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MR: Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?
EB: My full name is Edward J. Bloch. I was born April 17, 1924 in New York City.

MR: What was your educational background prior to entering military service?
EB: I finished high school, then I put in two and a half years at Williams College. World War II started earlier than that, so I signed up for the Marines Corp. I went from there to V12 school.

MR: Can I go back a second, do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?
EB: Yes, I was a freshman at Williams and I remember Dave Greenbaum (? 1:12) coming up the stairs and talking about the fact that Pearl Harbor had taken place. I was as shocked as everybody else. Actually, I felt that our participation in the war could not, and should not, be avoided. In a way, it was a mixed reaction on my part.

MR: So you enlisted in the Marine Corp. Why did you enlist, and why did you select the Marine Corp?
EB: Well, to make a long story short, I guess I was one of those who was trying to prove myself. My father spoke German fluently and used to listen to Hitler on shortwave radio. I understood German too. The thing that got to me was that Hitler said Jews were gutless, don't have any courage- I'm of Jewish ethnic extraction. Retrospectively, I know now that I was not only trying to prove myself, but to him that that was not the case.

MR: Where were you inducted and where did you go for your basic training?
EB: To the best of my recollection, I was inducted in New York City, but I could be wrong about that. Basic training, well they had this V12 program which was actually in uniform. That was at Dartmouth College. I remember that Dartmouth, for the only time in its history I believe had the best football team in the United States because all these guys came in from the Navy and the Marine Corp. [Laughs] When I actually went to Basic Training it was at Parris Island and that I believe was two semesters after being at V12 school at Dartmouth. We didn't learn much at Dartmouth. In my mind, it was a wasted proposition. We drilled a little bit. They took the position that in order to a good job as a rifle platoon leader you had to know about the battle of Trafalgar and a whole lot of things I haven't heard about since. So many of us felt it was a waste of time.

MR: Were you taking college courses at the time?
EB: Yes, credit courses.

MR: So when you went to your basic training, you were an officer then?
EB No, I was a private. Throughout the V12, all of us were privates. I guess we did get our first stripe PFC, I can't remember when that occurred. But no higher than PFC all the way through Parris Island. The next thing that happened, was a senior officer came to speak to all of us. It was sort of a ninety-day wonder thing, they were pushing us through. Because at the battle of Tarawa they hadn't foreseen the role that the reefs would play in landing. They had to wade in at Tarawa and a lot of the rifle platoon leaders got knocked off. So they could not graduate them fast enough at Quantico so I believe, the only time in the history of this country they set up a special OCS school at Camp Lejeune and because they called us in a special class, we felt special. [Both laugh].

MR: So you went to Jejune, then for officers?
EB: Right, I guess it was called OCS at that point.

MR: How long was that program?
EB: Probably in the beginning of 1944, and we didn't graduate from OCS until the fall of that year.
After you're commissioned, first there was a special ceremony, some funny things happened then. They had some kind of a post-graduate officers' school so we were there until then.

MR: And from there, where did you go?
EB: Okay, from there when we were commissioned we got a leave. It was supposed to be for two weeks, but then we got a telegram while on leave to report back to Lejeune by the most direct means possible. We were supposed to be in Lejeune a while longer, but instead of that, I arrived back about two o'clock in the morning. The train left at six o'clock for the west coast so we just changed our things and took off.

MR: Once you reached the west coast, where did you go from there?
EB: We went to Camp Pendleton. We had just missed the ship we were expected to be on so we were in the 23rd Battalion, or something, for transit and we just hung around wasting time in Pendleton. We didn't do too much training. On December 11, 1944 we left on General M.M. Patrick. And interestingly enough, some of those on board were the Navajo "code talkers". They would not speak to us. Because my name began with the letter B, I was supposed to conduct exercise courses. When you're aboard ship, you really need to do something, and they wouldn't come. I didn't know what to do about that, I reported them and was told "forget it". That was that. But later on we found out who they were. A very impressive group

MR: They basically stayed by themselves?
EB: They definitely stayed by themselves. Mostly playing checkers, over and over again without many words being spoken.

MR: How long were you at sea, and did you go to Hawaii?

EB: We had a case of spinal meningitis aboard. We went without a convoy because our ship went thirty-two knots which was most faster than most ships and we could outrun most submarines if any showed up-they didn't. We did put in at Pearl Harbor, to take off the spinal meningitis case. We never got off the ship, then left for Pavuvu.

MR: Could you see any damage from 1941, was that still evident?
EB: Not where we were. I'm sure I would have remembered it if I had seen it and I don't. We might have arrived in the dead of night. I do remember people were on their way home yelling "you'll be sorry!" [Both laugh] We were there a very short time, took on supplies and then left for Pavuvu in the Russell Islands.

MR: What did you do there?
EB: We had pretty intensive training there. We were told when we landed, this was one of the great successes of the intelligence. We were told we were going to attack Formosa. All the plans were laid out. Complete plans down to the last C-ration knowing that the Japanese intelligence would get a hold of those plans. And sure enough, they moved 60,000 troops from Okinawa to Formosa. So then we were at sea for a long time, we stopped for a final assault mock-up at Guadalcanal. It was 135 degrees. The Army closed down for that day, but we didn't. From there, it was Ulithi and Okinawa on April 1st.

MR: Were you in the first wave?
EB: The 11th wave. I was in 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. The Battalion was in reserve at that point. You know, two battalions first, then third is reserve. One of the things nobody bothered to tell us, we could see on the way in there were a lot of things bobbing in the surf. We had just heard about Tarawa and Peleliu, where there were a lot of injuries and deaths in the landing, so we thought they were bodies. Actually, they were just life vests. Our landing was unopposed, I think we had only one injury. The night before we landed the divers, the guys with guts, swam in and looked around and spotted things. They said all of the gun emplacements that had been targeted were not destroyed. The battle wagons, the heavy ships had been pounding for a day and a half. However, it turned out they were not gun emplacements but burial vaults. So the landing itself was almost unopposed. I suspect, partly as a result because of the transferal of the Japanese troops from Okinawa to Formosa.

MR: Could you describe how you felt entering combat for the first time?
EB: We felt triumphant because how we landed. We had been expecting all kinds of trouble there and it didn't happen. At that point, at least our Battalion, went north which was lightly defended not nearly as heavily defended as the south where the Shuri Line was well established. In the initial stages, we were not doing a lot. Patrolling, of course, and some fire fights once in a while.

MR: So most of your duties were patrol and you ran into some fire fights?
EB: Right. There was no steady line because most of that area was lightly defended.

MR: Could you please relate your experiences while on Okinawa?
EB: My twenty-first birthday took place on the 17th of April. We were in the hills and we could see out to sea where the Kamikaze were diving. Their targets were the ships which were much more fruitful targets than we were. At the same time, you could hear the

Japanese digging tunnels underneath us in the hills where we were. It was a very strange thing. At that point we were transferred to the south were the heavy fighting took place. Before we were committed, our Battalion was still in regimental reserve. Our company, which was L-Company might also have been in reserve.

One thing that happened, before we were supposed to get into the attack toward Shuri, it was raining. The third platoon leader, Johnny Stetsooli (? 17:53) went into one of the caves with all the squad leaders and most of the group leaders were in this cave which we shouldn't have been. Sure enough, it was booby-trapped. There was an explosion. The bodies flew over our head and there was very few people left of the 3rd Platoon. They were distributed to the 1st and 2nd Platoon, I was in the 2nd Platoon Leader. Arlen Buebeck (? 18:45) was the 1st Platoon Leader. There was a burial service at that time before we were actually committed to the Front. So it was not a happy time.

From there on, we knew we were going to attack. We were coming down off this hill, across a valley and up a place that was designated as King Ridge. When these things are going on, as you understand, there is so much noise it is hard to figure out what is happening. When we approached King Ridge, I remember George – he was a Maltese- he was the first up King Ridge and he was killed and fell back. It was a pretty perceptive ridge. Next was Frosty Williams, he did the same. Nobody seemed to go forward at that point so I went up. This was a quite a dramatic thing for me personally. I got up to the top of Wana Ridge and I looked out because we were supposed to take that too. The rest of the Platoon had followed up. The Platoon Sargent Herrford (? 21:58) was hit badly and out of commission. It turned out that our own 4.2 military mortar shells were landing short onto us. Our guide, Wragg, pulled the Platoon off the ridge. There was a cleft on the top of the ridge and I went down in there for cover. Another dug area transecting it was there and I didn't realize the Platoon had been pulled back and was trying to figure out the best way we could go up to Wana Ridge. At that point there was thrown what seemed like a discus shaped land mine. I was sort of hypnotized, like a frog and a snake, probably not for a second or two before it exploded. I felt as if my reproductive apparatus was missing. It turned out what had happened was it had just hit a nerve. To tell you the truth, I lost it at that point.

MR: You were hit with shrapnel?
EB: Yes. All at once, I realized I was alone, the rest of the Platoon wasn't there. That didn't help either, I ran back down the slope we came up. I remember this guy, Daryl Kinsell (sp @24:31) of Group 1 in the 1st Squad said "what are you yelling about?" I said "my balls are shot off"! He said "I don't think so, take a look". So with all this stuff going overhead on I zipped off my pants, took inventory, and it was all there. [Laughs] But I was bloodied up and didn't know how good or bad shape I was in and went back to be checked. There was some shrapnel here and there, some surfaced twenty years later from the gut but I wasn't seriously injured.

MR: Were you sent back to a hospital ship?
EB: I was sent back to a field hospital and incidentally I was given the Bronze Star for that episode. The big thing that they wanted to check. I don't know if you want to hear all these details. You know how the way the field hospitals were. These doctors were absolutely deluged . They didn't have a chance to think, or get second opinions. They just did what instinct told them. There was this nurse there, he said to her "catheterize this man" because

they wanted to see if my bladder was torn. Actually, I had heard about that and that was a concern. So she started monkeying around with a catheter.

MR: This was in Okinawa, there were female nurses there in the Field?
EB: Oh yes there were. To make a long story short, I came to present arms. The doctor said "what the hell are you doing over there? And went BING! [makes a hitting action in the air] and that took care of that. He did say there was no blood in the bladder and we are going to check you out for now and we'll put you on a cot in the field hospital and see how you work out. I don't remember how long I was there. I was hit on May 9th of that year. Whoever sends the telegraphs home reported to my parents that I was wounded on May 9th and returned to duty the same day, which wasn't accurate. They were quite worried because they didn't hear from me all the while I was in the hospital. You talk about the nurses, they were the most remarkable people you could imagine. There were so many injuries that typically when somebody came in with a gut wound, the doctors would do what they had to do in there and not bother to sew them up again because they knew they would have to come back again. So each day, or half a day, the nurses would take the organs out, clean them off, and stick them back in. I couldn't believe what I saw they were doing.

MR: So everybody was in one huge room?
EB: No, just small tents. Penicillin had recently been discovered so they routinely gave you eight shots of penicillin a day. That would mean if you were asleep they would come in and one guy would wack you on the tail, while the other guy would jab it in, and you never even woke up. You just got very used to that sort of thing.

MR: How long were you in the field hospital?
EB: I don't remember, but it was a matter of weeks I'm sure. They would check the catheter to see what was happening. I wasn't on the catheter continuously, they would insert it every few days. A tear in my bladder was the thing they were still concerned about.

MR: Did you return to the Front?
EB: Yes. I was transferred from L-Company to K-Company. For a while I was without a Platoon, but I inherited the 3rd Platoon of K-Company and we had a night crossing onto Dockashee [? 31:42] Ridge. There were some firefights, but by then most of the opposition had subsided so we were on the offensive all the way. Hiroshima took place on August 6th. By then we were training for an attack on Kyushu, the southern most of the four Japanese islands. That would not have been the 1st Marine Division. It would have been the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine divisions that had been on Iwo Jima. The battle after that was called Coronet which would have been on Honshu, the main Japanese island where the center of the government would have been, so our training was with respect to an attack on Honshu and I don't know when that would have been. That is when we heard about Hiroshima.

MR: What was your reaction to that?
EB: I will be honest with you, it was mixed. Certainly, it was very clear that the war would be over and our lives would be saved. But a lot of people, including me, were pretty horrified. We had heard that 300,000 Japanese had been wiped out. It actually was 100,000, but we heard 300,000. Even though our lives were saved by that, there were too many civilians, it was too horrible to think about**.**

MR: When the war was over, you ended up in China?
EB: We saw the white plane with the green markings come over, the Japanese plane to sue for peace, over Aoshima (? 34:55)right over our heads so we naturally thought we were going to go home. We were talking about parades and women throwing flowers and kisses. Instead, we were told we would be going to China. What the hell was that for, the war was over?

MR: Did the whole division go over?
EB: I think it was the whole division. I know the 5th Marine Division was in what that time we called Peiping, the Capital of China. The 7th Marines were in a place called Tengchong, which was later wiped out by an earthquake. That was on the rail line northeast of Ching Wontow (? 36:25) which was the port. We didn't know what we were supposed to be doing. They told us we were there to help disarm the Japanese. We were to work with the Nationalist troops and another group called "Troops for the Protection of Peace, Order and Prosperity in the Greater East-Asian Co-prosperity Sphere". It turned out they were Chinese, but they had sided with the Japanese since the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. It didn't make a lot of sense to us. We also had to help protect the Kailan coal mines, which were British owned, from the Chinese. The British were in top command. The engineers were all Belgians. The British would speak to the Belgians by their first names, the Belgians would say "Mister"to the English, and of course the language was English. Some of those coal mines were in Tengchong.
Then we were told we had to protect the railroad against derailment and destruction. In our Battalion area which ran north, into Mucton, Harbin, and Manchuria there were three bridges. One at Lutai (sp@39:30) one at Honku and one at Batai(sp@ 39:33) so that each company: I-Company, K-Company, and L-Company would be responsible for one of the three bridges and rotate Platoons and their guard. Ours was Honku, the middle one. On this one day, my Platoon, the 3rd Platoon (whose former leader was Jack Wilson from Texas (? 40:20) was going to protect the Honku bridge from destruction. The I-Company Platoon got off at Lutai (sp@40:46) we got off at Honku and the train went on in a southwesterly direction where the Batai bridge was.
That part of China was quite flat. So even though they were a long way off, we could see the train going down there. We heard an explosion and the train was derailed. Another train was coming, I stopped them, put a gun to the engineers head. We got two squads together. The other squad would stay on the bridge. We went down there to where the explosion was, and got off. That Platoon was Ben Taylor's from I-Company. Ben was dead. So we lined up along the railroad embankment. The engine had been derailed, but most of the cars had not. We stayed there and one or two minutes later, one of the troops from the Peace, and Prosperity Sphere – the puppets showed up with arms. They had fought on the side of the Japanese for fourteen years, against their own country. A few minutes after that, the Japanese army showed up. Remember, our original mission was to disarm the Japanese. As a matter of fact, at the prisoner compound there was a single Marine on duty with a telephone, no barbwire-nothing as far as I know We were working with them, if there was any kind of a ruckus, I later discovered, they would come with us. So here we were, lined up on the railroad embankment and a nearby town (if it had a name I never knew it) and the Japanese officer in charge, though he spoke no language that we knew made clear that the way these things were handled was -you fire on this town.
We had brought a machine gun squad with us and the Japanese said (? 44:50) "namboos"

(machine guns) and the rest of us had small arms fire. I carried a Tommy Gun. We just fired on this village. We didn't do a body count, we just fired for a period of time. After a while, the Japanese officer, who knew what it was all about, stopped firing and the rest of us stopped. To tell you the truth, I've thought of this many times since then, I don't know the rest of it, but somehow we got back to the Honku Bridge. I assumed it was by the train that brought us down, but I don't remember it now. I really didn't think that much of it. The bridge guard was a very difficult thing. Patrolling at night, for example, you had to walk from one tie to the next you could slip. Nobody did though.

Another thing that happened, on verbal orders only, we got word that nobody goes under the bridge at night. As it happened, this bridge was over a river and the Chinese farmers did not have motor boats. They would have to go with the tide. So I gave orders two warning shots, and the third one between the horns. We were there for about a week, and then we would rotate in another Platoon.

MR: How long were you in China?
EB: We went home on points. I left at the end of January, 1946. I had some extra points because I had been wounded. The people on our ship on the way home were not the same group that had gone over.

MR: When were you discharged?
EB: We got back into the same pier we had left. San Diego, California. When I got home I had visions of lying on the beach for a while. But I had one semester left at school, so my father had enrolled me. I reported to the Brooklyn Navy Yard where they told me I was to call every day and report for duty from school and that was it. I was actually discharged on May 18, 1946.

MR: Thank you very much for your interview.
EB: Okay, great.