

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WILLIAM D. (BILL) WALKER

This is Ed Metzler and today is the 27th of February, 2004. I am interviewing Mr. William D. (Bill) Walker in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the Nimitz Museum. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Let me start out, Bill, by thanking you for being willing to participate in these oral history sessions and taking the time to be there, so thank you for that. Let me ask you to start out by telling me where you were born, who your parents were, brothers and sisters, and then kind of quickly take us through high school and then we will go from there.

MR. WALKER: I was born in Waco but my parents lived in Satin which was Will and Annie Walker. They were really from Falls County. I went to school in Satin and then went to high school in Chilton, Texas, Chilton High School and from there I went to A&M. The year was 1943 we were called in, the whole class, junior class at A&M was called into service and we went to Camp Roberts basic training.

MR. METZLER: What were you studying at Texas A&M?

MR. WALKER: Agriculture. I was a farmer.

MR. METZLER: Gonna be a farmer. Go ahead.

MR. WALKER: At Camp Roberts the whole junior class of the ROTC was there and they had a test just an OCS before boards and the ones that passed went to OCS and I didn't pass. While at Camp Roberts there came a recruiter there the air force or gunners

or something and then I had bad eyes and I decided I couldn't pass there. The next one that interviewed us was from the paratroops. He told us all of it. What really got me interested, they paid fifty dollars a month more than the regular army. They had already offered me a job there to stay in the cadre.

MR. METZLER: As an Instructor?

MR. WALKER: As a non com. It's an Instructor. We were a little bit ahead of the other troops in the ROTC training. The ones that didn't pass the board they wanted them to stay there. I didn't want that because I wanted to go overseas somewhere. I didn't know whether I wanted to fight or not but I didn't want to stay in California.

MR. METZLER: Is that where Camp Roberts is?

MR. WALKER: Camp Roberts is close to Bakersfield, California. It's halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. From there they shipped me to Fort Benning.

MR. METZLER: We're back to Georgia, aren't we?

MR. WALKER: Yes. We went back and forth two or three times, from San Antonio to Camp Roberts, California, then back to Benning. While at Benning, I was a young man then maybe twenty or twenty-one, and I met this kid. He was seventeen years old and his name was William S. Harrell from Norfolk, Virginia. We got acquainted and went through jump school, we went overseas. We were overseas nineteen months in the same squad, same company, and all through the war.

MR. METZLER: My goodness. Exactly the same track, huh?

MR. WALKER: The same track. I got to come home a month earlier than he did because of my ROTC training. And he got very unhappy with me because we had all gone through the same thing and we never heard from each other until two years ago. He

just dropped out. He didn't join any VFWs or anything like that. One day he called me and we met and I am supposed to go back to see him. He's still living.

MR. METZLER: And where is he living?

MR. WALKER: In Norfolk, Virginia. He went back home, too.

MR. METZLER: Then after Fort Benning, what happened?

MR. WALKER: After training they were sending out as replacements our class that we jumped at Fort Benning. He and I both were scheduled to go on the 101st and somehow they had our payroll screwed up so that bunch left. Then I think it was 110 of us went to California to go to the Pacific to join the 503rd. We got out there and it was during Christmas I remember that and I don't remember the exact date we shipped out.

MR. METZLER: You shipped out from?

MR. WALKER: San Francisco.

MR. METZLER: It was a slow boat probably like most of those troop carriers.

MR. WALKER: We were on the water forty-five days and there's a little instant there Harrell still worries me about. I was a boxer in college and I had some fights at Camp Roberts and I'd lost all of our money gambling when we got on this boat. He or I neither one had a penny to our name and the Navy was selling soda water and ice cream for a nickel and we didn't have a nickel. About half way over they had a Red Cross said that they wanted to have a fight. He said, "You were a boxer. Can you do? They gave five dollars to the winner and the loser got a box of candy." I said, "Man, I can't get in shape on this boat." He said, "Well the guys can't use it." So he was my manager and I don't know how in the world I made it. Have you ever tried to fight on a boat? The boat would rock. Anyway, they gave me the winner.

MR. METZLER: They had boxing gloves and everything?

MR. WALKER: Yes, and all the troops were on ...

MR. METZLER: And probably a little bit of betting going on.

MR. WALKER: It was a boat like you went on a cruise. There were five thousand of us on that boat and troops in the swimming pools. There were twelve of us in a cabin, probably about third class because we were just sticks in a load up there.

MR. METZLER: Backed up, huh?

MR. WALKER: Backed up. When they started to give this boxing match thing I got this wild hare. I played baseball at A&M and I wanted to go back and play baseball. I said, "Man, I'll be taking money." So when they gave it to me, I said you keep the five dollars and give it to the Red Cross. Harrell said, "Man, if you'd lost you'd got at least a box of candy." Harrell had figured this up. I don't know how he ever figured out his was part of it but his interest now is up in the millions of dollars. He duns me now ever so often about not taking the five dollars.

MR. METZLER: But you won the fight?

MR. WALKER: Oh, yes. We landed at Port Moresby and from there we took a landing craft. We stayed there two weeks, I think, before we went to join the 503rd at Oro Bay.

We took a landing craft.

MR. METZLER: What bay?

MR. WALKER: Oro Bay.

MR. METZLER: Like gold in Spanish.

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. METZLER: And where is that located? Is that still Australia?

MR. WALKER: No, it's in New Guinea, the 503rd moved to New Guinea and they had already jumped on Nodzab or somewhere.

MR. METZLER: I'd heard that story.

MR. WALKER: The boat ride wasn't too good. It was an open boat, landing craft, and we were on it a day and a night and another day. You couldn't see over it.

MR. METZLER: You were down in a hole.

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. METZLER: Was there a lot of sea sickness?

MR. WALKER: I don't remember. There was a lot of talking.

MR. METZLER: A lot of complaining?

MR. WALKER: Yes, a lot of cussin'. I joined the 503rd at Oro Bay and I was put in Company E. The company commander was Hill from Huntsville, Texas. I don't remember how long we were there.

MR. METZLER: What did the Oro Bay look like. Just describe the...

MR. WALKER: Well, it was just an army camp really. It was a supply base really. There was an airfield there and we got in supplies. The same scouts were at Eiwak. I don't know how far it was but it was up the coast of New Guinea.

MR. METZLER: So Eiwak is still on the island of New Guinea?

MR. WALKER: Yes, and it's on the coast on the edge. New Guinea on the map is just a little part that has never been explored, and the whole New Guinea was just green. They send you out on patrol you didn't know where you were going. We were just in training

MR. METZLER: Did you do any jumping then?

MR. WALKER: We had one jump, practice jump.

MR. METZLER: Out of a C-47?

MR. WALKER: Yes, it was a C-47.

MR. METZLER: So how long did you train?

MR. WALKER: I don't remember. You're with your own outfit and we were reserve for several landings for MacArthur and the marines. But we'd get ready to go somewhere and then they'd call it off. They didn't need us or something. I would say we were there three or four months and then they had this invasion of Hollandia. MacArthur had this deal where he was just going to cut the Japs off at Eiwak where they were real fortified there and Hollandia was a supply base for the whole Japanese army and air force.

MR. METZLER: Now where is this located?

MR. WALKER: It is, I would say, the southern tip of New Guinea.

MR. METZLER: Do you know how to spell that?

MR. WALKER: Hollandia. That might not be correct, (It is.)

MR. METZLER: That's okay. Now we know roughly what it is.

MR. WALKER: We were supposed to jump. They had such an easy time all these Japs there and were just supply personnel and except for the air force they had bombers and fighters there. The air force and navy had wiped them out pretty good before we got there. So they decided that they would get rid of this just land there at the Japanese air base. the troops there.. While we were there the Japs were trying to come back from Eiwak to take this back. Then we went out on a couple of patrols to cut them off. One time, I don't know how far we went in from the coast, we were in this airfield. We were

stationed on the edge of a Japanese airfield but it was in American hands. The American planes were flying off of it.

MR. METZLER: Were you on foot then when you went in?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. METZLER: Parachute man on foot, huh?

MR. WALKER: Most of the war we were. We were just the infantry. The date was 7/4/44. From New Guinea they decided they wanted to take this island called Noemfoor. Don't ask me to spell that one. It starts off with a Noom something. It is real close to Biak. I don't know how far it is from Biak.

MR. METZLER: This must be Biak.

MR. WALKER: No, this is right off the coast of New Guinea. They wanted to take this island so that the B-24s could bomb Dutch East Indies and down that way. We were in the second battalion; the first and the third jumped on Noemfoor. E Company is in the 2nd Battalion which we were in. The first and the third took so many casualties. The island of Noemfoor is nothing but a coral island which is made ideal for bombers. It is solid rock. The wind was blowing when they jumped. I don't know exactly the number of casualties. They cancelled our jump, and we went with boats from Hollandia to Biak and we stayed there a day and then we went from Biak around the backside of Noemfoor. The paratroopers that jumped, the first and third battalions, had taken one side of Noemfoor and they sent second battalion around to take the other side. Noemfoor is probably, I think they said it was nineteen miles long and about ten miles across and two airfields there. Besides the airfields there wasn't anything there but natives and jungles. We landed back where the natives had a little village. That was the first time that, I

guess, that some of them had ever been in combat. That night the Japs were out there in the woods yelling and they go like dogs and the sensors we had gotten from other new troops and they started shooting and everything they were wild that first night.

MR. METZLER: But you never actually saw any Japanese that night?

MR. WALKER: It was two that was killed going into the village. I don't know what they were doing there and one of them committed suicide. He had put a grenade up to his stomach.

MR. METZLER: So how were the natives? Were the natives friendly to the Americans?

MR. WALKER: They were at first. The women didn't wear any tops, they were all bare-breasted and, of course, we swam in the river, the streams there. The natives would go back and forth and, of course, all these troops had never seen any women, I guess by then we had been overseas maybe seven or eight or months, and they would whistle and all that and the natives weren't too friendly. It wasn't very good lookin' either those natives.

MR. METZLER: Definitely not a pin-up girl. How long were you on that island then?

MR. WALKER: We were there forty-five days in the jungle and the scariest I guess I ever was was there. We had a base camp maybe three or four miles in from the coast that we had set up. That was the idea getting away from the navy. So the Japs would hit and run. I don't know what company it was that went out and they got surrounded so they sent E Company, the one we were in, to rescue them. We were fooling around and trying to read the maps and I guess we had been out about an hour and a half in the patrol company in single file and I was at the rear. We heard something coming and it was two Japanese soldiers walking down the trail. The guy, I can't remember his name, at the

time had a Tommy gun and he cut them down real good. It was kind of a master. We didn't think we were in a battle but we should have.

MR. METZLER: Doing something about what?

MR. WALKER: That we were walking into a trap. We went on another thirty minutes and our scout ran into a sub-machine gun and he got killed. I was bringing up the rear. Then I guess I was an assistant squad leader. Anyway I was the last one and I heard all this shooting up here and I looked around and, man, they were coming from behind us, too.

MR. METZLER: Japanese were?

MR. WALKER: Yes, we had walked into a trap and we fought there for I guess a good hour and the Japs were hollering so the company commander Hill ordered us not to shoot anymore. It was getting dark and not to shoot anymore rifles. The flame from the rifles was giving our position away. We made a circle like the settlers did back in old West days and Harrell and I were right together right off the trail and everything got real quiet. In about thirty minutes Sterling shot and everybody started cussing him and everything and I looked over there and a Jap was trying to crawl in and give out food packs.

MR. METZLER: They must have been hungry.

MR. WALKER: Yes, they were real hungry. I read later that was what they were trying to get. We were bringing enough food for us and the next company that was penned down. I guess they had scouts and were trying to get to the food. That's why they were attacking us. The night got real eerie and quiet and I don't know how in the world I went to sleep, and the next thing I knew there was branches falling all over my back and my butt. The Japs had opened up with a machine gun and they were cutting down the

saplings that were falling all over us. I bet they didn't shoot five minutes with that machine gun. We had fought about an hour the afternoon before and then everything got real quiet and we stayed there about a couple of hours and our company commander decided we needed to go back to our camp. During the night we had called for artillery back on the coast and they tried to coordinate where US were and they pinpointed about three miles out in the water and the artillery didn't help a whole lot but sometime during the night the company we had come to rescue had gotten out. They left them and I guess attacked us.

MR. METZLER: Maybe they were coming to rescue you.

MR. WALKER: The next morning it got daylight a little piper cub proplane came over and we threw a smoke bomb and the artillery got a little better and I don't think they fired very long. Then they decided the Japs never returned fire so we decided we'd go back to base camp. They had two scouts out there and no guns and our scouts killed them and we never saw them again but there were dead Japs everywhere. We had lost another paratrooper in the fight and I guess seven or eight days later the Americans you were missing in action until you had a body. So we had to go back out to get those two from our company. They were dead, we knew they were dead and we left them there and while we were there to pick them up we counted seventy-five Japanese we had killed. I don't know how many were attacking us. It was a scary night. We went on several other patrols there but after forty-five days we moved back to the coast to the main camp where the harbor was. While we were there, they thought we were service personnel, they put us to unloading a ship. We resented that and I remember one night we were unloading there and we were always hungry. The 503rd didn't belong to any Division, any army, we

were a regimental combat team and so we always got short rations and we were always hungry. The first night we were on this boat we raided the navy's kitchen and the navy was very unhappy when they found out we had gotten all the cold cuts and stuff like that we'd never seen any since we'd been overseas.

MR. METZLER: Which boat was this?

MR. WALKER: This was with the Liberty ships, I think.

MR. METZLER: Supply ships.

MR. WALKER: Supply ships. They'd bring them into the harbor and they made us go unload around the clock. This was a night I remember this. We were unloading this ship and we stole all we could. I guess when they finally took us off, I remember coming in and I'd stolen a lawn chair and something else to put in front of my tent, they decided that was enough. It happened to be that supplies weren't getting to the supply depot. It was just when they let us off we'd carry off everything we could that we thought we could use. We didn't have to unload anymore ships. Then we were alerted to go to the Philippines from Noemfoor.

MR. METZLER: What time is this?

MR. WALKER: I'm trying to think. Do you know when they invaded Leyte? 503rd got there 11/18/44.

MR. METZLER: I can't tell you that. I don't know. It was '44, I think.

MR. WALKER: Yes, it was in '44 because the war was over in '45.

MR. METZLER: I know we didn't get to Corregidor until early '45. You went to Leyte.

MR. WALKER: Yes, they're really going to jump there. They said they had made some good contact and they didn't need us but we were there. That was the first kamikaze

attack I had seen. We were lying on the beach and all these American ships were arrayed out there and that was the first kamikaze plane I saw. We had a ringside seat to see all the air battles and one time a P-38 chased the Japs along the beach where we were. That was spectacular. We weren't doing anything we just had a ringside seat.

MR. METZLER: The kamikaze, did he do any damage?

MR. WALKER: He hit one ship we saw. I don't know how many they got. I remember they hit one one day. We had a typhoon while we were there and we were in a coconut grove and it knocked the coconuts down all over us. That was kind of a scary thing..

MR. METZLER: That could be painful. You wore your helmet I bet.

MR. WALKER: It was at night and we were in our hammocks and the rain was coming in. They had these rubber hammocks, the bottom was rubber and mosquito net was on the sides and a little rubber thing over the top. I felt under there and I was sleeping in water and so I took my bayonet out and stuck a hole in it so it would drain but I didn't sleep anymore that night.

MR. METZLER: So that was pretty violent weather then.

MR. WALKER: Yes, the navy lost some ships out there in the harbor. This is getting close to November, I think, and they decided we would take Mindoro from Leyte, no, that is Mindanou.

MR. METZLER: No, that's Mindoro.

MR. WALKER: Is that Mindoro?

MR. METZLER: Yes.

MR. WALKER: Okay. Well, where is Leyte?

MR. METZLER: I think Leyte is back down over here somewhere.

MR. WALKER: MacArthur's Filipino scouts had scouted this pretty good and this town was San Jose. Easy to land and take San Jose and they said we didn't have to jump that there was very few troops there so that was kind of interesting, too. The navy put on a big show and the Japs got scared and they left. They were shooting these rockets off of these landing crafts and the navy was shelling. When we got in about a mile there was Filipino people waving at us. We got into this town and they said the Japs were in this school house and they sent E company over there to take this school house. So we all got around the streets and everything and I don't think we ever fired a shot. We decided there wasn't anybody in that schoolhouse and so we went in there and the Japs you could tell they were eating breakfast when the Navy was doing all this shelling. They left the food and they just took off.

MR. METZLER: Where did they disappear, into the hills?

MR. WALKER: Yes, and in the town, I think. They left all of their food there and that was the first thing we got. We all got rumped out—we were sitting on the porch of this schoolhouse drinking sake. The colonel came up and he didn't think that was a very good idea for us to be drinking there. So he sent us up into the hills, we were pretty well soused and never had any breakfast, hadn't eaten. It was hotter than hell and we had a three-mile march up. They said the Japanese were supposed to have a paratrooper division in Luzon and they were afraid they were going to come back take that and we were supposed to be out there. Anyway, we go up there, everybody was as sick as a dog and best thing we were digging foxholes around where we could see San Jose and the town. If the Japs were going to land this plane in front would be the place they'd jump on. Well, here comes this good looking woman in slacks riding a caribou.

MR. METZLER: A caribou?

MR. WALKER: A caribou which is a cow; that was their work cow.

MR. METZLER: That's what we call an oxen or water buffalo or something like that.

MR. WALKER: Yeh, a water buffalo. We got to talking to her and she and her husband had run the ice plant in San Jose and when the Japs came they were pretty well off.

MR. METZLER: Were these Filipinos?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. METZLER: But they spoke English?

MR. WALKER: Just like you and me are doing now, as friendly as they could be and so glad to see us. We had gotten rid of the Japs and we stayed up there a couple of days but we stayed in touch with these people. We were camped out on the river still facing the possibility the Japs were coming back and every night the Japs would try to bomb. In the meantime the engineers were building air strips like crazy and the air force was taking off from there to bomb Luzon and Corregidor and all that and every night the Jap bombers flew overhead. I don't think they ever hit anything but they would come so low we could see when they had the bomb bay doors open, we could see lights in there. It came Christmas we were still there. These people I told you about, they had us out to their house, the people that we met the first time. They had pig they had barbequed underground, they had coals...

MR. METZLER: Had a Luau.

MR. WALKER: Yes, that's what it was. The Filipino cooking oil made out of coconut and it was real nice. Before that, though, we were hungry again and we killed one of those baby caribou so we could have some fresh meat and, of course, it didn't last very

long. The Filipino, that was probably all of his wealth, and he wanted his money back which I don't blame him. Of course, we didn't have any money but one of our officers loaned us some money to pay him. We paid him back. We had steaks there for about a week.

MR. METZLER: Caribou steaks.

MR. WALKER: It was good. Then those people had us Christmas dinner and then Christmas night I don't know how in the world they did it but the Jap navy went in with attack force of about three or four cruisers and one, three or four at the start and one cruiser I believe it was and they shelled Mindoro. They were going to knock out those air fields and how in the world they got in there I don't know without the American Navy getting them. The Americans had gotten most of the ships out and gotten most of the planes off and they left one Australian squadron there to defend us. We thought they were fixing to invade us and that was the only time I ever came under Jap naval fire.

MR. METZLER: So you had some near misses there?

MR. WALKER: I don't think they ever hit that air field, but maybe they did. They were coming pretty close to us 'cause you could feel the ground shake and we all had foxholes along this river. And the one that was real close to the, Sterling and I always had foxholes right together and on the other side we had I can't remember his name we called him Button, he had a foxhole. And this bombardment must have gone on maybe thirty minutes or thirty-five minutes, I don't know how long. But whenever it quit, you could tell when they took off from the anti-aircraft from the harbor because this Australian squadron was going in there and trying to ward them off but they did all the damage they could and just took off. When it quit, Sterling and I got out congratulating ourselves and

all being there and we hollered at Button and we couldn't find Button. He was hollering "help, help." He had dug his hole so deep, he kept digging all during the bombardment, he couldn't get out of his foxhole. If a bomb had hit real close it would have buried him.

MR. METZLER: You pulled him out of his own foxhole?

MR. WALKER: Out of his own foxhole. There was one Japanese plane that was shot down by the air force, crashed right down the river from us. There was two of them in there—I guess that was a small Jap bomber and what amazed me was that part of the time that he sat out on his Japanese SWORD and flying an airplane.

MR. METZLER: Well, the sword was something special to them.

MR. WALKER: In February we jumped on Corregidor.

MR. METZLER: Tell me about that. Still on Mindoro.

MR. WALKER: Yes. Mindoro. It's three o'clock in the morning. We all went to the airfield and I think the 3rd Battalion was the first one to jump and the 2nd Battalion was the second ones to jump and this is pretty close to eleven o'clock in the morning before we took off. The Red Cross brought out some doughnuts and some kind of juice and all. My stomach was already going a thousand miles an hour but I was so hungry. We didn't have any breakfast so I ate some doughnuts and everything. We were on the C-47 going over and that was the roughest thing you ever saw. I got air sick and I took off my helmet and when I got through throwing up I just threw my helmet out of the door of the C-47. Then they weren't going to let me jump because I didn't own a helmet. I didn't want to go back on that airplane; I wanted to get out of there. They found me a helmet from one of the personnel on the airplane. He gave me a helmet and I tied a knot in it and the wind was blowing though. They had cut down the sticks that were jumping. It was

six men sticks; started out with twenty-four jumping four in a pass. The C-47's would circle and they would jump. Too many were going over the cliff, they were jumping on the top side of Corregidor and too many were falling off the cliff and everything. They turned down the height, we were jumping from 600 feet to 400 feet. We were going to jump at 400 feet in two fallouts. When I jumped all I can remember is going up when the parachute opened and thrust you straight up and I made one foolish dive and I was on the ground. I found out later I was on the edge of a golf course and I hit the pavement. They were shooting so we were there my pack and I decided I didn't want to go that way. Then another thing I found another buddy and I said, "Where are we supposed to meet?" He said, "I don't know but this don't look like anything on that sand table we were looking at." He was saying of the sand table we...

MR. METZLER: What about the sand table?

MR. WALKER: Go back. On Mindoro we found out we were going to jump on Corregidor. I guess we started out with officers and all and looked at this sand table and they showed you your mission and where you were to meet after you jumped and the hospital we were to take.

MR. METZLER: So they sorta arranged the sand right where the jump is?

MR. WALKER: Yes. This table had every building on it, where the hospital was, that was where we were supposed to come to, the hospital right off the road topside. I jumped on the parade ground the, golf course. On one side was the enlisted men's barracks and on the other side were the houses that were the officer quarters and on one end the movie theater. During peace time the Americans had... They had a hospital right down from the topside. When you came up from the harbor, there was the hospital and then on up to

topside. We finally got all of our company, most of them, gathered up on the Lichemae (sp?) side of Corregidor. Lichemae is headquarters. We went down to take the hump and as well as I remember it's not maybe a quarter of a mile from topside to the hospital. It's more level on the island. We went all through this hospital and there weren't any Japs there and so they told us to stay there that night. We got all out in front of the hospital and there was a road right below us and all night long we could hear Japs talking down there and we never did fire on them. They never came, maybe a few tried to come up there and we opened fire and they left. The next morning we went back up to topside and the Japs had a cave that they were sending signals from what our navy was doing and all. We were supposed to go and take this cave. We got up on this ridge and we came under lots of fire and so we could never get to that cave that way; went back the other way and they decided, well, we wouldn't go up there. But we had a scout, his name was Bill Edwards, and he was a real good friend of ours. He said he was going to go up to that cave. He and another scout went up there and they killed him and we went up there and got him. About three or four Japs came out of there. We didn't go in that cave 'cause Bill was still living then and we carried him back down to where a jeep came and got him and carried him to a hospital. I never did go in that cave but somebody went in there and the Japs did have radios and they were sending to where I don't know. We blew up the cave, and when we got back to topside where headquarters were and the hospital was they were operating on Bill and he died. That shook everybody up for a long time; I was. From our platoon squad, that was the first one we had lost. I can't remember whether we went on. Headquarters sent us out on patrol to capture a Jap soldier. They had told us there was only about four hundred there on Corregidor and we

had killed that many the first day and things had gotten so bad intelligence so they wanted us to capture a Jap. We'd didn't know how we were going to capture...

MR. METZLER: Wanted you to capture one alive so you could interrogate him?

MR. WALKER: Yes. The streets, of course, were bombed out and we were going down one of these streets and there was a truck on the side. We could hear something in there, so everybody got real quiet. One got on one side of the truck and another one on the other and it turned out there was a Jap in there eating in this bombed out truck in the cab. So we had captured a Jap. We searched him and everything and he didn't want to talk or anything. We couldn't understand him anyway so we took him back to headquarters.

The 503rd had this Japanese American that was an interpreter in intelligence and Corregidor was his first jump. I didn't know all of this then but he's in the Hall of Fame for the Intelligence people. I read about him in one of our papers. So I wrote him and told him about this incident. So we carried him up there and I think his name is Akuene and there was a general in there and all the brass. The intelligence officers were shaving and he was talking to this Jap across the table, there was a little table there, and all of a sudden this Jap jumped across this table and started choking this intelligence agent. This is where our information gets kind of screwed up. I pulled this Jap off and that general pulled out a pistol and shot him. Intelligence officers say it didn't happen this way but anyway I was so mad, hell, we'd done captured one and he didn't talk two minutes, and they just killed him. This was on the second floor of headquarters on Corregidor and so they just picked this Jap up and threw him out the window. There was a bomb crater out there and a working bulldozer and they just covered him up, buried him right there. I was so mad. I read where this intelligence officer was in the Hall of Fame. I wrote and asked

him if he remembered this instance and I said what were you calling him a son-of-a-bitch, or what? He said, “No, I was just asking him his name and his rank and all of that. He hollered back in Japanese that he was going to die for the Emperor, but he was going to take him with him.” He said this general didn’t shoot him. I don’t know.

MR. METZLER: Well, if you saw it, you saw it.

MR. WALKER: But he was there, too! I don’t know how that Jap got dead. He said that part of the story was correct they did throw him out the window and the bulldozers covered him up. Another incident there on Corregidor, our squad, when weren’t fighting played pinochle, double deck pinochle. Nobody had any money then so we kept a tab. We kept up who won and we paid five dollars a game. We jumped with two decks of cards and so we had some. We weren’t doing anything that day and we were in the officers’ quarters across from headquarters and headquarters was in the barracks across from the parade grounds on top side. We set up a card table out of old wood and stuff and were sitting in a hallway playing pinochle. All of a sudden the ammunition dump blew up and it blew us off the table and the cards everywhere.

R. METZLER: Now this is when you’re still on Corregidor, right?

MR. WALKER: Right, on Corregidor, and they brought all that ammunition up from the seaside up to the topside and they piled it all up out there on the edge of the parade grounds right next to the station headquarters and hospital. Of course, it was hotter than hell every day and evidently the heat had gotten to one of the smoke bombs and exploded. Then from there it blew up the whole ammunition dump and it killed about two or three people in the hospital and ended up with a bomb crater you wouldn’t believe out there.

MR. METZLER: It doesn't seem like a smart spot to stack all the ammunition.

MR. WALKER: No, the army didn't do a whole lot of smart things.

MR. METZLER: But that was after the island had been secured, right?

MR. WALKER: Well, we had the biggest battle we had. We were trying to get them out of the caves every day. We would fight during the daytime and at nighttime we would come back up on topside. The Americans had put all these underground bunkers when they had it. Then the Japs had it for two or three years they had dug some more. We would clean out some place today and close that up and think it was safe and the next day you go up and there was Japs coming from right on the other side, they had another opening. We had one pretty good battle there with Bill Calhoun writing I found out after all these years. We were there eight weeks, I think, never had a bath and the flies were real bad from the dead bodies.. They flew a C-47 over there and sprayed the whole island while we were fighting because the flies were so bad. The best thing they did though they dropped us fresh bread every day to go with out rations until they had an opening from the beach up to topside. Two or three days there they brought fresh bread in dropped it out of an airplane.

MR. METZLER: Well, that was good news.

MR. WALKER: From Corregidor all the way back to Mindoro we ran into a typhoon on the way back. We were on a LCI that held about a hundred men and I got seasick then. That was the only time I ever got air sick or seasick was going to and from Corregidor. We were so glad to get back to our camp on Mindoro, I went down to the river and soaked for two or three hours in that river.

MR. METZLER: You felt like you were home again, I guess.

MR. WALKER: Yes. One other thing we encountered really inspiring was when Mac Arthur came.

MR. METZLER: Alright, tell me about that.

MR. WALKER: Okay. We had done our thing with fatigues on when we jumped and there was no place to get water so we still didn't take a bath and we had new fatigues for Mac Arthur. He was coming up there.

MR. METZLER: Clean clothes, dirty body, huh?

MR. WALKER: We lined up on the roads up and as he came by we saluted and all that and I got to see Mac Arthur. Then he went up to topside and of course we all followed him up there. Our leader wasn't a general then he was a colonel. He said he presented the roster to Mac Arthur and Mac Arthur thanked him and all and the thing that I still remember he said, "I see the flagpole is still here. Raise Old Glory and let no other nation ever take it down again." And that was really exciting.

MR. METZLER: I'll bet there wasn't a dry eye.

MR. WALKER: Oh, no. We were proud of ourselves.

MR. METZLER: And you should have been. quite a story. So was he smoking his corncob pipe while he was there?

MR. WALKER: I never saw him. I saw him those three times when they raised the flag.

MR. METZLER: What did the people think about Mac Arthur, I mean just the common soldier?

MR. WALKER: We liked him. I thought that was a great speech he made on Hollandia. Every time we took Noemfoor, but Noemfoor wasn't very heavily fortified. We fought there for awhile but we didn't have near the casualties they did on Biak.

MR. METZLER: So there was a lot of respect for Mac Arthur then amongst the rank and file.

MR. WALKER: Yes. Man, I was still alive and I appreciated it.

MR. METZLER: So you went back to Mindoro and finally got cleaned up and kinda of back to what felt like home at the time. Then what happened?

MR. WALKER: Well, they decided they would take Negros and that was...

MR. METZLER: This is another island?

MR. WALKER: Yes, Negros is a big island.

MR. METZLER: We'll look on the map here and see if we see it.

MR. WALKER: It's below Mindoro.

MR. METZLER: Oh, so it's south of Mindoro, so I guess it's probably not on this map.

MR. WALKER: I don't see it.

MR. METZLER: Well, keep going.

MR. WALKER: It was still Calhoun writing on the 503rd. Operation on Corregidor was great for paratroopers because the biggest artillery pieces we had were 75s. They sent us to Negros to clean up this island which the Japs had all the high ground. They put us in there and they were dug in and were expecting us and all that. We must have landed there around the first of April.

MR. METZLER: 1945.

MR. WALKER: 1945, yes. The first day we were there we came under artillery fire. Then the air force came over and they damn near bombed us, they got too close.

MR. METZLER: Did you jump on to Negros?

MR. WALKER: No, we went to Cibu first, from Mindoro to Cibu city to a big port in Cibu City, on the island of Cibu. From Cibu we went over to Bacolod which is the capital of Negros. Bacolod is pretty close to the coast and the Japanese were all in the mountains. We went out either the second or third day after we got to Bacolod and Negros and we were going up these mountains and they stopped us. Then went over to a river, I can't remember the river, sent us out on patrol. I can remember the day because Roosevelt died April 12, 1945. We knew the Japs were across this river. They wanted a patrol to go across this river, and there were seven of us, to see if we found the Japs. We were going down this trail, we had stopped; it was right after dinner on the 13th, we got across the river and we stopped and ate our rations. We hadn't gone maybe a mile, we were going down another little hill to go up another one, and there were five of us ahead of us halfway down this hill. Then I had a BAR, that's a Browning automatic rifle, and another fellow was behind me. We were just barely down the hill and Sterling Harrell, my buddy, was a scout that day. He saw something glinting off of a rifle or something. He started shooting, he opened up with his Tommy gun and then he hid. I thought the fire was coming from my right and I turned and they had me and the fellow behind me zeroed in, the Japs did, and they got him right between the eyes. Just as I turned I got shot in the mouth and it knocked out three of my teeth. One minute I was standing up and the next I'm on my hands and knees. The fellow in front of me says, "Are you shot?" and I said, "I guess so." We got off the trail, we knew that much, and went all down around back on the hill. In the meantime our Browning automatic rifles rolled down the hill and we couldn't go back and get it. I had a forty-five and I pulled it out and I was waving it around. They were going to take it away from me because I wasn't a

very good shot with it. I found out later the reason they were afraid I was going to shoot one of them. We stayed there and we radioed in and we had found the Japs. Now we wanted to come in and we didn't know how in the hell we could get in. They got our position and put down some artillery. It was pretty damn accurate I'll say that time, and we started working our way back to the river. When you get shot or wounded in the head you're bleeding and everything. They wanted to carry me and told no, I was going to get to that river because our troops were on the other side of the river. I knew if we got to the river we'd be okay. We got to the river and I just lay in the river. I was sort of tired and scared. They thought I was dying and they came back out there. I couldn't talk by then 'cause my head was swollen and that ole mucous was coming out of my mouth and everything. They came and we got back up on the side of the river, they made a stretcher and carried me in. We had a field hospital there. When we left on patrol we always left our bags at company headquarters, our pack. I used to play poker and shoot craps whenever we got paid and I had about fifty dollars. After three days you didn't have any money. If you won, you sent it home and if you lost you still didn't have any. I sent a bunch of money home but I still kept about fifty dollars and I had it in my backpack.

MR. METZLER: How do you send money home? Do you put the dollar bills in an envelope?

MR. WALKER: You got a money order. They had headquarters, battalion headquarters, not company, they had some way 'cause I was sending money orders home.

MR. METZLER: That was a secure way to get money back to family. How interesting! I interrupted you, go ahead.

MR. WALKER: When I got to the hospital I wrote to Sterling, Before I left I was on this stretcher, I went into the hospital first, and since it was a facial wound they wouldn't do anything. They said we're going to send you back to Bacolod, they've got a bigger field hospital there. They called for a piper cub and had a bulldozer out there. They just scraped off a place and that piper cub landed out there and picked me up on that thing. Before I left Sterling was there and I wrote him a note, "I've got fifty dollars in my pack back there."

MR. METZLER: Get it home.

MR. WALKER: When I got to the hospital I wrote him back and told him if he ever got to a town spend it; it was alright if they spent it. He wrote me back and said it was a damned good thing 'cause we done spent it. Anyway, they got it; they paid me.. I got to a hospital in a C-47 and it happened to be...

MR. METZLER: Now where was this?

MR. WALKER: I think it was Bacolod, the capital. After wading that river, all I have on is my fatigues and my paratroop boots. When you went in combat, you always wore your good boots.

MR. METZLER: Why did you always wear your good boots going into combat?

MR. WALKER; Because they're comfortable. While I was on that table, like I said, they took all my wet stuff off and took my boots off, there I was up there with just a blanket on. The surgeon happened to be from Chicago and he looked at me and he told me he was a cosmetic surgeon in civilian life. He said he was going to fix me up there and he did. He did a good job and they put me in this room. I didn't know whether I could get up or not, you know, and they gave me a pain killer and everything. The next

morning they were going to fly me back to Leyte to a general hospital they said. I said I wasn't going until I found my boots, I wanted my jump boots. I wrote a note that I wanted my boots.

MR. METZLER: You couldn't speak at this point.

MR. WALKER: No, my head was all swollen and I wrote a note that I wasn't leaving there until I got my jump boots. About fifteen minutes later two guys came in and picked me up off that stretcher and put me on an airplane and I ain't seen my boots yet. Son of a guns stole my boots while I was on the operating table.

MR. METZLER: So you never saw your boots again?

MR. WALKER: Never saw them again. On this plane all I had was a blanket and, of course, it was hotter than hell. We get back to this hospital this nurse told me, "You can take that blanket off." I was sweating and everything. She said, "Take that blanket off." I said, "I've nothing on me." So she went and got me some pajamas and told me to go and take a bath. She said, "You stink."

MR. METZLER: Well, she was honest with you.

MR. WALKER: We got to be good friends. Her boyfriend was a gunner in Europe. We went to a show a time or two and since I didn't have any clothes she gave me her boots. I got a small foot, they were just infantry boots, but they were something I could put on my feet. She went and got the Red Cross to give me a Purple Heart. She was really nice.

MR. METZLER: Tell me about the Purple Heart

MR. WALKER: I was just laying up there enjoying myself and an officer came in and this same nurse and a Red Cross lady was with them. They gave me all this little speech about it and asked me what I wanted to do with it. I don't know. I don't have any place

to put it on me. The Red Cross lady said, "Would you like for us to send it home?" I said, "Well, sure." So they gave it to my mother and father.

MR. METZLER: Do you still have it?

MR. WALKER: No. They sent the Purple Heart home and my mother wrote and she was real appreciative. When I got out of the army I didn't want anything to do with the army. My wife says that I let my kids play with it and my other ribbons and everything and I don't know what happened to them.

MR. METZLER: They just disappeared somewhere along the line.

MR. WALKER: I got another Purple Heart combat thing. He was going to give it to me some guy wanted it. I sold that one for five dollars. I didn't get home with that one either.

MR. METZLER: They came in and they gave you a little presentation speech and you didn't have any clothes to pin it on so you sent it home. Which puts me to a question, how often were you able to write home and how often did you get letters from home? How was the communication between you and State side?

MR. WALKER: When we were not in combat we got mail at least once a week. It was pretty good. Papers would be maybe three or six months behind. Mother would send me the sport section in the paper.

MR. METZLER: Did you ever get food sent from home?

MR. WALKER: She did but I told her not to do it anymore. By the time it got there, if it was cookies, they were just crumbles. She sent me some tee shirts. I really liked those.

MR. METZLER: So anyway you're recovering from your war wounds and then what happened?

MR. WALKER: They had a Col. dentist there and they fixed me a bridge. I was there maybe a month. When he got through he told me that he'd fixed me up I could go back there and kill that Jap now. We were two hundred miles from any Japs. I said, "You can say that here but that son of a bitch can stay out there as far as I'm concerned." I got tired of that there and when they were going to send me back and I finally went down to the air strip. I found a mail plane going back to Negros and so I caught the mail plane. I got into Bacolod and I crawled out of a truck, and my outfit was maybe five or six, or maybe further miles out so I got there and met everybody. I didn't do anything but they said from now on they'd give me the acting sergeant there now. I said all I did was get shot and they said well you're the last one here, the oldest one here. The next day they decided to move back to Bacolod but I had to walk back that time. Our outfit was pulled back from Bacolod. We went from Bacolod to Frabien and we were to patrol there. Frabien was known for being a factory that made furniture for Mac Arthur. Wood there was supposed to be real good. There was a great big warehouse there; the top floor where they made the furniture and then underneath it was where they sawed it up, it was a sawmill, I guess you would call it. It was a pretty good complex and the Japs had used it for kind of a headquarters. The Filipinos were running this factory for Mac Arthur before the war. They had a compound that had a tennis court, looked like at one time it had a swimming pool up there and there were houses, and that was neat. We got to stay in those houses for awhile. This was getting kind of close to the end of the war. They decided we had to go out and try to get rid of the rest of the Japs. There was another lumber

camp about ten miles from Frabica and they had a railroad, little bitty railroad that would go out there. They don't know if it could be suited for a camp. This buddy and I, and he was a big football fan, too. Our company commander, who was only a 1st lieutenant, was a big football fan. His mother sent him football clippings and we'd swap and we were up there and got this order that they needed to send a patrol out to this camp. Since I was laying there he said, "Bill, I want you to go out to this camp with a Filipino scout and check it out and see if the whole company can move out there." I said, "Well that's good but..." He said, "We don't know if there are any Japs out there or not. We want you to go". "That's a good deal! Send me and a Filipino?" He said, "He's not going to be armed either". I said, "How are we gonna go?" He said, "We hope the railroad will carry you to the camp, if the Japs have been using it." There was a little ole motor car like you see on the railroad and you know how much noise they make. You could hear them for a hundred miles. The next morning this Filipino and I got on this little motor car and I got a Tommy gun and we hit out in this dadgumed place that I don't know where I'm going and you could hear for a hundred miles and wasn't any of our troops out there. Ever now and then we'd have to stop in a place that was shady and cut our way. We got out there and fooled around the whole time and got back and I cussed Whitten out. I told him I never wanted, I said, "You tried to get me killed."

MR. METZLER: But you never saw any Japanese?

MR. WALKER: No, and we moved out there, and we had this camp. I think it was more than a company because I believe the whole battalion was out there at this lumber camp,

and they decided that we would have a company sweep. We were going to march from there to the coast, I don't know how far it was. So we go out there and get to the company advance and my squad was leading the company. We had this same Filipino scout that had gone out to the camp with me; he was showing us where to go. He said that there was a little coffee plantation up there on the hill and they had some real good water, a good well there, and we could go up there. So we get to this canyon where this house is and he told me where the well was. So Whitten told me to take my squad and go up there and check this house, the house up there on the coffee plantation. We go up there and we check the house and walk all around, walk through it, go to the well, fill up our canteens with water and came back and told him "Ain't nothing out there." Fine, so he says, "Well, he and this Filipino scout we're going to go over there to the well and get us some water." He got about half way up there and there was a sniper beside the house. I'm dying laughing and he's cussing me. I said, "Hey, I got you back." He said, "I thought you said it was no Japs." They don't want your enlisted men they saw your damn bars.

MR. METZLER: They want the officers?

MR. WALKER: He said, "You get off my butt and get your squad out there and go get him, get me out of here." He never returned fire. We get back up to the house and there was a hole right by a window. We had walked over him.

MR. METZLER: He was down in a hole?

MR. WALKER: He was down in a hole while we walked all around him. As we left he waited until our company commander and that Jap got out there in the clear and opened up but didn't hit him. I told him, "Man, this Jap ain't out here by himself." We did some

walking on a trail leading off behind him and we had a lieutenant in my squad and he had just joined us and he and a scout was behind him. We started down this trail and we hadn't gone thirty yards and our scout thought it was a machine gun pointing at us. He opened up and killed two Japs down there. Before the scout killed the Japs they got off a few shots from the machine gun and one of the shots went through the bill of the Lt's cap and helmet and didn't scratch him. Good old coffee plantation out there and a coffee tree is not very big. We fought all day in there around that coffee plantation and we never did make much headway. I remember climbing over a wall on my stomach and a bullet hit about a foot from my butt . We killed about three or four and that day, as I said we fought during the day time. We'd come back and do like the cowboys did we made us a circle and everything. That night they dropped the atomic bomb.

MR. METZLER: That was in August of '45.

MR. WALKER: August of '45 and that was about the end of my, they told us to disregard international Japs, go out and kill more Japs. Man, we had done been over there long enough. We dug us some foxholes and we stayed in that and didn't move for three or four days, finally decided they would let us come in. We think we fired the last shots of WWII as we were the only ones in combat at that time.

MR. METZLER: So when did you hear about the surrender, then?

MR. WALKER: I'm going to tell you.

MR. METZLER: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MR. WALKER: They told us they were going to do a surrender in August when they dropped the bomb.

MR. METZLER: I think it was still August when they surrendered.

MR. WALKER: They finally got word that the Japs on Negros were surrendering. And they had three surrenders in Negros. They had one for Bacolod with the Jap general and they had one in Fredica, and I don't know where they had the other. I know they had three. One officer and me met the Jap officer and a Jap interpreter (American) & NCO and we got the Japanese out under a tree and they arranged to surrender. I got to be in the honor guards when they surrendered. The Japs all came in from the jungle and gave us their sword and, of course, all the officers got the good ones and I think the 2nd lieutenant gave me his and that's the sword I gave to the Museum.

MR. METZLER: So the sword that you donated to the Museum was presented to you by a Japanese officer who surrendered there.

MR. WALKER: I got to come home. I got discharged on Christmas day and I never was so glad to get back to the States in all my life.

MR. METZLER: I bet you were. How had things changed when you got back home? Were things about the same as they were you left?

MR. WALKER: No. I guess they were. Things hadn't changed much.

MR. METZLER: Had you changed?

MR. WALKER: Probably.

MR. METZLER: How?

MR. WALKER: For awhile I didn't want to do anything. I only lacked a year to finish school. I didn't want to go back to school. I fooled around there and I got malaria and got really sick after coming back.

MR. METZLER: But you caught it when you were over there but you didn't really get the symptoms until you got back. Is that right?

MR. WALKER: I had malaria once before over there. I got shots 'cause I went back and then I got sick.

MR. METZLER: Are you still bothered with it?

MR. WALKER: No.

MR. METZLER: Your body was able to overcome it.

MR. WALKER: When I went to the hospital this time, back over here, I thought I was going to go back to college. I needed that degree or something if I was going to make a living.

MR. METZLER: So you went back to A&M?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. METZLER: I see you have an A&M ring?

MR. WALKER: Yes. I lost my first one. When I was a junior they let us have our rings before we went overseas. When we went on that patrol in New Guinea I lost that ring. I've got an A&M ring in New Guinea somewhere.

MR. METZLER: Out there somewhere. Have you ever been back to that part of the world?

MR. WALKER: No, but my brother went to Corregidor.

MR. METZLER: Did he?

MR. WALKER: Yes, he brought me back a (end of cassette 1, side 2)

(Cassette two)

MR. METZLER: So you went back to A&M. I see you have an A&M ring.

MR. WALKER: Yes. I lost my first one. I was a Junior and they let us have our rings before we went overseas. When we went on that patrol in New Guinea I lost that ring over there. I've got an A&M ring in New Guinea somewhere.

MR. METZLER: Have you ever been back to that part of the world?

MR. WALKER: No, my brother went to Corregidor. He brought me back a bunch of pictures on how it looks now. My wife won't fly.

MR. METZLER: Well, maybe you need to take one of those cruise liners?

MR. WALKER: She won't get on that either.

MR. METZLER: Well, I think you're going to stay in Satin then. Are there any other stories that you would like to share with us?

MR. WALKER: I think I've done enough.

MR. METZLER: You certainly did enough for us when you were over there. You had quite an adventure and it's good that you were able to survive those wounds. I can't even tell by looking at you that you had any critical wounds.

MR. WALKER: The only thing is getting those teeth, I think.

MR. METZLER: Isn't that something.

MR. WALKER: The scar has moved down here now but it was just a small scar here and it is around my nose.

MR. METZLER: That had to have been sore. Well, Bill, thank you so much for sharing your time with us and sharing your experiences.

MR. WALKER: I've never done this before.

MR. METZLER: See, it's not so bad, is it? It's just like telling stories.

MR. WALKER: That's all it is.

Edited copy May 25, 2009, by Eunice Gary