

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series
Alonza Jones Interview
Conducted by James Newberry
December 11th, 2014
Transcribed by Lauren Hohn

Full Transcript

- Interviewer: This is James Newberry. I'm here with Alonza Jones on Thursday, December 11th, 2014 at Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And, Mr. Jones, do you agree to this interview?
- Jones: I agree.
- Interviewer: Okay. Please state your full name.
- Jones: Alonza Jones. A-L-O-N-Z-A Jones, J-O-N-E-S.
- Interviewer: And Mr. Jones, when and where were you born?
- Jones: I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, Jefferson County at the...then it was the Hisman Hospital. But now, I don't know the name of it. It's...I think it's a University of Alabama hospital now. In fact, last I heard of it, it was University of Alabama. 'Cause didn't nobody know Hisman Hospital.
- Interviewer: Mmhmm. And what's your birthday?
- Jones: August 19th, 1926.
- Interviewer: Okay, and can you tell me about your early family life. What were your parents' names?
- Jones: My parents were named Teresa. Teresa Brown. And before she married, her name—her name was Teresa Brown. And after it's Jones. And my father died when I was about 30—when he was about 36 years old. So...I don't know too much about him because I was a little toddler, enjoying life as a child. Life wasn't too plentiful for me. My mother was working at a mill near Columbus, named Swift Mill, and my father was working at the same place. It was...it was Swift Mill in Columbus, Georgia. And...we went to school there in Columbus. The first school I remember was...first school I remember was a lady teaching children on the side for the parents, I think for two or three dollars a week. Her name was Annabelle, and from there we went to Clavern School. Clavern was a city school run by Professor Marshall. And quite a few teachers I can't recall of their full names, but...we got along good. I used to get spankings for nothing. I appreciated that now. Since I'm grown, I appreciate all the spankings I got for nothing. But...anyway, we came through Clavern School from the first grade

through the...I think about the the sixth grade. Sixth or seventh grade, then we went to Spencer High, Spencer High School in Columbus, Georgia. And from there...we-we-we finished Spencer, and I and—trying get a little job in Columbus. But...the job wasn't paying much, so most of the fellows were leaving in the summer time, they'll leave and go to...Maryland...Connecticut one, to pick tobacco. And I, I was one that didn't go because I had a little job paying me just about as much as they were making. Anyway, I...left there and came back to Columbus, I—I left s—little job in Columbus...and I started seeing my grandfather. In time...I left him and came to Colum—and came to Atlanta, where my mother was. She had remarried again...and...and I, in turn, stayed with them for a year. And...and that...start messing with the boys in Atlanta. My mother didn't like it because the boys in Atlanta was more rough than the boys in Columbus. So...

Interviewer: What would they get into?

Jones: They would get into anything. Anything except drugs. We didn't—I didn't know anything about drugs then. But-but-but-but...the thing that was bad about—at that particular time, things that were bad was...ghonnorea.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Jones: And my mother, she's always talking to me about, "Don't do this" and "Don't do that," "Don't do this" and "Don't do that." Well, I got tired. I said, "Well, I'm gonna do like the other boys are doing. I'm gonna see if I can get in service." So I went to the draft board...I wasn't up there a year before they call me. My mama said, "What is this?" I said, "I'm gonna try to get in service." That worried her, cause World War Two was just at a little European goal then, Japan hadn't did anything. Well, anyway, my mama talked, talked, and talked. My stepfather told me that the best thing I could do...get in service, and that's what they did. They called me first...to take the military exam, to be accepted into service. So we went to Fort Benning.¹

Interviewer: Well, let's go back a little bit. Was your stepfather in the military?

Jones: He was.

Interviewer: And where was he posted?

Jones: He was posted in Atlanta, here. It's a little, little place called 101 Ollie Street. It was taking in the black soldiers as they come through and didn't have nowhere to stay. So they...took them in...one night, put them on a train the next day to wherever they were going to. 101 Ollie Street was where my stepfather start getting—start getting his promotions.

¹ Fort Benning: A prestigious army base near Columbus.

Interviewer: You were already familiar with the military then?

Jones: Well, yeah, I was familiar with the military because I was familiar with the military a long time before then because...Columbus was infested with soldiers. Soldiers were—soldiers were coming in day and night...and, you know, it was just soldiers here, soldiers there, soldiers there wherever you go. But anyway, the time that they...after the draft got me...we went to Fort Benning, passed the physical exam there. So, they told us at the end that...we had...the Army had its quota for that day. You can get the...you can get the Navy, you can get the Coast Guard, or you can get the Marine Corps. And I didn't like—I said, "Well...I'll take the Marine Corps." And everybody that took the Marine Corps, they had to go to the Navy. They had to leave there and go to Macon, Georgia, take another physical. So, we all went. We took another physical. And they told us, they gave us paperwork when we were supposed to report. And they would send us a ticket...to get the train and go to...Fort M...not [*he claps his hands*] they gave us a ticket and go to...Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.²

Interviewer: Why did you choose the Marine Corps?

Jones: Well...I...I chose the Marine Corps because of the fact that...you know, the fellows always talking about "Marines do this, and the Marines do that." So, so I chose the Marine Corps. Quite a few of us choose the Marine Corps. We didn't know anything about the Marine Corps, but we all knew about the army, see, because most of us had been raised up around the army. So from that we went...from there, we went in training, we get a train in, the next day...next day we was in, in our...Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. And—and from then we start kitchenette. What do I mean "kitchenette?" Everybody had been walking around like, like they wanted to, but they started saying "Yes, Sir" and "No, Sir" and all of that stuff, the boys start cussing. I mean, it was something. But I was, I'm glad it all happened because back in that time, fellows were doing what they wanted to do, and we—and we in time...started taking training, and everything you do, you had to do it on the double. What do I mean "double?" If you go to the restroom, you had to run to the restroom. If you had to go to the chow line, you had to run to the chow line. Everything you had to do, you had to do it on the double. And there was training, and some guy used to get to fighting, and—and—and they used to get to fighting so much until a man just told them to, "Okay, fight, y'all. Finish. You ain't finished fighting yet. Go on, fight some more." So that's the way it was. And so...after that, we start taking our GI training. We had to learn the general orders. They give us some general orders, take charge of this post and all military property in view. It was nine of them—I mean, it was...I'm trying to think, was it nine general orders, I think it was about nine or ten. No, I think about eleven general orders because they used to ask us, "What are the twelve general orders?" Nobody know. And—and so the man said, "Well, If you don't know the twelfth one, you can't go nowhere." So he put

² Camp Lejeune: A Marine training facility opened in September 1941 (*Marines: The Official Website of the United States Marines Corps* "Marine Corps Base Camp Lejuene.")

us on restriction until we learned the twelfth general order. The twelfth general is not a general order that's down there. They had eleven general orders, but the twelfth general order was "Be damn sure you know the eleventh." That was off record in the military scene, but if anybody asked you, "What's the twelfth general order?" [*He salutes*] "Sir, my twelfth general order is: be damned sure you know the eleventh." Asked you the ninth one, you had to spit that out. The eight one, you had to spit that out. They just kept drilling until you learned all the general orders.

Interviewer: Do you remember some of them?

Jones: I remember a whole lot of 'em, but I can't remember in sequence.

Interviewer: Hmm-hmm.

Jones: To take—first general order: To take charge of this post and all government property in view. Two: To walk my post in a military manner, keep always on alert and observing everything that take place within sight or hearing. Three: To be especially watchful at night and, during the time of challenge, challenge all persons on or near my post and allow no one to pass without proper authority.³ And so you...you go through that way and go through this whole circle of all of them. That was...they grade you on that, see...then they start showing—giving you a rifle. They tell you to take that rifle apart, so you learn how to take that rifle apart. The first rifle I had was M103, 30 caliber. So I had to take that rifle apart...then they talking about putting it back together blindfolded. Well, didn't many put it back together blindfolded, but they did a good job of doing it, they did a good job, so...Anyway, after that, we...we were taking marching...calisthenics, different things every day. Out to march, step off on your—first step off your tape is on your left. And it was a funny thing, but anyway, you find some guys they still couldn't think about which way was the left. And when they tell you to column left or column right, some guys be going right, some guys be going left. And here's rifles just hitting up against each other and hitting up against everybody in the head. It was a funny thing, but it was showing you discipline.

Interviewer: Were your drill instructors black or white?

Jones: Well, we had some black drill instructors. We had some white ones. But—but when I went through, we had all black instructors because they came through before...but now when it first began, first beginning of it, you had some guys that I'll tell you about that had transferred from the Navy to the Marine Corps, see, they were black, and they already knew how to march, how to drill, you know, different things of that. Anyway, after that, we went through the...of learning...learning different things in Marine Corps. Learning different orders, how to take orders. And that was a difficult thing, and see...most of the things you went through was really teaching you how to take orders. Some guys didn't

³ Three: This is actually the eleventh general order.

know how to take orders, see, and sometime your orders would be so nasty spoken until you don't wanna take an order. But anyway, we learned how that was done, and why. So...there was one thing that I'm glad...I went through 'cause you learn how to take things you really don't wanna take.

Interviewer: Did you ever go off of base?

Jones: Off the base? Well, no, we never did go off the base, not while we were in training. Only time we went off the base was after we got through training. Yeah, I went off base. First place I went was New Bern—New Bern, North Carolina.⁴ And after I had took my training, me and a fellow, we decided to go off base. You had to be tact—you had to be sharp. They'd had creatures everywhere. And then to...went off the base, and that's when we start drinking beer. Choo! A beer bottle—Choo! and I said, "What was that?" Well, a civilian got mad with the soldiers, got mad with the Marines, cause they was—they had taken a bottle, and they had a table full of beers, see, and they wouldn't give the civilians none, so the civilians got mad, and they start throwing bottles and everything, start—as a fight, and I lost my cap, what they call a little cunt cap. And I didn't know how, I said, "What are we doing?" "Hey man, you better start fighting these folks like they fighting you." Now there's a funny thing about it. But anyway, I hurried and got out of place from the [*he makes a trilling sound*]. You heard the [*he makes a trilling sound*] MPs. MPs they's coming and they's arresting everybody they can get. I went out the back door somewhere. I got down and went to put my cap on, I ain't had no cap. So I said, "Well, I got—I have about three or four dollars. I got my three or four dollars, I went over to the little place that sell army supplies to Marines, I bought me a cap. I went back and got on the bus, went back to camp, without them catching me. And me and the guys, I said, "I'm never going to town again. I'm never going to town again." Well, anyway, I went to town again. I went to Jacksonville. Jacksonville was just right next door, see, you had your pass in your pocket. Only thing you had to do was show it to anybody if anybody asked for it, say, "You got a pass?" Just show it to them, that was it. But anyway, we...we left there and...we did our training there...yeah, the only place...we went to Raleigh, North Carolina once. They had a school there...forget the name of the school, anyway, that's where you meet the so-called "decent girls," see. We met girls there, and they rejoiced, we rejoiced, everybody got a girl, girl's name, and everybody writing letters to...it was a fun thing. I mean, that way...what wasn't funny...was that you could—if somebody do something, and they couldn't find out who it was, the whole platoon was on restriction. So everybody found out who did it, then the others started to tell...and when they tell on the fellow, the fellow get mad, and he would come out and pull our bunks over. You know you had...it wasn't as modern then as it is now. But we had bunk up here, bunk up there, see, two—two high bunk—man sleeping up there and man sleeping down there, see? So guys would come back and get to fighting at night, and you hear bunks falling all over...you just couldn't get used to it, see? But anyway, we had a good time. We had on the base, when

⁴ New Bern: A North Carolina town about thirty miles away from Camp Lejeune.

you didn't have enough money, you can go to the Slop Shoot.⁵ Slop Shoot was where they sell beer.

Interviewer: On base?

Jones: On base. Well—it was a—we call it the Slop Shoot, but it was the PX.⁶ The PX is where they sell the different articles. But Slop Shoot, they went in and sold the fellows beer, beer. You didn't have no pass to go there, see, but anyway, it was good. Anyway, we...we had...quite a good time there, so when time come for us to finish our training, a man told us... "Get your clothes ready. You going home on furlough. You're going on furlough." I went home Had all the girls jumping all over me.

Interviewer: Was is your uniform?

Jones: Yeah, and you in uniform then, see, you finish your training. You got your little medals on you, and you finish your training, you think you're a big man then. You still don't know nothing. But anyway... anyway, we stayed on furlough for about a week and a half, had to go back to camp, went back to camp...at Montford Point, got on the list, on the list—soldiers—they send soldiers here, they send military men there, military men like that, and that's the way we went. So I was on the list to to New Orleans for further shipment overseas. I was glad of that. Well, I hadn't been nowhere in my life in no way, and...we left there, going to New Orleans, Louisiana, we left there and where we supposed to eat was in Columbia, South Carolina, I think, after we left the post, we were supposed to eat in Columbia, South Carolina. They didn't have anything for us there. So we went to the other place, went to another place—that was in Columbus, Georgia, I think it was. They didn't have anything for us there. So...

Interviewer: That was, you mean they didn't have any food for you at—

Jones: No, no, no...

Interviewer: —Any of these places?

Jones: No, no, no, no, they didn't know a thing about no black troops coming through there. And so...the guys that mad, they start spending their money, buying something to eat, you know, cause it's...you had to start at home regular eating every day—you had to start regular eating every day at a certain time, so your stomach was calling to you at the same time. And so...Columbus didn't give us anything 'cause they said, "Birmingham. Birmingham's the next place food." They called Birmingham. Birmingham. When we got to Birmingham, people had tables full of everything out there. "What was that for?" "No, we don't—we don't get no black troops nothing." The Red Cross...they won't serve the black

⁵ Slop Shoot: Sometimes spelled "Slop Chute," an on-base bar.

⁶ PX: Slang for Postal Exchange, otherwise known as Base Exchange.

troops. And so, Captain Timplin, he got mad about all this stuff, see? He was our commander, 'cause he was the man carrying us onto New Orleans.

Interviewer: Captain Timplin? Can you remember his first name?

Jones: Yeah...I'm thinking Robert Timplin. I'm not sure his first name, though. I think the name was Robert Timplin. He was a tall man. He was...a tall...he should have been a general. 'Cause...he'll talk to you, he'll smile with you...but he was just a military man. And...Captain Timplin went somewhere in Birmingham, and he called the people and told them, "This train is not leaving here until these people get something to eat. Train not leaving here." Everybody got scared for R—for Captain Timplin then...'cause he's acting just like a general. Anyway, train didn't leave there. All the while, this food start coming in, food start coming in. Everybody got [*he pats his stomach*] tummy tight and everything all right. So they—he made them clean up all around the train where they been having those sandwiches and papers and stuff, made them pick all that up, so they had to do that after we got through with that. Train headed off to New Orleans then. So...that was good. And we got to New Orleans, we went out to a Naval Base somewhere. They put us at a naval base down in New Orleans. So we stayed there until they called—ordered us to leave there. We had a nice time in New Orleans.

Interviewer: What did you do?

Jones: Well, we—we weren't doing anything. We weren't doing anything according to the training we were in, but we went on leave. Everybody had—everybody went on leave. And so...we went on leave in New Orleans. Everybody acted right. Didn't nobody get in the brig, nothing like that. But anyway, the next morning, they called roll. Everybody supposed to go—everybody went where they supposed to go. And...the ship stayed there all that day. Everybody wondering when they were gonna leave. Somebody was saying they gonna leave at night. "No, gonna leave at night." You know, everybody gets waking, and so the train left—I meant the ship left *early* that morning, about 4 o'clock, I guess. Well, somebody said, "Oooh, well they—they're taking the ropes off! They taking the ropes off the ship!" Everybody start going up on deck, and had to go back—go back down on deck. Smoking lamp is out.⁷ Could—you couldn't smoke nothing, not up on deck. So, anyway...if there's a good thing, it is, it is teaching you all the waiting, giving you the facts of how life was gonna be. Anyway, we got on there, and...out there in the Gulf of Mexico, you look around, you didn't see nothing but ships. It was ships everywhere you go, looking like they just stacking up on them. But all that day, all that day, nothing but ships. Later that night, we were down in the bottom deck, playing cards. Somebody said, "What? All them ship's gone!" So everybody started going up on deck to see, and we were on a LST. LST was a show ship. Landing Ship, Tank. And we, in time, got scared,

⁷ Smoking lamp: signified whether it was okay for people to smoke on deck (*USMC Hangout*, "Jarhead (Marine Corps) Jargon.")

'cause they said, "They [?] left us out here here, ain't got no submarines to take care of us, and nothing like that." Well, anyway, we didn't have no—we didn't have no difficulty until—until about two days before we got to Hawaii. And somebody said, "Boy, that's a sub is out there. A sub is out there, gonna get us." That sub didn't want us 'cause they-'cause it wasn't...that LST wasn't nothing, see? Now all the big ships, big battleships and crusiers and things like that, they said it got away just like that. Well, anyway, it left the small ships there, see, in a group to themselves, and I think it was about four ships out there by themselves. But they never—nothing happened to us. We were blessed. And we got to...got to Hawaii. They told not—told everybody, "Don't go through that pineapple field." Okay, they didn't go through the pineapple field, but what they did, two or three of them...took the bayonet, go to there, reach over there and get [*he imitates jabbing a pineapple with a bayonet*], get a pineapple. See, you didn't say nothing, notice somebody looking at us. And that's what got us, so when we got back to that little base there, they start calling names out, c—calling names. "What are they calling my name for?" Well, see, you had—I had, I know I had [*he repeats the gesture*] cut me a pineapple. And I eat—I ate that pineapple. He said, "Everybody, everybody we call go to Barrack 11." So we all went to Barrack 11. Other men out there...well, what they—what they got us for, we were the one doing—cut that pineapple, see, 'cause we weren't supposed to, 'cause that was a Dole, D-O-L-E, pineapple place.

Interviewer: Hmm-hmm.

Jones: And so...we couldn't go on leave. Everybody was going on leave.

Interviewer: You had to stay behind?

Jones: A lot of us stayed behind 'cause we was out there doing pineapples.

Interviewer: Where were you in Hawaii?

Jones: We were right out from Honolulu. I don't know the name of the place. We were right out from Honolulu. Well, anyway, it was a sad thing—i—it was teaching you...and from that...we waited a few days there. Then they loaded us on another ship going to...it was going to...this place they call now...anyway, it was a place there, it's now—it's now a pleasure place. What's they call it every now and then on this—on this...*Wheel of Fortune*...but anyway, when we left there, when we left Hawaii, going to this place...I forget the name, it'll follow...When we got there, they had some big, dark...natives there. They were in the British forces. They couldn't speak English. We couldn't speak what the natives spoke. So...one of the—one of them big black fellows up there...he saw the sergeant, saw the sergeant, he's big too, he went over there and "Bula, bula!" Sergeant stared at him. "Bula, bula!" "What the hell you mean? Bula, bula back to you!" And he grabbed him and hugged him. He was saying "Hello." The sergeant

didn't know what the hell he was saying...he said—he said, "Hello back," and everybody started saying bula, bula then, bula, bula." So—

Interviewer: These guys were in uniform, too?

Jones: Yeah, they were in British uniform.⁸

Interviewer: Okay.

Jones: They were in British uniform. It wasn't Pago Pago.

Interviewer: Bora Bora? Or Bornea?

Jones: Something over there. Anyway, it was...it was a nice place, too. A nice place. We had a nice time there. We didn't stay there more than about day and a half, shipped out again. But everywhere we go...see, we was on LST 39. LST 39. Landing Ships, Tank. And they tanks galore down in the bottom of that thing, just carrying those tanks over there to get in action... Anyway, we—we went on 'til we got to...if I had my list, I could tell ya, but I don't know... See, everything I had, that I made history of... all I went through, I have put it on my sea bag, what island we went to...but now I don't know, I don't know where it got to.

Interviewer: Well, you were on Guadalcanal.

Jones: Yeah, I was on Guadalcanal.

Interviewer: Okay, so how much late—how much later was that?

Jones: Well, that wasn't long after we left this place.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jones: 'Cause we went to Guadalcanal. And so where all those trees had been...shot down...all those coconut trees, yeah we had a good time there to, 'cause only thing we did was...drill and went out to a range, shot—shot your rifle, come back, clean it up...keep your rifle clean at all times...not everybody would...everybody couldn't shoot their rifle all at the same time. Well, we would shoot, you know, getting used to the recoil. And...after that...I said—well, Guadalcanal had got so good then until they—Guadalcanal was secured then. They...had a Red Cross club there, and so I was gonna ride to the Red Cross club and shoot some pool. Now, I was on a highway, thumbing a ride to the Red Cross, and I guy stopped me and he said, "You heard the bad news, ain't you?" I said, "What's bad?" He said, "Well, you know president Roosevelt...died." "God." And that—that hurts

⁸ The island may be Fiji, which has a history of European colonization (*BBC* "Fiji's 'Unsung Heroes' of UK Army"). In World War Two, some Fijians were involved in the fight for Guadalcanal, one of the Solomon Islands, on the Allied side (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

your heart, too. [So's the thing,] you know...so I went on to the Red Cross. I didn't shoot no pool, I just...sit there and listen to the radio.

Interviewer: He'd been president for twelve years?

Jones: Yeah.

Interviewer: Since you were little?

Jones: That's right. And that hurts you. And...after that...we kept listening to news and it said Truman would be the president, see? And from there...we called it. 'Course MacArthur was the commander over there, and MacArthur gave the marines hell. We made the boy scouts say, "With the help of God and a few marines, MacArthur gained back the Philipines." Yeah, I'll tell you—and I don't think...President...Missouri, Missouri...

Interviewer: Truman?

Jones: Yeah. I don't think Truman liked MacArthur too well, either.

Interviewer: I don't think so, either.

Jones: See, because when Truman got in charge, Truman had MacArthur come back to the states...stripped off all his awards...when they got through...I don't know how in the world they let him go, but they let him go.⁹ Yeah, because we were training like hell, we were—some evenings, I didn't think I'd live the next day 'cause some days, we'd go out there...and they'd have us dragging through mud, dragging through mud. I [?] wore my elbows off, dragging, holding my rifle up like that. [*he holds his hands up like he is carrying a rifle through the mud*] Just dragging...just dragging...

Interviewer: So you were doing a lot of training and drilling, even there?

Jones: That's right.

Interviewer: And...you went on to Okinawa, and you said things got a little stiff on Okinawa?

Jones: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Jones: Things got a stiff on Okinawa...because MacArthur had got everything trained up to make... somebody said to make an invasion in China. You know you hear scuttlebutt everywhere. Scuttlebutt was flying something. What do I call

⁹ "When Truman got in charge": In 1951, Truman pulled MacArthur from command for insubordination during the Korean war (*History.com*)

scuttlebutt? Lies and, you know, the GI's put out, "Man, so and so and so and so, you know, so and so and so and so, and you know...they had a little army paper, but that army paper wasn't nothing. It'll give you a little facts, a few facts about things, but it was nothing...like you get news now. If somebody come in open that door and tell you, "So and so and so and so," you can rely on that, but the other you couldn't rely on it, see, because...it's so modern now to—you can take a picture of man and send it home to his mama and daddy, and they can talk to him, see, but then you couldn't even—couldn't even call.

Interviewer: Did you write letters home?

Jones: Yeah, you had letters going back and forth, you had everyone going back and forth. But not like now, see you got this modern convenience now. You can take your little radio out and call home. "I'm all right." But then, you couldn't even tell the folks on the letter where you were. You don't tell them where you are. They think you'll tell how many troops are there, see, 'cause Japan knew just about how many troops are there because they can see the ships coming in and going out, see? And...ships...But anyway, when that...when—we were out one day...we were out one day, had just come off the little training phase that we were on...and somebody come in our hut and yell, "Whoo-hoo! Whoo!" bringing news, you know. "They dropped the A-Bomb." "What the hell's A-bomb?" "It's this atomic bomb, dropped this atomic bomb." And we—we were so scared about that atomic bomb because they had talked so much about it, that thing'll tear you up. Well, anyway, they said, "Japan"...they dropped that on Hiroshima, and said "Man, you should—[?] devastated that place." In fact, about four or five days later, we went to the movie, and they showed it. Whoo-ee. And so, probably about—probably about four or five days later, after they had dropped the first one, Japan didn't believe it. You know—you find something you think is a malfunction. And they thought that bomb had just a malfunction bomb, see, so they dropped another one. [*he throws up his hands in surrender*] Japan threw up the hands. And everybody start hollering then, "Whoo-hoo!" We all got glad.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were when you knew the war was over?

Jones: Yeah, I was on Okinawa. I was on Okinawa.

Interviewer: How did y'all celebrate?

Jones: [*he holds his hands up to imitate holding a rifle and firing*] Pow pow. Take your rifle. Come the—come a man that, "Okay, don't shoot up all this ammunition. You don't know what's happening." Well, that's the way it was. In fact, they start—start saying "You go home" after about four or five days over there. They had air raids and all that. We were going to our foxholes. And...and it wasn't no air raid...they just have a...I guess they didn't...peace and quiet on the island. Well, anyway, as a nice thing we had...It's not like it is now...I see the fellows now, when they come in [*deterior men?*] I certainly have a better time now.

They...they... 'course we...only way they transferred us was by train. But now...you get where you're going now by plane. A really good thing.

Interviewer: So when did you return home?

Jones: I returned home I think about...I think about...it was about the first of the year in... '45, I believe it was. I believe it was '45.

Interviewer: It would have been late in '45. Like Winter?

Jones: It'd been Winter. Just like right along now...¹⁰

Interviewer: But you had to have enough points?

Jones: Yeah, you had to have points.

Interviewer: And how did you earn points?

Jones: Well, points, the points system was...you had so—had to have so...so many months in service, so many months, like two months, and I had been over there about 27 months. Well then that...two for each month. But now...I wasn't married. I was single.

Interviewer: If you'd been married, you'd have more points?

Jones: Yeah. If a guy was married, he had some points because he's married. If he had any children, he had some points because he had children. And see...well just about my whole unit...was ready to because the fact they had enough, see? So they got us...they got us on a big—on a big ship. And it—and this was a ship—this ship was going, that ship was...*[he motions with his hand to show the ship on high waves]* You look like you go down like that and when you come back up, you looking at the sky, and it was going to...so we got back to California. We got back to those Golden Gates, we thought we were something.

Interviewer: Came in through San Francisco Bay?

Jones: Yeah.

Interviewer: And when did you make your way back to Georgia?

Jones: Well...we—we got there—we got back to California. They kept us there at...this—this big camp out there in San Fransisco. I—I—then...this big Marine camp. Can't think of the name now. In fact, we stayed there about four days, then they start pairing us off, so many a day. So that...so that—that...going home.

¹⁰ Right along now: The interview took place in December. Earlier, Jones said he arrived in “the first of the year,” so between December of 1945 and January 1946.

I had to report back—had to—had to report to...[M___ Point,] Camp Lejeune, North Carolina on the same day, so that's where we came back, came back and I stayed I guess about...about two weeks—nearly two weeks. They wouldn't give you no two weeks, they give you about a week and a half or something like that, and you're due to report back to that camp base. Anyway, that's one of the good things about it, and so...I stayed there, I got out...they gave me discharge with the ruptured duck.¹¹

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Jones: Ruptured Duck is a little [*he gestures to his shirt*] duck they sewed up on here. A little ruptured—they call it the ruptured duck. It were yellow. And it was a duck. They called it “ruptured duck,” that meant you—that meant you'd been discharged. See...you can go on in and get [?], civilians got you or the military got you, whoever wanted to get you, but anyway...you got your papers and you go on home.

Interviewer: Did you go back to work after being discharged?

Jones: Well, I went back to work, but I didn't...I didn't get...the job I wanted because the job that I had left, they had—they had made some kind of reservation for...fellows that come back, get their old jobs back...but I didn't get my old job back. The man told me said he didn't need nobody then to...I said, “But I thought I was going to...” [*he shakes his head*] “Well, I'll tell you what...we'll call you as soon as we possibly can...we have somebody.” [*he shakes his head*] I told the fellow that, fellow said “They didn't do me like that? They gave me my job next day. Well it's a little job working at the candy factory.” In fact...I stayed there for a while—I mean I...I started to go back in the Marine Corps. Well I said, “No, I think I'll just go on and try and find a job.” So I finally found a job driving a truck. I drove this truck awhile [?] for the post office. And...they didn't have enough then...they let me know something later. So...after that...I went to...

Interviewer: Went to Lockheed?

Jones: Huh?

Interviewer: Lockheed Aircraft in Marietta?

Jones: I went to Lockheed.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what you did at Lockheed?

Jones: Well, I took training there. You had two weeks of training to take. And if you passed that training, then you get the job. And you can believe me, everybody—everybody was studying like Hell. So I...I took training, I passed the sealing—

¹¹ Ruptured duck: a pin signifying an honorable discharge, nicknamed so for the engraving of a duck on the pin.

sealing one thing, that was one of the jobs. Riveting was another one. And...splashing was another. So I took all three of 'em. And I got all three of 'em. I worked there quite awhile until Eisenhower got in office.¹² When Eisenhower come in office...Eisenhower started his junk. We all start...they just like you throw up and hit a...throw up and hit a...bee, a little bee cone, where all those bees are nesting. Ah! You hit that...they—it swarm all over you—it swarm all over the plant, so...there it was.

Interviewer: So people were angry?

Jones: Well they were angry, but they—they knew the war was over, and they knew they couldn't be...keep making planes and things like that.

Interviewer: And you'd been working on the C-130?¹³

Jones: Yeah, C-130.

Interviewer: Is that correct?

Jones: C-130.

Interviewer: Did you work alongside white coworkers there?

Jones: Oh yeah, yeah. Working alongside white coworkers.

Interviewer: So it was an integrated...

Jones: On the job?

Interviewer: ...Factory?

Jones: Mmm...on the job. See, because...and after we left there—after Eisenhower got through his layoff, I come back and got that truck driving job back, thought the man liked the way I'd done it. And so the post office call me back...and I went there. I making more money at the post office.

Interviewer: How long were you with the postal service?

Jones: Huh?

Interviewer: How long were you with the postal service?

Jones: I worked about twenty-something years. I retired there.

¹² explain

¹³ explain

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your family?

Jones: Huh?

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your family?

Jones: My family? I married to...when I was in service—I mean not—after, after I got out of service. And...we stayed together for 13 years. Then she wanted a divorce. So I gave her—gave her that divorce. So I gave her—gave her that divorce. I wish she still married to me today 'cause of the fact that...I was going to—I had told her lawyers that I would take her back, see, well when I went up in the—when I went up in the court room...I looked over and saw her and she's like [*he imitates his ex-wife turning her head away*] I said, "Hell, I don't want this." I said—told the jury that. Jury—I guess they had...notified the jury that I was going to take her back, so they asked me what I wanted to do, I said, "I want a divorce." And she looked at me [*he shakes his head*]. That was it. When the case was over, I was on outside of the steps—I was on outside...on the steps...and...she come over there and start cussing me out, and it's good there was a...this man with this blue—with this brown uniform on...he said, "Look lady," said, "Why you wanna mess with him?" I said, "She got the divorce she wanted," I said, "She put me down for divorce," I said, "She got it." I said "Now what you want? You had your this and that, your this and that." Man said, "Well okay." Said, "Now, if he tell me to put you in jail," said, "I can put you in jail now 'cause you cussing him out." I said, "That's all right." I start walking away, and she said, "Yeah, you old..." I said, "Well, that's all right." And we got a divorce. They took half of my payroll, so I did that for about—I took...year to divorce, and they took half my payroll. But—but when I first put in for...when I first put in for—I mean when she first put in for this divorce, one of the fellows told me, said, "Man, see if I were you, I'd get off the road." See, I had—I had—I had trained myself to...to the scheme, see? And scheme, if you could scheme...you could scheme and take care of that scheme...you'd get you a better job, so that's what I did. I got a better job, and I making sometimes two times what the po—what the people at the post office was making because I was on the train, when you on the train you got that...you got to learn—learn this and that—learn when to make a...make a catch, you gotta learn what you're running on...what I mean "What you're running on"—next stop, so you can get the mail out, put it in that sack and let them have it so they can get it off, see? Well I had learned that and I told the fellow, I said, "Yeah, you're right there." He said, "You go to the office and tell so and so that you wanna come off for awhile." And that's what I did, and they took me off, and oh, that saved me. Cause...what I'd have been paying her...two or three hundred dollars a month. That shaved it down to a hundred-and-something dollars.

Interviewer: So when did you remarry?

Jones: Huh?

Interviewer: When did you remarry?

Jones: About three years later.

Interviewer: And did you have children?

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: How many?

Jones: Three. Three.

Interviewer: Okay, and have you received awards for your military service?

Jones: A what?

Interviewer: Awards? Like the Congressional Gold Medal there. You wanna show us that?

Jones: Oh yeah, I'll show you that. [*he picks up the medal*]

Interviewer: When did you get this medal?

Jones: I got that medal after I met one of the fellows and he told me about this. I said, "I don't know anything about it." [*he lifts the ribbon around the medal into the camera frame.*]

Interviewer: Just wanna hold it up by—in front of you there?

Jones: [*he drapes the ribbon around his neck*] Yeah.

Interviewer: So you received that medal in 2011?

Jones: Right, right, 2011.

Interviewer: And show us your hat there.

Jones: That's a Marine... [*he picks up a Marine cap with Montford Point Marine Assoc. embroidered on it in yellow*] Montford Point Marine Association.

Interviewer: And how long have you been a part of this Montford Point Marine Association?

Jones: Well...I'd been a p—I'd been...I guess about eight months now, somewhere like that.

Interviewer: So it's recent?

Jones: Yeah, recent. But see, they haven't—they haven't been going on a long time, see, I didn't know anything about it, so the fellows told me about it...[he opens a red envelope] and they invited me to come up there to see them. And here's the...[*he shows a certificate for the United States Marine Corps and a Congressional Gold Medal Certificate of Recognition for the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc.*] ¹⁴

Interviewer: And this is the certificate that goes along with the medal?

Jones: Yeah. Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: Thank you for showing us.

Jones: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: And Mr. Jones, why did you agree to speak with me today?

Jones: Why did I agree to—?

Interviewer: To speak with me today?

Jones: To speak with you? I tell you, this fellow told me that...he wanted to—he had somebody he wanted me to see. I forget his name.

Interviewer: That's Fred Morton.

Jones: Uh-huh. I said, "Okay," I said, "Whenever—whenever he wanna see me." Then I said, "Well," I said, "I don't know..." he said, "I don't know when it will be when see him," said, "But I'll call you."

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Jones: I said, "Okay then." And so that—that's the way it happened.

¹⁴ United States Marine Corps: The certificate reads, "United States Marine Corps Certificate of Presentation On 12 October, 2013 For: Mr. Alonza Jones. 'I would like to congratulate the Montford Point Marines on the Congressional Gold Medal minted in their honor. This recognition is long-overdue and richly deserved. By breaking the color-barrier in 1942, the Montford Point Marines became part of the rich legacy of our Corps. They answered our call despite our society being deeply divided along racial lines. As such, their contributions went largely unrecognized and many times they were not given the respect and recognition they deserved as Marines, as Americans, and as patriots. To me, they were heroic for two reasons: They fought against the enemy during World War II while they also fought for their civil rights and the respect of their fellow Americans. It is fitting that we, as Americans, honor their selfless service and sacrifice with the Congressional Gold Medal and fully embrace their storied contributions to the history of our nation at war.'" It is signed by James F. Amos, Commander of the Marine Corps.

Interviewer: Do you think it's important to share your memories like this and with future generations?

Jones: Well, it's important...because it was important to me—important to me. The things I went through...learning people, learning how to be with people...sometime you can get your head knocked off. [*he shakes his head*] But...it just that. But it's good to be a fighter for a country. And...

Interviewer: Do you think the country has changed a lot, or not much since World War Two?

Jones: [*he shakes his head*] Country has changed a lot. Changed a lot. You don't have to ask me, you can ask others. 'Course there's...some people don't...don't appreciate a little change at a time, see? I appreciate a little change, 'cause a drastic change will make you re-set back.

Interviewer: Maybe people aren't always ready for a big change?

Jones: That's right. You're not always ready for a big change. Sometime they will blow it. I've seen it.

Interviewer: How do you think that your military service helped contribute to the Civil Rights Movement? Especially in the South?

Jones: Well...Civil Rights...Well, it's not...it's not me, it's them. Civil Rights Movement has...helped a lot. But sometime, you can talk so much...until you...lose some goodness...you know?

Interviewer: Well, Mr. Jones, thank you for talking to me today.