

Dr. Charles Edwards Interview

Interviewer: All right, we want to welcome Doctor Charles Edwards with us today. Charles, we're very happy and honored that you could come visit with us at KUED. Do you have a statement you'd like to make?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Yes, I appreciate this very much. When I came back from the war and combat, I had no desire at all to relate anything that happened to me in combat even though I was in the thick of it for only 3 months. They took no prisoners, we took no prisoners, so it was almost like a Wild West: Who shoots first, although we are rifles and we had pistols. But, the Utah Heritage Foundation asked the veterans a few years ago if they would write their story about World War II and their participation. So at the encouragement of the wife, I started writing some and it became easier to talk about. So that's how I finally decided that someone ought to hear about it.

Interviewer: Well, we really do appreciate you coming up and allowing us to ask you some questions. I'd like to take you right back -- you entered the war kind of late, but I'd like to go back to December 7th, 1941, when we were first attacked and tell us what you were doing and what you were thinking during those times.

Dr. Charles Edwards: Okay, I was a senior in high school in December, 1941, and when I left school after 2 quarters, I went to Utah State for a couple quarters. And, uh, it looked like all of us would be drafted at the age I was at. So, I put in for a farm deferment to go out to the Uintah Basin and help my aged parents. They were living on a 160 acre farm with a dairy. And that's where I spent a little over a year, and, uh, for some reason, they denied my application for a deferment at that point and I was called into the service and went into the infantry training down

in Texas. Then we shipped out on January the 25th under the Golden Gate Bridge for the Pacific Islands, and that was the Philippine Islands.

Interviewer: And that was what year?

Dr. Charles Edwards: That was 1944.

Interviewer: And after you -- when did you know you were going to the Philippine Islands?

Dr. Charles Edwards: We didn't know for sure it would be the Philippine islands until we got to Lete, which was on the Philippine Islands. And it was at that time that we disembarked from the ship. Lete was where President, I mean, General MacArthur came back, and that's where the troops first started at the Philippines.

Interviewer: Yeah, let's go back before this and tell us about your basic training before you shipped out.

Dr. Charles Edwards: Well, basic training was in, uh -- next to Mineral Wells Texas, somewhat close to there. It was not a good situation because there was a lot of small cactus that drove us crazy as well as chiggers. And it was in August and it was hot and we were in the full uniform with packs, and that was tough duty. And I mentioned to one or two of the soldiers, "I don't know if combat could be worse than this." That was a misstatement, because it certainly was. But, uh, I got through in December and went home for -- got home for Christmas, even though the army dropped me at Lubbock, Texas, and I had to make my way home. That was my first distaste of the -- second distaste of the Army. But anyway, we were on the ship 43 days, which seemed like eternity, getting to the Philippines. There was nothing really exciting to even mention about it, except that we were fired on twice by a submarine -- uh, one or two

submarines, anyway. They missed us, luckily. At least one of the submarines had the torpedoes spotted on the port side of the ship. And we were on a zigzag course, so that helped a lot for them to not target us.

Interviewer: Could you see the torpedoes in the water?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Yes, at the bottom of the swell, some of the fellows saw them. We had six guns – six guns on that ship, even though it was a transport ship, and they opened fire trying to hit the one that was visible, but weren't successful. So then, that made us feel like we were not too secure on the water, but we did make it all the way with two stops: one in the New Hebrides Islands for fuel, and the other on New Guinea. But at neither place did we disembark at all. And we arrived there on Lete --

Interviewer: What were accommodations like on the ship?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Absolutely terrible. One of the ship mates asked me one day where our accommodations were on the ship, and I said right in the bow, the worst place they could be for sea sickness. And I told him just exactly where, and he said, “You've got to be kidding. That's the only place where we carried prisoners.” Well, there was Japanese writing on the walls, so we knew what he was talking about. And so, with everyone sick when we first got out to sea, that place got so bad, just unbearable almost. The floor was slick, and I went tell you what happened, but we all carried our helmet liners to up-chuck. It was not a good situation. It was about 8 days before anyone could even eat.

Interviewer: 43 days aboard.

Dr. Charles Edwards: 43 days aboard that ship. So, when we got off at Lete, I walked into an area and it was spongy and I asked, "What the heck makes that so spongy?" It's not like it's a swamp or anything, and they said, "Don't walk there again. We've used that as a burial ground for Japanese." And God, that sent a chill through me. And I was assigned then for two days in women's quarters. There must have been 50 to 75 women that were quartered there.

Interviewer: These were nurses, and uh--

Dr. Charles Edwards: That and clerical workers, I think they were doing a lot of the clerical work for the troops, no matter where they were. But that was good duty; I liked the looks of those gals (laughter). I wanted to stay there, but they had other plans for me. But when we left there and went to -- well, it was at Lete where we got our assignments where we would go. Some went to Okinawa, some to other places; I don't know where all they went. I know one individual went to Okinawa. He was quite a religious young man that was on the ship with me and we spent quite a lot of time talking. I wasn't religious at all; I didn't belong to anything. He said at one point, "Edwards, you and I are both going to come back. I don't know what condition we'll be in, but we'll both come back." And, um, we both came back with Purple Hearts. I came back with a Bronze Star for duty beyond what was expected, and he came back with his hand partly blown away throwing a grenade out of a hole. Just as he let go of it, it went off and blew his hand apart. But he came back, but he was shell-shocked. I went to see him down at Payson at one time, and uh, he pretty well recovered, but he wasn't the same.

Interviewer: How long was this after MacArthur landed on Lete?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Gosh I wish I had the date approximately, but I don't have it right now. But it had to be, uh, when I was there -- it had to be within two or three months because he went to

the Lingayen Gulf and that's when he went ashore again and the troops, uh, fought toward the town of Tarlac, and after that fighting had subsided, I joined the outfit. They took me to the mountains up Highway 5, and that was a terribly rugged terrain. Highway 5 went over the top of what they call Balete Pass, and that's what our goal was -- to get up to Balete Pass. We figured then that the Japanese wouldn't be well organized. But when I joined the outfit, another fellow from Roosevelt and I were assigned to the same squad, an "I" company of the 161st Infantry. And we felt quite lucky to be together as we were pretty good buddies, but I didn't like the fact that he might get killed and how it would affect me. But he did get wounded and left, so, I was by myself and, um, for the three months it took us to get over the top of Balete Pass -- talk about a killing field. It was just every day, sometimes we'd have a lull where we didn't have much to do, and other times -- during those time's we'd have to scout. We had to go out and make contact with the enemy to know where they were. We couldn't make any progress, or know what kind of progress to make, unless we made contact and knew where they were or how they were. That was the most frightening thing you could even imagine because they were stationary and we were moving. I was a squad leader at that point—acting, because I didn't have the rank, which I was offered later--and I did most of the scouting because I couldn't get the four guys that were with me to scout. Well, they would, couple of them would go out, but they wouldn't be the lead. The lead "Scouter" was the one in danger, and, so I did a lot of scouting beyond what I wanted to. In one instance, were scouting and I was assisting another squad, and we came upon a little rise, we'd been through kind of a jungle area, more brush than it was trees, and we came up on a flat area. It was four Japanese soldiers playing cards in a fox hole. And we opened up on them and they did on us. And they got one of our guys, shot him through the groin, but he could -- he was able to make his way on his own out of danger, so we got back to the unit without any more

trouble by helping him. And then the next day, we carried him out to an aid station where he was cared for. But that was kind of typical of our scouting. You made contact and you didn't know what contact you were going to make -- extremely dangerous and scary.

The combat -- like I said, as far as my participation, it was only 3 months, but it seemed like forever. Every day was a -- or every other day at least -- was a killing field. The Japanese would sometimes, and I was told this, I didn't ever see it, a Japanese would get a little white flag and put it on a stick to surrender, so they'd come walking right to one of us, then he'd drop to his knees and there was a soldier behind him with a rifle and shoot. So we were warned about that, "Don't ever take a prisoner that's got a white flag. You shoot them first, or you'll be shot yourself." At one point, this one time, our outfit made a push -- I think it was our company, it wasn't just a platoon, I was in the platoon and I was a squad leader -- the company made a push, and, uh, we knew it was going to be rugged. But they had what they called "knee mortars," and you think it was curved and you think it was something they'd hold on their knee and shoot it, but it was meant to be put at the base of a tree or something that would take the impact of it. A few of those were, I've read, were held by Japanese soldiers and crippled from the concussion, I think. But I took my four men and went to the right flank, someone else went to the left flank so we wouldn't be surrounded if the Japanese tried to do that, and then the main body pushed up through the center and, uh, they got in to the worst situation you could even imagine. They had dropped mortars on them, just right and left, and uh, when the night fall came, they were bringing those that were wounded out. They couldn't bring -- if they had a chance to, they did. And one of the fellows that came to where I was, I joined, I tried to join their outfit at that point, and here was a guy that was mortally wounded, and his name was Robert Yule from Salt Lake City. And, being my name Edwards and his Yule, we were in the barracks at the same time, and

so I knew him well. He had shrapnel through his lungs, his legs, the flesh was just shattered. I knew that I had to give him help if there was any way to do it. There was a medic there that was wounded himself -- he had shrapnel through his arm. He and I tried to give him blood plasma. We called for some, and, uh, someone brought it to us and we were giving him blood plasma when he said, "Charles, loosen my belt, I can't breathe." And I did and, uh, pretty soon he just looked up at me and said, "Charles, I don't wanna die." God -- that really broke my heart. Nothing I could do for him, so we went to others. The next one that came, he was mortally wounded and he was a fellow I knew too, not well, but he died before I could even help him anyway. But they just almost wiped our company out. We were really short-handed from then on, and when we had to take a wounded soldier out, it took four men plus someone to carry a rifle because there were snipers all over that country. And, um, we heard a shot this one day, we were taking the fellow out that was shot through the groin, and we heard a shot ahead of us and we had no idea what to make of that, and we stopped and, uh, tried to see what the situation was, but the growth around there was terrible. And, uh, we got into a little opening there and there was a Japanese fellow who had been eating rice, sitting right out in the open, and someone had shot him right through the forehead, and we never did know who it was. We don't know if another Jap shot him -- for them to die wasn't such a bad thing, the way they believed. They believed they would die for the Emperor, and they would meet their honorable ancestors, and we helped them all we could. So, there was -- the Corps of Engineers were making new roads behind us. The reason for that is that they would help the artillery get up to where they could help us, but the artillery wasn't much good to us because they -- they'd fire over our heads, but they, to hit the enemy, the enemy sometimes was just too close to us. We call for air strikes sometimes, and, um, they'd release those bombs behind us, and they looked like they were

coming right down on us -- most spooky thing. But, uh, one miscalculation and they would have, but it never did happen. But we didn't have much use there for the airplanes -- just one time that they did help us.

Right after I joined the unit, we moved out after the third day, and we were walking single file down this ridge, we had to cross on open area. And the Japanese, they didn't have an artillery corps at all. They had artillery but it was manned by those that were assigned to it, just two or three guys. But they had an artillery piece somewhere up above us, and they were shooting down on us, and, uh, what my initiation was kind of interesting -- if not frightening. One of those shells hit in the bank and the guy was under a bank that was quite high of dirt, and there was a bank in front of him too. And the shell hit in that bank and buried him. And uh, the guys with him dug him out, and I never saw a shell shocked individual, never knew what to look for -- he was shell shocked and his glassy-eyed, and drooling, and just staggering. He had to have help to walk, and within 15, 20 minutes, not even 20 minutes, a shell hit between myself and this fellow from Roosevelt that was with me, and uh, it just sent us just flying, actually flying. Being new, we didn't know hardly what to do. One of the seasoned men said, come over here and get behind this bank. And so we did and it kept killing and they would hit in the trees and the shrapnel would just fly everywhere, but luckily, no one I knew got hit with the shrapnel, but they sure did pour it in on us.

Finally they got to where they quit shelling and we got down to find of a flat area with a little ridge to the north of us, and started digging fox holes for the night, and this was getting a little late in the afternoon. And, uh, the Lieutenant, which was the platoon leader, said, "Edwards, would you go up and kind of watch for us while we're doing this." So I went and climbed up on this little ridge that wasn't very high, wasn't even as high as a house. I positioned myself there

and I was lying on my left side and had a bandolier of ammunition around me, and, uh, all of a sudden, six Japanese soldiers appeared. And, uh, I don't think they knew I was there. So I opened up on them and I shot all eight shots, and I was a crack shot with a rifle. I'd grown up with a rifle, and, uh, so I don't think I missed much. And then, the clip flipped out of my rifle and the darn things, they rang like a bell. And uh, evidently they heard me. But I could hear them talking, so they weren't that far away. I couldn't -- I didn't know any Japanese, so I didn't know what they were calling me. But before I could put that clip in, a Japanese grabbed a rifle and he pointed it at me. And I jumped to my feet and dove off that hill and, uh, the bullet missed me. But when I dove off, the back hit my helmet and the helmet rolled down the hill, the guys came running to me. They thought sure I was shot because they heard the retort of the rifle. So, that was my initiation, the third day in combat.

Interviewer: Jeez.

Dr. Charles Edwards: And I'd been trained on flat country, I didn't know what jungle fighting was like, and that's what it was -- jungle fighting. There were -- we stayed in that position for little over a week, and the older guys in the outfit had been there too long, and so they pulled us out to a safe area. And there was a river close to where we were, and, uh, so we could go swimming there and there was a -- the river was quite swift, but it came down to a big pool, and it was just clear water and so, three of us had a game. We found a real pretty rock and we'd go down and hide it at the bottom of this pool and the others would dive in, and we'd dive in one at a time and find it. I was up on the bank ready to dive in after the rock had been hidden and two fellows came down to get in to have a bath. And one of them walked out in to the river there and it swept him down in that hole, and I heard one of them they, "He can't swim!" He just hollered that out. And so I watched him and just sure enough, he couldn't. And the water was kind of

swirling around, and he went down, came back, he went down a third time, and after that, he wasn't struggling at all. And I wasn't about to go in there while he was struggling. So I dive in and got him behind the, uh, under his arm around him, and swam to the shore, pulling him. And we got him up there and brought him around, and finally got him breathing. I was put in for the Soldier's Medal, but being in combat, the papers were evidently lost, I never got it. I could have gone home three months early if that had been the case.

This one night was the most traumatic night that I had, that's after I had been with the outfit for a month and a half. See, I was only in the combat area for tree months, but, talk about tough. It was really hard to stay alive. And, uh, I think there were more of our guys killed than there were wounded and taken out. But this one night, we were -- we tried to take a knob that we knew the Japanese had occupied, and we thought maybe they had that artillery piece up there, but we never did see it. But we tried to take this hill and, uh, it was just impossible. We couldn't -- there were just too many of them, and they were shooting us. So we dug in and that night, and the Lieutenant, which was the platoon leader, asked me to, uh, take the last hole on our perimeter and dig in there with two of my men, and the next hole was two other of my men in my squad. So I -- we dug that hole big enough that two could lay down in it with their knees right up against their chin, and the other one on an ammunition box, and he was to stand watch. And he, uh, called to me at -- well, he said to me, "What time do you want to take the watch?" And I said, "I'll take it at 9:00." You couldn't always tell what time it was, but I had a watch and I was one of the few that did that had a luminous dial on it. And evidently, he found out that it was 9:00, so he called me, but he first he asked, "Who wants to take the watch?" His name was Watson and Dixon Fields was the other one in the hole with me. And Dixon Fields would never volunteer, and it was to his disadvantage because I had just barely gotten on my feet when a

grenade came in the hole, and I got this leg up on the bank, and the grenade went over next to his head, right close to where my head had been, and went off. It wounded Watson, killed Fields. I had, I don't know what it was, shrapnel or dirt, up and down my leg, and big gash across my knee. Then, I talked to the Lieutenant and he said, "Hey, Edwards, would you go back and get in the hole with those two other men of yours?" And I said, "Lieutenant, you know what they're like. They don't care about anyone but themselves." And he said, "I know exactly what you're saying, but do it for me."

So I did, and uh, we were in there, oh, maybe not quite an hour, and a grenade came in that hole. And our knees were right up like this and it landed. I don't know whose lap landed in, but man; we jumped like kangaroos out of that hole. And, the one fellow, we just called him "Red," he got shrapnel up and down his shins, the other guy who was a guy that had been crying every way that he could to get out of combat -- I never saw him again, ever. I don't know if he's wounded or not, I don't think he was. I think he just abandoned the place. So the Lieutenant reported to him and he said, "Would you go back and get in that hole?" He said, "The next hole is a machine gun, three guys with a machine gun, and they're not able to protect themselves as well as a rifleman." So I did, very reluctantly, and, uh, it wasn't very long till a grenade came in their fox hole. And, uh, one guy, it shell-shocked him and evidently blinded him because he started crawling out goes towards the Japanese, and one guy that wasn't wounded too bad grabbed him by the foot and pulled him back. And uh, so I think maybe the Lieutenant helped us and we carried those two guys as much as we could carry them. They could partially walk. The one guy had his wits about him, but his arm was shattered and I tried to hold that arm, but it was just limp, I don't know. I'm sure it was broken and I had to get under here under his arm and a hand around his waist and we got him to a fox hole that was back behind us a little ways, and

laid them down in that fox hole. The Lieutenant asked me if I would attend them the rest of the night, and so I got in with them. It had a shelter half over the fox hole, which was about this high, but we got them under it, and uh, when we could we would put shelter halves over the fox holes we could because it rained so dang much. And then, the fox hole would just get muddy and we were always just usually plastered with mud, usually dried mud.

And uh, this, one guy was leaning one way, and the other had his head the other way, and his guy that was so shell shocked kept moaning. God, and it scared me because I knew that's what they were trying to zero in on. So, I kept him from kicking the other guy because he would thrash around and I had my knee on his legs holding him down, but I couldn't stop him from moaning. And, I heard a grenade hit, and it landed on top of that shelter half. And I dove out of that fox hole and landed on some sheet rations and I had no more hit the ground than that thing went off, and it was not just a grenade, it was a grenade that had picric acid sticks to it, like dynamite. And if you ever get a chance, look up picric acid, and it describes it just about like dynamite. And when that went off, it just sound like the mountain blew up. And, it next morning, that was nothing but a blackened hole, just a crater. Those guys were just mutilated, and uh, after that blew up, I guess I felt like I'd had it, and I started to cry.

I don't know how long that lasted, but it was probably good for me. But I was so unnerved at that point that I just couldn't help myself. So, the next day, I was able to walk and um, we started taking wounded out. And uh, kept enough of the crew that we could hold the position, anyway. But the Japs still had that hill, that knoll. I -- they dressed my wounds and I don't know what they took out of my leg, they just dressed it, I didn't even see. They just dressed my knee and I went back to the unit.

And, uh, then my next big experience was scouting again on that very hill. And, uh, at that point, I only -- I didn't have any individuals with me to scout with me. I was a squad leader without a squad. And uh, so I joined another squad and a fellow by the name of Dennis and I crawled out on the hill to see, uh, what we could find out with our rifles ready and I saw a Japanese helmet coming up, and I said, "Down. Get down." And we got as low as we could, and when we raised up, I could see enough of him now that I just let him have it. And uh, we crawled up to where he was, and it was a trench. Gosh, they could go anywhere they wanted around that hill in a trench. So no wonder we couldn't take the hill. And uh, we no more than looked over in that trench then Dennis slumped to the ground. And uh, so I grabbed, no -- I need to back up a little bit. I had one guy with me, and that was the Dixon Fields. That was before he was killed. And uh, so I grabbed Dennis by the arm and I couldn't take his rifle too, and I left it there, and pulled him off the hill. But when I was pulling him off the hill, Dixon fields was in a fox hole there, and uh, if I hadn't have looked in the fox hole, I wouldn't have even seen him. I stuck my rifle over there and said, "Fields, you cover us, or you're not going to be worrying about a Jap bullet." And boy, he figured I was serious. So I pulled this guy off the hill and ripped his shirt open and he had a little red spot right through here, it had to be right through his heart, never had a chance. But why I wasn't hit, I don't know. Because I was, I just reached down and took hold of his arm. I was that close. So, those are some of the experiences that -- we finally did, those that were left of us, reached Balete Pass, and there's no, no way to know how many of our guys were killed. I never did know, maybe there's some statistics somewhere, but I wouldn't know where they were, but I think there were more killed than there were wounded, and very few lived.

I don't know why I did, but, once we got over Balete Pass, they were not well-organized. So, it made life easier except for the fact that snipers were everywhere, and we had to be extremely careful. Colonel Dalton -- I don't know who he was over, but he was over a Battalion Commander or something -- he came up to Balete Pass after it was secured, and was shot by a sniper and killed. So, they renamed Balete Pass "Dalton's Pass."

But, we went down the other side, and now we were down, going down-hill. And we had the advantage over the Japs, except that we were moving and they were stationary. It reminds me of hunting deer. Deer standstill, and if you're walking, they have the advantage. If you stand still, sometimes the deer don't know you're there, and I thought of that a number of times -- I related it to fighting the Japanese.

But, um, got down to one point, and we were scouting again. I went with another group, and we were walking down a little stream bed that was quite deep, but it was quite wide. And uh, hadn't seen any activity at all, and uh, all of a sudden we heard something up on the side of the hill, and it was, Japanese had a beat on us. And at the same time that he stood up and had a beat on us, he was on a shale-y type of hill and his feet went out from under him. And so, he was sent to his honorable ancestors, too. And on our way back from that scouting, we didn't run in to any opposition anywhere. But on the way back, I saw a Japanese pack, and we weren't to touch those things because they would booby trap them, but I couldn't resist. And I took that back to the fox hole I was in, and started looking through it, and by golly, there's something in there that looked American. So, I started unwrapping it, and uh, it was a picture of a fellow that had been on the ship with me. His name was Robert Frasier. He trained in Texas with me. And I thought it was really odd that this information, he had pictures of his family, his wife and two boys, and letters that he'd received from them. My curiosity was so great that I just couldn't wait to find someone

in "K Company." And finally I did, and ask him -- asked them, how come I had this information on him in a Japanese pack. And he said, he was -- he'd gone out to rescue a soldier that was wounded and killed himself. He was killed by a Japanese. And the Japanese got the pack off his back and had all that information in there. I thought that was the most ironic thing, that I'd run on to that and I knew the guy. So when I kept the material and when I got back to civilization, if you can call it, uh, I wrote a letter to his wife and 2 boys and told them that if I ever got to Bell, California, I'd come and see them. She wrote back to me and said she would love that, but circumstances were such that I never did get there, and I always felt sorry that I didn't. But I was glad that I got that material and was able to send to her.

After we got over Balete Pass and down into the valley, we found caves there and we'd throw grenades in and once in awhile a Japanese guy would come out, and uh, one morning, I uh, was looking out of my fox hole, and uh, here came a Japanese soldier without a rifle, just walking out toward me. And uh, he just veered enough that he'd walk past me, and I had no idea what to make of that. He walked past me, and I don't know where he went, but there were others that would have seen him too beyond me. And uh, I thought that was really strange. But I think he was shell shocked, really. He probably been in one of those caves, and threw the grenades in. But if there're any prisoners taken, it had to be right there along those caves.

When we got back to -- uh, well, one thing I wanted to mention too, when we first landed at Lingayen Gulf and went to Tarlac, they'd released the soldiers from the prison camps.

Interviewer: The U.S. soldiers?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Yes, from Camp O'Donnell and Camp Cabanatuan, or something like that. And I'd never seen such a pathetic situation in my life. Those guys were just nothing. They had

shorts on and -- but they were just nothing but skin and bones. Their arms -- I didn't know what bones looked like, but you could tell what the shape of the bone was. And I tried to talk to them, and they wouldn't talk to me. And uh, I found out, well, they were eating candy bars. They could have anything they wanted from the PX there. And they were eating candy, and I guess they were so starved for sweets they'd had, if they'd had anything that was rice or soup. And I found out later that the Japanese had plenty of food if they wanted to share it with those prisoners, and they didn't do it and I think the reason they didn't, and this is just my own reasoning, is they wanted to keep them so weak and so emaciated that they wouldn't escape, although a few did, but not many. It would just be a handful that did.

But, uh, I think the reason that they were still there, even though they'd been released a month or so before, or longer than that, is because the Japanese hadn't -- they were still had planes and were bombing our ships out in the harbor. And, uh, there were 424 Kamikaze pilots that volunteered to go out and bomb our ships. Uh, well, they still had planes on the Philippines. And they bombed 16 ships, one place I heard that they sunk 16 ships, and another place I heard that they'd damaged 16, at one point, and 80 another point. So I think that's why they -- why they never gotten to hospital ship where they could get the kind of aid that they needed to get.

Now there were some things that I never mentioned that I didn't want to put in a story that were extremely gory, like, the Japanese would kill themselves if they were wounded. When I was real close to my fox hole, uh, we had a booby trap and he was wounded, and stuck a grenade held right against his stomach, killed himself, after he'd been wounded. You know, there's some pretty dang gruesome things that happened. Those two that were in the fox hole with me that had the picric acid on the grenade, I didn't even look in the fox hole. I just couldn't. Uh, I don't know what, what the hole looked like. I just asked someone else.

When they were back in flat country, I decided that, there were recruits coming, and I didn't want to go to Japan. I had enough of that, and I wanted to transfer. And uh, the Lieutenant said, "Edwards, I'm putting you in for staff sergeant. But I can't do that if you're going to transfer." And I said, "You hold the staff sergeant, I want to transfer." And the only place I could go -- I tried the engineers, combat engineers. They didn't have any room for me, but there was room in the kitchen for a baker. I had never baked a loaf of bread in my life, but I had seen my mother bake bread and so forth. So, I was transferred there, and uh, I soon learned what to do. But, after that one experience on May the 16th, when I had such a rough time staying alive, the next day I wrote a letter to my mother and put it in my pack just in case I didn't make it because I didn't think I would. Just hoping that someone would open that pack and see it and send it to her. But I didn't have to use it, luckily, so, I destroyed it later.

When I got into the kitchen and I had time on my hands, I got a hold of some shears from somewhere, like tin snips, and I'd seek out Japanese zeros that has been shot down, and I would cut the metal out. And that's the thickness of the metal that was on their planes. They were so extremely light. The only thing that was heavy on an airplane, a Jap zero, was the motor and the fellow that was in it. And I'd cut these out and I'd make watch bands for some of the fellows that wanted them, and I'd take a bayonet and I'd carve a pretty girl on it with a Palm tree. Just kind of a side-light here. Finally went to Japan and --

Interviewer: Leave that out, we're going to want to look at that closely.

Dr. Charles Edwards: -- Got to Japan and um, my idea was not to stay with the kitchen, although I was offered to be the Mess Sergeant, which had been a Staff Sergeant rating. I turned that down; I wanted to get into Special Services. And so, by some maneuvering, I finally did. And

life took on a different meaning to me then. It was great. I was in a big building of special services where the GI's could come in and have coffee and donuts and see movies and so forth. And my job then was to run the, run the telegraph office and I assigned different units for rest and recuperation -- R&R -- to the different hotels around Japan. Some I went down to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the bombs were dropped, and others went to other places of their liking.

So, it, after being in Japan on occupation duty for some months, I went home. So that's about the size of it. There's a heck of a lot of details you don't -- you don't remember. The grass there where we were fighting, sometimes the grass would be six feet tall and thick as can be, and it was serrated, and we always had to be careful but we already had jungle officers on their arms and on their hands, there was no way to treat it, they had to just put up with it. That grass was so bad. Some places, it was just an open country -- just trees and brush, but where that grass was, it would grow so profuse, great, wide blades of grass. It was kind of an interesting area.

Interviewer: Where were you with you heard the atomic bombs had been dropped?

Dr. Charles Edwards: On the, I was, uh -- I was with our unit. I was a baker for 240 men at that time. We didn't, uh -- there was no facility set up for bread, so I made biscuits. We'd have pancakes for breakfast and biscuits for the other two meals, and I made all of those. And the flour that we got had little brown beetles that were just um, about an 8th of an inch long. There was no way to filter them out and I would bake those in and, uh, every once in awhile, somebody would open a biscuit out in the field when they'd been served and, boy you could hear 'em swearing about those beetles in the biscuits. Well, I had to eat 'em, too (laughter). It was kind of interesting. But, uh, we were on, there on the Philippine islands when we heard bombs -- the last

bomb had been dropped. And uh, it still took a few days, a week or so, before the Japanese really surrendered. They surrendered on, I think it was the 15th of August, 1945, and, uh, the armistice, or their total surrender was on the 8th of August, I think it was.

Interviewer: "V-J Day," well, I'm not sure the dates, either. Had you heard the atomic bomb or was it completely a total surprise?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Well, no one seemed to know what it was. We'd heard that, uh, 2 cities had been bombed with a super bomb, and that's all we knew. Uh, there was a gal by the name of, um, Iva Taguchi -- I believe that was the name -- that was Tokyo rose. Have you ever heard that name?

Interviewer: Toguri, I think it is.

Dr. Charles Edwards: Toguri, yeah. And, uh, she was always making comments about, uh -- yeah, Toguri. She always called herself "Orphan Ann." I thought that was interesting, too. But, uh, I didn't have a chance to listen to her at all, but the others, some of the others did, especially those that were back in other units, such as, oh, the Quarters that took care of our barrack bags and so forth. One thing that was very disappointing to me was after the war, and we got our barracks bags, those things had been rifled. They had stolen everything out of them, whoever was taking care of them. Boy, that was a sour note to me. I thought, "Hey, we're up there shooting the enemy. I wonder who the enemy really is." I had a camera and a lot of film I had taken a lot of pictures, had film, I had writing materials and pens and a harmonica, anything that meant something to me, letters that I'd received from home and so forth. If it was writing material, they just took everything. But, uh, the Quarter Master Corps was the one taking care of that stuff, and boy, did they take care of it. Everyone lost stuff.

Interviewer: Was it the Filipinos or was it GI's?

Dr. Charles Edwards: It was GI's.

Interviewer: Yeah. Where were you exactly that you heard that the Japanese had surrendered then, what happened?

Dr. Charles Edwards: We were there on the, the Philippines, and we were right next to a mountain that had sheer cliffs along it. And, uh, the GI's that were there were given permission to open up on that cliff, and my golly, there were tracer bullets shot, there were mortars shot on to it, uh, I don't know what all, but my gosh, it was quite a fireworks, just to see that. But there were a couple of things that were very sad that happened at that point. Uh, these guys that had been through the thick of it and then three of them lost their lives doing that. One guy was aiming the mortar; you know what a mortar is? A tube that goes down to the ground that is on a base and you can drop a missile in it and it will fire and shoot way out. Well, two of them were working that thing, and the guy dropped one in and before it went out he put another one to drop it in and it hit it, and they both went off and killed those two guys and wounded some others. And then, uh, a guy let go of a machine gun, he had his hand on the trigger, but he let go with the other hand and it swung around and shot a guy and killed him. And that was that. But that was the end of -- we knew that was the end of the war. So then it was packing up and -- up to that point, for about all through July, we were just -- troops were training for Japan.

Interviewer: When the war was over, you didn't go to Japan to occupy the--

Dr. Charles Edwards: I did, that's where I went.

Interviewer: Okay, then tell us what -- how were you accepted by the people and something about the occupation.

Dr. Charles Edwards: We, we were really curious to know how we would be accepted, and you can imagine we would, uh, because we'd been out there killing their husbands, friends, family, any male that was able to fight was sent out, so we were very reluctant. When we landed and got in a truck and started inland, we'd start down a street, and that street would be busy as can be with people and they just vanished. I don't know if they thought we would kill them. They'd been hold how vicious the Americans were, uh, so they were afraid of us. But, uh, once we got to know them, uh, gosh they couldn't have been more courteous to us. I that it was just great the way they treated us. We'd, uh -- the only time that changed was when some of their prisoners were repatriated and brought back. And, uh, they resented any of the GI's seeing any of the Japanese girls. And I can understand that, but, uh, other than that, we were accepted real well.

Interviewer: Okay, then tell us about coming home.

Dr. Charles Edwards: Well, I was on the ship, uh, eight days coming home, 34 days going over -- uh, 43 days going over -- and uh, landed in Washington at Fort Lewis. That's where I was discharged and that's where papers were processed and so forth. I was really disappointed with the reception we got from people that worked there. They, they didn't care a thing about a soldier, no matter what he'd been doing. And I just was really anxious to get away from there and finally got a train out and headed for Utah. Got to Salt Lake City, and, uh, wanted to get on a bus. It was so dang busy, just so many people. No one hardly was driving anymore because of the gas and tires, and, uh, so to get on a bus was, you had to take your chances. And uh, I talked to a young gal that was going to get on the bus, and she said, "I'm going to save you a seat."

And she did, so I road home out near Roosevelt, about, uh, five or six miles from Roosevelt, and my folks -- or my mother and my brother -- lived 4 miles to the east from the highway, and so I asked the bus driver if he'd let me off there, so I got off with my barracks bag at 2:00 in the morning and started for the farm. And, uh, I was carrying the barracks bag and that was more than I could stand to walk that far, and so I finally ditched it, and went home, and got home and, uh, woke my mother up, and she acted like she was glad to see me.

One thing that had really bothered me -- the guys that, from Roosevelt they were fliers, if they came home, there was receptions of all kinds there: parades and banners and everything. Boy, there was certainly not that for the infantry guys. But that's -- that's just the way it is, so, I accepted it.

Interviewer: Charles, if you were to give some advice to future generations or, tell them something about your experience and how you feel about the war, or what they should think about it, what would you like to say to them?

Dr. Charles Edwards: Well, I'd say that, if you're enjoying freedom, it comes with a tremendous cost to someone, and, uh, I think young people need to know something about what others sacrificed, that kept our country together. I don't know if the Japanese had won, if we'd be speaking Japanese or not, but, uh, the conquest was in their mind, certainly. And someone had to do what was done to keep America as the United States and free from foreign aggressors, and I was one that tried. And, uh, I feel like I should speak for those that were killed that can't speak, because they, they tried just like I did. But, uh, they didn't make it, and they all wanted to live just like I did. And how -- how I was fortunate enough to survive is just beyond me, I don't know how I did it. If I hadn't of thought that -- I had too many close calls to think I'd ever make

it, and that's why I wrote the letter to my mother. And, that Yule -- Robert Yule -- that I tried to help while he was dying, his mother was remarried in Salt Lake and I never could contact her. But, uh, I hope that young people realize that some people went through hell to keep this country free. And some made it, and some didn't. Those that made it can tell the story for those that couldn't. If you'd asked me a few years ago if I'd ever sit here and told my story, I'd flatly refused. I'd, I wanted to forget it, make happy memories for myself and move on. But, others need to know what someone else did -- sure makes you love America.

Interviewer: Thank you, Charles, for coming today. We really appreciate it.