

Interview of Jimmy Manuel Valdez.

Interviewer: Okay Jimmy, give me your full name.

Jimmy Valdez: Jimmy Manuel Valdez.

Interviewer: And you're from where in Utah?

Jimmy Valdez: Bingham. Bingham County, Utah.

Interviewer: You grew up there mostly?

Jimmy Valdez: Mostly a Highland boy.

Interviewer: And how did you get into the service? Tell us that story.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, at that time, things were getting pretty rough in the Pacific and I graduated and our whole class, everybody that was with me, we all went in the service at the same time, which was in June. We graduated in May and we all ended up in the service in June.

Interviewer: What year?

Jimmy Valdez: '43.

Interviewer: And so, where did you go from there?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I took my basic training at Camp Roberts, California, and I -- but the thing was -- I was, they had me going to training school in New Orleans, so I didn't take infantry training at the time. So I never did fire a rifle. I was getting ready to ship overseas, so then they had to put us all in a place where we could learn combat. So we ended up on Angel Island, which is outside of San Francisco before they shipped us over. So, from then, we were shipped out --

Interviewer: Were you put into a unit at that time? Were you put into your unit at that time, your specific division, is that when you got your division?

Jimmy Valdez: No, till later. Till I left there, I didn't join up the other 25th division till I end up in New Zealand.

Interviewer: So you were a replacement at that point?

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, got it. So you get to New Zealand, then what happens?

Jimmy Valdez: See, they were on leave there, more or less. R&R. And I was there and they'd already been there for quite awhile. Of course, the troops there already seen a lot of combat. So, got there and it was really nice there in New Zealand. I was there maybe a month. So then we left there. And from there, that's when we went to the Philippines.

Interviewer: And you knew you were going to invade.

Jimmy Valdez: Yes, uh-huh.

Interviewer: So it was a pretty scary thought, huh?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, when you're 18 years old, you don't think about it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jimmy Valdez: You don't think of those things, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, so tell us about, it's about October, was it November of 44? Wait a minute; I'm trying to think when they invaded the Philippines. First invaded in October of '44, so you're right around that area.

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: So tell us about the invasion. Tell us about going ashore.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I remember we didn't run into heavy fire from the enemy because there wasn't that many on the shore. It wasn't till later, till we got in farther. That's when we ran into opposition.

Interviewer: But, when you first went ashore, who -- there was somebody very famous with you. Tell us about that.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, just --

Interviewer: General MacArthur.

Jimmy Valdez: Just General MacArthur.

Interviewer: And you told me that they were fairly sure it was safe when he went ashore.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, yeah.

Interviewer: So, how did that happen? Did you see MacArthur?

Jimmy Valdez: No, at that time. No.

Interviewer: Do you ever see --

Jimmy Valdez: I saw him later. He came and he was going to -- we were supposed to march for him. And I remember waiting. We waited, I bet you two hours till he arrived. So we couldn't march for him. Which I thought was kind of not very good, because it was hot down there. And then finally, he showed up. Of course, he was a showman anyway. When you're a general, you can do things like that.

Interviewer: All right, let's go back to hitting the beach and going inland and tell us about your first couple days of combat.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, first thing, we run in heavy fire. We're on the right flank and company A was on the left flank. And this friend of mine I went in the service with,

he was from Midvale. So they ran into more fire than we did. So we had to go there and help them. And so, who do I run into? The first person laying there was this young guy, young male. He, of course, was dead. Then, as I got up higher, my platoon sergeant was, had been shot, too. So then we just kept going. And then I remember we got up a little farther, and we come under machine gun fire. So naturally, we all hit the deck. Hit the ground. And I remember being under this, it wasn't very high, and I remember I was there for what seemed like forever. Every time I get to go up, rise up, the machine gun fire would start. So we got to wait till then. We called for fire from the Air Corps and the airplane came over and dropped a few bombs and kind of strung that out for awhile, you know.

Interviewer: Hang on just a sec, Jimmy. I forgot to turn off my cell phone and I don't want to -- okay. First of all, I forgot to ask you what unit. Tell us the unit, the company, everything you were in.

Jimmy Valdez: I was in the 25th Division, 35th Regiment, Company B.

Interviewer: And this was the island of what you landed on?

Jimmy Valdez: Luzon.

Interviewer: And --

Jimmy Valdez: That's the main island in the Philippines. See, the one -- couple divisions run south to Manila, but we went up north, the 32th Division and the 25th Division went north. We ended in the jungles, and that was really not very good. Then you had to climb a mountain, you know. Of course, we went up quite a ways on trucks, as far as they could get us. Then naturally, we would get off and then we have to be on foot, you know. And that's when we started running into a lot of opposition because the Japs were really cunning. They were pretty hard to fight, I'll tell you. As we were going up, I remember those, just big

Army -- I guess it was a German gun, one of the big guns. And they pull it out in the day time and fire down on us, you know, until a plane would come over and start dropping bombs. So naturally, they would pull back in the tunnel. So, but then the next morning, there it was again. Raining shells on us. And I remember, boy, that wasn't very good. Because you're under these trees, you know? And the trees and the shrapnel come down on you. I mean, you were in a fox hole. But still. And finally, they got rid of that gun up there.

Interviewer: So, you were -- tell us about, here you are a kid from the mountains of Utah and Colorado.

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: And suddenly you're in a jungle.

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me about it.

Jimmy Valdez: I got in the jungle, and I'll tell you, this is in broad day light, and once you got in the jungle, you look up, you couldn't even see the sky, it was so thick. The jungle was so thick. So you're actually in the dark for quite a while, you know, till you come to an opening again. But, uh, then we'd have to go on patrols and I don't know why, but this one sergeant, he always had me going on a patrol because I was the lead gunner on the mortar. So I had to carry a mortar along with me. So I always went. And I finally, at last there at the end, I tell him, "I'm not going to go again. My luck's going to run out." He says, "Well, I can have you court-martialed." I said, "Well, you want to have me court-martialed? Go ahead." So he didn't send me that time. But at one time, we went -- we're going and this other outfit was on the other side of the mountain, the valley, and as we're going, coming back, we see this person on a stretcher, and he was below this hill, but we didn't see anybody around him. So, we went over,

we thought, well, we'll go get him and put him in a safe place. So we understood why, because then we come under machine gun fire, but the Jap was up above us, so he was shooting down so we were able to get away because he had plunging fire, which, (unintelligible) fire. We never would have made it. But we got him out of there, running across this little spring, you step on a rock. I remember I had the head part, and I thought, "Boy, I better not fall," you know? And of course, I dropped him. And I told my friend, I said, "Well, if he wasn't wounded, he's wounded now, because he hit his head. But what are you going to do? But we got him out.

Interviewer: Were they using him as bait, or --

Jimmy Valdez: Pardon?

Interviewer: Were the Japanese using him as bait?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, we don't know. I think what happened that people were, the two soldiers that were carrying him, they came under fire, so they just dropped him. And they took off. That's what we figured, because we didn't see anybody around him. So --

Interviewer: So, again, the jungle, there's lots of bugs.

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Jimmy Valdez: About the only thing, they had this wild boar. And boy, you could hear them coming. It sounded like a freight train. And one time, it fell right in a fox hole, but he went out. That's all I needed because they were mean. A wild boar. But one thing I was happy about, because I never did like snakes, I never did see a snake there, never. But then, of course, then you had mosquitoes which carried malaria. So I ended up coming down with malaria and I had that all along, but I was taking a pill for it, you know, which turned your skin

real yellow, but it contained the malaria. So I never did come down with an attack even though this one soldier came down with an attack and it went to his brain and killed him. So --

Interviewer: Tell us how hot it was in that jungle.

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, I don't remember. It was so damn hot and then when it would rain, it would really pour. It would pour bucketfuls, you know? And there you are in a fox hole, of course, we had it covered with a poncho, which was a good thing. But here we are in the rain and you don't have any clothes to change, you know, into till later when they come in with some new equipment for us. But then you had to drop it. We got up so high on the mountain that they had to drop it by plane, dropped the ammunition and the Japs were on one side of the hill and we're on the other side. So they were actually getting some of our ammunition and our food. Rations because we were right on top of the mountain. But what are you going to do? You couldn't go back, because they'd cut us off. So, we just had to keep going. Up and farther up into the mountain, and we had one general, we called him Dusty Dalton. And he was really a goody boy. Well naturally, they shot him. And, uh, later on, there was still a statue erected in his honor up there in Balete Pass. That's the northern part of Luzon.

Interviewer: So, you were months fighting?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of people don't know about that. How -- it must have taken a real wear on you. Tell us about --

Jimmy Valdez: Well, you get to the point, actually, you don't care. I thought, "Gee, I would be better dead than go through this." All that shelling and that, you know? But I just lucked out, you know. All I got was wounded a couple times. But, there was one in the -- with shrapnel in the head. But we couldn't get back to the aid station, so the medics just

bandaged my head, you know, and you look back and you think it was during the civil war. With these bandages on your head. And, of course, I wasn't the only one that was wounded. There were other soldiers there. And then, later, while we were up on the -- we had to get some reserves, and then first thing I told these guys, I said, "Now, you want to keep -- don't get in the sky line because there's snipers." Well, some of these guys, you couldn't tell them, you know. So, that was the end of them, you know. And I told the one guy, I said, "See? When I tell you something, you gotta stay down. It's for your own good if you want to live another day." So they listened. We kept going north and then when we got way up to the end, just about to the end, of course we run into these pygmies. These short people, all they had was like a G-string, you know? Of course, they didn't bother us, you know. And then they wore those deals around their neck and they looked like little heads. They looked like little shrunken heads. And, it was really weird, you know? And they had these spears, you know. Well, they didn't know what was going on, you know. They was still way back up in the jungles, you know. They didn't know nothing about wars. Really kind of interesting seeing them there, but they didn't bother us, which was a good thing.

Interviewer: Was your unit taking a lot of casualties?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah. See, we started -- we had started with 200 men, by the time we got to the end, out of the 200 that we had, we had 25 left. Out of the original 200. And when we were going up this mountain, we had that one soldier. He had to go in this tunnel, where his tunnel was. And we said, "Well, you're going to have to throw a hand grenade in there." Well, we didn't know, but the place was loaded with ammunition. He threw that hand grenade and the whole mountain -- actually, he got killed, too. And the whole mountain just blew up. And also when we were going, the one soldier, I seen this mortar, Japanese mortar hit

him right on top the head. And he walked maybe about three or four steps and the concussion killed him. He fell right over. And I thought, " Oh, man."

Interviewer: So, you fought to the very end the northern part of Luzon.

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: And were you taking many prisoners?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, see, after we got up -- we didn't have enough men to take care of them, to stand guard over them. So I told them, I couldn't tell them to shoot them. But I says, "It's up to you. We're short of men, so it's up to you what you do with them." So naturally, they weren't going to pull guard on them. So they do away with them. And also, they come out of these tunnels because we had these flame throwers, and naturally, they're coming out. So we had to shoot them. I remember we didn't have no choice.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jimmy Valdez: It's either them or us.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jimmy Valdez: But it -- people probably thought, well, that's kind of cruel, but it isn't in combat. It's you or them.

Elizabeth: Did he use a flame thrower?

Interviewer: You were a mortar man, right?

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you ever use a flame thrower?

Jimmy Valdez: No, no, we had special people that did that.

Interviewer: You just had a carbine?

Jimmy Valdez: I had a carbine. And then later, I had a submachine gun and a pistol. A 45 caliber. That's when I became a platoon sergeant, that's what we always wore, carried. But I had some good, uh, buddies. I'll tell you.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of them.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, this one guy, he was from Iowa. He was a big, a regular farm boy. I guess he stood about 6' 4", just muscle, all muscle. And he was my machine gunner. So we got into combat really heavy, and of course the first thing they go after is the machine gunners and the mortar because they know they'll wipe out a lot of troops, you know. So he got shot, he got wounded quite -- he got shot in the leg. So naturally, he got to go home. And I told him, "You were doing that just so you could go home." And he says, "No, way." But he was a good soldier. I had some good men.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of the others.

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, the other one was a -- he was a mortar man, too. And he was really good. And then, we had one guy, he was really quiet. And the other one stayed by (inaudible) more or less and he was just a rifleman, so when we got up there during the evening, of course, we're in our area, and he went berserk. You know, it got to him so naturally he was going out and I told this one guy, "You gotta knock him out because he's going to give our position away because the Japs were coming up, my hell, they were coming doing that, they'd holler, "Banzai" and that's when they'd attack you at night. That's when they'd always attack you was at night. During the day, they did, but at night time they did. And I says, "Well, you gotta knock him out for his safety and our safety." So that when daytime came by, we had to ship him back. We got him back. But he was a good soldier. Just -- you're under combat a long time, you know? And some people can take it, and other people can't. And I thought, "Well, we got some

good soldiers and the guys that I went in with, joined to begin with, of course, they were regular Army. And then, when they first came in, they were on Guadalcanal. They relieved the Marines on Guadalcanal. And then, they went to this other island. So then when I joined them there, that's when I joined them. On the Philippines in New Zealand. So they were with us for awhile, and the thing is, you can be in combat so long and naturally, your luck's going to run out. So this sergeant, a couple sergeants, they'd already seen a lot of action, and naturally, they got killed. And I thought, "Well." And they were ready to go home. And boy, that's a heck of a thing, you know? You go through all this and you've done your duty already. So what happens? You don't get to go home. You're killed, you know. So, I consider myself pretty damn lucky to get out of it.

Interviewer: So, at the end of the fighting in Luzon, are you preparing to go into Japan?

Jimmy Valdez: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Jimmy Valdez: See, we were getting ready to invade Japan. And we're, in fact, we're all on board ship and we were going to be the first wave to go in, our regiment. And, uh I thought, "Oh, man." Then you're really sweating it out. You're sitting on board ship, all ready to go in. And then, when, uh, Truman had them drop the bomb, woah, was that a relief. I thought, "Oh, man. It's a good thing he dropped it or I wouldn't be here today." A lot of soldiers would have got killed. Because when we went in to occupy these different cities, we went on Nagasaki, and the first place you went, you'd go in all these houses and everyone had rifles in their -- they were waiting for us. Everybody was armed, I'll tell you. But boy, you go in there and they hand over their rifles or pistols, you know, well, they knew that we meant business

then. Because we could have shot them. They weren't about to put up with that, so I stayed there and then I got to know the mayor of that town. And he said, "Well, would you teach these students English?" And I said, "Yeah." He was the interpreter. Really a sharp guy. So, I taught school there for awhile. And it was really nice there. And then, they said, "Well, you can stay here, or go home." Because I had enough points to go home. But they said, at that time I was the acting first sergeant because naturally the captain, they were off up in Tokyo and all that living it up, you know. So they figured, "Well, let Jimmy take care of that company." Which I didn't mind, you know. It was a really good duty. So I thought, "Oh, well." So they said, "We're putting you in for first sergeant and you're going to have to stay till it comes through." I says, "No, the first ship that comes in, that's the ship I want to get on and go home." So I didn't stay there. I came home.

Interviewer: When you were fighting the Japanese in the jungle, and you talk about how good fighters they were, it's -- you really must have hated them. What's what the infantry man does, you hate your enemy and how did your opinion change of the Japanese when you got home?

Jimmy Valdez: It never changed. Right to this day, I don't care for them. I don't like them. Because right to this day, this 60 years later, I still have dreams of being in combat. And when I wake up, I'm sweating, and boy, you think I'm glad to wake up. And thought, "Jeez, I thought I'd get rid of that." You never do, and I know of other guys in World War II and this one guy, in fact, he owned a -- he sold boats, really nice boats. And he told his son, he says, "You never sell a Jap one of these boats, never. As long as I'm living, you don't sell them." Boy, he hated them worse than I did. A lot of people say, "Why don't you get over that?" "Well, you don't." If you were in there and went through what we did, you don't forget it.

"Can't you learn and let live?" I says, "No, I run into them and they are the most obnoxious people in the world." You know, they are. I haven't seen any change in them. And in fact, I -- I had a friend that worked (inaudible). He was Japanese. Well, we got along okay, but this one friend of mine, boy, he did not like him. I says, "Well, you gotta over look some things," but this guy.

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Never did go in the service anyway, this Japanese guy. So then, later, our government gives these people 20,000 dollars, you know? Because they were in these concentration -- well, concentration camps. But actually, they were saving them, because if they had been out on the street, somebody would have shot them. And they didn't realize this.

Interviewer: So, in the jungles --

Crew Member: Can I get you to tilt your head, your hat back just a little bit?

Interviewer: There we can see you.

Crew Member: I wondered about that.

Jimmy Valdez: I can take it off.

Crew Member: You can just leave it.

Interviewer: I guess you dreaded the thought of being taken captive by the Japanese.

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us why.

Jimmy Valdez: Because I had, one of our men, was captured by the Japanese. And you know, this person was, well, I mean, I don't know how he got in. He was totally blind. His glasses were like coke -- bottle of coke bottle. Anyway, he ended up walking into their camp, you know, over to their place. So naturally, they had him for awhile, but you know what? He got away and found our outfit. So naturally, we had to send him home because he said, "Well, I think my luck's running out, you know?" But he was really good, you know, about it.

Interviewer: But, I guess you saw things that, when other people have been captured --

Jimmy Valdez: Well, and then also, when we got up pretty close to the end there, we had the rangers there with us and they'd run into these Japs that had prisoners, our prisoners. So they brought these men down, you know. And man, they were -- they had just treated them terrible. They were lucky to be alive. They didn't -- they were nothing but skeletons, you know? It seemed like.

Interviewer: Was that the liberation of Cabanatuan, that prison camp?

Jimmy Valdez: No, this was other troops, yeah.

Interviewer: So, um, I want to ask you one more thing about your buddies. Tell us about friendship when you're under those conditions. Tell us about that.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, you become real close. You become just like brothers, you know? When you're watching out for him and he's watching out for you and they are real close. And you, well, when one gets killed. It really gets to you. (Inaudible) when he got killed, it really hit me really bad, you know, and I -- boy, that's when I really, I just about went off the deep end, you know? Seeing them dead, you know? I thought, "Boy, I don't know." You get

over it, but, uh, that's where you get toward the point where you want to kill more. So then, we had, uh, one regiment. It was like contest, see how many Japs you could kill. So then they'd post it, you know. So, our regiment had quite a few kills, you know. Seeing it was the 35th regiment and the 27th and it's something to strive for. See how many you can get rid of

Interviewer: So they'd post it on a sign or something?

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was it in the hundreds or thousands, what?

Jimmy Valdez: In the hundreds, yeah. Got up into the thousands to the close to the end of the war, you know. But, you know. When they come attack you, to them, life was nothing. They didn't care. And the next morning, you look and they're all laying there. They run in our fire, you know, but they would never give up trying to overtake us, you know. Of course, we were up higher, so naturally we could kill more of them. But, yeah, they were gung-ho, I tell ya.

Interviewer: So knowing that and the week before the bomb, you didn't know about the bomb. I guess you -- your idea of. Tell us how this would have made you feel about going in to invade Japan, knowing all that, you know.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, we knew that it's more or less you're not going to come out of it because we knew they're waiting for us, you know. And then if you're on the first wave, naturally, you're going to get the brunt of their fire power. That's what you have to put up with, you know, in invasion.

Interviewer: If you were to invade, what do you think would have happened to Japan if there had been no bomb? What would have happened in the end?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, it's pretty hard to say, I think they would have fought to the end, you know. We'd have overtaken them eventually, you know. But, we'd lost a lot of troops though trying to take them. But by dropping the bomb, that saved a lot of American lives. People said, "Well, it was kind of cruel doing that. You see all the people that were killed over there at well." They're the ones that started it. We didn't start it, they did. So, what do you think would have happened if they would have invaded the United States? You think they'd cared what they did to us or did to the American people? No, they would have slaughtered them because that's the type of people they were. They believed in being superior.

Interviewer: Tell us about coming home.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I really enjoyed, I mean, I was on board ship on the one Christmas, but coming home, I thought, "Well, it will be great though and being a sergeant for the rangers, we were in charge of all the troops coming home on the one ship, you know. So we had to go through all the barrack bags and that, make sure they weren't taking any arms, you know. Pistols and all of that. Well, the one guy in my outfit, or he wasn't in my outfit, but he was coming to my home town, Bingham. And he really liked to booze it up, you know. So he had this double bag full of booze and I says, "You know you're not supposed to be taking all this booze. You're going to have to get rid of that." So, he did, but we got on the train. The Ranger said, "I don't know. We got our hands full with all these soldiers and that." What are you going to do, you know? We're in charge of them till we get to Utah. It was okay though, you know. Everybody was glad to come home, that was the nice thing, you know.

Interviewer: Did you have a nice homecoming?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, by that time, the war was over and it wasn't like the other people that come home, you know. People waiting for you and all that. No, none of that. We're just glad to get home, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. Sally, Liz?

Elizabeth: I want to know if he can describe, he said, "Mortar?" Describe what that job is.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. Tell us about being a mortar man and what it --

Jimmy Valdez: See, I was a 60 millimeter mortar, and you set her down in front of the you, and the shells are maybe about that long. And once you pull the pin, you have to drop it down in there, otherwise it will go off, you know. If you drop it, it will go off. So you got so good, you could drop it actually in the smoke stack, that's why I was a mortar man because I was that expert with it. I was an expert with the mortar. And you could do away with a lot of Japs by dropping the mortars in there because they go out, you know. And, so when I'd go on patrol, before I became a sergeant, I always carried -- I was a mortar man so I carried it, you know, because I was the gunner. And you dropped them on the Japs and I'll tell you, you get rid of a lot of Japs with that mortar because that's the first thing they go after, the Japs. The mortars and the machine guns. I had a friend of mine that got wounded, he was a machine gunner.

Interviewer: So, how many men in a mortar team?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, we had six on each squad. We had three, three mortars.

Interviewer: And you carried the two?

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how heavy --

Jimmy Valdez: It wasn't very heavy. A 60 millimeter wasn't very heavy. But, 90 millimeter was. But a 60 wasn't that, in fact, you didn't have to have the base. You didn't have to carry the base. You could just put it between your legs. Of course, when it went off, the shell went off and the tube would go down a ways you know, if you didn't have solid ground. But you get to where you're pretty expert with them, you know.

Interviewer: And -- Liz?

Crew Member: I have a question, when he felt extreme fear, what would he do, where would he go in his mind?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Crew Member: What were his spiritual --?

Interviewer: Yeah, in the pressure of combat, we've asked this of a lot of guys -- the pressure of combat after awhile, what do you do to get yourself through and how do you handle?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, some people can handle and others can't. And, uh, that's all mind, you know. But, like I say, either you can handle it or you can't.

Interviewer: Was there anything you'd do to help yourself handle it?

Jimmy Valdez: I really don't know. It just, I just took it for granted, I guess. Well, I told the sergeant, his name was Kelley, so we called him Commando Kelley. And he used to tell me, "Jimmy, you don't have to worry. These Japs can't hit ya." So here, they were carrying me in the back of a stretcher, you know, he said, forget what I told you. They can hit you, see, that's why I'm being carried back. But you just got to keep going, you know?

Crew Member: Was he one of these "fight like hell to the end" kind of --

Jimmy Valdez: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: So you were determined, you were a determined soldier?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yes.

Crew Member: Can you have him say that?

Interviewer: So, again, tell us about your attitude as a soldier. Your personal attitude.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I took it from this sergeant. I says, "They can't hit me." Which was kind of stupid, you know. But, I don't know. I guess I was too young to realize until you see your buddies coming back. Then you know, well, they can hit you, that's for sure. You're not invisible. But --

Crew Member: I have another question about when there was air relief.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Crew Member: Did they all look up at the sky and --

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. Tell us about --

Crew Member: Or the relationship between land and air.

Interviewer: Tell us about being supplied by air and how that made you feel.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, actually, a lot of times, when they dropped the supplies, the Japanese would get 'em because they'd miss our base, you know, because you're on the mountain. They could drop it off on the other side. So then the Japs ended up with it, with our supplies. But, they are pretty good at dropping it in our area, you know.

Interviewer: So you were that far out ahead of everybody?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: And you said, one time --

Jimmy Valdez: See, that's why our division was known at the "Lightning Division." Because it was really fast. We moved really fast. And that's why they called it "The Lightning Division."

Interviewer: You mentioned being cut off a couple of times.

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, when you're cut off, you -- they had to drop supplies into you because you were too far ahead of the main body. So they dropped all your C rations and whatever, you know. Ammunition. But a lot of times, they -- the Japs would get it if they'd over shoot our area, you know. But most the time, they got it into us, you know.

Interviewer: Was there one day in combat that really sticks out in your head or any kind -- one particular battle?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, not really.

Crew Member: Has he shared with stories with people?

Interviewer: Did you talk about the war after the war much?

Jimmy Valdez: No.

Crew Member: Can you have him say that and why?

Interviewer: Can you tell us why?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I don't know. You want to forget those things, really. Because they're your buddies getting killed and all that, you know. You actually want to forget all that, which you never do. But I had a lot of close friends, a lot of good buddies that were killed and, you try and block it out of your -- your head and all that. But, you never forget though. That's something you never do is forget.

Crew Member: So, why and when did he start talking?

Interviewer: So, is this something you don't do when you talk to us or, have you talked recently about it as you've gotten older?

Jimmy Valdez: Not that much, no.

Crew Member: Is this the first time you've --

Interviewer: Is this the first time you've really told these stories?

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah, it is.

Crew Member: Can you have him say that? Just say that?

Jimmy Valdez: This is the first time.

Crew Member: This is the first time what --

Interviewer: I will tell you what they want you to say. "This is the first time I've talked about it." You got a say the whole sentence.

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah. This is the first time I have --

Interviewer: So, just say it in a declarative statement. Just say it.

Jimmy Valdez: This is the first time I have talked to anybody about it.

Interviewer: Beautiful, yes?

Elizabeth: Talking about banzai charges.

Interviewer: Oh, yes.

Elizabeth: Hold on -- you referred to that. I want to know how they slept with that (inaudible).

Interviewer: Yes, tell us about sleeping, trying to sleep, and hearing the banzai charge during the night.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, you're not sleeping at that time, because you know they're coming. So then they holler, "Banzai" and you know they're ready to come after you. So you're waiting for them. And that's when you kill a lot of them, because that don't stop them. One, if they lose one person, one soldier, they don't care. They can lose 20 people and they're still coming after you as long as they have troops, they're going to come after you. And, I remember one time, they were saying, "Banzai." You know, and I was telling this buddy, "They're not saying 'banzai, they're calling your name.'" So you better be careful. And he said, "What do you mean, they're calling my name?" "Well, it's not banzai. It's Eddy." His name was Eddy. You know. He's all, "Don't give me that baloney. They're not." And I says, "They are." But boy, they didn't give up, no.

Interviewer: So, during a banzai charge. Would you be doing the mortar or would you have your Thompson? What would you do?

Jimmy Valdez: I'd have my rifle, or my submachine gun, yeah. And also, you could drop the mortars, too, because you knew that's what they're going to come after because you need to wipe out a lot of troops with a mortar shell and with a machine gun.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jimmy Valdez: Kill a lot of troops.

Interviewer: So, being part of a mortar crew or mortar section, you're a target?

Jimmy Valdez: Yes, then and a machine gun.

Interviewer: Yes?

Elizabeth: Can he discuss the whole concept of life and death and luck?

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. That's an interesting -- we've asked people about luck and about life and death and how they go through that. What is your philosophy -- what is your advice and philosophy on that?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I think it's, uh, I think it's just luck, more or less. You're in the right place or you're in the wrong place at that time. So you really don't know, but I also thought it was luck or it wasn't your time, you know, to go. Or probably the man upstairs is looking over you, too.

Interviewer: Now, you've got a couple metals here.

Crew Member: Can I ask a question?

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Crew Member: Was he a religious boy at all?

Interviewer: Were you religious during the war?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yes.

Crew Member: So, at that time, ask him if that helped him.

Interviewer: Did that help, being religious?

Jimmy Valdez: Yes, I think it did. Well, see, the reason is, because this one friend, this one soldier that was from Iowa. He was a good Catholic, so when we're in training, he made sure I went to church even though I didn't want to go to mass. He says, "You're going." I'd be laying in the bunk and tip the bunk over. "You're going." But he was really religious. I was religious, but I wasn't that religious. He was.

Interviewer: So, the old phrase, "There are no atheists in fox holes?"

Jimmy Valdez: Right, that's right. You pray.

Crew Member: Did he experience that personally? Did he pray?

Jimmy Valdez: You pray, oh yeah, you pray.

Crew Member: Can you have him just --

Interviewer: Yeah, tell us a little bit more about that. Something like, give us an example of that. You're waiting for the banzai, or what?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, before that, you're praying, you know, that you don't get it. But like I say, you never know.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jimmy Valdez: Because they don't care who they shoot or who they kill, you know. That's just like us, we didn't care.

Interviewer: You've got a couple metals here. Why don't you tell us about them?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, this is the bronze star. I received this --

Crew Member: Can you hold that up?

Interviewer: Can you hold that up? Perfect.

Jimmy Valdez: I received that, I came under machine gun fire rescuing this soldier that was on, well, they just left him there. So me and this other buddy went and picked him up and we got -- we both got bronze stars for that, rescuing a soldier, a fellow soldier under machine gun fire.

Interviewer: Was that the fellow on the stretcher?

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what's your other one?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, that's the Purple Heart you receive for wounds when you're wounded.

Interviewer: Was it a serious wound?

Jimmy Valdez: They were pretty serious, yeah. I got hit, like I say, I got shrapnel in the head. In fact, you probably can't see it now. There was a scar there that's probably gone now. Pretty well gone. You know, I was hit in the legs and, but it -- you're just lucky, you know, you come out that good because a lot of people, they lose their arm or their leg or you lose your sight. So I consider myself really lucky. But it was, uh, an honor, really an honor to be a soldier and to fight for the country.

Interviewer: Tell us more about your feelings about the country.

Jimmy Valdez: Well, when you're that young, anyway, you're really gung-ho. You know you want to go fight for your country, and you don't stop and think, "Well, you can get killed or you can get wounded." You don't think of those things, you know, because when you're 18 years old, you're just, uh, gung-ho I guess or whatever. But you take more chances, really. Then, when you get older, you kind of wise up, I think.

Interviewer: But, do you still feel the same way about the country?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah. It was worth fighting for, that's for sure.

Interviewer: Tell us about, did you run into any Philippine civilians?

Jimmy Valdez: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about them and how they felt and what you felt

Jimmy Valdez: Well, see, on the Philippines, you couldn't -- we really didn't trust them that much, a lot of them, because they had turned a lot of our troops in, you know to the Japs. They were playing both ends towards the middle. So, I really didn't trust them that much. In fact, a lot of our troops didn't care for them at all because we had them bringing supplies and the first shot that was fired, they dropped the supplies and they were long gone. So

we ended up carrying the supplies anyway. So, from then on, we will just take our own and reload. We don't have to have that, you know, because it will probably end up in the Japanese hands if these Filipinos because they are more or less looking out for themselves. They didn't care about us that much anyway. But --

Crew Member: When Jimmy came home, he witnessed so much tragic stuff. If you could ask him -- I know it's personal -- if he had any problems, issues when he was home.

Interviewer: Yeah, some of the guys came home and had problems after the war. Did you -- did you fare pretty well through that, or did you have problems after the war?

Jimmy Valdez: No, I didn't. Like I say, it's up to the individual. You either can handle it, or you can't.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Jimmy Valdez: And it just stays with you. That's why lot of people, a lot of soldiers end up where they actually lose their minds, more or less, because it really gets to them. But the rest of us, we could handle it lot better. It's up have to individual, your make-up, whatever.

Interviewer: Does somebody going in the armed forces today, a young man, uh, and he's going to go into the infantry, do you have any advice for him?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, now, things are a lot different, see, then they were then. I think, like in Iraq, I mean, they should never be sending these troops back in like they do. Because I don't think we had any business there in the first place. We lost a lot of good men for nothing, just because of Bush, I think. And I never did get along -- I never did get along with it. Vietnam, the same thing. Because soldiers came back and the people actually just shunned them, which was a bad thing to do. Here they are fighting for their country, and then they're treated

that way? I don't know, it's just not right. The Korean War was a lot different; it was like World War II. People more or less appreciated the fact that the soldiers were there for their benefit, you know, to save the country. But Vietnam and this other war, Iraq war, and this Afghanistan war, the same thing. We're losing a lot of troops there for nothing. And I do not go along with that one bit because you never change those people. You're trying to change the way they live? They're going to fight from now to doomsday. That's the way they're brought up, you know. You don't change the way they live.

Interviewer: Yes?

Elizabeth: Did he run into any Filipino troops that were --

Interviewer: Um, there weren't. There weren't not really because the whole place was occupied.

Jimmy Valdez: Yeah.

Interviewer: We brought some in that were part of our group, but there were some -- did you run into any Filipino gorillas?

Jimmy Valdez: No, they claimed they were gorillas, but I never went along with that. That was just the title they gave them, you know. We didn't buy that at all, because we seen the way they were. You have to be there to know. And we seen it all, so, they were just putting on a big front.

Crew Member: Did he continue relationships with any of these guys?

Interviewer: Keep in touch with any of your buddies after the war?

Jimmy Valdez: I did for a long time, see, but a lot of them are scattered around and a lot of them are from back west, I mean, back east and a lot of them are from Pennsylvania. Of course, a lot of them died, you know. So, and then we had reunions, but I

never did go to the reunion. The last reunion we had was in Hawaii because that's what the division came out of was from Hawaii, and they sent me a picture, and the only one I recognized was our captain because he was a big, tall guy. Really a soldier, really a good man.

Crew Member: Why is he telling the story now for the first time?

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. Why are you telling us this story now? We're so happy you did, but why are you telling this for the first time?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, I think, you know, years have gone by. I'm not going to be around much longer, so. You have all this built up in your system. You got to tell somebody.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Crew Member: Is this helpful to him?

Interviewer: Do you find this helpful?

Jimmy Valdez: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: And because we appreciate it, or what?

Jimmy Valdez: Well, because of my, like my granddaughter and my niece, they thought this was really great. They said, "That's really great. It's about time they did something for you World War II veterans." I said, "Well, it was our time, I guess." Because, like they put up a wall for it Vietnam veterans, and they just barely put up the wall for the World War II veterans not too long ago, for crying out loud. So, we, more or less forgotten, you know.

Interviewer: All right. Well, I don't think I have any more questions.

Elizabeth: I think I'm good.

Interviewer: Me too.

Elizabeth: It was really good, Jimmy.

Jimmy Valdez: Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you very much.

End of recording.