

Rutgers Oral History Archives
Lesson Plan
By Kathryn Tracy Rizzi

Lesson Plan: How the Allies Won World War II: Island-hopping in the Central Pacific

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject/Topic Areas: Social Studies/U.S. History II

Key Words: World War II, Allied strategy, amphibious warfare, island-hopping

Time Frame: Approximately 120 minutes (not including time for writing assessment)

Assessment(s):

Performance Tasks:

In this lesson, students will read and analyze oral histories of World War II veterans, engage in discourse with groups, and write essays that incorporate the use of primary source documents and reflect understanding of the topic/essential questions.

Informal observations/discussions/interviews:

Students will work in cooperative groups as they read oral histories and discuss guiding questions. The teacher will monitor the small group discussions and then lead large group discussion, targeting the essential questions.

Student Self-Assessment:

After reading the oral histories, students will self-assess as they discuss the guiding questions with their groups. At the conclusion of the lesson, students will be assessed with a writing activity. The writing activity will not only assess students understanding, analysis and evaluation of the topic but will also assess the students' abilities to use primary source documents as supporting evidence in their writing.

Content Standards and Benchmarks:

6.1 U.S. History: America in the World.

11. The Great Depression and World War II: World War II

A. Civics, Government, and Human Rights

6.1.12.D.11.b Compare and contrast different perspectives about how the United States should respond to aggressive policies and actions taken by other nations at this time.

B. Geography, People, and the Environment

6.1.12.B.11.a Explain the role that geography played in the development of military strategies and weaponry in World War II.

C. Economics, Innovation, and Technology

6.1.12.C.11.b Relate new wartime inventions to scientific and technological advancements in the civilian world.

D. History, Culture, and Perspectives

6.1.12.D.11.a Analyze the roles of various alliances among nations and their leaders in the conduct and outcomes of the World War II.

(Note: Since Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey serves as the state’s public research institution, this lesson plan uses the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Social Studies. The content standards in this lesson plan can be adapted to NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies for educators in other states.)

Lesson Summary:

This lesson entails students analyzing primary source documents and then incorporating into writing responses evidence from the primary sources that evaluate how the Allies defeated the Japanese in the Pacific during World War II.

After an introduction to the lesson by the teacher that involves map analysis and lecture, students will work cooperatively in small groups and read oral history excerpts of veterans of the Pacific War. In a reading comprehension activity that affords students the opportunity to think critically and engage in discourse, students will discuss guiding questions with their groups. To conclude the lesson, students will respond to the following writing prompt: “How did the U.S. military’s island-hopping strategy contribute to Japanese defeat in World War II?” The students will incorporate quotes from the oral history excerpts into their writing responses, using the primary sources as evidence in support of their thesis statements. The writing activity will assess the students’ understanding, analysis and evaluation of the essential questions *and* assess how well students use primary sources in analytical writing.

(Note: This lesson plan allows teachers to conform the writing assessment to their school/district/state writing requirements, as well to create their own rubrics, and does not address issues such as teaching students how to structure essays, write thesis statements, and cite primary and secondary sources.)

Lesson Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the strategies devised and implemented by the United States to defeat the Japanese during World War II.
2. Describe the experiences of soldiers who fought in World War II.
3. Analyze the role that technological innovation played in the implementation of military strategies.

Essential Questions:

1. How did the Allies win World War II?
2. What were the experiences of American military personnel during World War II?
3. How did technological innovations impact the conduct of the war in the Pacific during World War II?

Essential Skill:

Students will develop the following skills in the course of this lesson: reading comprehension, critical thinking, analyzing primary sources, cooperative learning, group discourse, writing a thesis statement, analytical writing, and using primary source documents in writing.

Instructional Strategies to be used to Develop Essential Skill or Concept:

Graphic organizer, lecture, cooperative learning, reading primary sources, group discussion, writing

Using the strategies, how will we accomplish the following?

How will I **introduce and explain** this strategy so that students will understand the how and why?

As a “starter activity” to begin the lesson, students will answer, “What areas of the Pacific/Asia did Japan acquire during expansion in the 1930s and territorial conquest at the outset of World War II in December 1941?” to review concepts learned previously in the World War II unit. The teacher will distribute a labeled map of the Pacific Theater and guide discussion to answer the question and review the extent of Japan control of the Pacific. Students will locate the island chains in the Central Pacific: Gilbert Islands, Marshall Islands, Mariana Islands, and Iwo Jima, in addition to Okinawa and the Philippines. The teacher will explain the strategic importance of the islands to the Allies and their geographical proximity to Japan (especially of Saipan, Tinian and Guam in the Mariana Islands, Iwo Jima and Okinawa).

How will I **model** this strategy for my students?

After explaining the objective of the lesson, “Students will evaluate how the Allies won World War II in the Pacific by analyzing the viewpoints of American servicemen who fought the Pacific War,” the teacher will give a short lecture to provide an overview of the Pacific War. (At his/her discretion, the teacher will introduce vocabulary/concepts integral to understanding the content of the lesson: amphibious warfare, Marine Corps, Navy, combat loading, strategy, tactic, mobilization, logistics, infantry, B-29, landing craft.) The lecture will provide an overview of the Central Pacific islands occupied by the Japanese and the strategic importance of these islands to the United States in terms of developing naval bases and air bases from which to mount a sustained offensive against Japanese forces. The teacher will give a brief explanation of the U.S. military strategy of island-hopping and describe how the strategy was implemented by the United States Navy, Marine Corps and Army through amphibious warfare. Seizing certain strategic Japanese-held islands (and bypassing others) enabled U.S. forces to launch air strikes against the Japanese home islands and mount offensive operations, thereby re-conquering territory in the Pacific and defeating Japan by 1945.

How will I provide opportunities for **guided practice**?

After the lecture, the teacher will explain to the students that they will read the oral histories of two Pacific War veterans who were involved in the campaigns to defeat the Japanese in the Pacific. The students will work in cooperative groups and read the oral history excerpts, using the reading questions as a guide for thinking critically and analyzing the primary sources. As the students read and discuss the questions with their groups, the teacher will monitor group discourse and interject questions to elucidate the essential questions and main ideas.

How will I monitor/gauge students' understanding of the strategy and the skill it develops? (**formative assessment**) How will I determine student readiness?

To assess the students' understanding, the teacher will circulate as the students read the oral history excerpts and engage in group discussion. Additionally, the teacher will guide whole group discussion prior to the writing activity to gauge the understanding of students and their readiness to engage in the writing activity, which ultimately will assess their mastery of the essential questions and skills.

How will students **independently practice** using the strategy and the skill it targets?

Working in cooperative groups, the students will read the oral histories and use the reading questions to prompt discourse and guide analysis. At the conclusion of the lesson, students will respond to the writing prompt "How did the U.S. military's island-hopping strategy contribute to Japanese defeat in World War II?" and write responses that use evidence from the oral histories in support of their analysis.

How will I **adapt or differentiate** this lesson for grade and skill level?

There are many possibilities for differentiated instruction. In the modeling portion of the lesson in which the teacher is lecturing, the teacher could show a movie clip to explain and illustrate the concept of amphibious warfare. The movie *The Thin Red Line* and mini-series *The Pacific* offer excellent scenes featuring both amphibious assaults on Japanese-defended islands and combat in the Pacific during World War II. Scenes from the movies could also be shown to highlight experiences of American servicemen in the Pacific War. *Windtalkers* portrays Marines fighting on Saipan in the Mariana Islands, although the film does not contain an extensive scene of the amphibious landing. Instead of an analytical essay, the teacher could assess students at the conclusion of the lesson with a creative writing activity. For example, the teacher could direct students to imagine they were Marines engaged in combat on Iwo Jima and write a letter to a family member about their combat experiences and role in contributing to Japanese defeat. The teacher could also direct students to embark upon independent research and find an oral history of a Pacific War veteran. (The Rutgers Oral History Archives website <http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu/> features almost 600 oral history interviews.)

How will I engage students in a **reflection** of how this strategy has developed this particular skill and how it has helped each of them become a more effective reader?

While working in cooperative groups, students will be developing reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. The reading questions will provide students with a framework to guide group analysis of the primary sources.

Sequence of Learning Experiences: (What teaching and learning experiences will equip students to demonstrate the desired understandings?)

This lesson plan incorporates many instructional strategies to enable students with various learning styles to master the essential questions and skills. By using a graphic organizer and lecture to introduce the lesson and then shifting to small group work to allow students to read, discuss and analyze the oral history excerpts, the lesson encompasses varying methods and opportunities for students to demonstrate their mastery of lesson content and skills. Importantly, the lesson fosters the development of higher level thinking skills and the utilization of primary sources in writing essays.

How the Allies Won World War II: Island-hopping in the Central Pacific Discussion Questions

Read the oral history excerpts and discuss the answers to the questions.

1. Trace the development of amphibious warfare before World War II.
2. Describe the role that technology played in the development and implementation of amphibious warfare before and during World War II.
3. Describe combat loading. Analyze the importance of proper combat loading of supplies for Marines and soldiers during amphibious operations against the Japanese in the Central Pacific.
4. Describe the strategy of amphibious warfare used by the U.S. military to conquer Japanese-held territory in the Central Pacific.
5. Analyze how American servicemen viewed the Japanese.
6. Discuss experiences faced by soldiers and Marines during combat in the Central Pacific.
7. Analyze improvements made over the course of the war in logistics, technology, communication and tactics in amphibious operations.
8. Evaluate the importance of Navy, Marine and Army forces in winning back islands in the Central Pacific from the Japanese. Examine the strategic value of the Central Pacific islands to U.S. forces in defeating the Japanese during World War II.

How the Allies Won World War II: Island-hopping in the Central Pacific

During World War II, United States armed forces conquered Central Pacific islands from the Japanese in a strategy known as island-hopping. The American invasion force, consisting of Navy, Marines and Army, disembarked Marine and Army assault troops from large naval ships into landing craft that carried the servicemen to islands defended by the Japanese. This method of warfare is called amphibious warfare. After achieving ship-to-shore movement of troops, weapons and supplies, Marines and infantrymen fought against Japanese defenders until the securing of each island. U.S. servicemen engaged in many different roles during the American invasions of Kwajalein and Roi Namur (in the Marshall Islands), Saipan, Tinian and Guam (in the Mariana Islands), Iwo Jima, the Philippines, and Okinawa. Ranging from the quartermaster, charged with ensuring that supplies and weapons made it from ship to shore in a timely manner, to the infantryman, who fought against his counterpart Japanese foot soldier, each role proved vital to the success of the operation. The following are excerpts from the oral histories of two U.S. servicemen, one an officer and one an enlisted man, who participated on the frontlines of U.S. efforts to defeat the Japanese in the Central Pacific during World War II. Read the oral history excerpts and discuss the questions.

Charles S. Tracy, Sr., U.S. Marine Corps

Charles S. Tracy, Sr., who eventually attained the rank of colonel, served as a quartermaster on the staff of General Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith, USMC, during the Central Pacific campaigns of World War II. He coordinated the movement of supplies during amphibious operations on Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands, Saipan and Tinian in the Mariana Islands, and Iwo Jima.

I

Charles S. Tracy, Sr. (CST): Over a period of time, the Marine Corps had been developing landing force tactics, amphibious forces. From the early '30s, they had really foreseen the necessity for amphibious warfare, and they had developed landing tactics. Andrew Higgins, I think, of New Orleans was a boat builder. General Smith and he had become friends, and he had developed some early landing craft, which were boats that could come up on a beach and retract pretty nicely, but, in the early models, you had to go over the side of them. Then Andrew Higgins developed one with a ramp on the front of the boat, so you could walk out, instead of going over the side. If the Navy got you on shore, you could walk out. If they left you in deep water, you still had to get out. ... Also, they developed craft that would carry a tank. The landing craft for personnel was LCVP for Landing Craft, [Vehicle], Personnel, and LCT for Landing Craft, Tanks, which were pretty effective ways of getting a tank ashore. All the summer of 1941, we were in maneuvers off of Carolina, practicing landing at New River, which is near Wilmington, North Carolina, not too far from where Camp Lejeune is now. That was all the summer, we were in and out of base in Charleston on the transports. Frequently, we were, as I said, on maneuvers, getting ashore and learning, climbing down the side of the ship on cargo nets, which enabled people to get down in the boats, hand over hand, and into the boats with all equipment on.

II

Kathryn Tracy (KT): What was the training like for the combat loading?

CST: Well, the poorest example of combat loading was the British ships which went to the Dardanelles in World War I, and they never could get the fighting equipment out of the transports, because they hadn't loaded them properly. That was the prime example of how not to do it, so, between World War I and World War II, the Marine Corps devised the proper way to load ships, so that the most important equipment for the troops came out first and in the order needed. We tried to do it sensibly from our Marine Corps manual. It said that for the combat people, you leave all the unnecessary stuff at home, and you load it so that the first things to come off are the things you first need, of course. So, that was the principle of it.

III

CST: ... We were transferred from San Diego in September of 1943 to Pearl Harbor, where we, General Smith's staff, planned attacks, first, in the Gilbert Islands and then the Marshall Islands. We would go on an operation and come back to Pearl Harbor and plan for the next one, and back from Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Roi-Namur in February and March of '44, Saipan and Tinian in June of '44. ... We came back in August to Pearl Harbor and planned for Iwo Jima, and that was in February of '45. That was the process by which General Smith's amphibious forces fought their way across the Central Pacific.

IV

KT: What did you think of the Japanese?

CST: At the time, we thought they were a bunch of monkeys, but they were a tough fighting group. They were really brave, unbelievably brave. They didn't mind getting killed. They fought until the very end, such as the group on Iwo Jima and the group on Saipan. They really didn't want to get captured, so very few of them were. They fought right to the bitter end, and it would've been just as bad if we were to go there in November of '45. The plan was to attack the mainland, the home islands, and that would have been tough, too. There are a lot of people now who are rewriting history and saying that the atomic bomb was not necessary, but those guys weren't there. ... Some people say there would have been hundreds of thousands of casualties in going to the home islands. I think the atomic bomb, even though it killed 60,000 people or so in Japan, it prevented killing 500,000 people landing there. Too bad it hit the civilians, but it brought the war to a close, period. Peter Jennings and other rewriters of history who say it wasn't necessary are entirely out of their context. End quote.

V

KT: What was the first battle in which you saw combat?

CST: Kwajalein and Roi-Namur. Kwajalein is at the south end of the atoll and Roi-Namur is at the north end.

KT: Can you tell me about the battle?

CST: Kwajalein occurred after Tarawa. By that time, the Navy had learned how effective their sixteen-inch guns were against concrete pillboxes and things. They came in to about fifteen hundred yards offshore at Kwajalein and really destroyed bunkers and things like that, so that the landings were unlike Tarawa at all. The Japanese were pretty well stunned, and the same up north at Roi-Namur. I think the fighting was more intense up there, but where we were, it didn't last too long because of the devastation of the naval bombardment, which was very effective.

KT: What was your specific role at Kwajalein?

CST: My role was strictly on the command ship and seeing that supplies got ashore properly, and the same at Saipan and Tinian and Iwo Jima. My job was to see that the supplies got off the ship and got ashore.

KT: At Kwajalein, what order were the supplies loaded?

CST: Well, we were very careful to be sure that the fighting material came with the attack forces. At Tarawa, apparently, I think the Navy admiral who took command there had his refrigerators and a few things for good living unloaded pretty quickly after they took it. At Kwajalein, we limited the attack forces to just what they needed and no fancy stuff like refrigerators.

VI

KT: Now as you went through the Marshalls, Marianas and then to Iwo Jima, what kinds of improvements were there in technology and such in carrying out logistical support?

CST: Oh, yeah. After the lessons of Tarawa, the naval bombardment for both Kwajalein and Eniwetok, and even Saipan, where the battleships came in as close as 1,500 yards offshore, were very effective in the shore bombardment. ... Unfortunately, they didn't do it long enough on Iwo Jima.

KT: What about in the ship-to-shore operations? Were there any improvements in landing craft?

CST: The amphibious tractors [Landing Vehicle, Tracked (LVT) or Amtrac] were a great improvement, and also the Army, what they call the Army DUKW was a great vehicle for getting troops ashore. It made the Tinian landing, on the north end of Tinian, where the Japanese were not, they landed two divisions on beaches that were about a hundred yards wide and sixty yards wide. ... These amphibious vehicles were a means of getting there and quickly. They were great. Those developments were great. The amphibious tractors were not very well armored. They were sitting ducks at Tarawa, so the landing at Tinian was duck soup, because the Japanese

were at the other end of the island expecting them to come in Tinian Harbor. That was probably the most impressive, efficient landing operation during the Pacific War, on Tinian. B-29s [Boeing B-29 Superfortress] flew off Tinian to attack, later. That's where the airfields were on Tinian and also Guam, where the B-29s were stationed.

KT: You had a friend who flew B-29s.

CST: I had an old friend from Syracuse who was a pilot of the B-29. I certainly admire anybody who flew a B-29 over Japan. He, a boy of the name of John Hancock, his father was a Congressman at the time, landed twice at Iwo Jima with a crippled B-29. It enabled him to get back safely, because they had landed with one or two engines out at Iwo Jima. ... I guess it was damage to the plane from antiaircraft fire. So, he was a lucky guy that Iwo Jima was there, and Iwo Jima saved many, many Army aviators, Air Corps aviators.

KT: The B-29s were the planes that fire bombed Tokyo.

CST: They sure did, apparently, with bombs specifically designed so when they exploded they would light the lightly-covered roofs of Japanese houses, and you just couldn't put them out. They really devastated Japan.

VII

KT: ... What problems in general would you run into with logistics [at Iwo Jima]?

CST: Well, Iwo Jima the problem was the volcanic ash and also people firing down on the landing forces from [Mount] Suribachi. Until the flag was raised on Suribachi, the people on the shore were sitting ducks. ... Finally getting these mats, these steel mats that frequently were used for airports. So, to get the vehicles off the beach was a problem, and that was, finally, we got cranes and other things that would lift the stuff and get it going, as that picture shows all the supplies on the beach getting unloaded from the LSTs [Landing Ship, Tank]. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy is referring to a U.S. Navy photograph of Iwo Jima taken in 1945.]

VIII

KT: How quickly did the Marines adapt to the changes in amphibious warfare? For example, the Marshalls were atoll warfare and Iwo Jima was more in the way of cave warfare. How did the Marines adapt?

CST: They adapted as well as they could. Each operation was a different situation. Iwo Jima was the toughest because of the underground tunnels and things, where the Japanese were ensconced. ... The flamethrowers were the things that really did them in, on some of those places. They were absolutely protected by all the concrete. There were amazing tunnels and things, where they were absolutely protected, except when we finally got into them, with great casualties to do it, too.

KT: Before Iwo Jima, Marine aviation was reorganized. How do you think that affected the battle?

CST: Well, what do you mean Marine aviation was reorganized?

KT: Before that, Marine aviation was under control of the Navy.

CST: Oh, yeah. Marines were flying off the carriers and Navy pilots, too. Of course, it was very helpful. In many cases, they weren't very effective because of the caves. That's where it was tough. That's where all their defenses were. ... All those undulations were hard to spot, except for the infantry doing it the hard way. ... Of course, it was always helpful to have a dive-bomber. [laughter] The coordination between the ground forces and the aviation had been worked to a very efficient manner, by the time we got to Iwo Jima. On Saipan, [it was] was very effective, too.

KT: Do you remember any particular instances of the effective coordination?

CST: Yeah, I was listening to an aviator who was listening to the forward units on Saipan. For example, you had the naval gunfire officer calling in the shots, and it was in a place where the naval gunfire wasn't effective. It couldn't go over the hill. The aviator, who was in the squadron circling above, heard the thing and came on his radio and said, "I think I know what you're talking about. If you'll guide me, I know where the guns are, and so when I dive-bomb, I'll wiggle my wings where I think it's the target and you let me know and we'll bring the rest of them in." So, that's what he did. He located the target where the forward observers were trying to get covered, and then he brought the dive-bombers in and they took care of what the naval gunfire couldn't. It was very good coordination by that time. I think that's where the Marine aviation and Marine ground troops proved quite superior.

KT: Did you see the flag raised on Mount Suribachi?

CST: ... I was watching through my field glasses as the patrol [was] getting near the top, and then I saw the flag go up, the first flag go up. There were two flags. They set a bigger flag up later, and that's when the famous picture was taken. But I saw the first flag go up, and I'll have to say, it was quite a thrill. [laughter]

IX

KT: ... Iwo Jima was one of the bloodiest battles ever fought by the American military. Did you get a sense of how badly it was going?

CST: Oh, yeah. With the casualties coming off, there was no question that it was very tough. 6,000 were killed and about 20,000 were wounded, casualties, had to be evacuated. That's a lot of people, although I guess that Antietam killed a lot of people in one day and, of course, Gettysburg. I've forgotten the casualty rates for that one, but it was just awful.

KT: Yeah, especially on the third day of Gettysburg. Was the unloading of supplies onshore threatened at all by Japanese artillery?

CST: Yes, it was, by borders from the north end of the island and from [Mount] Suribachi, before they eliminated that. They were sitting ducks on the shore for three days or more.

KT: What day did you go ashore?

CST: I was there on D plus one to see how things were going and to report back to General Smith.

KT: What did you report to him?

CST: I remember I sent a message back to the ship ... American Indians would put it in their own dialect and it would go to a guy back on the ship. ... That was a marvelous way, because they [the Japanese] didn't have any interpreters for that or any Indian dialect. [Editor's Note: Navajo code talkers, especially useful at Iwo Jima, enabled Marines to have a quick and secure method of transmitting radio messages during amphibious operations in the Pacific War.]

KT: Do you remember what tribe it was?

CST: No. ... But I was amazed ... That was a marvelous way of keeping it secret.

KT: Do you think that after Iwo Jima that American public opinion was dismayed with the Marines because of so many casualties?

CST: Well, of course, the Army made a lot of that, how dangerous it was. They didn't care about the casualties, but General Smith had said before the operations that, "Unless we get proper naval gunfire, there were going to be 15,000 or 20,000 casualties." He made that statement because of the defenses, and it was true. The only way to get them [the Japanese] out was to dig them out. I think he was tagged with being a bloody general, careless with his troops, but he was not, in my opinion.

KT: Do you have any other stories about Iwo Jima?

CST: One of my friends was ashore when an ammunition dump was hit, and they were nearby and they hunkered down. These shells were exploding and they hunkered down for several hours. Finally, they timed it. When a minute would go by without anything going off, they thought they might have time to get out of the place. ... They were held down for about three or four hours, but then finally survived it. They really had their heads buried in sand. He was my friend Leo McSweeney from Rochester. [laughter] ... He said it was a very nervous time. [laughter] Nervous as hell. I remember I was on the tarmac when the first B-29 came in. I saw it come in and land, which was quite a thrill. The airfield hadn't really been, it was just getting fixed up from all the bombardment and things. So, that was the first of many, many B-29s that were saved because of the airfield at Iwo Jima.

KT: Did you have supply shortages at all on Iwo Jima or any of the other islands?

CST: No, not to my knowledge. Early on, it was tough getting them ashore on Iwo Jima without getting killed, because the beaches were just under fire, both from Suribachi and from the northern end of the island, where their mortars would shell the beaches. It was tough. ... Eventually, as soon as Suribachi was covered, that got better, as you saw in that picture. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy is referring to a U.S. Navy photograph of Iwo Jima taken in 1945.]

X

KT: Out of all the campaigns that you participated in, which was the most efficient in the amphibious assault and the logistics?

CST: Tinian.

KT: How so?

CST: The Navy wanted the Marines to land at Tinian Town, which was well defended, and General Smith and staff wanted to land on the northern end and said they could do it with the amphibious vehicles. They landed two divisions in short order on two narrow beaches without a casualty. The Japanese were at the other end of the island, where they expected the Marines to land. That was the ideal operation. Other than that, every other landing was darned well opposed.

XI

KT: Where were you when you heard about the atomic bomb?

CST: I was in headquarters in Pearl Harbor, and I guess I heard it on the radio. ... All of a sudden, the ships in the harbor were sending up flares, and it was almost like a fireworks celebration. [laughter] That occurred when we heard about that and the surrender. It was the surrender that was the cause of that celebration. We knew something was afoot when the *Indianapolis* cruiser came to Pearl Harbor in late July. It was the only ship that came from the West Coast that didn't have to go through the Marine Corps naval bombardment course off of Kahoolawe, one of the islands near Maui, and people talked about that, including a story of some Navy captain who was always sitting on something under a tarpaulin on the hanger deck of this cruiser. ... Then the next thing we heard, it was headed for Saipan and that had the atom bombs on it. We learned later that it was the *Indianapolis* that did carry the two atom bombs.

KT: It was headed for Saipan ...

CST: It was headed for Saipan, and I guess the bomb took off from Tinian. [There was] a lot of speculation about what was on that ship. ... It was about two weeks before it was dropped. ... It was coming out from the West Coast on the *Indianapolis*, and as I said, the crew didn't have to do any of the usual things that every other naval ship coming out had to go through, the naval shore bombardment exercises. So, anyways ...

KT: Were you privy to that information because you were an officer?

CST: No, we were not privileged. ... I don't know anyone who knew it ... Because one time, about the end of July, our headquarters sent a message to Marine Corps headquarters, saying that we would like to know the schedule of the coming invasion of Japan, on account of wanting to properly prepare for it. A message came back saying, "You know the situation as well as we do, and the war is liable to end sooner." [laughter] So, that was the only hint that maybe things would end sooner, but I don't think anyone I knew had any information on the atom bomb until it was dropped. It was a pretty well-kept secret.

Roland Winter, U.S. Army

Roland Winter served as an infantryman in the U.S. Army in the Pacific. He saw combat on Guam, the Philippines and Okinawa and participated in the occupation of Japan after the war.

Note to readers: The following oral history includes graphic language and explicit, violent descriptions of combat situations.

I

Roland Winter (RW): You'd be amazed at who you can learn what from. At Okinawa, we were nearly starving to death. There was a guy from my platoon, he was a mortar man. ... I had become one of the few people he would talk to. I didn't know his problem, but I knew that he had had a hard life in Pennsylvania. If he had [a] question, he would ask me. He also asked me to write letters for him. I don't think he was illiterate, I think he was ashamed that he wrote poorly and he had difficulty expressing himself, which is why he spoke so little. Of course, I admired him for the way he adapted to living in the field. He was never hungry, he was never dirty, he was never thirsty. He never looked cold, he never looked wet, he was an outdoorsman. ... I had great admiration for guys like that and I wanted to learn from him. We were actually hungry at one point at Okinawa and he said to me, "You and I are gonna eat." He said, "I'll be back in a half an hour." He said, "You can help if you can find an onion. Now try to find an onion." Well, he went one way and I went another way. ... There were a couple of little houses off in the distance. I saw a little old man tilling something. I walked over to him and he was apprehensive. He was an Okinawan, not a Jap. They hated the Japs. ... I couldn't speak a word of Okinawan. I smoothed a piece of dirt, and I got a stick and I drew concentric circles, went like this [draws circles in air]. He says, "Oh, onion." ... With his hands, he dug up a nice red onion about this big. I patted him on the back. I went back. By this time, my friend had a ... fire going and he'd taken his steel helmet off the liner and he was boiling water and he had other vegetables in there. There was a small animal in there, skinned, cut into pieces. I don't know whether it was a rabbit or a local rodent or what the hell it was, but it smelled pretty good. ... I cut up the onion, put that in there and boiled it up into a stew, doled it out into the mess kits. It was absolutely delicious, you know, rewarding and fulfilling, a nice hot meal. Funny thing about the days on Okinawa, the days were hot and the nights were frigid. ... If you didn't have a

sweater you could put on at night, you'd freeze to death, and the minute the sun [would] come up, you had to take everything off. It got to be hot.

II

Kurt Piehler (KP): When you say you were a survivor, how many of your unit did you lose over the course of these five major campaigns?

RW: I can answer that question specifically. When we were finally relieved on the last ridge on Okinawa, there were only eleven others and me left in my company, that had a full T.O. of 287 men, there were twelve of us left. This company roster of 287 men actually had from the time we landed in Hawaii over 1400 people go through Company L.

KP: So you had, several times, casualties of over one hundred percent.

RW: Many times over. ... One of the outrages of this is that when we came off Ie Shima [island off the coast of Okinawa], and relieved another outfit on Okinawa, we couldn't fill their holes. Somebody on the General Staff was falsifying our casualty records. They thought we had more troops than we did because he was lying on the reports. We relieved, we couldn't fill our holes, and we had been in combat longer than they were. Ie Shima was the worst I saw. That's where Ernie Pyle [American journalist] got killed. ... They took us right from Ie Shima and put us on a ridge in Okinawa. I mean just the boat ride and we were right back in the middle of it.

KP: Going back to your first campaign, you ...

RW: Guam.

KP: Guam. My sense is that no one before Guam had seen hostile fire. You didn't have any regular sergeants who had seen combat.

RW: We were all green. ...

KP: You were all green. What was your first contact with the enemy, the first time where someone was trying to kill you, directly or indirectly?

RW: Going on a beach. Although Marines were already on the beach, it was still under fire, and we spent the first night in front of Marine "Long Toms." "Long Tom" was the biggest gun in the Pacific, and every time the Marines fired him, we got bounced out of our holes and the flash and, I mean, your ears. I'm half deaf today because of that. ... I wish I had a map of Guam in front of me. The main beach really was secured when I went ashore, except for they still [were] taking mortar rounds on the beach. There were no small arms fire. ... We weren't immediately committed. We spent that afternoon, that night, in front of this Marine artillery section. There was another Marine beachhead to the west. These two areas were separated by a peninsula that pointed south called the Orote Peninsula, and one segment of the Marines was engaged in pushing the Japanese off the end of the peninsula. That was going well, but there was a lot pressure from the land side on the Marine beach to the west. So, the second morning, we were

committed to marching behind the Marines that were pushing out on the peninsula and toward the beachhead that was in trouble to hit the Japs from behind. We got to the rear area where the Orote Peninsula met the main island area.

III

RW: I developed on Leyte [in the Phillipines], I never heard any other name for it, they called it jungle rot. I'll describe it to you. From the elbow to your fingertips, you would get open, running holes, deep, from your knee to your feet. These holes all hurt like a toothache. They were open and they would just ooze like a colorless liquid. It wasn't blood. I went on sick call. The doctors put different stuff [on], nothing worked. I was on a beach detail in Leyte before the Ormoc, or after the Ormoc landing, I was waiting for instructions to go meet my outfit and I was on a detail off loading ships that were in anchor. Put the material on ducks and LCVPs, take it to the beach where it was off loaded again. ... A navy corpsman saw it, and he says, "Come here, soldier. I got something for you." He had a bottle of something purple in his pocket. He took cotton swabs, and he hit all of the holes. Burned a little and he said, "Meet me here in a half hour, I'll give you a bottle of this and a ball of cotton. Just do this every couple of hours." I says, "Well, thank God somebody knows what do for this." He says, "Yeah, this'll clear it up." And the stuff worked like a charm. For the first time in a year, the holes started to close and stopped running, and it actually healed. ... I ran out stuff. I showed it to some Army doctors. They didn't know what it was. Wherever I got near any kind of dispensary or field hospital, I described it, I ran out of it. The minute I ran out of it, it reoccurred. ... It plagued me in Japan, although it started to clear up when I got on a ship and it started to clear up a little in Japan, but not fast enough. I was discharged with it. When I was civilian, I still had all of these holes in my arms and legs. Very, very slowly, the holes filled in. The outside covering wasn't skin. It was shiny and hard, like I had been burned there and no hair, body hair was growing out of those holes. ... I thought I would be polka dotted for the rest of my life. A couple of years later, skin took over and the hair started to grow and it finally disappeared by itself.

IV

KP: You became a sergeant. When did you become a sergeant? I am sure there is a story behind it.

RW: The gunner got killed, our squad leader got killed. The assistant gunner moved up to be sergeant; ... he didn't want the stripes. I said to him, his name was Eddie (Hotten?), the tough guy from Boston, I said, "Eddie, take the stripes." "It's not worth the money." He used epithets, he says, "I don't want any part of stripes. ... I wanna fire the gun when I have to, keep it clean, I don't wanna have to worry about ... [anything]. I wanna worry about Eddie (Hotten?) and my gun." He wouldn't take the stripes. They said, "We'll court-martial you." So, he said, "Good! Put me in a can. Put me in a brig. Put me anyplace. If I can't be the gunner, I wanna be in prison." He wouldn't take the stripes! I was the next survivor in line. By default, I got it.

KP: What battle was this? When did you get the stripes? Was it before Okinawa?

RW: No, it was on Okinawa where the rest of the squad got killed. ... We lost our gunner, oh, God, you know my big Jewish buddy, oh God, I was alongside him feeding the gun, and he got, a sniper in a tree put a couple of rounds into him, went in his back and came out his genitals, ripped his spine apart. I was feeding the gun, laying right along side of him. I missed him, boy, good soldier. Excuse me. It's an actual statistic.

VI

KP: I guess I wanted to follow up on one thing you said about literally not having enough to eat on Okinawa. How did you find the supply situation on the island, in terms of all your needs from ammunition to food?

RW: When I was with the Marines, we had no trouble because the Marine kitchens were right there where we were, and we got fed. When I was under MacArthur, we starved. On Okinawa, it was a combination, they had Marines and Army, and I was under Army control on Okinawa. We had nothing. Nothing. Ammunition, only ammunition.

KP: In other words, what you are saying is that there were some benefits to being a Marine.

RW: Holy Christ! If I had known as a kid that I was going to do the same fighting they were, I wouldn't have hesitated. You wanna know the truth? In combat, I would look for a dead Marine and take his shirt off. I liked them better. They fit better, and I felt better in it because when the fighting was over I had to [go] back into one of those stupid fatigue tops. But I would look ... for a Marine, you know, a corpse, and take his shirt. Oh, I admired them, baby. My outfit was a good fighting outfit. It had a good reputation in the Pacific. There were some army outfits that broke and ran. Never the 77th. Twenty-seventh got that reputation and the Americal, but the 77th had a well-deserved reputation for, you know, ... we got the job done. We got the job done. We had, well, I had the best company commander in World War II. You know, and we had some terrific guys in the outfit. We had some terrific guys in the outfit.

KP: It sounds like you also had some very impressive medics, although they could not do anything for your jungle rot. How good were your medics?

RW: They were horrible. I'll show you one of my toes. I had a festered big toe. I don't remember where, I could hardly walk. I couldn't get a shoe on, and I finally got to an aid station and there was a young guy who said he was a doctor, right? ... He filled my foot with Novocain, excuse me.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: You were saying about your foot being filled with Novocain.

RW: Yeah, you know I couldn't feel anything, but I had a sense he was cutting. He cut half my toe away. Did you ever hear of, it's pronounced "ding he," but it's spelled D-E-N-G-U-E fever.

KP: I have heard of it, yes.

RW: It's a tropical fever, okay? It's a five-day fever. Its symptom is: it leaves you so weak that you can't even raise up an arm. Your mind is working and you're feverish and you get chills, but the overriding thing is you're totally weak. Well, I got dengue fever on one of the islands. Don't ask me which, and they actually took me to a field hospital on a stretcher. I couldn't walk, I couldn't do anything. They put me in a bed in a long tent, and the beds were laid end to end. There were some beds in the middle. There was guy on one end behind me. Every night he got half an erection and he peed and he peed in a stream, and he was peeing on me every night. I could barely talk, you know? I kept telling [them], "This guy is peeing on me every night." ... They said, "I know, but we have no place to move you." That was their answer. Plus worse than that, okay? I don't know who was guarding this field hospital, but it was far back from the lines. Every night there was bullets flying through the tent. We're above the ground. I'm not used to that. I'm used to bullets when I'm in a shallow, not really foxhole, we used to call it slit trenches. You didn't have time to dig a deep hole, ... just so you could get your body into it. You know, there's no protection against this, these assholes are firing at shadows. By the third day, I could walk. I just walked out of there. I found my outfit. I mean, it was terrible, terrible.

VII

KP: You had spent two years killing Japanese and the Japanese were trying to kill you. What was it like to be occupying them? I mean, you had mentioned that you had quelled this unrest between the Chinese slave laborers, but were there were there any mixed emotions.

RW: I had such a low opinion of Japanese and such a hatred for them that I found it difficult being civil to them. I witnessed too many atrocities. For example, there were frequent times when our attacks failed and we couldn't complete it by nightfall. We had to withdraw. One of their standard tactics was to torture the wounded, make them scream so that we would attack at night when they were safe in their holes. ... We would listen to our buddies screaming, and this was almost every night. ... When we finally got up there, we would see them dismembered, disfigured. One of their favorite things was to cut off their penises and put it in their mouths and leave them there. That was one of their favorite things. You know, the other thing was, we knew how little they thought about life, I mean, their Kamikaze, you know. We were always resisting Kamikaze attacks. They'd run right into the mouth of a machine gun, and another guy behind him and another guy behind him. I mean, they wanted to die in battle. How do you cope with that? These bastards wanna die and I'm willing to accommodate them, but I'm not willing to die. I want to live to fight on and get old. The total different approach to war.

KP: Did you have any gung-ho guys in the unit who in a sense were foolishly gung-ho, or did that very quickly fade?

RW: Yeah, yeah. There were a lot of kids in the Marines that I knew were underage and walked around like Edgar Rickman. They were good jungle fighters. ... Your machine gun, even a light machine gun, is a principle weapon and it falls on more. So you usually use a machine gun to anchor a position. The first time I actually saw Marines fighting was on Guam when we linked up our right flank with their left flank. ... They had a machine gun there, too, and there were three young kids in the hole. We shook hands and said, "Now, listen, we been here for a couple of nights. I hope you guys aren't hair triggered." We says, "Because with a machine gun, if you

give your position away, you become a major target." We said, "Now, they send a patrol down this gully between us every night." We said, "It's a bright moon, you'll see them. They come back the same way. Don't fire when they're coming down. Let them do their reconnoitering or whatever they do. They'll be back." Says, "Don't fire until we do, and then you'll see what were shooting at. Then you can shoot. And if you can, use your sidearm. Don't open up the machine gun, because then the mortar guys on the hill will spot the machine gun." ... So, we all stayed up and stood watch on the gun instead of taking turns that night, all right. Sure enough, we see the first guy pop his head up over the edge like this, then another, then another, then another. You know they're really crouching and moving stealthily and they had to go down the gully between us, and then they went out of sight. ... Then we saw what we wanted to see, we started to stand watch as we got one guy on the gun at a time. What woke me up, I heard the Marines firing. One shot at a time, side arms, not the machine gun, right, and as they came up the ridge, we picked them all off with side arms. The next morning, we says, "Thank God you listened, see how nice it worked." He says, "Beautiful buddy, that's the way we do it from now on. You're right." They were good. They were really good. They weren't taking prisoners and we weren't taking prisoners. We saw what they did.

KP: Did any Japanese try to surrender?

RW: I never saw anybody walk up and with a flag. ...

KP: Yes, no one ...

RW: ... But sometimes you overwhelmed them and they'd, surprise, drop their weapon, and then they couldn't move. You had a prisoner, not that he wanted to surrender. He was on the ground, you were over him with a weapon. Most of the times, you didn't think twice, you just finished him off, you know? What were you gonna do with them anyway? We had no place to take them back, so ...

KP: Did you ever get orders from higher up to take prisoners for specific purpose?

RW: It was more than an order, it was a request with a prize. Three days in the rear and a case of beer for every prisoner. Here again, I was on the right flank, we were hooked up with Marines on the left flank and we advanced together and one guy in our outfit wanted a case of beer and the three days in the rear. He had a guy by the neck and a gun in his back and he's walking down, and there was a young Marine without a shirt, right? Around his waist he had a sash, he had a beautiful samurai sword hanging like they wear them. ... The prisoner must've recognized the samurai sword, some high ranking whatever, right? When he saw the Marine, he broke away from his captor, started running toward the Marine. The Marine smiled, he took out the samurai sword, the Jap kept running, and he put the samurai sword right through his chest. That was the end of the prisoner. The guy in my outfit said, "... You lost me a case of beer and three days in the rear." He says, "... That's it, he's dead." That was that.

KP: The other guy never got his case of beer and three days in the rear?

RW: He had no prisoner to deliver! I don't know what we would've done with him if we didn't. You know, ... we didn't know who was behind us. The whole world knew we were trying to take this objective, were trying to take that objective. ... The grunt up there doesn't know anything. It's them or you. It's one on one. ... It's not a war, its man-to-man combat. You know, were totally disconnected from the world.