

**Robert A. Addison**  
**Narrator**

**Wayne Clarke and Mike Russert**  
**Interviewers**

**January 4, 2005**  
**At the New York State Military Museum**  
**Saratoga Springs , NY**

**Interviewers: INT**  
**Robert A. Addison: RAA**

**INT:** What is your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?

**RAA:** Robert A. Addison. I was born in Akron, Ohio on December 7, 1922

**INT:** What was your educational background prior to entering service?

**RAA:** I graduated from High School, the preceding January, 1941  
I started at Mt. Union College which was in my hometown of Alliance, Ohio. In  
November I got appendicitis and back in those days they kept you in the hospital for a  
couple of weeks. And as I was recuperating on my birthday, December 7, 1941 some of  
the fellas were in and we were battling the breeze and my younger sister came home from  
the movies and said they stopped the movie and announced that they bombed Pearl  
Harbor. So I was in the process in college.

**INT:** Do you remember your reaction and the reaction of those that were with you when  
they heard that?

**RAA:** Oh yes. Everybody was pretty shocked. I didn't realize until I was downtown in a  
malt shop and I said, "Those son of a guns! That's my birthday!" [Laugh]. So I had a  
personal vendetta against them, I guess.

**INT:** Was the whole town buzzing about it?

**RAA:** Oh, yes. There were different reactions. Some of the fellas said, "Oh, this might  
take about 6 weeks. They got little '22s articles'" Well, they had 25s which were a lot  
more powerful than 22s we found out. But most of the fellas [pause] I played football,  
basketball, baseball all the way through school and football out there is big stuff [in  
Ohio]. It's where Paul Brown got his start in Nassau. I played against his football teams.  
I'd like to be part of the best of the best and well, I heard that the Marines were pretty  
good guys. So I went down and asked them,  
"How long after appendicitis will you take me?"  
"Well," he said, "how long has it been?"

“Six weeks.”

“Anytime.”

“Oh.”

So I went home and my mother said,

“What did they say? Anytime? Like hell, oh no. Wait till after the holidays.”

[laughter]

So January 7<sup>th</sup>, I went down, and I left for the Marine Corps on January 7<sup>th</sup>.,

**INT:** So you picked the Marines because you felt they were the best organization?

**RAA:** Yes.

**INT:** Where did you go for your training?

**RAA:** Parris Island. Of course, all the Marines had just a skeleton of two divisions, very, very basic and they were bringing them in 500 a day at Parris Island. They cut boot camp from 13 weeks to six weeks. So what they usually did was have two weeks of close order drill, then they'd send you to rifle range for 3 weeks and back for a week of extended order drill and you were through. When it came time to send us to the rifle range there wasn't any room. So they put 500 of us on a train and shipped us up to Quantico. Now this was the latter part of January and the first part of February. Quantico is in Virginia but it still gets cold and rainy and it was miserable on that rifle range. In fact, I think it was only time during record day that the Marine Corps called off record because the targets were flying out of the racks.

**INT:** How was the training? Was it pretty tough during that 6 weeks?

**RAA:** A lot of the guys [were from] New York City so it was really tough on them. But I found that it wasn't as tough as high school football.

**INT:** What kind of guns were you using at the time?

**RAA:** We had the O3's. We took the O3's all the way through Guadalcanal.

**INT:** When you first went into basic training did you have the old WWI helmets?

**RAA:** No. We had those old pith helmets. I never got one of those. They were in the process of changing over. The Raiders were forming in Quantico at the time – they were the old 1st<sup>h</sup> Battalion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines. They had been pulling maneuvers up and down the East Coast, and they were stationed there, so they pulled them out of the 5th Regiment and were going to make it what they called the "First Separate Battalion", but then they decided to go with the name "Raiders".

**INT:** Did you volunteer for this?

**RAA:** Yes. It was another volunteer. We were just about finished boot camp when they came out and said "We've got this outfit", and told us what kind of an outfit it was and took us into A barracks and interviewed us and they picked the ones. Here's a crop of fresh guys so that's how they built up the battalion, from these guys just finishing boot camp right there at Quantico.

**INT:** How many guys volunteered out of your group?

**RAA:** don't know. I don't recall.

**INT:** Were there quite a few?

**RAA:** Yes, there were quite a few. We had sixty some in the platoon. I would judge thirty or forty of us volunteered. They took most of us, some of those they didn't. I don't know why. They picked me though. I got a feeling one of the reasons they picked me was because of my high school football background. The fella who interviewed me was Major Bailey, Captain Bailey at that time. He'd been a professional football player. One fella in boot camp platoon they didn't pick. I don't know why. This fella just wasn't the type they wanted. The battalion still wasn't built up. That was my graduation from boot camp, marching from the rifle range into the A barracks at Quantico and that was it.

So we became First Marine Raider Battalion at that time. That was about the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> of February and then we went into real stiff training then.

**INT:** In Quantico?

**RAA:** In Quantico. Where we pulled maneuvers everything is all built up now and I don't think they have infantry-type people there at this point. In April, we had an oversized battalion. Most of the battalions were about seven hundred and fifty men. They had three rifle companies, a weapons company, and a headquarters company. We had four rifle companies so we were close to nine hundred men. One rifle company, D Company, was not fully developed yet. In the meantime, I was put into 81mm mortars. But then they decided they would do away with those. They are too big to carry, which was a good thing because the base plate weighs about 180 pounds. It's a good thing they did because we would never have been able to get through some of the places we had to go through.

So we were there and in April the most of Headquarters Company, and A, B, C, and E Company (which I had been in with the mortars) they shoved off for San Diego and eventually went to Samoa for two months. We were back at Quantico waiting for this other rifle company to fully develop. They didn't know what to do with us. So, "Let's send them to demolition school", for a six-week course in ten days [smile]. In June I went overseas as a demolition person. We stopped in Samoa picked up our battalion and went on to New Caledonia. When we got there they already had most of the demolition people they needed, so they threw me back into E Company and 60mm mortars. So that's the way I finished up, on 60 mm mortars all the way through.

Then we finally got word. We traveled on APDs, those were WWI four-stack destroyers. They put new diesel motors in them and so there room for a company of troops in these APDs. That's what they pulled maneuvers on prior to the war up and down the coast. They were attached to our battalion. We didn't go overseas in them. We went overseas

in a big transport. We got to New Caledonia and there were four of them there and we pulled some more maneuvers there. And then shoved off and went up to the Fijis. Well, here I am one day up on a ridge and, "There they go again!" They just didn't have room in those four destroyers for all of us. [laughter]

In New Zealand they had somewhat of a luxury liner where they had dance halls and all that. They had put six-inch guns on it and called it a cruiser [laughter]. [A guy], Malawi was his name, brought up a load of mutton from New Zealand up to New Caledonia so we went down and approached him. He said "Yeah, I'll take you up, sure." So the rest of us piled aboard there and went up to the Fijis. He wanted to go all the way, but [we said] "No, you go on back". So they put us on transports and that were filled up all the time so we would sleep up on deck. We pulled a few maneuvers up there.

Then August 7<sup>th</sup> we hit the island of Tulaghi. I think the reason they chose us to do that is because our fellas were in pretty good shape because they had been in Samoa for a couple of months. The rest of the division had just gone to Australia. They weren't in any kind of a shape. But the reason we had to go into Guadalcanal was they found out they were building this kind of airstrip on Guadalcanal. Prior to that the Japs had lost four aircraft carriers at the battle of Midway so they had to get other means so they could bomb and place planes to go to Australia, New Zealand, Caledonia, Samoa, whatever. So they were building this airstrip and we had to get it back. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of August at 8 o'clock we were the first offensive ground troops to engage the Japanese.

**INT:** Why don't you hold that up in front of you?

**RAA:** [Holds up a poster: "Edsen's Raiders, 1942-1944, First Marine Raider Battalion. First offensive ground troops to engage Japanese in World War II at Tulagi. August 7, 1942 - 0800 hours]

We went in to Tulaghi at 8 o'clock, the rest of the division went in to Guadalcanal at 9 o'clock.

**INT:** That the insignia [on poster] you wore?

**RAA:** Yes. This was our insignia.

**INT:** What rank were you at that time?

**RAA:** I was just a private. Back in those days you didn't make PFC out of boot camp. I was just a private. We decided we would take the island of Tulaghi. They had no problem taking the airstrip on Guadalcanal because there weren't many troops there, mainly Korean workers working on the airstrip. They didn't have any problems taking the airstrip itself. We had quite a battle over on Tulaghi.

**INT:** How did you land? Did you use the old Higgins boats?

**RAA:** We used the old Higgins boats where you go over the sides. We couldn't get within 100 yards of the beach because of the coral. So we had to wade in. Fortunately it was not a defended beach. We were anywhere from our knees up to here [chest high] in

the water depending on the coral. The boats couldn't go in – it would have ripped the bottom. The old Higgins boats were just wooden boats, no ramps. That's the way we went in.

**INT:** Wasn't your unit one of the first to use the two-piece camouflage uniforms?

**RAA:** No, not at that point. Everybody still had the old green. They didn't come out with camouflage until we went to new Georgia. So instead of those camouflage things on our helmets we had a hunk of burlap painted green. [laughter]

**INT:** So you had the old herringbone type fatigues? Like an OD type fatigue you wore?

**RAA:** Yes, almost a solid color. Olive drab. An insignia, U.S. Marines. That was it. [pause] No rank was on it. It's amazing because I see all these officers and non-coms with ranks out there in combat. Ours had no rank. The Japs would pick them off first. Another thing they'd pick off first would be corpsmen. The Marines didn't have any medical things, so the navy supplied corpsmen and doctors. According to the Geneva Convention they were supposed to wear a Red Cross armband and no arms. One day. That was it. Off came these [the armbands] and on went the arms because the Japs were picking them out first so they couldn't treat anybody. Talughi was where the governor of the British Solomon Islands lived prior to the War. It was a beautiful little island, about half mile wide, three miles long. It had polo grounds, all this kind of stuff. It had a lot of houses on it and a lot of caves. We went down. We couldn't use our mortars after the first day because we thought we had them in such a small area. But then we found out we had bypassed a lot of them that were still in the caves. Then they came out at night. That's when all hell broke loose. We got a lot of our casualties at night. In about three or four days we finally had it all secured. We stayed there and went on patrols, over to Florida Island. But there's nothing over there.

In the meantime, the Japs tried to take back the airstrip in the Battle of Tenaru with a thousand men. The Marines got them into a trap and annihilated them. If the Japs had waited.... [pause]. Then we went over towards the end of the month. All we had was a little perimeter where this little square is [points out on map of Guadalcanal]. That's all we had of Guadalcanal, just a perimeter defense around the airstrip. The Japs could land anyplace. Mainly because on August 9<sup>th</sup>, two days after we'd gone in, there was a sea battle up near Savo Island and we lost four cruisers that night. Our fleet took off to New Caledonia and our transports went back and half our supplies went back. So there we were. All by our lonesome.

**INT:** How did you feel about that?

**RAA:** Well [pause] I was always an optimist. I don't know why. People tried to tell us how bad it was. Later on I found they were wrong. It was worse than they were telling us. [laughter] And in fact, in the newest book that came out they said we were known as the "marooned division" because we were just there.

**INT:** We interviewed a Marine that called it “starvation island”. Did you have short rations?

**RAA:** Oh yeah. We took rations for about seventy-two hours, about three days. Our colonel said, “Hey, the Japs are eating.” So that’s what we did on Talughi. We ate Japanese rice and we were down to about one meal a day until they finally got things back into us. But it was quite a while. We had no air support. They could bomb us. They could shell us.

When people ask “What made your battalion so much better than the others?” “Training and leadership.” We had terrific leadership. Colonel Edsen while we were in Quantico would take us on Saturday morning on a twenty-two mile hike. He would stop every once in a while and watch everybody go by and then he’d double time up to the top and take off. When we got into the barracks he was there talking, making nice remarks to everybody. Complementary remarks to everybody as they came in. That’s the type of fella you want to go with.

**INT:** So you had a lot of respect for him as a leader?

**RAA:** Oh, yes. A lot of respect for Colonel Edsen.

**INT:** Did you have that much personal contact with him?

**RAA:** No. I did not, no. But those two things.... [pause] Not only their leadership but the leadership they developed in us. A lot of guys after the war went out , like myself [pause] I retired as a full professor from a college. I felt that’s probably equivalent to a colonel in the Marine Corps. A lot of guys developed leadership roles after. In fact, four received the Congressional Medal of Honor and eight of our battalion members became generals. And I have a list of all the other navy crosses and silver stars. Twenty-four navy ships are named after fellows from our one battalion. I don’t think there is any other one battalion [pause]. They keep telling us it’s probably the most outstanding battalion the Marine Corps ever had. When we go back for our reunions in Quantico they treat us fantastic. Of course, we’re smaller and smaller. Last time I think there was about twenty-five of us there. We lose fifteen to twenty guys every year. Somebody said, “How many are still alive?” We don’t know. We were in existence for two years and in a two year period 2,600 guys went through the battalion. Replacements and so forth.

**INT:** Did you have any specialized equipment that the other Marines didn’t have? I heard that the Raiders were issued a special type dagger or knife that the others didn’t have.

**RAA:** Yes. We had stilettos. Just stilettos, that’s all. The rest of the equipment was all the same.

**INT:** I also read that you had some British or Canadian guns with you. Specialized guns?

**RAA:** No, not that I was aware of.

**INT:** But you did carry the O3 basically through the entire Guadalcanal campaign?

**RAA:** Yes. The 7<sup>th</sup> Marines came along in October and they were the first ones to bring on the M1.

**INT:** Did you like the M1 or did you prefer the O3?

**RAA:** [Laugh]. I never had an M1. The reason I never had an M1 is because I left the Island with the O3s. And then after we went down to New Zealand for some liberty and then came back to New Caledonia. New Caledonia was kind of our base. Then we got in replacements and then they decided to do away with the weapons company. So they sent two machine guns and a mortar to each rifle company and they already had two machines guns. That gave each rifle company four machine guns and three mortars. I was a gunner at that time on the first squad and we went down to A company. When we got down to A Company, they needed a squad leader for their second squad and I went over and took over the second squad. My weapon then was a carbine. They were just a couple of months off the factory.

**INT:** What did you think of the carbine?

**RAA:** It was nice. We didn't have to fire [far]. A lot of times you couldn't see 100 yards. It was light and I think it had about twenty rounds.

[Laugh] To get back to Guadalcanal, we just had that perimeter defense around. Down on the beach the Japs had been landing down at a place called Tasaboco. Colonel Edsen had been in China prior to the war. He knew what the Japs were going to do before they knew what they were going to do. He knew it was trouble if we didn't get down and do something where they were landing. So they sent us down to raid this village. We got down there and the main body had already pushed off into the jungles. They had four pieces of artillery there. If we hadn't destroyed it they would have used it on us on the Battle of Bloody Ridge. So we destroyed them, pulled them out to sea, blew up their ammunition dump and what chow we couldn't push in our pockets we destroyed. They had everything. They had bicycles and everything. We went back and there was a gap in the defense around Henderson Airfield on this Lunga Ridge. Edsen just knew this was where they were going to attack! It took awhile for him to convince General Vandegrift for us to go out and put up our defense around there, and still then we were spread out quite a bit too.

So on September 12-13<sup>th</sup> that's when they attacked us. There were 700 of us and about 3,500 of the Japs. What helped save us was the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines artillery. We had our forward observer right up there by Edsen. I could hear them all night long and they were dropping them just a hundred yards ahead of us. We could hear those things coming in and you'd swear they were going to drop right in on of you. But they kept them spattered enough so that not too many could hit us at once. It was between a two and three day battle. They bombed us everything the night before. They shelled us. They knew right

where we were. After that morning, we pulled off and the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines took off. The Japs took off.

I have pictures of what they left. Estimates of anywhere from 800 to 1,400 that they left on Bloody Ridge. There was grass the night before and the next day you could hardly see a blade of grass. They kept “Bonsai! Bonsai! Bonsai!” They wouldn’t..... [pause]. That’s another thing. When I came back from overseas people would ask, “What’s the difference between the American servicemen and the Japanese?” And I think the Germans [were] the same way. We were taught to think for ourselves! They would just follow orders. Bonsai! If they would have probed they would have found we didn’t have anything to our left. They could have circled around and surrounded us. Head on. Head on. Head on.

I think, on D-day if you looked back you’d probably see cases where American junior officers, NCOs made decisions. Important decisions! But yet there was a German general and tanks. He knew what he had to do but he couldn’t do it because he didn’t get orders from above. Rommel was off at a birthday party for his wife and Hitler was asleep and nobody dared wake him up. The guy couldn’t get any orders, so as a result he couldn’t do what he knew he had to do. But as you probably heard, there were many, many cases of junior officers and NCOs making decisions on the spot.

We had that. We could make decisions on the spot. In fact, on that last morning on the Ridge we were behind one little ridge and there was a Jap machine gun had come up. Somebody up ahead of us at headquarters said, “Hey, can you get 150 yards on the peashooter?” “Yeah, okay.” So we held up a gun and we sited in on that. “We’ll go 10 mils right.” And that was it.

And there was a jungle down off this ridge and they were in there and had the range of the Ridge with their D mortars and machine guns. They were picking us off. In fact, I was up there and all of sudden looked up and here comes one right at me. So I flipped to the side and rolled down the hill and run off. We pattern-fired our mortars down in that area. We’d hit one and go ten mils right, ten mils right, up twenty-five yards, ten mils left, ten mils left and on. We must have thrown in over 100 rounds in there. We silenced the whole crew. So that’s what our little 60mm mortars could do. Nobody teased us about our peashooters anymore. [laugh] We came off with close to fifty percent casualties those two nights.

**INT:** Did you have any hand-to-hand fighting yourself?

**RAA:** Myself, no. I did not. I was where I was supposed to be, when I was supposed to be there, doing what I was supposed to do. It just happened to be that I was in the mortars and we were called on to do what we did there. When we came off we went back in a coconut grove.



In the meantime, Edsen had made full colonel. Each battalion has a lieutenant colonel. Vandegrift relieved the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment and made Edsen commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment. So up the other way! The Matanikau had come out so the Japs went up the other way too and that's where the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment was. We had gone up a couple of times to try to circle around them but we were unsuccessful. We had 60mm mortars. That's all we had.

So we came back and they said,

"All right now, you're going to be the reserves of the reserves. In fact the only time we'll call on you is if the Island is in danger of being retaken."

One morning we see A and C Company packing their gear.

"Where're they going?"

"They're going up to guard Edsen's CP."

The next morning, "Get your gear."

"Where are we going?"

"Well, we had to use A and C Company, so you're going up to guard Edsen's CP."

Fortunately, that's all we did do.

But that night there were a lot of skirmishes going on and some Japs had come on our side of the Matanikau River. They were trying to get back before the tide came in so they could wade through. They ran into our A Company mortars who were digging in. They were skirmishing. Edsen thought they were trying to come this way [points left] he was yelling at them, screaming "You gotta hold! You gotta hold!" We went up the next day and we pulled eight of our fellas and about sixty Japanese. All hand to hand. Not a shot fired. This was four days before we would leave the island and these poor guys got it that one night.

Then when the Army came in they brought in 3,000 from New Caledonia. They'd been sitting down there. For some reason the Navy wanted this an "all Navy- Marine" show but they finally brought up this division of the Army from New Caledonia. That's what we left on, those transports. In fact we left a little early because they had a character called "Pistol Pete", a piece of artillery up in the hills and he would shell us. When they would bomb, he would drop some shells. Hey, there's a different sound between a bomb and a shell. We figured out that he was shelling at the same time they were dropping bombs on us. Then he started to shoot the ships. A couple of rounds went through the rigging on the ship and the old captain of ship, "Hoist anchor! Get out of here!" In fact he left some of his Higgins boats there and we went back.

To show the difference again, between our American servicemen and theirs. When we got aboard ship there were prisoners there. They were Japanese sailors who were picked up. I don't know if this ship picked them up or another ship picked them up and moved them to this ship to take them back. They had sheets, blankets, pillow, pillowcases and we had bare mattresses. [laughter] But the way the Japs treated guys in the water – they

would run them over with their destroyers and machine gun them, you know, the survivors. That was a little difference, and it would irritate us because some of them on the APDs [high speed transports] that got sunk were very, very good friends of ours.

In fact when we went from Tulaghi to Guadalcanal we were on this cal hoot [unclear] and it was late afternoon and they were debating whether to take us ashore or leave and wait until the next morning, "Well, let's take them ashore." We hadn't even hit the beach yet and the ship was gone. It got bombed and went down in three minutes. So, that was another close call. By the time we left there all those APDs had been sunk. As you look on this chart, the Navy lost a lot more men on Guadalcanal than the Marines did because of all the sea battles. Have you heard of "Iron Bottom Sound?" All the ships went down and a big book I have has pictures of all these ships that are the bottom of Iron Bottom Sound.

Then we went back to New Caledonia and the ship was going down in to dry dock in Wellington, New Zealand. Okay, "as long as we stay, you can stay." We were aboard ship on Thanksgiving going down and supposedly they had a nice Thanksgiving turkey dinner but they ran out and I got cold cuts. But it was still better than what I'd been getting on Guadalcanal. [laughter] We got down there right after Thanksgiving and we spend Christmas and New Years. It was one of the finest Christmases I'd ever spent. All we had to do was come back and check in at 8 o'clock in the morning. That's all we had to do. A lot of guys got hotels. I got a bunk. I'm not going to pay. I came back to the ship. The day before Thanksgiving [Christmas?] I thought I'd go to the "Y" and get a bunk in their gymnasium. They had put up double-deckers and so I got a bunk for three nights and breakfasts. It cost me "two and six", forty cents a night and breakfast. [laughter]

As I was coming out some elderly lady stopped me and said "Do you got a place to have Christmas dinner tomorrow?"

I said "No."

She said, "Well, come up to my place."

She told me where she lived.

"If you got any friends looking for places..."

I asked around but couldn't find anybody so I called, and she said,

"Come on up. I live at 12 Apuka St."

A-p-u-k-a. I still remember that. It was way up in the Brooklyn section of Wellington, New Zealand. The street cars weren't running after Christmas Day, so I walked up there and she had a couple more American sailors and New Zealand sailors and her grandson who was later in the New Zealand Air Force. That was my first experience with plum pudding and I ate it. Then I bit on something metal. A piece of coin or something. And somebody else said, "I got a threepence!" "I got a sixpence!" That's what they did – put money in the thing and I ended up with a threepence!

After the ship got out of dry dock we went back to New Caledonia and got in our replacements and back up to Guadalcanal. We got a little more training and then up to New Georgia. The airstrip Munda was on New Georgia. In the meantime, I got a letter from my brother and I didn't know he was in the service at the time until I got this letter from him and he said he was in the 181<sup>st</sup> Army Engineers. I got a letter from him that said that they speak French in the island where he was. So I said, he must be here in New Caledonia or up in the Hebrides. Somebody said, "I think I remember seeing that sign." So I got to go in to Mia, the town, and I got right up over the truck cab and I told the driver, "Now if I pound on the cab, stop will ya and let me off." "Okay." So we went down and there it was, the 181<sup>st</sup> Army Engineers. So I pounded and he let me off and I started walking up the road and three trucks were coming down. Pretty soon one slammed on the brakes and my brother was driving one of them. So we were together there for awhile until I shoved off. He came out one time and we were gone. I figured he must have been on Munda too because engineers are Army. But after the war we got together and yes, he had been on Munda.

We were on the northern side of New Georgia and Anagui, Boroku, knocking out their supply bases up there. And they had 10,000 Japs on Kolombangara that we could see and they could see us right across the bay. That's where John Kennedy was with his PT boat, right in that area. We had landed down at Rice Anchorage at night on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and we had come two days through the jungles and three days through a swamp to come in behind the Japs. They never figured anybody would come that way. That's why our outfit was known. Show us something that can't be done and we'll do it. We took the island of Anagui and the outpost there. We never did take the island of Boroku. They were dug in and everything.

In the meantime, the engineers were building a road from Munda over. One day we sent a patrol down and some guy got killed. The next day the Army came walking in and they [the Japanese] were gone. We knew they were doing something. They were doing a lot of pounding and they were evacuating to Kolombangara. Of course, "Washing Machine Charlie", he was on Guadalcanal too, one of these little things that come over and drop a bomb just to harass you. What we would do was to go down where we had landed and stand up in the Higgins boat and get supplies, then stay down and come back. They would figure we were still there and they would come over and bomb down there. Nobody there. So we outsmarted them.

If they had known that all we had was about two battalions! They had 10,000 of them over there! They could have come over and wiped us out. There were so many times, like on Guadalcanal, if the Japs had waited on Tenaru, Matanikau, or the Ridge, and attacked all at once there was no way we could have defended it. We found out later than their army and navy didn't get along too well. Stupid things on their part that we survived. It got so bad there on Guadalcanal that Vandegrift was told to surrender. He never told us, so we never knew.

**INT:** By New Georgia, you had the camouflage uniforms then?

**RAA:** New Georgia we had the camouflage uniforms then. It didn't do any good. By the time we got through the swamps we were all mud.

**INT:** I had read that some of the units were given a flannel belly pack or strip. Did you ever get a "band", they called it?

**RAA:** No.

**INT:** I was just curious. I had read once that some of the units received these.

**RAA:** No. We had an anti-tank gun when we went in there. Some of the guys carried an anti-tank gun. That was the biggest weapon we had other than our 60mm mortars. There is no way we could have gotten those 81s through those jungles and swamps.

**INT:** I noticed you said you picked up jungle rot. Did you ever pick up any fevers or anything like that?

**RAA:** Well, a lot of guys on Guadalcanal got malaria. I never got malaria. My brother was out there three years. He never got malaria. I don't know why.

**INT:** What about dengue fever?

**RAA:** Not dengue fever. I had what they called "cat fever".

**INT:** Was that the same as what they called "cat scratch fever" or something different?

**RAA:** I don't know. Of course, I had jungle rot and on New Georgia I had yellow jaundice too. Not hepatitis, but yellow jaundice which was dietary deficiencies. Your eyeballs turned yellow. [laughter]

**INT:** Were you hospitalized?

**RAA:** No, because we were leaving the island but at New Caledonia and there was a list coming out of [those going] back to the States. No way was I going to be in sick bay when that list came out. I found out what they did for it. All they did was feed them ice cream and candy and sweet stuff. I forced myself to eat and by the time I got back to the States it was gone.

**INT:** You mentioned a story here [on paper] about Jinx Powers? That episode on New Georgia?

**RAA:** He got wounded before we took Anagui and he could walk, so they sent him back to get help, to get yourself treated. Tell them we need help out here! Stu Polonis [unclear] was one of them. Well, they didn't hear from Jinx and Jinx went the wrong way [laughter]. He got in to where the Japs were and he said, "Well, they climb trees." So he climbed a tree-got up in the top of the tree. I guess he spent the night there. Some of our guys went out looking for Jinx and he heard them coming. He said, "Now if I yell at them, they'll probably shoot me." So he started to sing "Mamie Reilly" which is a song our guys used to sing. [laughter] "Well, there's Jinx! Let's go get him!" [laughter]

There was something on Tulaghi. I told you there used to be a "Reveille Joe", a Japanese destroyer used to come up and down and shell a few at Guadalcanal and a few our way. It would usually be about 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning. The general on the island, he would come down and go into a cave right near where we had our mortars set up to protect the beach. One fella of ours, Andy Dobie, he came off duty and went in this cave and [laughter] he set up a bunch of tin cans and wires and everything else so that if somebody came in it they would stumble and wake him up. Down comes this general and his entourage and stumbled right in to that. They read him [Andy] up and down and everything and sent him over to Colonel Edsen. Edsen didn't get along with his general anyway and I'm sure it was all Edsen could do to keep from laughing right in the general's face. He congratulated Andy on his ingenuity. [laughter]. Another thing on Tulaghi. We don't have chaplains either. The Navy supplies chaplains. The Navy chaplain used to come around and say, "You know, I like to start rumors. By the time they get back to me they're really good." [laugh] Another time he came around and said, "After the war-he comes from Chicago- I'm going to get about 50 Raiders and paratroopers and really clean out the Underworld in Chicago." [laughter]

We finally left New Georgia and back to New Caledonia and I came back to the States. I was stationed down in Camp Elliott. I had been in college and I got over there -- that college bit wasn't so bad after all. I heard they had this V12 program. It was a Navy where they would send high school graduates to college for eight semesters and then send them to midshipman's school. They had a section for the Marine Corps too. The Marines would go for four semesters and then go to Quantico for OCS. When they came back they gave us two choices. "What do you do?" "Well, I'd like to get into that V12" "Well, why don't you wait until you come back- that will give you three choices." So I got guard duty on Camp Elliott at the main gate and then applied to my commanding officer for the V12 program. And I got it.

In July of 44 I was sent to Dennison University, which is not too far from my home in Ohio. After one semester they did away with the Marine unit there and shipped us up to Oberlin College in Ohio. In the fourth semester the war ended. They said, "Now you have to go eight semesters now before you can apply to Quantico." "I was going to go back to general duty but the commanding officer said, "Why don't you take another semester?" So I took another semester and my enlistment was up in January so I extended it until March and I got out. Then I went back to Oberlin as a civilian and eventually finished up. I don't know if you know what kind of school Oberlin College is or was but Oberlin was one of the top liberal arts colleges in the country. They wouldn't have even looked at me because I didn't even have college preparatory courses in high school. I took industrial arts. But I did well enough while I was there that they let me come back. The coaches wanted me because I played football, basketball and baseball too. [laugh]. Normally it takes about 120-125 hours to get a bachelor's degree. I had 165 hours by the time I got mine, making up all the deficiencies. Right out of college, I was twenty-six at the time, I got married a month after I graduated, and right into a

college job, teaching and coaching job at what was then Patterson State, which is now William Patterson College.

Then Korea came around and I was in the Reserves. They called me back in and I spent a year down in Portsmouth, Virginia in Special Service. When I went in they gave me the same MOS when I was in before, a 60mm mortar. Some sergeant said, "Ah, this isn't right. You've got a degree and teaching." So they sent me over to an officer and they gave me a Special Service Secondary. That's what I got into in Special Services.

**INT:** What rank were you at that point?

**RAA:** I was a corporal. All the time I was in V12 all ranks were frozen. Everybody reverted back to private even though I made PFC after Guadalcanal. In the record book I was still a PFC, but all the time I was there everyone was like a private. When I went to get discharged, if you'd been in rank enough time you'd get promoted [laugh] to corporal when I got discharged. So when they called me back in, I couldn't get a commission because I was too old. The cut-off date was [age] twenty-six and I was twenty-seven. Then I made sergeant. That was all right. I had a pretty good deal. I was player/coach of the basketball team; did the post newspaper and a few things like that. After thirteen months I went back to my Patterson job and then up to Bates College for three years, and then out to Doane College out in Crete, Nebraska for five years and then I did YMCA work in Pennsylvania for two years. Then this job up here at Adirondack School was one year old when I came up here. I set up all the physical ed, intramurals, and athletics.

**INT:** I know you got your education while you were in, but did you ever make use of the GI Bill?

**RAA:** Oh, yes. I went eight summers and got my Masters Degree and got a thirty hour certificate beyond the Masters Degree. It was called a Specialist in Education. I got all those at NYU.

**INT:** Did you join any veterans' organizations?

**RAA:** Oh, Yes. I still belong. I have a life membership in the Legion and I have life membership in the Marine Corps League. I held office [points out the pin on his lapel]. I was a Commandant of the detachment for a couple of years and Past-president of our Edsen's Association.

**INT:** So you stayed in contact with people who served with you?

**RAA:** Yes. I'm not active now because I got blood clots in my lungs. I can't go to meetings without piping off and expressing myself. [laugh]. I just sit back. I'm eighty-two years old. I guess it's time to relax a little bit. People ask me what this is [another pin on his lapel] – Heisman Club. Johnny Heisman, his first teaching job was at Oberlin College. He was their first football coach. Now they have a club and they're the club that determines who goes into their athletic hall of fame. I'm a member of that.

**INT:** How do you think your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?

**RAA:** [Shakes his head] When I home once one weekend I had a picture taken. It was very solemn. When I came back from overseas I had another picture taken. I had a nice smile. I told my mother, "Get rid of that other one." She said, "No. That's the way you were then. This is the way you are now." It developed my leadership. I became a leader, I think.

**INT:** Could you tell us a little bit about this [picture of five soldiers with rifles and mortars]? When and where it was taken?

**RAA:** This was my squad – my 60mm mortar squad on Guadalcanal, taken in September, 1942. Across the top [row] was John Burke, [Ronald] Nado, Pat Wreath, Eddie Rakowski. [unclear] I was down [on the left] and I'm down here [on the right]. He [Eddie] was the gunner and I was assistant gunner. This is what was left of a nine man squad. Right now, Ronald Nado and I are the only two left. See the coconut grove in the background? I don't know where the squad leader was. He must have been in sick bay. A lot of guys in sick by with malaria, diarrhea, and other stuff. The first squad leader got hit the first day on Talughi and our gunner got hit. So Rakowski moved up to gunner and I moved up to assistant gunner and another corporal took over the squad. I don't know what happened to him. I don't know what happened to him after the war either.

In fact, when we came off Guadalcanal to New Caledonia, we were sitting around talking about what we were going to do after the war. There were two corporals, the guy who was our squad leader and another corporal. I said, "I'm going back to college and play ball." One said, "Ah, the kids will run circles around you." Well, they didn't [laugh]. I wrote to this one corporal. I found his address. He was down in Florida. I started out [writing], "You were wrong!" [laugh] I told him what I done in college- played football in Ohio all four years, captain of the basketball team, led the baseball team in hits. He no sooner got that than he called me on the phone. He said, "That made my day!" [laugh].

We still get together every year down in Quantico. We used to go down in February but after two years of snowstorms in Quantico- the reason we got together in February was because that's when we actually started to form. Then we went to April – when we went overseas. That was much better going down in April.

**INT:** I imagine.

**RAA:** Last time I think there were about twenty-five of us. We lose fifteen to twenty guys every year. However, we have over 100 at our big dinner on Saturday night because we have sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, and recently, the last five years or so, we've been getting nieces and nephews and younger brothers and sisters of fellas who got killed. They want to come and find out. There was a fella-his brother was six months older than I was. He was from Indiana and went in the same Marine Corps same day I did, in boot camp at the same time and he was in platoon 69 and I was in platoon 66. We went up to Quantico together, fired at the rifle range, went into Raiders together. He went into B Company and I went into E Company. He got killed the first day. His

younger brother has been coming for the last few years. Not this last year, but the year before he got to talk to a fella who was right beside his brother when he got killed. He's been getting a lot of closure. We've been getting people like that coming, and we always have some kind of a general come and talk.

A lot of things we instigated, the Marine Corps still uses. Fire teams. We were the first ones to use fire teams. There used to be two BARs to a squad. They made three fire teams in each squad and each fire team had a BAR, That gave us a lot more fire power. We were the leaders of all these rubber boat amphibious landings. Of course, as they say, "Once a Marine, always a Marine." The Raiders – we were something different.

**INT:** Thank you very much.