, McCabe, been nice knowing you.' Jesus Chri...what the hell...how in the hell did I get that kind of an assignment.

JS: Carrying the flag's pretty obvious, isn't it.

WM: Oh, yeah. And then put the Division flag...they know where they gonna put that son-of-a-gun and they gonna have to...they probably know already. So they probably have it fortified. Come out that way, too. Anyway, when we went out to landing on D-Day, I had the assignment to get all the men out and put them in the regular places and put them on boats and get them off to the side. And when I got through, I went down to get my gear from below. And somebody stole all my ammunition -- my bandolier. I had two bandoliers, they were all gone. We were gonna land here and hell, I didn't have no ammunition. That's what I was issued out. I didn't have no other place to go, just go get another one. So I just had that one clip in there. When I landed I didn't have no

ammunition. Just that one clip. And I had the radio gear and boy, I had all the kind of message center gear all over me. And I went ashore. That's when I hurt my leg.

JS: This was going ashore at which island?

WM: On Peleliu. D-Day was September 15, '44.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: And we went in. Boy, they just plastered the hell out of that place, for two weeks. And right before the landing, during the landing, still we meet enemy resistance. We went ashore and we had twenty-five feet of the beach for about ten days, I guess.

JS: That's all you had.

WM: That's all we had.

JS: You didn't even get up to place your flag in the right place the first day.

WM: We....there was too much resistance. We kept moving to the left, to the left. Finally we landed at Purple...Purple Beach and we landed over there. And then it was decided that we use 100 per cent Navajo Code...Navajos during the landing. And I have to make...keep the communication lines open. Everybody had to check into the NET, we have our own NET. And they had to check in every thirty minutes...something like that to see that everything's all right. So I had my job all cut out for me and the flag just laying there. This colonel...he was a good friend of mine...he's a full colonel. His name is Hennigan.

JS: Hennigan.

WM: And he said, 'Bill, let me take this flag. I'll put it up there for you. You're too busy. You take care of everything right there.' So he went, it's a round off place in there, like so. It's a low place over there. I don't know what in the heck it was, some kind of a crater or something. And he stuck that flag in there, right into the entrance...only about 30 feet wide... towards the ocean. Plant that damn flag in there. There's a machine gun that side and a machine gun from that side, machine gun from that side...all criss-crossing right there where he stood. They just cut him in half.

JS: Hmm.

WM: They cut that poor man in half...just think of it...if I would of went over there I wouldn't be here.

JS: He was killed in action, then.

WM: Yeah. They thought that he was the general, you know. They had it in for...

JS: Officers. For sure.

WM: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

WM: Jeez.....if I had been over there, they would have gotten....and then we had a heck of a time trying to get...we almost had about twenty-five feet, then we went down back to ten feet and some guys had to walk in water. And then for...it was a good thing there was a

high place....a ridge all the way along there...steep beach.

And then we landed there and he got killed. We went and...

JS: You mentioned that you got your leg hurt on Peleliu. How was that?

WM: Well, I slipped and the whole mob ran over me.

JS: The whole mountain came down, huh?

WM: They twisted my leg in the knee. Twisted it.

JS: Um hmm. Did you go to the hospital on that?

WM: No. It come out all right. But I got a trick knee after that.

I couldn't even do anything. I chop off all my athletic activities right when I was a young guy.

BL: Did you say mob or mountain?

WM: Mob of Marines.

JS: Whole bunch of Marines came right over you.

WM: Yeah. That higgans boat open up and boy, we...well, we had to land. We couldn't go in. We have to land out in the ocean... sort of like...we didn't...we generally hit the sand and go slide a little ways and then...

JS: But you had to land outside...out there, and then you slipped as you were getting out?

WM: Yeah. I had water underneath me...when I hurt my leg in there.

JS: Where did you go after Peleliu, Mr. McCabe?

WM: Well, we went back to the rest area and I don't remember when in the heck I got back to the rest area, and I don't remember where

JS: When were you discharged?

WM: Oh, about November 27, 1945.

JS: You weren't called back during Korea, were you?

WM: No. I have some...I have some tree roots already dug for me and boy, I'm gonna hang onto those tree roots. They have to drag me out of here to get to Korea.

JS: Yeah. Sure. How large a family do you have?

WM: We have four boys and one girl on my second marriage. And on my first marriage, I had two boys and one girl. Both boys are in the One Hundred and One Infantry. What do they call that thing? One Hundred and One Screaming Eagles.

JS: They are both in the Screaming Eagles?

WM: Yeah. Paratroopers.

JS: Paratroopers. They both served in Vietnam?

WM: They both served in Vietnam, both got wounded, and the other one's still over there...he went back twice. He's....that's his career.

JS: That's his career. And the one, did he get out after he was wounded?

WM: One, he's over in Parker. He got out after he was wounded. They both got to be sergeants.

JS: Uh huh. Do you have any grandchildren?

WM: Yeah. I got one. I don't know...about...maybe I got four or five more besides that. I haven't seen my other daughter. She's down in Florida. Never seen or heard of her no more. I don't know where she went. She just left. Left us.

JS: And who do you work for now?

WM: I work for BIA.

JS: The highway department of the BIA?

WM: Roads, yeah.

JS: You're constructing bridges and so forth? Is that what you said the other day?

WM: Yeah. We're doing construction...construction...see, some of the other part you make almost construction...bridges and culverts and highways, black topping and all that. I'm the supervisor and inspector...highway inspector.

JS: Do you think that your experience in the Marine Corps helped you out for later life?

SM: No. Just that discipline is the only word.

JS: Discipline's the only word. Uh huh. Well, sir, we'd like to thank you very much for sitting down and talking with us this afternoon. We'll be glad to send a copy of this to you if you want to leave us your address.

WM: You know, we lost some more of those guys over there.

JS: You lost some more..in Saipan, Okinawa, Peleliu.

WM: Peleliu, we lost some more.

JS: Who did you lose there?

WM: Harry Socce and Tom White and one got wounded real bad. He's all right though.

JS: How did Tom White...he's the one that went through the pill boxes...

through the lines to the pill box -- how did he get killed?

WM: A Jap colonel came on a banzai charge at sunrise. He wanted to get out so bad that he didn't sleep for three nights. And he dozed off and the Jap colonel came through there with a banzai charge, and cut his jugular vein out.

JS: And Mr. Socce?

WM: He got killed with field artillery.

JS: Field artillery. So you lost quite a few of the Code Talkers.

WM: Oh yeah. In the First Division. I don't know about the other parts.

BL: Do you know of any of them that might have been captured?

WM: No, I don't. No. On our part, we...I invented another code over there, and I give everybody code numbers...two code numbers, just in case of capture. Use it anywhere and stick it anywhere in the message. See, they'll make you want to send messages. So stick these two words in there...it's just that you're captured...that's all...that's it...that'll tell the story.

JS: Sure.

WM: If you ever get captured, well, just send that. Stick it anywhere and we'll, we'll see it.

JS: You'll know that he's captured.

WM: Yeah. And that, that his message is not his own.

JS: Uh huh. You never had to see one of those?

WM: No. We never see any of them. I don't think there was any chance of it.

JS: Uh huh.

BL: What kind of a family do you come from ... how many brothers, sisters?

WM: I don't have any more. My dad is gone, my mother's gone. I had one sister and four brothers. They're all dead. They died off. I'm the only one that's left, I don't know why they keep me alive.

BL: It's really been interesting talking to you this evening.

WM: Well, I had some more on Peleliu, but...

JS: Well, we can sure go ahead. I suspect you'll want...are you going to the banquet tonight? Go ahead with your experiences on Peleliu.

WM: Well, can you shut it off?

JS: O.k.

WM: We got shellings from Bloody Nose Ridge every night. Big guns. They come out of the mountain.

JS: They were in a cave there, weren't they?

WM: In a cave. It's all hewn out for the gun. And it has steel doors around it. And the doors open and big guns slide out. And they put in about three or four shells. They go back in all set all way along that line there. Right...they were pointed right on the beaches down there. Boy, when we...one was set to blast from about fifty yards or fifty feet...seventy-five feet, I guess, away from us. It starts off that way and goes that way. Another of them were set about maybe thirty feet from us and goes that way.

JS: Oh brother.

WM: And we was right there..

JS: Right in that pocket between the artillery.

WM: I don't know how...one of them got loose and hit that coconut tree right behind us and it killed, let's see, there's twenty, twenty-six of us bunched around that radio. It took that radio box and it took...only four of us got out alive.

JS: Oh my gosh.

WM: Out of the twenty-six.

JS: Was this your whole platoon you were with?

WM: Well, it's...they were intelligence, this bunch here with the big radio. But it hit the coconut tree that was laying away from us and hit on the other side and explode. But I don't know what the heck it was. And it just demolished that big...that radio was about half as big as this building.

JS: Oh my gosh.

WM: It just blew. And....

JS: Were you wounded at all by that?

WM: No. The concussion lifted me and threw me in the foxhole and covered my head up. But over there, you can hold your breath fifteen minutes, you know, and think nothing of it. There's some guys that hold their breath for half an hour.

JS: Over there?

WM: Yeah.

JS: Well I'll be darned. I wonder how?

WM: I don't know. We used to do that, and golly, I said, we was talking about it over here one time. I said I used to hold my breath when I was training to be...I used to be a half a miler in high school and I set the...fifteen seconds I can hold my breath and....so we thought we'd test each other out and see who can hold their breath the longest. Golly, one guy made it on one minute, two minutes, three minutes. Finally I was going to five and said, 'Haven't I got to seven minutes yet? Oh, gee whiz...' I didn't want to, maybe I was doing sometinng...so I didn't want to do it no more...you hold your breath long enough. And that stuff... the sand got around my head...if those other three wasn't with me, I never would have got out. They dug me out and threw me out...one of the guys...his name was Jim, I mean Ben Manuelito.

JS: He was one of them that dug you out?

WM: Yeah. He's the one. And Jimmie King and I...and Ben and one white guy--his name was Stanley _____, he was from Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was a Polack and he was the only one that was with us. That...we was up high...was up high...we had a foxhole and had a rock wall in front of us. And we look through the thing. I don't know how we had that thing up there.

JS: It saved your lives.

WM: Yeah. But there was one guy right by us that had his foxhole deep and they got him.

JS: Is that when Harry Socce got killed?

WM: No.

JS: He was another time.

WM: He was with the 11th Marines.

JS: Oh, uh huh.

WM: And I'm with division. So we went in there, got bunch that was killed there where it was just awful. They just have to carry them off. And they hit the ammunition dump right next to us. And these colored guys...colored battalion, they were bringing in the ammunition--hand to hand thing. They all singing away and boy, they hit that thing, boy it just hit the fan.

JS: I'm sure it did. They blew up the ammunition dump.

WM: Boy, they just...colored people flying every which way. And so we got there and there was a sniper, I guess, sitting up there, ten days right over us, waiting for one guy to get in there. And this captain, I guess he got sleepy and he went to sleep right by me. I was laying this way and Ben was laying that way and Jimmie King was laying that way and that Polack was laying this way. And that guy sees something over there he kicks everybody else and when this guy sees something moving why he kick everybody else...everybody wake up. And we all crawl on one side, try to look for...they come through...these banzai. And every once in a while a banzai, boy, he comes through. They don't care if they get killed anyway. Some guys are coming in with a knife, they kill a couple of guys and they get killed anyway. So we have to

watch out for those guys. And this captain he laid there and when they measured the angle of the entrance of the bullet wound, he said, 'right there.' And the marines opened fire on that tree... boy, that Jap just came down by the _____. He's dead because he's fired about ten times. He was so mad at that....

JS: He'd killed the captain.

WM: Yeah. We took the airfield. About the eleventh day, I guess, we took the airfield. Then we had to take Bloody Nose Ridge. And Jimmie King was the only one that was carrying top secret messages. He was so top secret that you can't even get the Navajos to send it. But you have to have a Navajo to take it.

JS: I see. Uh huh.

WM: That's where the top secret is...that the Navajo was trustworthy. Jimmie King was the only one that was carrying it. So he look over there and this sniper was embedded in the hills there. And this lava thing, with this lava volcano there...right in those ridges just...volcano outcry. They had their machine gun nests right in there in that hill there. And you can't fire big guns. Those 155 millimeter, you can't shoot them in there. You shoot too low. And set 'em a little high, you shoot too high...you go over the mountain and the Navy's on that side. Man, we get hell. 'Left the fire...you're hitting over here.' So we couldn't...they couldn't get those things. They had to call a suicide mission to go in there when the guns came out, there be a

Marine waiting...stuff the high explosive in there. Out of And sixteen suicide guys that went in there, I think only about two or three of them came back. Boy, but they stopped the....

JS: Stopped the guns. where he was. And he stayed over there on his

WM: Yeah. And...but this one, this sniper they couldn't get...he had a big caliber rifle because it blows the tires off the cars. That's what kinda thing he use. He'd have a train on...there's only one corner, this mountain coming down this corner and then the ocean...the only way you can go through, go around. And he had it pointed right on that place there. He'll get a man every once in awhile. But Jimmie King knew what it was. So when he gets near there he makes a dash for it. And goes through. And coming back the same way. So this secret message was so secret that even Jimmie King couldn't take it. They sent a man, a captain from a ship to take the message. And then they have to take Jimmie King to take the captain through the place. So he took it... took him...he went. He said, 'Right here is where we run across... or else you get shot if you walk.' And no hesitation. So they made a run for it. The captain backed out. Jimmie King ran across 'Come on!' And the captain was way back there saying, 'Afraid to go.' So Jimmie King came rushing back there through all that, that smart guy up there already knew what was going on. He missed Jimmie King when he ran back. So before that guy could do anything else he just grabbed that captain by the shoulder and started dragging

JS: him across there. He had to run then. And they ran across. And so they delivered their message. And so Jimmie King said, 'We gonna have to get that guy.' So he said he was gonna go over there and find out where he is. And he stayed over there on his own time and finally spotted that guy. Way up there. And he said that he was just laying there smoking a cigarette. He didn't have to...he didn't even have to aim.

JS: He had that place so well...

WM: Yeah. He said that thing right where he wanted it...only need to shoot. He hit somebody once in awhile. He hit one Jeep. A guy by the name, that Mills that I was talking about, he had his Jeep ripped out from under him. And so Jimmie King went over there and out set that guy. He know where he set and he came sitting down again and he got his M-1 beaded right on, on his head. Hit him right between the eyss. And he said that that guy just stood up and went...

JS: Straight down.

WM: Yep. That was the end of it. Of course, Jimmie King never did get anything for it.

JS: No. That's the trouble. Too many people didn't for those things.

WM: So that was it. And he saved a whole...

JS: A whole bunch of people.

WM: Yeah. So that's another talker.

JS: You betcha.

BL: Are we gonna talk to him?

JS: Uh, Mr. Benis from the Marine Corps is talking to him. Just finished with him a few minutes ago. He just left. He was an instructor, wasn't he? Later?

WM: Yeah. I think so. He was a replacement. Came out in 1943 I think. He joined us at Australia. And we got through there when we...I was made sergeant of the guard over there, too, one night. And I complained to the commanding officer. I said, 'I'm a corporal. I can't do a sergeant's job. I don't have to take no sergeant's duty without sergeant's stripes.' I said, 'That's the way you guys operate.' You know, I was talking to the captain... Marine officer. He say, 'You're a sergeant now.'

JS: So you were made a sergeant then.

WM: I was made a sergeant right there on the spot. And then I went and act as sergeant of the guards. And I placed those guys out there. I even had to place one guy crying because he made it this far, he wants to go back....see mama. And so we got through it to there, we got...that was just...what they call Division, it stays in the unit promotion.

JS: Uh huh.

WM: When you leave the unit you leave the rank there.

JS: Yeah.

WM: And so I left the First Division about ten days afterwards and...

JS: And you were a corporal again.

WM: Yeah. I was corporal again. But I never seen the...

JS: Sergeant's stripes.

WM: No. I never seen the papers. I don't know whether he said the truth or not but that's the way it was. He just sat there, 'You're a sergeant now.'

JS: Put it down and there you were.

WM: Yeah. Couldn't complain no more. So that's the way it happened and then we lost Harry Socce on that landing, I mean on that operation. And Tom White. And that's about the end of it, I guess. I left that island and went back to the rest area. When we got back to the rest area, John Benally said he was there. But God bless it, I don't remember it.

JS: You don't remember it, huh?

WM: He and I, we get off the ship. I went on that ship.

JS: I'll be darned. You missed each other.

WM: No, I don't remember. But he said, 'I was there.'

JS: Hmm. Uh huh. Well, sir, thank you very much.

James Nahkai, Jr.
Window Rock, Arizona

An Interview By
John D. Sylvester
July 15, 1971

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INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 15, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name James Nahkai, Jr.

Birth Date _____ Birthplace _____

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships _____

Informant's Occupation _____

Extended Comments Member Board of Directors of Navajo Forest Products

Member of Navajo Tribal Council

Chairman of Budget and Finance Committee

Postmaster at Tohatchii 23 years

New Mexico, Human Rights Commission Member

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No _____

Language of Recording English Translator _____

Interviewer's Name John D. Sylvester

(PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR EXTENDED INFORMATION)

FOR OFFICE USE

Date Received _____ Tape Reel No. 1162

Disposition of Tape University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

Rough Draft Made By Geoff Stevens Date _____

Proofed By Beverly Eichwald

Final Draft Made By Pearl Myers Date _____

Index Card No. _____ No. of Pages 34

Distribution of Copies University of Utah Library, Western Americana Division

cc: John D. Sylvester

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The following is an interview with James T. Nahkai, Jr., conducted by John D. Sylvester, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 15, 1971.

JS: "...1971. We have a tape with Mr. James H. Nahkai, Jr., post-master...Tohatchii, Arizona...former Code Talker, World War Two ...interviewee. Interviewer...John D. Sylvester.

Mr. Nahkai, when were you born?

JN: I was born February 17, 1924.

JS: And where were you born?

JN: I was born in Redrock, Arizona.

JS: Into which clan were you born, sir?

JN: I was born into the Banana Clan.

JS: And how does that go in Navajo?

JN: _____

JS: And what was your father's clan?

JN: Nakaiidine'e. Mexican Clan or something like that.

JS: Um hum, where did you go to school?

JN: My first twelve years I went to school in Farmington, New Mexico, they call it the Navajo Methodist Mission School.

JS: Let's see, when did you start school there? 1930...

JN: Anyway, I graduated in 1942.

JS: Graduated in 1942. Let's see, did you know Wilfred Billey? He was one of your classmates.

JN: Not exactly. He was...

JS: Ahead of you.

JN: No, behind me.

JS: That's right. He came back and finished after the war. But he was there about the same time.

JN: Yeah.

JS: A couple of other gentlemen that became Code Talkers went there.

JN: Yeah. Yeah, we all...there were a bunch of them going in. At the time I was... in 1943 I was in college, and there were a bunch of the boys that I used to go to school with that were in school that were going into the service. And so I said, "Well, I'm going to go with them." At least we'd have company.

JS: Where were you in college, sir?

JN: At Fort Lewis College.

JS: Up at Hesperus at the time.

JN: Hesperus at the time.

JS: Um hum. I'm a graduate of Fort Lewis College, myself.

JN: Are you?

JS: Yes. I graduated in 1966.

JN: 1966. Un huh.

JS: You were at Fort Lewis when you joined. What year...I mean, what month was that in 1943? Do you remember?

JN: Um...March.

JS: March, 1943. Did all of you go in as a platoon to basic, or as a group?

JN: All of us went in as a platoon. Platoon 297, they called it.

JS: And where did you take basic...at San Diego?

JN: San Diego.

JS: And then from San Diego where did you go?

JN: From San Diego we went to Camp Pendleton. This was where the school was...the Code Talker school was.

JS: How were the men selected for Code Talker school?

JN: Well, you, you had to learn...I mean you had to have known the English language, you know, writing and reading. And then you must ...you've got to know Navajo

JS: Obviously. Well, some Navajos didn't make it into the Code Talker school.

JN: No. Some didn't make it into the Code Talkers' school. There was about two or three fellows that went in the same platoon I was in ...went through boot camp. When we got up to Camp Pendleton their vocabulary of the English language was a little low, so they could not.

JS: I see. It depended on how much English they could read and write as well as how well they spoke Navajo. How long was your Code Talkers' school? Do you remember about how long? How long it took you to go through school there?

JN: Let's see. I don't quite remember, but I think it was about two or three months.

JS: Two or three months. Was it quite intensive training?

JN: Well...a lot of it was classroom for awhile. And after the classroom ...this was to get the words and the alphabet, you know, transposed.

JS: All memorization, was it?

JN: Uh huh. Uh huh. All memorization. No, nothing on a piece of paper.

JS: Couldn't put it down?

JN: No. And then after that was field work with the radio.

JS: Practicing with the radio.

JN: Yes. Practicing with the radio.

JS: What type of radio equipment did you use?

JN: Well, from the beginning we used what they called TBXs. They were small hand generated things. We have to set it up and do our own calibration. They would give in the channel to work on and then we'd have to calibrate to go on. I mean this is where we got to know calibration, they call it...of radio. But afterwards, after we got overseas we got the smaller walkie-talkie size. They call them SER 300s. That we'd just have on our backs. They had batteries in them.

JS: I see. Much easier for a man in the field.

JN: Um huh.

JS: When you graduated from Code Talkers' school...oh, by the way, who were your instructors? Do you remember any of your instructors?

JN: Well I remember John Benally...

JS: John Benally.

JN: And, uh, Rex Kontz, I guess.

JS: Was Mr. Johnston there at that time?

JN: Yeah. Yeah. Well he's one of the instructors...

JS: He's one of the instructors there.

JN: He's the senior instructor, I guess you'd call it.

JS: Um huh. He was sergeant at that time, I believe. I think that's what he....

JN: No, he...we'll never forget him.

JS: That's sort of hard... He's quite the character.

JN: Um huh.

JS: The, uh, which division did you get assigned to?

JN: Well, we left in September of '43 and, uh, went to, uh, by ship to New Caledonia. And from New Caledonia the whole platoon was dispersed. Some went to the 2nd, some went to the 3rd. I went to the First Marine Division which was based in Australia, Brisbane, Australia. And, uh, this is where I joined the outfit and from there we went up on into three or four campaigns.

JS: Um hmm. In other words, your platoon went over more or less as a replacement platoon for all of the divisions.

JN: Right. Right.

JS: And you filled in vacancies throughout.

JN: Um hmm.

JS: What was your first impression of Australia?

JN: Australia?...

JS: Did it make that much of an impression on you? ...As a country, or as a people?

JN: Well, they, they, um, their lingo. This was the first impression. You start talking English to them, our English, they don't quite understand it. So it took us about two or three weeks before we could get used to them. Uh, just like you go to USO and you want to dance with one of them...one of these girls, they say, "I'm knocked up. Go jazz my sister." So, in American 'knocked up' means something else.

JS: Yes, it does indeed.

JN: She meant she was tired.

JS: Right. I suspect it would cause difficulties. For sure.

JN: And, you know, there's different words you have to get used to. The people were nice and, uh, as usual, you know, servicemen, as servicemen we would up in the pubs. They had good beer.

JS: Yes. I've been told so.

JN: They were, like I say, the people were fine. And, they, they, the women folk really liked the Indians. They went for them. And, uh, I don't know why. And, uh, and then some of the, and, uh, there were some Negroes there...colored people. I guess they told, they ask us about these colored people. Are they Indians? Or are...

they tell us they're Indians and they're black because they come over here to fight...be night fighters.

JS: Pretty good line to give to the girls.

JN: And, I say, "No. No." I says, "That isn't so." And, I, we didn't stay there long. Probably October, maybe. And then we moved up on into New Guinea. And from New Guinea we hit Cape Gloucester.

JS: Cape Gloucester was your first major action?

JN: Uh huh.

JS: Were you in a headquarters company or were you on a front line?

JN: I was with the 11th Marines of the First Marine Division, which is an artillery regiment. And I was in Headquarters and Service Battalion of the regiment. And each, I mean then there were about four battalions of what they call 105s and each one had a Code Talker in them...some two, I think. And there was two of us at the, at headquarters?

JS: Who was your partner at headquarters?

JN: Lloyd Oliver was his name, for awhile.

JS: Is he still alive.

JN: Uh, yeah. I hear he's in Phoenix.

JS: In Phoenix. Um hmm.

JN: And, uh, whatever the colonel wanted to relay to the battalions we relayed.

JS: In code.

JN: And they wanted a certain sector hit. So and so, or so and so, we relayed in Navajo.

JS: You had to relay all of the quadrants and all of the...messages.

JN: Right. Um hmm. And they used this everyday for the password.

JS: To change the password...each...around the whole battalion.

JN: Uh huh.

JS: Do you remember any of the other Navajos that served in the other three battalions?

JN: Well, there was Thomas Claw. I got to see him here. And there was a Jerome Dodge...I didn't see...he wasn't here. And, uh, I don't quite remember the other two. See, we never did see them much.

JS: Just over the phone.

JN: Uh huh. Just over the radio and phone. Uh huh. Once in awhile we get together, but they, you know their work is different in the battalion. There with the guns there, so... And we're back here sort of...

JS: You were more or less behind the lines with the communication center for the artillery. I see.

JN: Right. Um hmm.

JS: Did your positions ever get hit by Japanese artillery or...?

JN: Yeah. Yeah. Our second campaign, what they call Peleliu..we, our front lines was from this here as far as those rocks over there.

JS: A little over a hundred yards away.

JN: Uh huh. And our 105s were right in the back of us and we were right in front of them. It was just going point blank.

JS: Rather loud to be around the guns, I suspect.

JN: Um hmm.

JS: Communications probably be a little different.

JN: That was just for about two or three days that happened. After that they pushed them out over...

JS: Then from Cape Gloucester you went to Peleliu.

JN: From Cape Gloucester we went to Peleliu and from Peleliu to Okinawa. And from Okinawa to China.

JS: Which part of China were you in?

JN: I was in the northern part around Tientsin.

JS: Around Tientsin. What was your duty...what were your duties in China as a battalion and, well, of course, your duties were still Code Talking.

JN: Yeah, we were still Code Talkers...we still sent messages. Not as many. Maybe it was cut in half. And we started...being in the communications section we did, we did part of what they called the message center work. That's what I did. And a lot of papers would come in and we have to distribute here and there. Hand carry some.

JS: What were the Marines in China for? Do you...?

JN: To, uh, round up the Japanese.

JS: Um hmm... Some historians believe that they went in, um, more or less,

to keep the railroad open and away from the Communists at that time.

JN: Well, some places I think this was true.

JS: That was true. Did you have many Japanese to round up in China?

JN: Yeah. We had quite a few.

JS: A number of prisoners.

JN: Uh huh. Yeah, we...

JS: Did you go...did you happen to go to Japan?

JN: No.

JS: During your tour of duty at all?

JN: No.

JS: When did you come back to the United States from China?

JN: 19.., uh, February of 1966, I think it was.

JS: 1946?

JN: Yeah...'46.

JS: And, were you discharged when you came back?

JN: Right.

JS: Where were you discharged?

JN: San Diego.

JS: In San Diego.

JN: Uh huh.

JS: Did you return immediately to your home area here?

JN: I did. And then I worked for about...see, that was towards the end of school session. So, I worked for awhile and then I went back

Fort Lewis again. At Hesperus. I finished out my second year.

They gave me the rest of my first year.

JS: Okay. That sounds great. And where did you go from there?

JN: From there after that I went up to Fort Collins. And stayed there almost a year. In the meantime, when I came back I got married, got children. When I moved up there, you know, the V.A. wasn't paying, you know, for a family it was tough.

JS: You bet.

JN: With all the studying and all the other responsibilities, you know, that you assume. So, I just quit toward the end of the third year there. Came back and went to work.

JS: What were you studying in Fort Collins?

JN: Engineering. Civil engineering...road construction.

JS: Um hmm. And then when you returned from Fort Collins you said you returned to go to work. How large a family did you have at that time?

JN: I had one, one child then.

JS: One child. The G.I. Bill, you say, didn't really help out except if you were single.

JN: No. If you were single it would be all right. But...if you have to, you know, live by yourself. If I went up there...if I was married and went up by myself, you know, I could have made it.

JS: It's hard to leave a wife...a new wife at home.

JN: Uh huh. They want to go, so...

JS: And where did you begin working then after you returned from Fort Collins?

JN: Well, I came back down and went to Tohatchii, here. They had a trading post there. There was a Navajo man and an Anglo fellow that were in partnership. And they needed a manager to run that store. I had done a little, you know, trading post work before during the summer. And they asked me if they would, if I would work for them. I said, "Sure." And my wife, see her sister is married to this Navajo man.

JS: What is his name?

JN: Albert Arnold is his name. And, uh, so I says, "Okay, I'll go to work." And I managed the place for about four or five years. And in the meantime, the partnership begins to sour and they were disagreeing on this and that. One day the next door neighbor, who's tried a cafe...uh, wasn't you know, he wasn't making it. He asked me if I could, if I would buy his business and everything with it. So, in the mean...before ...while I was in the trading post there, the postmastership went up for appointment. So I submitted my papers and I got it. So I had the post office at the trading post. And, uh, when this other opening came up I accepted it and moved the post office over there. And started a post office and a cafe for awhile. The cafe, we run it for awhile, but the Mrs., she got tired of the different types of things the people would order. Some wanted hamburgers raw inside, raw on one side, or...

JS: People are finicky eaters.

JN: The heck with it. She says, "I think I'm tired of cafe, now." So we ...then I applied for a trader's lease, in which I could sell groceries

beside the post office. See, at the time, the post office was a fourth class. It wasn't paying too much...enough to live on. But we said, maybe...but being a fourth class postmaster you can have another business on the side. And, so, I says, "Well heck, let's start a little store with it. So, Window Rock said okay.

JS: Was the other trading post next door still going well?

JN: Yeah, It was still going.

JS: Um hmmm. You got your license and now you have...I know you have a store there now. So it's a rather large store, isn't it?

JN: No. No. It isn't.

JS: It's still rather small.

JN: It's small, because in the meantime the post office grew, too. So I have to put more time on that side. And, uh, she tried to take care of the little store...which she still is. Eventually I guess, we plan to enlarge it, but the post office is still a lot of work for her now, so... And me now being a councilman, I'm away from it.

JS: Your other duties keep you away quite a bit.

JN: Uh huh.

JS: You mentioned the other night in our conversation that you were a member of the Board of Directors of the Forest Products.

JN: Navajo Forest Products Industry.

JS: Yeah. Forest Products Industry.

JN: This, this was about two years ago, see. Appointed me to this.

JS: How large a board is that?

JN: Uh, there's nine members, I think.

JS: Nine members

JN: Uh huh.

JS: And, uh, the whole tribal timber industry, uh, planting, I take it for new trees...fire fighting...all of this come under you eventually?

JN: Uh, no.

JS: Or are you just only concerned with the sale and management?

JN: We're just only concerned with the, uh, with the, uh, lumber. With the, uh, with the uh,...

JS: Finished product.

JN: With the finished product. No...with the tree as it comes in and goes out, as lumber. The Tribe owns the lumber, they sell it to us, and then we...

JS: I see. Is this a private concern? Or is it a tribal concern?

JN: It's a tribal concern. But we have to run it like a private concern, you know that.

JS: I see. Yeah. Underneath the tribal structure it's set up as a corporation type.

JN: Yeah. It's an enterprise.

JS: Uh huh. Yeah. I see. Then who in the Navajo Tribal structure is concerned with the land management...the planting of the new tree and managing the trees?

JN: Well, I think it comes under B.I.A.

JS: Under B.I.A. I see. As fish and wildlife comes under B.I.A.?

JN: Yeah. Uh huh. But really it should be under the Tribe, but because it's their trees and their property. And they're supposed to take of that.

JS: It would help, I think, quite a bit if some of the young Navajo forestry students...I noticed there were some up in the summer...this summer up in some of the mountains there...if they could take it over.

JN: Yeah. I think eventually they'll...I think eventually we'll have a forest department in the Navajo Tribal government structure, so...

JS: Well, you have enough forest to do such.

JN: Uh huh. But they, you know, the people have got to realize that's their property and they got to take care of it. And as of today, the majority of the Navajo, I mean, the government has done so much for them all these year, they, you know, it's hard for them to give them something now and tell 'em, "here...it's yours...take care of it."

JS: It's hard for them to accept the responsibility.

JN: Uh huh. Right. Right.

JS: I see.

JN: This was true of maybe half of them. The other half, they know what it is to have sheep, cattle...they know...they take care of these things.

JS: Sure. The private property as well as the public property. Now that was two years ago you became part of the Board of Directors there. You

also have been now elected councilman. How long have you been a councilman?

JN: I was elected last fall. I'll be councilman for four years.

JS: Four years. Are you planning on running again, already...or do you know?

JN: It's up to the people. I just tell them, it's up to you. If you want me in, nominate me.

JS: Are they nominated through chapter office?

JN: Right.

JS: And then, does each chapter have to have their own...

JN: Each chapter has their own councilman and they have their own elections there.

JS: I see. The only offices selected at the Reservation at large are the chairman and vice chairman.

JN: Right. The chairman, uh huh.

JS: And the vice chairman automatically comes in on the ticket.

JN: Why he, uh huh, he comes along with the chairman. Really, it's just for the chairman.

JS: Um hmm. Where was Mr. MacDonald from originally?

JN: Well, Mr. MacDonald was from Teec Nos Pas.

JS: Teec Nos Pas?

JN: Um hum. Arizona.

JS: Um hmm. Know where it is. Are you related in any way to the former

Chairman Raymond Nahkai?

JN: Uh, Mr. Nahkai was a cousin of mine. Second cousin.

JS: Second cousin of yours. I was just wondering. The name is not that uncommon.

JN: Well, he comes over from Lukachukai way and my father comes from Redrock, as you notice where I was born. That's just a few miles, about fifteen miles away from each other.

JS: You spell your name with an 'h', don't you?

JN: Right.

JS: N A H K A I. I was hoping I'd get it correct for you. And he didn't, I noticed.

JN: And my mother is from Teec Nos Pas. And she's the sister to Peter's mother.

JS: Mr. MacDonald? The chairman now. So you're all...you're related to both of them a little bit.

JN: Right. More so to Peter than Mr. Nahkai was. See, we, we're real cousins. Well, in Navajo we call each other brother, because we have the same...

JS: Same clans.

JN: Same clan...the same mother, you know. My mother is the sister to his mother, so...

JS: So you're actually first cousins, blood cousins, as well as clan brothers.

JN: Uh huh.

JS: Uh hmmm. That's very interesting. Now he left the Reservation for awhile

after he was a Code Talker and became...was it in electronics?

JN: Electrical engineer. He was working down in California in one of these missile factories or something like that I think he said.

JS: I. Yes. I read a couple of articles and I think, thought I had remembered that.

JN: Yeah. He went into engineering just like I wanted to go into engineering. But...I got sidetracked. I should have been a business administration major instead of a engineering major.

JS: Especially after they made you chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee. That must entail an awful lot of work. How large a committee do you have on this?

JN: Oh, we, I have ten members.

JS: What's, approximately, a general annual budget for your group, for the Nation?

JN: Well, this last one, this last one we presented to the Council a 16.9 million budget, but the Council upped it to 18 million...which they can do. We tried to stay within our income...within our revenue.

JS: I see. Where does most of the Tribal, or Navajo Nation revenue come from?

JN: Mostly from, uh, gas, oil, uranium.

JS: The royalties.

JN: The royalties, uh huh. And from businesses on the Reservation.

JS: Also, I suspect, there must be some from the forest products.

JN: Yeah. They pay so much. Yeah. The Tribe gets paid for the trees when they sell it to us. Sell it to NFPI, I mean.

JS: Uh huh. I see what you mean. Being associated with... Then with the Budget and Finance Committee, do they...you just...are the recommendation committee. You set up the budgets.

JN: Yeah. We just set up the recommendation and present it to the Council.

JS: And then the Council has the final say-so on it.

JN: Right.

JS: Where did the extra one million dollars for the wool buying come from? Was that appropriated as a contingency fund, or...

JN: Uh, no. We have to dig into the general, uh, reserve to get that.

JS: I see. And then the Tribe will sell it to try to get their money back. Is that what's going to happen?

JN: Um hmm.

JS: What, uh, on the Reservation...especially the western part of the Reservation...I've noticed how dry it is all over the Reservation this year, but there especially. Is the tribe having to pay for the water that's being hauled there or are the people in the individual chapter areas having to pay for such?

JN: The water...well, I think some of the water is, uh, is being paid for. Because it isn't being...they aren't getting it on the Reservation in some places. So, you know, they have to go off. And, I think in the majority of places they are getting it on the Reservation and just hauling it.

JS: I see. Does federal drought disaster aid...is that applicable to the Reservation area?

JN: Right.

JS: It is.

JN: This is where BIA got a lot of its money to help the tribe. Which to dig wells and do the hauling.

JS: I see. The BIA is doing the hauling and not the tribe. Is that correct?

JN: The majority of the hauling is being paid for by BIA.

JS: I see.

JN: We, we, we, uh, appropriated some, you know, to help.

JS: Another question on the Marine Corps, before I get completely off the subject: What, uh, do you have an evaluation of what your Marine Corps experience did or did not do for you?

JN: Well...being a Marine...well, in the Marines, you know they teach you discipline. You either learn it or they kick you out. And this, I mean, this has helped me a lot. In any job I've been in I've learned that one phrase: If you want to be...let's see, what was it?...If you want to give orders you've got to learn to take orders. See...they go hand in hand.

JS: I'm sure they do.

JN: And it, it, it, the training they pounded into us just stuck.

JS: So you'dyou'd say that's a very positive thing for you?

JN: Right. Uh huh.

JS: Did you have a ceremony before you went over or after you returned from the Marine Corps?

JN: No. No. My parents were, uh, had taken on the Christian religion, so ...they, they I mean, they respect the Navajo religion and everything like that...

JS: But their religion is the Christian religion.

JN: Uh huh.

JS: There are some men who had the ceremonies when they returned, and I was wondering if you had known anybody that brought back, uh, say hair from Japan for the Squaw Dance Ceremony or something like that.

JN: I think some did. Uh huh. Some firm believers in the Navajo religion did this I think. Today I have a sabre and a...well, that's all I have --a sabre. And every now and then they, some guy will stop and want to take a piece of wood of it. I say, "No. I like to keep this thing intact."

JS: They want it because of the...they were over in Japan, or fought the Japanese and the Japanese were their enemy...suspected it work the same way with the Germans and other enemies of the nation.

JN: Right. Um hmm.

JS: What other jobs did you mention the other day, uh, that you are now involved in?

JN: Well, this convention they had in Albuquerque for the last four days... I was representing the New Mexico Commission on Indian Affairs, of

which I am a member too.

JS: You're a member of that. How large a group is that?

JN: That's about nine members too.

JS: Now does this...this would cover all of the pueblos of the Navajo Nation?

JN: Right. This commission takes care of all the Indians in New Mexico.

JS: Um hmm. Now, that's a state commission, right?

JN: Appointed by the governor.

JS: Um hmm. And how much time does that take up?

JN: Oh...we meet about once a month. Sometimes more than that, but it averages once a month.

JS: What type of duties does the New Mexico or the State Commission of Indian Affairs have?

JN: The, the different tribes present their problems to us. Especially concerning state government...state problems. We're sort of a clearing house...we can go to right to the governor or go to one of the departments and tell them we're so-and-so and we'd like to know how he can help these people or why you're not helping them. And if we can't do this...if we don't have too much say-so or if they won't listen to us, we go directly to the governor. Tell him: you have some person working here that isn't interested in helping anybody. Maybe you should, uh...

JS: Take a second look at him.

JN: Yeah.

JS: I understand. There's a lot of those people in government--all over the place, I think. It seems like most of them are concerned, but there's still those ones that aren't. There just there for the political reasons of the job. You're on the New Mexico Commission of Indian Affairs, the Navajo Nation Tribal Council, chairman of the budget committee on that, and finance, and the Forest Products Board as well as being a postmaster and store owner. Do you think you have a full enough life?

JN: Yeah.

JS: Or do you want more?

JN: And I'm also a member of the, what they call, the board of governors for the Rehoboth Hospital out here. Near Gallup. And this is a different experience.

JS: I'm sure it would be. What type of things do you have to encounter there?

JN: Well, they, they, they, it's a new hospital and they're encountering financial problems and we have to see where we can get some money for them. We have to do a little recruiting, too.

JS: Um hmm. Is this a private hospital?

JN: It's a private hospital. Uh huh.

JS: And, uh, who own it?

JN: The church.

JS: The church?

JN: Uh huh. It's run by Luke's Society, which is a group of doctors, I think it is. So they, most of it is run by donations, though. By members of the church, I think. Yeah.

JS: How many beds does it have?

JN: It has a thirty bed...it's a thirty bed hospital. And trying to go into a forty one.

JS: There's always room for expansion.

JN: Um hmm. And quite a few of the Navajos go there...Indians go there... Anglos. Because there's a difference in treatment they say they get in the McKinley County Hospital and the Public Health Hospital.

JS: And the Rehoboth Hospital.

JN: Um hmm.

JS: Better treatment.

JN: Better treatment there

JS: Probably much more personalized.

JN: Right. Right.

JS: How large a family do you have, Mr. Nahkai?

JN: I have, uh, three girls and one boy.

JS: And how old are they?

JN: The oldest girl is 23. And then comes the boy--he's 21. Then comes a girl--she's 18. And then the other girl is 15.

JS: Is fifteen. Now they all...the three oldest ones graduated from high school?

JN: Uh, let's see. Sharon graduated. Tommy graduated. Charlene graduated.

JS: Um hmm. Which high school did they attend?

JN: Uh, Sharon graduated from the Mission School...Methodist Mission School. And Tommy graduated from Gallup High. And Charlene graduated from Tohatchii High.

JS: I didn't know there was a high school there.

JN: Yeah. This was the first year they graduated, uh, had a graduating class, and she graduated with them.

JS: Oh, that's very nice...being graduated at home. Now, is that run by McKinley County Schools?

JN: Right. Well now at one time I was also a member of the Gallup-McKinley County School Board, which...I was a member in that for about six or seven years. Before, there was only a Gallup School System, uh, Gallup School Board. And then the county had their own. And I was on the county school board. And, uh, about 19...1956 there was consolidation.

JS: They joined the two together.

JN: Uh huh. So now it's Gallup-McKinley County School Board.

JS: It's said to be one of the better school boards and school districts in the whole state of New Mexico...one of the best.

JN: Right. Uh huh.

JS: Do they have a bi-lingual program for Indian children, now?

JN: In the public school system?

JS: In the Gallup-McKinley County schools at all?

JN: Not, not too much. Not too much yet.

JS: I know they've been experimenting with it in Albuquerque with the Spanish-American youngsters and, uh, I think it would help the Navajo youngster quite a bit if they could come to school and speak Navajo and learn English as another language, instead of having English forced on them.

JN: Um huh.

JS: And you said your other daughter is fifteen. She's going...

JN: She's going to Tohatchii.

JS: She's at Tohatchii.

JN: ...to, uh, Fort Lewis for a couple of years...and she got married.

JS: She's married. And how many grandchildren do you have?

JN: None from her.

JS: None from her. Any from your son?

JN: The son...he is finishing at the University of New Mexico this coming month.

JS: What's his major?

JN: He's majoring, he said, in composite social studies and a minor in history.

JS: Very interesting. Does he plan on teaching or...?

JN: Secondary.

JS: Excellent. Does he plan to come back to the Reservation area?

JN: Well, yes. He either wants to go to the BIA or the public school system.

JS: The public school system somewhere here?

JN: Uh huh.

JS: How many, uh, BIA schools are in this general area?

JN: Which general area are you...?

JS: The western, I mean, the eastern section of the Reservation. Um, the general area of Tohatchii, uh, Shiprock, Gallup.

JN: Maybe, seven.

JS: Maybe seven. Let's see. There's one at Fort Wingate, is that correct? Is there one at Fort Defiance?

JN: Right.

JS: Is that a public school?

JN: No...if you count Fort Defiance I think there would be ten altogether.

JS: I see. And then Tohatchii is a public school.

JN: Has a public and a government school.

JS: That's right. I remember the government school there. Is the public school right there by the government school?

JN: Right.

JS: And Shiprock has both?

JN: They have both too. Uh huh.

JS: I see. What do you see as the main needs for education? What type of patterns do you think are necessary? Do you agree with the schools

such as Intermountain--the boarding school concept? Or would you rather see them stay here in day schools or public schools in their own area?

JN: I'd rather see the Navajo children stay here at home. In boarding schools where, where, you know, where there should be a boarding school...say, uh, if the roads aren't good to this certain school, well, put them in a...make a boarding school out of it. But if they are good roads and passable roads going to some of these schools, make them public schools. You know, make 'em a day by day basis school... public school system style. And that way a lot of these kids can stay here...go home and do some chores...have their mother and father near them to supervise them, to help them in whatever they can in school. Because it seems like we're sending our kids away too much and there's beginning to be a gap between home-life and school-life. And this is where the problem... This is why we're getting problems. There's at least half a year or all year to look over these kids. There, there, sure, maybe treatment is a little better over there in some of these big boarding schools. But still, I, I...we're taking away responsibility away from the mother and father.

JS: Yes. I understand. There was a comment not too long ago that the boarding school was good for the kids from outlying areas, just as you said. But you'd rather see those boarding schools on the Reservation.

JN: Right. Right. We need the jobs here too.

JS: Surely.

JN: Because you can see the unemployment section of the tribe...it's getting large too.

JS: Are there a lot of unemployed teachers on the Reservation?

JN: By teachers, you mean both Navajo and Anglo, or...?

JS: I was specifically thinking of Navajo.

JN: Well, there aren't too many...there aren't very many Navajo teachers yet. Most of them do have jobs, though.

JS: That are here on...

JN: Right. Uh, huh.

JS: And then, uh, I suspect there are some Anglos that could teach here on the Reservation area that are around already.

JN: Right.

JS: The...what do you see as the major problems facing the Navajo Nation, as a councilman? Is it lack of money for programs or...what do you see as the major areas for improvement?

JN: Well, there is...there has to be a lot of things done on the Reservation. There's got to be more money appropriated for road construction. More money for schools. More money for domestic water home use. Like I was saying one time, any American home you go to, they always seem to have some water. Either in form of a well, you know, an electric pump style or else one of these old fashioned hand pumps right in their back yard. And today you go to a majority of these Navajos' homes...the poor people have to haul their water. Why

can't they just sink a little well for them in their backyard and they can pump it out by hand? Like the average American home. Is this right? 'Cause every American home I've been to has a little pump or a...

JS: There's a water supply somewhere. If you're in a city it's usually the city water supply that's forced to the home. I'd give a good percentage of 90 per cent at least. And, I'm sure that there are some areas that they have to haul water. I know in some of the areas of the South they do to their farms... uh, both Negro and white farmers have to in the South...a few areas. But most homes, you're right, do have water there, or within at least, from here to the fence ...within, you know, fifty feet or whatever, of their home. And, uh, some of the men I've been talking to out in the Pinedale-Mariano Lake area and over into the city, have asked, "Why can't we drill a well here?" One man out in, uh, Mariano Lake area has a well drilled by the BIA or by the Tribe, I can't remember which, one of the two... but they had to cap it because they had no money for the windmill. And here he's still having to haul water almost twenty miles and that well is right on top of the hill. And so he had some complaints... I'll guarantee you. He asked me to go see Perry Allen and a few other people for him to see if he couldn't get something if just a tank up there instead of... But I agree, that's a definite problem.

JN: Because water, you know, through water you can do a lot of things.

JS: Well, much of the arid lands here that are on the Reservation, if they had enough water could be planted and be and have rich fields ...it's rich soil, but it's dry. And then of course it would help all of the stock.

JN: Right. Like you say, we need the money. The Tribal pot, the treasurer is gradually going down. So we're, this new council, this new, uh, like the new Budget and Finance Committee, we're trying to look into other areas--the federal government, or else we're seeing if we can get money to, that will either match what they want or else through grants. And, uh, because every year there's an increase in people so there's an increase for need. So we got to be looking elsewhere for money. This money that's coming in is going down.

JS: Is the Reservation large enough to hold all of the Navajo people that are here now?

JN: Yeah.

JS: I realize it's vast area, but as we were just mentioning it's quite an unproductive area without water. How many people do they estimate that the Navajo Nation has now? Is there an estimate or census?

JN: There's just an estimation of about 130,000 now, I think.

JS: Most of those right here in this...on the Reservation area?

JN: I'd say about 120,000.

JS: 120,000. And you mentioned an unemployment problem. Do you know the rate of unemployment?

JN: No. I don't really know the rate, but I know there's see, say for my area one out of every ten, maybe.

JS: Is unemployed?

JN: Um hmm.

JS: There's not enough room for them all to be employed with their sheepherders, I mean with their own flocks. And so they have to go into other areas. Do you have some men from your area working up, say at Fairchild plant?

JN: Yeah. There's a lot our, a lot of our people working here at Window Rock, Gallup, Fairchild...they're all...

JS: They have to quite a ways for work?

JN: Right.

JS: Do you have anything else you'd like to add to this tape?

Concerning either the Navajo Nation or the Code Talkers?

JN: Well, uh, the Navajo Nation, the people themselves are going to have to go into a lot of more business enterprises. This way they'll understand what it is to be a businessman. As of today, there's very few and they don't understand why a businessman must say this to them,...'No', to them or 'Yes', to them or, because they're not business minded yet. And they need to be...and they've got to be. So...it's going to take education and a lot of work by us councilmen, local chapter officers, people that are interested to help these people to go into business. And, uh, because I've always said that.

They, they, they go to go into business and understand it themselves before they can...

JS: What type of businesses do you foresee as being very adequate here on the Reservation?

JN: Well, everybody's got to eat...so wherever you go I'd like to see a small grocery store. Wherever you go you go by car, got to have a gas station--garage. And some places you got to have a feed store, hardware stores. The larger places, the larger centers of population you need more, you know, variety of things.

JS: Very much then you're seeing on the Reservation what we see off the Reservation in most towns. In other words, the small town just has the regular small businesses to take care of the people there...the larger towns have the entertainment facilities etc.

JN: It's gradually going in this direction, but like I say, it's money that's holding back a lot of these young fellows that are eager to go into business.

JS: Does the Small Business Administration offer any help at all?

JN: They offer some help, but they'll, they'll...just enough, which isn't enough in some places.

JS: Yes. People new to business, uh, should have a little bit of reserve in case the first go around doesn't quite make it in the... I see, well, Mr. Nahkai, I sure appreciate you're sitting here and talking with us. And we'll be glad to send you a transcript of this if you'll

INTERVIEW: James Nahkai, Jr.

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give your address. Do you have a box number in Tohatchii to send it to?

JN: Right. If you just send it there, I'll get it.

JS: I have a feeling that you would, being a postmaster there wouldn't be any problems, but I thought I might as well ask if you had a box number.

JN: Box 118

JS: Box 118. Okay. Very good. And the zip code?

JN: 87325.'

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Dennie Hosteen
Window Rock, Arizona

An Interview By

John D. Sylvester
and
Benjamin Lee

July 10, 1971

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INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Dennie Hosteen

Birth Date (August?) Nov. 15, 1922 Birthplace Salina Springs, Ariz.

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships Ta'chii'nii and Kiiyaa'aanii clans

Informant's Occupation _____

Extended Comments 9th Marines of 3rd Marine Division on Bougainville,

Iwo Jima

Tape Recording Made? Yes x No _____

Language of Recording English Translator _____

Interviewer's Name John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

(PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR EXTENDED INFORMATION)

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Date Received _____ Tape Reel No. 1170

Disposition of Tape University of Utah, Western Americana

Rough Draft Made By G. Stevens Date 11-18-71

Proofed By R. Dalby

Final Draft Made By B. Eichwald Date 7-12-72

Index Card No. 1170 No. of Pages 31

Distribution of Copies University of Utah, Western Americana

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The following is an interview with Dennie Hosteen, conducted by John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971.

H: I was working at Salina Mission, you know. Building that mission.

S: Building the mission.

H: Uh huh. Helping out.

S: Helping being a carpenter on it?

H: Yeah, I was a mason. Well, the policeman went out to, well, they were going to see my father to get his okay, you know. To see that we get to school. So we went back in the hogan and somehow I laid down, you know, and I went to sleep. _____ my mother. Well, it took quite awhile before the policeman came back. And that's when I went to sleep and I didn't have time to ---

L: To run.

H: To run. [Laughter]

S: He got a hold of you then that time.

H: Yeah. He got a hold of me that time. Well, anyway, that's when they came back and I had to hid behind the rocks. When the policeman came in my father okayed for me to go to school and my sister, but the other one, my youngest brother, was too young yet. _____ And that's how I began my school.

S: And where did they take you to school?

H: Uh, Chinle.

S: To Chinle. The boarding school there?

H: The boarding school there.

S: Uh huh. How far did you go in school?

H: Well, I went through beginners at Chinle and then from there I was transferred to Fort Defiance, the Indian School. And I finished my grammar school there at, eighth grade. Graduated from eighth grade in 1940. And then from there I went to Tuba City. And that was a new program because they don't send any more Navajos out of the reservation so they have to keep all the students within the reservation at that time. So I was thinking I want to go to Santa Fe. But they, they didn't let us go out of the reservation anymore. So I took Tuba City. Better than taking Shiprock or Fort Wingate. I was there for one year and from there I was interested in going to a mission school. So I applied for _____ Mission. That's where I was going to school when I joined the Marines.

S: You volunteered to go into the Marines?

H: Yeah.

S: In what year was this?

H: This was October, 1942.

S: October of 1942. How had you heard about the Marines and about the Code Talkers?

H: Well, there was a recruiting outfit came out there, and one

of them was a Navajo. His name is Johnny Manuelito.

S: Johnny Manuelito.

H: He was one of the Code Talkers. Yeah.

S: Uh huh.

H: So I just got interested in joining when they were there. Before, before I was thinking about going into the Army. And I had everything filled out. Application, you know, because the Army sent me some applications. I was writing to Washington for that. So instead of that I went into Marine.

S: And where did you go into basic training?

H: I was in San Diego Marine Corps Base.

S: Uh huh. And after basic training --- What was your experience like in basic training? Was it hard?

H: No. I think everything came out just fine.

S: Uh huh.

H: I didn't have no difficulty going through training. And I made 'sharpshooter'. I never had a big rifle in my life.

S: And where did you go after basic training?

H: From there we went to Camp Elliott.

S: Camp Elliott.

H: We went there for communications school, yes. For this Code Talker school.

S: How many weeks was your communications school?

H: I don't remember how many weeks it was. I think it was four weeks. Because after we finished with it came in there as the Marine Corps --- It didn't take us long. I was about a month, I believe. And then we had to join the other units, you know.

S: Which unit were you assigned to?

H: I was assigned to Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines.

S: In which division?

H: 3rd Marine Division.

S: 3rd Marine Division.

H: At that time the 3rd Marine Division was just forming.

S: Yes, uh huh. Did you get furlough during training to come back home?

H: No. I didn't have any leave at all. They just sent us right overseas.

S: And where did you go from, once you joined the 3rd Marine Division?

H: I joined the 9th Marines in Camp Pendleton.

S: In Camp Pendleton. And where were you sent?

H: We stayed there a couple of days and then we boarded a ship in San Diego. It was --- The night before we sailed, the

day, the date we sailed was January 24, 1943. And it was on the USS Mount Vernon.

S: Mount Vernon. Uh huh.

H: One of the big transport ships. It used to be a liner, I think before the war.

S: Was this the first time you'd ever been on a big ship?

H: Uh huh.

S: How did you like that?

H: Well, it was a nice ride on the ocean.

S: Did anybody get seasick?

H: No. Not going over there. It was a real nice cruise out to New Zealand.

S: You went to New Zealand?

H: Yeah. We went to New Zealand. We got into New Zealand February 11, 1943.

S: Which port in New Zealand did you ---

H: Auckland.

S: At Auckland. How did you find the New Zealand people?

H: They were quite welcoming, I think, because they welcomed us there through the street. We had to go, we had to parade through the street.

S: Uh huh. Did you have any ---

H: You know the bands, the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps Hymn

H: playing.

S: Beautiful. Did you have any problem understanding the New Zealand English accent?

H: No. Not quite. But I had to get used to the money, too.

S: Yes.

H: I never got used to carrying those pennies over there, they were so big. They were too heavy.

S: Break-a-hole-in-your-pocket type.

H: Yeah.

S: From New Zealand where did you go?

H: Well, we stayed there for training. We were there for about, about three months, at least, over there at New Zealand.

S: Uh huh.

H: You know, we had a lot of hikes there, forty, sixty mile hikes. That's how we used to do.

S: Uh huh.

H: You know, we had field problems out in the mountains. And after that we went to Guadalcanal for more training. It was jungle training.

S: This was after Guadalcanal had been taken?

H: Yeah. In fact, we were, when we were going to Guadalcanal we hit a storm. I think it was a tornado, or whatever it was, we hit. It made me seasick that time.

S: It did?

- H: I was vomiting for a couple of days. And I couldn't eat anything. Every time I'd eat, you know, I had to throw it up.
- S: Quite a few other troops were sick, too, I suspect?
- H: Uh huh. Yeah. It was quite an experience on that ship, you know because I didn't have no bunk either. I had to sleep on one of the trucks.
- S: Oh, wow. You didn't have a bunk assigned to you?
- H: No. Because there was too many of us, you know.
- S: You had two months of jungle training, then, in Guadalcanal?
- H: No, after we got there we trained most of the time from June to November, I think it was, before we went to Bougainville.
- S: And then you landed on Bougainville. That was your first combat?
- H: Uh huh. We used to go aboard ship and then go to the New Hebrides for practice landing. We did that a couple of times, I think.
- S: Were the landings rough?
- H: No, it wasn't, it wasn't too rough.
- S: Was it pretty --- Were there a lot of casualties or not too many on Bougainville?
- H: No, the first day there wasn't. We hit Bougainville November 1, 1943.
- S: Uh huh.

H: Anyway, the first day, I remember, there was a report of division casualties. There was only 17 killed.

S: Very light casualties, then, the first ---

H: Yeah, I can remember because it went through the message center.

And one of the casualties was a Navajo.

S: One of the boys killed on the first day was a Navajo?

H: Yeah. He was from Shiprock.

S: Did you know him?

H: I believe his name was Alfred Begay or Tsosie. I don't remember. He was in Raider Battalion.

S: Uh huh. How long were you on Bougainville?

H: I was there up to November 17. And I had an accident there. Anyway, I was fixing my foxhole, cutting, putting a roof over my foxhole. It rained, you know, during the night. It rains every night there.

S: Uh huh. And no rain here this year at all.

H: So I had an accident. I cut my thumb right here. I still have a scar.

S: H mm.

H: With a bayonet. So I was sent back to a naval hospital on Guadalcanal. Then from there I went to New Maya.

S: New Maya? Uh huh. And what, when was this? Do you remember?

H: It was November 17 I was sent back from Bougainville and I arrived on Guadalcanal a few days later. And I was, I stayed

there for awhile at the naval hospital, Guadalcanal. And then from there they sent me to New Maya. I think the mobile hospital was number 5. I think that was the number. Guadalcanal was 8.

S: Uh huh. And how long were you there?

H: I was there about a month.

S: About a month.

H: Uh huh.

S: And where did you rejoin your division?

H: At Guadalcanal. I had to go back to Guadalcanal.

S: They were back on Guadalcanal, then? And from Guadalcanal where did the 3rd Marine Division and the 9th Marines go?

H: Well, from Guadalcanal, after that, we trained more. We had to do some more training after that. And we did quite a few things again, there, before we went. And, for awhile, Guam. Before Guam, we were supposed to go, have gone to Carrienne.

S: Carrienne?

H: Yeah. But they call that operation off. Because, I think the brass didn't think they was quite important.

S: Uh huh. Uh huh.

H: See, we had everything ready. All the supplies moved to the beach and we were all ready to go when they called the operation off. So then after, we had to go for another one, which was Guam. And the Guam operation was supposed to have

been three days later after Saipan. But since they were having too many casualties, they had to put us into a reserve, a floating reserve.

S: Uh huh.

H: So we were floating from June, from June 2nd, I think it was, to July 21st.

S: A long time. Going back and forth, were you?

H: Yeah. We were just floating right out, out in the ocean and they had to take us to Kwajalein for a week. Just make a practice landing there and then when the operation in Saipan slacked a little bit, then we were ready to go in to Guam.

S: How was the Guam landing? How would you describe that?

H: Well, it was too hot. It was too hot. It was a hot day. It was during a hot day. And it was hot, too. Both sides. The weather and the firing. The weather and the firing was too hot. Yeah. I remember because, see, we had to transfer from the boat to the amphibious.

S: Uh huh.

H: Because we hit that coral reefs. And I have seen a lot of those tractors stall out in the reefs, you know. Seen a lot of Marines just walking through the water, you know. Could see a lot of mortar shells, artillery shells hitting in water, splashing water up. But, my amtrack didn't. We had to go right into the beach. And I was 2nd Battalion. My commander was

Cushman, Robert E. Cushman. He was a lieutenant-colonel then.

I notice that he's a lieutenant-general not quite long ago.

S: He was your commander. Did you work right with him in the headquarters?

H: Yes.

S: Did you ever work on the front lines, under fire?

H: Oh, yeah.

S: Yeah.

H: We got hit quite a, quite a number of times on Guam.

S: Uh huh. Did you get ---

H: See, when we hit Guam we went down towards the naval base.

I don't remember what the name was. You know, there was a naval base. We went up, down that way towards, towards that place. And then we went quite a ways, about a mile and a half, I guess, from the place we land. Then we had to, we were called to help the 3rd Marines, you know. It was just the 2nd Battalion there that was called to help the 3rd Marines, because the 3rd Marines were having, having trouble on their left flank.

S: Yes.

H: So we had to go up on that hill, what they call Fonti, Fonti Ridge I think it was. That's where we had, we really got hit over there.

S: You really got hit hard there.

H: Uh huh. I could hear yelling in the morning, about dawn. And one of the Navajos got killed there, too, His name was Johnson Housewood. He was from Chinle.

S: His name was what?

H: Johnson Housewood.

S: Johnson Housewood?

H: Uh huh. He was one of the Code Talkers.

S: This is up on the ridge. He got killed there?

H: Yeah. Going up the hills.

L: What was the name of the hill again?

H: Fonti Ridge.

S: Okay. Did you take the ridge?

H: Yeah.

S: How long were you on Guam, all told, about?

H: Well, from July 21st to August 10th is the day they secured the island. But after that we stayed there for training.

S: More training?

H: Yeah.

S: Always more training it sounds like.

H: Yeah. We move up across the island. It was near Telafufu, I think. We had our camp right on the beach. And say, we had an earthquake over there too, one morning.

S: An earthquake?

H: Yeah.

S: Had you ever been in an earthquake before?

H: No.

S: What did you think of that?

H: It was something. It woke me up in the morning. The whole land was just rumbling. Make a lot of noise.

S: Did you think they had a new bomb or something?

H: [Laughter] No. I didn't know what it was, but ---

L: Was it quite a bad one?

H: Yeah.

S: Was there much damage done?

H: No. It just, I mean the island just moved, like this.

S: Shook. Uh huh. Where did the division and you go from Guam then, after more training?

H: From there we went to Iwo Jima.

S: Were you in the original beachhead there? I mean, did the 3rd Marine Division land first there?

H: No, it was the 4th and the 5th that made the beachhead and we were in the, in the reserve.

S: Uh huh.

H: But we went, and the 9th Marines and the 21st were the only ones that went in of the infantry regiments. But the 3rd didn't go in.

S: Uh huh.

H: 3rd Marines. We went through, right through the center of

Iwo Jima. Right through the number 2 airfield, number 1 and number 2. Modinama, I don't know what it is.

S: Uh huh.

H: To the sulfur mine. There was a sulfur mine there. You know the ground is hot over there. It was a steaming island there. So we used to put our canned foods, you know, C-rations, put it on the ground and just heat it up. Eat it that way.

S: My gosh.

H: And we couldn't get enough rest at night because of the heat from the ground, you know. We had to roll over every now and then.

S: H mm. How long did it take you to go through the center of the island? How long did it take your 9th Marines to go through? Do you remember about how long?

H: Well, I think we got out on the island on the 24th of January, I think it was, 1945. Through April 6th until it was secured.

S: A very long and hard fight then. Were you anywhere around Mt. Suribachi when they raised the flag up there?

H: No. No. We were aboard the ship, I guess, at the time.

S: Uh huh. Uh huh.

H: We were still aboard ship, waiting.

S: Now, when you went onto Iwo Jima, had it already been secured?

H: No.

S: You fought on Iwo Jima, your group did?

H: Yeah. Uh huh. Yeah. Because we, see, our battalion really got hot. I think one of the companies was encircled and they had to get them out some way. Anyway, most of the companies, they lost a lot of men. And anyway, the men, you know, were all wounded or killed and some of the companies had only about 19 men left. And another one had, had about 20, 21. Anyway, it was just right to the 20 number. So they had, we had to get a lot of replacements.

S: Uh huh. Very heavy casualties, then.

H: Uh huh.

S: Were you ever personally wounded?

H: No. I never got hit. But I got scratched with the mortar shell. Just tore my pants off, that's all.

S: That's close enough.

H: It's close enough.

S: Yes. Uh huh. And then after Iwo Jima, did you take part in any more operations?

H: No. We went back to Guam that time. And while we were getting processed to return to the United States and getting our replacements, we heard the news about President Roosevelt died, you know. It was on April 12th, 1945. When we were waiting to be processed.

S: What type of reaction did that bring among the troops?

H: I don't really remember. But I think most of them were just

surprised, you know. As I was, you know.

S: Had anybody, had you ever heard of Harry Truman before then?

H: No. I didn't even know him. I didn't know he was the Vice-President either.

S: I don't think many people did. Everybody asked, "Harry who?" when he became President.

H: I didn't even know until after I came back until he made the big fuss about the Marines in Korea.

S: So you were discharged, or at least --- Were you discharged in April of 1945?

H: No. I came back from overseas in May of '45 and got my 30 days furlough. And I went back to Holbrook Naval Ammunition Depot where I was doing guard duty when I got discharged.

S: You were guard duty over here at Holbrook?

H: Uh huh. I was stationed there when they dropped atomic bomb, too. I listened to the radio. And then I got discharged on October 13, 1945.

S: Uh huh. What did you do after your discharge, Mr. Hosteen?

H: Well, I got me a job in Los Angeles as an apprentice carpenter. But I never kept on with it.

S: You didn't stay with it very long. How long were you in Los Angeles?

H: I was there for about a month.

S: Just for about a month. Then did you return to the reservation area?

H: No. I went up to Alameda, California. There I met my first wife.

S: Uh huh. Was she a Navajo?

H: She was Navajo. I used to write to her all through the war.

S: Uh huh. You weren't married when you went into the Marines?

H: No.

S: You got married after you got back?

H: Yes.

S: Uh huh. What were you doing in Alameda?

H: I start working for Naval Supply at Treasure Island.

S: Treasure Island, Naval Supply. And from there where did you go?

H: Oh ---

S: Or how long did you work there?

H: I started with barber training but I didn't stay with it, either. I was taking barber ---

S: Barber training?

H: Uh huh. In San Francisco. I didn't, I didn't stay with it because I had to _____ to support a family. That's why I had to quit that because this was just subsistence money and it was far in between monthly checks, you know.

S: What did you do after barber training there in San Francisco? Did you return to the reservation then, or did you go back?

H: Well, from there I had to take another job. It was a factory

job.

S: Uh huh. What type of factory?

H: It was spraying painting.

S: Uh huh. Was this in the San Francisco area?

H: Oakland.

S: Uh huh. And how long did you stay there?

H: Oh, I just worked there for about six months and I got laid off. And then from there out I had to go do different odd jobs like going, doing some farm work out around Stockton. Cannery work, I think it was, in '46, 1946, then. Then I started working for Southern Pacific Railroad in Oakland. I stayed there for about 18 months. While I was going there, I started taking up aircraft training at Oakland airport. And I finished that. Just when I go through with that school, I was called back into reserve.

S: For Korea?

H: Uh huh.

S: Uh huh. And did you go to Korea?

H: No. I didn't. I was going over there but I had to put in for a dependency discharge. So they had to keep me. They didn't give me a discharge, they just keep me for a year.

S: Where did they keep you?

H: El Toro Marine Base.

S: In California?

H: Uh huh.

S: Were any of the other Code Talkers there?

H: No. At that time there was no more Code Talkers.

S: Well, I just know that some of them were called back up with the reserve again during Korea. They were not Code Talkers but some of them were still back.

H: Yeah.

S: You had to stay in the Marines again another year?

H: Uh huh.

S: What were your duties then?

H: I was aviation supply clerk.

S: Aviation supply clerk. They used your aircraft training then to help ---

H: Yeah.

S: And when were you discharged completely from the Marine Corps, then?

H: January 30, 1953, I think.

S: Um hmm. Where did you go from there?

H: Well, I was working for Lockheed. I worked for Lockheed for quite awhile, from '51 to '59.

S: Uh huh.

H: I had a good job there with the aircraft. We were doing some military work. In fact, I work on F-80's. Overhaul a lot of

them.

S: You've overhauled a lot of F-80's. Yeah.

H: PQB's. Navy patrol bombers. C-121 that big Constellation.

S: You've seen a lot of planes then. You mentioned here that you finished with Lockheed in 1959.

H: Yeah. See what happened there at Lockheed, see, we were in Burbank and we had the seniority at Burbank. See, they had to move the plant to Ontario. So the union in Ontario didn't want us to bring our seniority from Burbank to Ontario. That's why we lost, I lost my seniority there. So I had to, I transferred to Ontario with a loss of seniority. So I just started as a new man. And then when the company didn't have enough business they had to lay off.

S: The non-seniority. Yeah.

H: Yeah. So that's what happened.

S: What did you, when did you return to the reservation?

H: 1959. I was back here for awhile looking for a job. But I couldn't find none so I had to go back to Los Angeles again and take up automatic transmissions.

S: Uh huh.

H: And I worked on transmissions for about a year in Los Angeles. After I came back to the reservation again, I was working for the tribe, as an auto mechanic.

S: Uh huh. And how long did you stay with that job?

H: About two years, I think. I was with the heavy equipment when they laid me off. And then they could call me back.

S: H mm. And where did you go from there, Mr. Hosteen?

H: And from there I worked odds and ends on the farms here and there. Down at Palo Verde, I think.

S: Palo Verde?

H: Yeah. Near Phoenix. Worked there for awhile. And then I was up in Idaho, Idaho Falls, working on potatoes. And after that I start working for Union Pacific. In 1966. On a steel gang.

S: Uh huh. Where was this?

H: Evanston, Wyoming.

S: Up in Evanston, Wyoming. Okay.

L: Still working there?

H: No. We, see, we were moving all the time. We went up to near Omaha and we came back over to Caliente. That's where we, we made the strike over there. We made a big strike there because the foreman was doing some unfair practice to the Navajos. Laying off, discharging them for nothing. That's why we had to strike them.

S: What, did you get the foreman to come around to your side after the strike?

H: No. They were trying to solve some problems among the people, but they couldn't. But everybody left, you know, and so they

had to bring in the new men. So I went, I just got home and did some more farm work in between. They called me and I went on another gang to North Platte. I was over there for about 18 months. We built a classification yard over there.

S: North Platte?

H: Uh huh.

S: Uh huh. Where did you go from North Platte?

H: From North Platte I came back to the reservation, and I got on one of these H.I.T.P. Programs for, I think it was six weeks or eight weeks.

S: And where was this?

H: Salina Springs.

S: At Salina Springs.

H: Cutting wood.

S: What type of program is that?

H: That's building homes for ---

L: Home Improvement Training Project.

H: Home Improvement Program.

S: Uh huh. Acting as a carpenter and mason and so forth?

H: Uh huh.

S: Are you still with this type of program?

H: No. Right now I'm working for the railroad again in Santa Fe.

S: You're in Santa Fe now with the railroad, the Santa Fe

Railroad?

H: Santa Fe Railroad.

S: In Santa Fe.

H: No, Needles, California.

S: Needles, California. You had a long way to come to come back.

H: Yeah.

S: Did you have something in between working for the railroad and the H.I.T.P. Program that you think is important?

H: Yeah. I was, I went back with the Union Pacific as a second-class carpenter. I was in the B&B gang, between Las Vegas and Salt Lake.

S: Between Las Vegas and Salt Lake. And then you joined the Santa Fe, when?

H: A year ago in August.

S: In August, last year. Isn't it pretty warm in Needles?

H: Oh, it gets too hot. It gets up to about 110, sometimes 112.

S: That's too hot for me. And what did you say your job was with the Santa Fe?

H: I am just a track man, which is labor and all.

S: You're on the tracks. Uh huh. Do you think you'll stick with the railroad or ---

H: Well, I'm thinking that I might have to just stay with that. Because the jobs are scarce, anywhere. Not unless I get an offer

here somewhere on the reservation.

S: Are you looking around for something here?

H: I have been looking for a local job, but I couldn't get on any of them, not even the O.N.E.O.

S: H mm. Uh huh. Well, with your mechanical training and things like that, you'd think that, if they have an opening, they'll probably contact you.

H: It seems to me they don't recognize those things, you know. The Tribe, I don't know what's wrong with the Tribe. Somethings wrong there.

S: Uh huh.

H: I think they, it seems to me there's too many, too much prejudice.

S: How do you mean that?

H: Well, between the veterans, you know. Some of these guys that have been through wars and experienced all these terrible things, then when they come back over here they are treated meanly. It seems to me it's like that.

S: Have you talked to Mr. Evans about getting help?

H: No. No. It's just a new program and I haven't tried yet.

S: Uh huh. Maybe he can help you out.

H: Maybe. I tried before, you know, tried to get some kind of a help from the Veterans Administration before this started, before Mr. Evans, you know, got appointed to this Veteran's Affairs.

Well, I went to Albuquerque one time. They told me I couldn't get nothing for the reservation. Because of, because of the -- the reason is that the government is holding the land. That is why they couldn't apply veteran's benefits into the reservation.

S: I see.

H: See, I wanted to have a veteran's loan for a home, which I couldn't get here.

S: You can't get a VA loan for homes?

H: No. Uh huh.

S: Well, there's two men from Veteran's Administration speaking inside this morning. Maybe they'll have something to help you with. You mentioned that you were married right after you got back from the war the first time. You mentioned you had a first wife, so I take it that you are married again.

H: Yeah. I was married the second time in '63.

S: In 1963. How many children do you have?

H: I have three by my first marriage and one by the second marriage.

S: So you have four children, total? Where are the children from your first marriage living?

H: Oh, they are in Gallup, now. Two of them working for BIA, in Gallup. And one of them has finished high school just recently, in May, Gallup High School.

S: Uh huh.

H: She's planning on going to NAU.

S: Northern Arizona. Very good. And your child by your second marriage is still in school, I take it?

H: Yeah. She's only started school a couple years ago. She's the young one. She's in Cottonwood, going to school at Cottonwood.

S: I see. I see.

L: Do you have any grandchildren?

H: I have one, yeah. The three of my children from my first marriage, they don't speak Navajo. We taught them English.

S: You taught them English and they don't speak Navajo too well. Are you teaching your new daughter?

H: No. She, she knows everything in Navajo.

S: Everything in Navajo. Uh huh.

L: That's the way to get them going.

H: I think you asked me a question about the Bible.

S: Yes. Please.

H: I had been reading the Bible quite a lot, but I don't really take interest in it yet.

S: Yes.

H: I'm just studying it. Studying the Bible. And I found some scriptures in here. It seems to pertain to this generation of today, the world problems today. That's why I brought this. And it seems like I found something here about Code Talkers, too.

S: Very interesting. Would you want to read those?

H: Yeah, well, yeah. This one scripture here is from Jeremiah 5, verse 15. It says here: "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, oh House of Israel," said the Lord. "It is a mighty nation. It is an ancient nation. A nation whose language thou knows not, neither understand what they say."

S: Very, very appropriate for the Code Talkers. Yes. Very appropriate.

BL: It sounds good.

S: You said you're not actually ---

H: Participating.

S: Participating in a Christian religion?

H: No.

S: Do you still believe in the Navajo religion?

H: Well, it's quite interesting to know that, too.

S: Yes, uh huh.

H: Have to take both sides, I guess. I think you have to know both sides in order to understand a lot of things in the Bible.

S: Uh huh. Did you happen to have a ceremony before you went to the Marine Corps?

H: No. I did not. But after I came back I did.

S: Which ceremony did you have?

H: Ho-zho-ji

S: The Ho-zho-ji.

H: Uh huh.

S: Was this to help you forget the war and to cleanse you from the experience with the enemy, or ---

H: Well, it was just sort of like that. But in a way, I think it was just so that things might, may be just a little better, you know, make everything better. That's what the Ho-zho-ji means, you know.

S: Uh huh. Did you have this at Salina?

H: Yeah.

S: I notice that you have some papers there. Did you want to talk about those?

H: Well, these papers here --- Well, I told you, you know, that I was never wounded by a gun or a gunshot or a mortar. But anyway, I wrote to Washington, D.C., to Marine Corps Headquarters one time and I asked them what do I rate, you know, as to the medals.

S: Uh huh.

H: Well anyway, they sent me a bunch of medals and I was very surprised to send me a Purple Heart.

S: They sent you a Purple Heart and you weren't even wounded, huh?

H: No.

S: Very interesting.

H: That's why I had these papers here. I don't know why, but I think this is what they gave me.

S: Oh, yes.

H: They sent me this. So I guess I rate it for some reason.

S: Maybe for the bayonet that you cut your finger making the foxhole.

L: Self-wound.

H: Yeah. And then I found something in the Bible also pertaining to this. That's in the Revelations. Let's see, I think it's uh, Revelations, Chapter 13. Verse 13. Starts on 13. And 14. "And he doeth great wonders, so that he make a fire come down from Heaven on the earth in the sight of man. And deceive them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beasts, saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beasts which had the wound by its heart and did live."

S: I see. Yes.

H: So I don't know what that really means, you know. This wording is so much wrong, I think, in the Bible. I think that this man that wrote it, that he didn't quite understand what he had seen or heard, probably.

S: I see. Uh huh. Very, very interesting.

H: But it was written by St. John, I think. Also from the time he wrote the Bible has been changed to different languages. So all the languages quite, quite strange, you know.

S: Yes. Yes. I understand. Mr. Hosteen, do you have anything

else that you'd like to add to the tape? Other personal experiences or memories of things that really excited you during the war, or during your life, or experiences that you can remember in the war that you haven't told us about?

H: Well, I'd like to say this to all the men of the Marines and the rest of the servicemen of the United States, you know. I think they did a wonderful job during the war. They are working together. And I think team work is a wonderful thing to have, you know. To get cooperation, you know, working. If everybody works together, nothing is impossible.

S: Very good. Ben, did you have any further questions?

L: Oh, I wonder if I might ask you a few questions in Navajo if you don't mind?

L: (N)

H: (N)

L: I guess that's all I have to say.

S: Uh huh. Mr. Hosteen, we'd like to thank you very much for sitting down with us. And could you give us your address that we might send you a copy of this?

H: Okay. My address is c/o Salina Springs Trading Post, Chinle, Arizona, 86503 zip code.

S: 86503.

H: It's not a Code Talker's number.

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INTERVIEW: Dennie Hosteen

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S: No. Do you remember your number?

H: Service number?

S: Yes. Your serial number?

H: 479730.

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