

Legacy Series Transcription
Transcribed by Adina Langer
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James Newberry interviews Alton Cadenhead

Full Transcript

Interviewer: All right. This is James Newberry, and I'm here with Alton Cadenhead on Wednesday, May 20, 2015, in the Social Sciences building at Kennesaw State University. And Mr. Cadenhead, do you agree to this interview?

Cadenhead: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: Thank you. So let's start at the beginning.

Cadenhead: OK.

Interviewer: I'd like to find out when and where you were born.

Cadenhead: I was born on the farm at Route 2, Chipley, Georgia, for identification. And Chipley, Georgia, at that time, was Chipley. Now it is Pine Mountain. I was born about five miles north of there in Troup County. I was born on a farm. My people were farmers. I am the oldest of six children that came into that family.

Interviewer: And what's your full name?

Cadenhead: My full name is Roy Alton Cadenhead, Sr. I have a junior.

Interviewer: So, tell me your parents' names.

Cadenhead: My father's name was Roy Erastus Cadenhead. No, I never heard of it either. My mother's name is Omie Euvelia Cadenhead. Her maiden name was Bishop. B-i-s-h-o-p. And they too were farmers. You understand that all of this came about during the Great Depression. You understand, and so you'll find, no doubt, that my life in that period of time is centuries old, because it's hard for people in the modern day that we live in – it's hard for them to understand what the Great Depression was, and how it did wear and tear the human mind and the human physical body. But it was true. And I came up in the middle of all of this.

Interviewer: Was it something that you were conscious of at the time? [2:19].

Cadenhead: No, I did not know any better, because I had not been in the world to know that there was a better world. OK. And everybody around me was in the same category. So, yes, you were poor, but the gauge became who was the poorest of all. Because everybody was poor. It's hard for students to understand today that there was no money – no money available, period. What little money you could gather and collect had to be saved for medical reasons, doctor bills, and so forth.

And every family would find that you always had a broken arm, a hole in the head – there was always something wrong with you constantly, and it would take medical advice to correct it. So there was no money, and it's hard for students today to understand this when there are loans on every corner, at a very low interest rate sometimes. Sometimes they're crooks; sometimes they're honest. But it's hard for students not to say, “Why didn't you go to a loan and borrow some money?” Credentials – you didn't have it. And so that added to the rigidity. That added to all that was necessary in that period of life. And I'm not trying to be facetious either. I'm telling you as it was. And there's not many of us remaining that came through that period, so it will soon be history, and the sooner the better, because it was no way --- I apologize for this. I've gotten too far away from you. You go ahead.

Interviewer: No, that was a wonderful introduction. I think that's sort of what we are going for. So talk to me a little bit about life on the farm there [4:37] in Troup County.

Cadenhead: Well the farm was not – it was not a money crop that you were thinking about. It was thinking about food. What you could bring out of the earth itself. What you could bring out of the animals that were around you was what you had for food. And it was so difficult. It was not just short distance. It was not short time. You were constantly... You would come in at night – you were dead tired, OK? But tomorrow would start a brand new day just like the one you completed. So it was hard to find joy anywhere. Your only prayer, and your hope prayer was, “some way I can find my way out of here.” And there was not much that you could want to be. You could be predestined that you were going to be here. You were going to be a farmer. The community would predestine you that you were going to be there. But it was a very, very difficult life. I don't know if you ever read the book, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Have you? OK. It tells you a little bit about what was taking place.

Interviewer: Well, can you describe the house that you lived in as a child? [6:09].

Cadenhead: Yes, sir. There was four rooms. There was a hallway right through the middle of the house and two rooms on either side. One room, of course, was the kitchen. That was the family conference room. That was the study hall. That was everything you needed to do. The other was your parents' bedroom. And on the other side of the hallway, it was filled with children. There would be three beds in each room, and you had a table in each room, and you would study in that room. Each one had a lamp. Please bear in mind – there was no electricity. And when you finished studying, you would blow out your lamp and you would go to bed. No harassing, no tumbling, no pillow-battles, no anything like that that you see today, because you knew you were going to need every ounce of strength tomorrow that you had shed today. And you can't understand this. I know, and I

can't expect you to understand it, but in those days you became adult at age ten. You worked like an adult. You'd do everything as an adult. You'd behave as an adult. So adulthood came on very early. And you abandoned the teenage years, which was the formative years for you, or for any person. Those teenage years are when you come to realize that you live with other people, and you need other people. Other people need you, and you form what we call a community. But when you go to work in the morning like an adult, and you work till night like an adult, there are no teenage years. That doesn't make sense, does it?

Interviewer: Probably a little less familiar to young people today. Can you tell me about your early education? [8:23].

Cadenhead: Yes, in those days we could start school at age five. And we were able, if you were smart enough, you could skip grades. For instance, I made the third and fourth grade in one year. And there were only eleven grades. You remember that – you don't remember that, but there were just eleven grades, which meant that you finished high school at a very early age – fifteen years, sixteen years of age, which put you into the market as a farmer, worker, a lot earlier in life than you would like for it to do. But the educational years were good. They were sound. We had good teachers. We had some of the best math teachers that I've ever known, I found in my school years. The school principal normally was your math director. And oh how I enjoyed him, because he was just a brilliant math teacher.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Cadenhead: Patrick. We would come into class, and the room had four walls, and on each wall was a long blackboard. But before the class was over, every blackboard was filled up. It was that interesting. Calling student to the board and asking them to work this problem out, and so on. And so I feel like the education was sound. We missed an awful lot. When I go into high school today and listen to the students talking about certain subjects, it's foreign to me. We did not have a foreign language. We did not – our basic was science, math, and communications. If you could read, if you could study, if you had a good math aptitude, somehow you were going to find a place in life. And so we worked on those. We knew that we had to work on that. And there were no advisers to help you. There were no councilors. Sometimes you could corner a teacher and beg, "I do not understand," and if you had a tear in your eye, then they might stop and listen to you, and in about three or four words, they could clear up your matter. And you were on your own again. But I really, really appreciate the early years of my education.

Interviewer: What was your best subject? [11:16]

Cadenhead: My best subject was math. History was my second-best subject. I loved it like a storybook. But one subject that I really enjoyed was engineering-- the little branch

of engineering that we had. It planted in my mind that I wanted to become an engineer. I wanted to become a civil engineer, because I felt like there was so much wasted energy on these farms that could be capitalated (?) and utilized to make life more pleasant for them.

Interviewer: And you did, you said, little inventions and projects which sort of, you know, suggested that you could be an engineer.

Cadenhead: Well, I had all kinds of quick get rich schemes, but because I was so interested in civil engineering, and in the energy that was in all the little streams that was going across the farms, I built a paddle wheel, and I had that to bring to you today. That paddle wheel had five blades on it, OK. And each blade had a 1-oz steel ball attached to it. And I would plant that in the little stream and count the RPM, and then I worked out a formula, and I can't give it to you in my head. I had it written out for you. But the final sum was the square root of all this you did back here (sweeps hands across body) times .375, and that gave me the energy that was wasted in every stream that I was testing. And then I was going to channel all of those into one stream that went across our farm – it was called Turkey Creek. I would put back into Turkey Creek the dam that the Civil War had destroyed, and I was going to sell energy to the community. I didn't have a dime in my pocket, but I was going to do it. That was the dream. I had other dreams. I was interested in perpetual motion, and I built a unit that would drop seven balls into a pocket, and it would turn a wheel, and as it turned, it would pull the balls back up. I never was able to get the eighth ball. We had been discussing this in class. I was told again, “A unit will not produce as much energy as it uses.” So I put that away as history. But then I came up with an idea of how the farmers could use a lot of the waste materials that were now being piled and burned. I created charcoal. I created from that what we would call rosin. It was a substance. And I said “there's so much here that's waste that could be handled.” And so those were my dreams and my ideas that I spent as a teenager, as a young fellow growing up on the farm. [14:58].

Interviewer: So, when you were in high school, I believe, you transferred to the school at Pine Mountain.

Cadenhead: Right.

Interviewer: And why did you do that?

Cadenhead: Simple. The school system in Troup County went broke. And when it went broke, there was nothing to flow to the teachers, to compensate them, so they all retired, resigned. School shut down. When Harris County was – Chipley was in Harris County. Pine Mountain there was in Harris County. And we went to Harris County to see if it was possible for us to get into school in Harris County, and

they said “We'd be happy to have you, but we cannot furnish transportation.” So we found an old A-model that we could put together. It had four wheels on it, and a steering wheel, and that's about it – that's the limit. And we could get transportation out of that to Chipley, and that's what we did. We went to high school in Chipley, Georgia.

Interviewer: And this is you and some of your siblings.

Cadenhead: Yes. In fact, all the siblings. We never went back to Troup County school system. All the siblings graduated from Chipley High School because of that. And it was a good move because that school was so far ahead of what we were.

Interviewer: And you're in the area near Warm Springs.

Cadenhead: I'm sorry...

Interviewer: You're in the area near Warm Springs.

Cadenhead: That's correct. Yes.

Interviewer: So, were you aware that President Roosevelt was visiting there? [16:47]

Cadenhead: Yes. Quick story. As I said, we were – I was studying Civics in high school in Chipley, and the word came out that President Roosevelt was at Warm Springs, and he was coming across Pine Mountain (sweeps hand across body, pointing) to Highway 27 and was going to Fort Bennett. So we turned our school bus up to the top of the mountain. And President Roosevelt came along in his little Ford car, driving it himself, and stopped the car, talked with us students. (Coughing). And I became a Roosevelt follower from that day on. (Hold up hand). That guy's going to lead us.

Interviewer: What was it about him that was so captivating? [17:48]

Cadenhead: Simplicity. His seeming interest in the students. (Coughing) And he was an invalid.

Interviewer: Do you need a Kleenex or...

Cadenhead: [Coughing]. We'll redo this one day if you want to.

Interviewer: That's fine.

Cadenhead: There was so much about him that motivated you. He was an invalid of course. He was driving his car. [Coughing] And he took time – he took time to talk to students. And his language was for students. It wasn't for the education – educators. It wasn't for the businessmen. It was students. He would ask you about grades. What's your favorite subject? What are you having problems with? [Coughing again]

Interviewer: Do you want to take a break? Here, let's take a break. [Break in the video]. We have to set it back up. And once they edit this, they'll edit all the coughing back out.

Cadenhead: I hope you do.

Interviewer: I think we'll start back at Roosevelt. [19:42] You want to do that?

Cadenhead: Fine. I'm sorry about that.

Interviewer: So, what was it that was so captivating about President Roosevelt?

Cadenhead: Well, first of all it was his simplicity. And I thought I was talking to a man that was deeply interested in me. Not for what he could, you know, exert from it, but somehow he could install – instill into a person a certain energy that you didn't have. So I was – I was moved with him. And I was a great follower of his even until his death. But that was a great moment, and it kind of changed my life, because I went back, and I sat on the bank of my Turkey Creek, and you'll have to forgive me for this silliness, but Turkey Creek was our swimming hole, it was our fishing lake, it was our playground, and I went back to study Turkey Creek and found that Turkey Creek was named by the Indians because of the turkeys that were gathered around the stream of water, and when the British came in and settled that area, they continued with the name. But I used to sit on the bank of the creek – laugh if you wish --- and I would drop things into the water, and I'd watch it flow away (traces a path through the air). And I would ask that water, “Where will you be a year from now? How did you get there? Would you be at your beautiful sea a year from now on some lavish beach enjoying life? And Turkey Creek, you're my inspiration! If the creator of the world can create a balance and a gravity, whereby you flow through all the torksome (?) crooks of your schedule, you can find your way – and find your way to your beautiful sea, I can find mine!” [Shakes finger in the air.] Laugh if you'd like, but when you're sitting alone, step forward. My life has been wonderful. Every year I go back to Turkey Creek. I sit where I sat 80 years ago, and I talk to that same creek. And I say to you, “we will rejoice together! I too found my beautiful sea!” And so Roosevelt somehow dropped some seeds somewhere, and from that seed all of this began. And I thought, “There's a way out of here. There's a way out of here that I know I can find, and be led out of here, and be meaningful for my life.”

Interviewer: Wow. Well, thank you for that. That's really powerful. So, when you graduated, you proceeded to college in Lagrange. [23:37].

Cadenhead: Yeah. I received a scholarship from the Callaway Foundation. If you're not familiar with it, we called them work scholarships. If you qualified for the scholarship and received the scholarship, not only would you receive the

scholarship, you would also receive a job, so that when you were not in school, you could work three months for money that would carry you through the next three months in school. (Enumerates details with fingers on hand). And what a blessing that was. And so I received that scholarship, and I had a choice of schools I could go to. (Enumerates schools on hand with finger). I could go to Clemson, or I could go to Auburn, but then the Callaway Foundation built a University as part of the University of Georgia today. They built the university, and we could go there to school much more economically than we could at another university. So I decided I'd try that for my first year. Well, my first year went fine. Everything was good, but you know what happened on January 7, 1941 – December 7, when Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The world stood still for a moment. What are we going to do? And I thought, well, everybody is supposed to be doing something. So I decided I'm going to analyze the major armed forces. (Enumerates on fingers) Army, Navy, Air Corps, and Marines. Because the Air Corps, if you remember, was part of the Army at that time. It was not the Air Force. It was called Army Air Corps. So I studied it, and I found out that the masses that you were in – I may not be able to find my place in that mass. And when I looked at the Marine Corps, I thought, “The units are very small, very efficient. This has to be my way.” And so I tried to join the Marine Corps, but I was turned down. Doing all the farm work, and sawmill work, and so forth, I had injured this right foot and this calf of this leg (points to right leg). It was about half the strength of what it should be. So they turned me down, and I was quite disappointed. So, my Sunday school teacher was a doctor. So I went to visit him, and he said, “Let me check a clinic that might be able to help you.” And so he did, and he lined me up with a clinic in Atlanta that I would attend Friday afternoon, Saturday, and Sunday. It would take a year for to redevelop all these muscles. And I would work on my work scholarship for four days. And that went on for almost a year, and my right leg and foot was as strong as my left one, and I felt that everything was just fine. So in 1943 I volunteered again, and I was accepted into the Marine Corps at that time.

Interviewer: Were you traveling back and forth between LaGrange and Atlanta? [27:22]

Cadenhead: No, I would check in – I had an uncle that lived in Atlanta, and he said, “you could live with us on weekends, and you just come and go to your school – go to your clinic.” So I was able to accomplish that.

Interviewer: Could you talk to me about the general mood in the country? We've spoken about this before. I think when we look back on the war, we think it was a good war, and everyone feels that they're doing a good thing, but was there great fear in those early years?

Cadenhead: Yes. Can I explain some of it? [28:01]

Interviewer: Please.

Cadenhead: I think those of us who were old enough to understand the word fear would soon be able to – there was no television, you understand. All the news you'd have was on the radio. And you could pick up a newspaper someplace. But we were losing cargo vessels up and down our East Coast and in the Gulf of Mexico. 600 of them went down in the bottom of the ocean from German submarines. I still have that story where vacationers stood on the beach in Jacksonville, Florida, and watched this German submarine sink a cargo vessel just off the beach of Florida. So then, on the other side of the globe from us were the Japanese who were going to control the Pacific Ocean. It was going to be fortified by them, and it would be controlled by them. In 1942, January 1, 1942, the Rose Bowl Game was transferred from Pasadena to Duke University for fear that Japanese submarines would shell the stadium from the ocean. So it was transferred. Am I making sense? All of this adds up to what? Fear. [29:48]. Unsafe. Worried conditions. Hat on earth were we going to do with these bottled up people? And then we soon read that... The Third Reich came into being, as you well know, and there were three members: Germany, Italy, and then Japan came on and signed into the Third Reich. And they were controlling the world. Germany was going unmolested, unstoppable through Europe, even into North Africa. And so it looked as if we were doomed. But guess what Hitler asked Japan to do? "I want you to keep America busy until I conquer England." And he would have conquered England had he not invaded Russia. "And after we conquer England, you and I together, we will destroy America." And if you say he was not feeling all that – the tactics were bad enough, but the conversations somehow put icing on what he was trying to say. And so it was that sort of fear. And a teenage boy, what can you do? Well, 11 million of us came together to try to do something. And one other thing that I pointed out to you is that there was a sense of guilt. If you didn't do anything, you felt guilty. Your neighbor: "Hmm (recoils) what is he still here?" Your neighbor looking at you. Students looking at you. "Why can't he find something he can do?" That is not true. They were not feeling that way. That was me reading their minds (points to his head) up. And I went even further. This could even go down to my children who were yet unborn. So I had to do something. And about 11-12 million of us felt the same way. Is this making sense to you?

Interviewer: Oh yeah. Definitely. [32:24]. So at that time, you said you were initially turned down, so you began to build muscle mass. And you met your future wife in here.

Cadenhead: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that?

Cadenhead: On my work scholarship, I would be assigned to certain areas that I was to work in (points to different places around the room). And mechanical drawing was one

of the big things that I had trouble with, but I finally mastered it, and I became good at that, so that's where I would work. They would send me somewhere to make drawings of certain things. And I was going through one day, and I looked up to the office window, and an angel had set right there by the window. It was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my life. A fellow named Will Hurston, from Troup County, was on the same program I was on. And I stopped Will, and I said, "Will, have you seen that girl in the back office?" "Yes, yes. And let me clue you in (shaking hand back and forth). Her father is one of the managers, and look at you." And I looked at me, and I said, "Mm kay." And I blew out the candle. But somehow our paths would cross, and I'd be carrying messages, or doing something, and our paths would cross, and she stopped me one day and she said, "Are you still in school?" And I said, "Yes." "What's your plan?" And I says, "I'm like everyone else. I have no plans. Everything is hanging in the balance of whatever happens to me in the military forces." And we talked and talked, and we became friends. And her parents didn't necessarily like it, and I can understand that. I certainly do. But somehow I found another Roosevelt. I found another inspiration. "I've got to get out of here and get going with my life!" So we became close friends, and we all understood – her family and my family – everybody understood that I was going into the military. I talked to her father about it, and I said, "Let me tell you this." I pulled everything out of my pocket and laid it on his desk. And I said, "Everything I've got in the world is right there. The only other thing I have is that old Ford automobile out there that I use going to and from school. But I'm going to tell you that someday that will not be the end. I'll see that that happens." He said, "Well, you may not make it back here." I said, "Well, that's very true, but I have asked her the same. I posed this question for her, what will you do if I do not make it back? And she said, 'I'll be like the other thousands of young ladies whose husbands also failed to make it back.'" I said, "I'd rather you ask her the question than answer it." So, everything was in limbo, and we were back and forth, and when things were going just right for me physically and in school, we married. And we had six months together before I again volunteered for the Marine Corps.

Interviewer: How old were you, and how old was she when you married? [36:23]

Cadenhead: Eighteen.

Interviewer: So that was about 1942.

Cadenhead: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. And you're still married today.

Cadenhead: Still married today. 72 years! And she's just as beautiful today as she was then.

Interviewer: Well...

Cadenhead: I'm talking too much!

Interviewer: [Laughter]. No, no, no. So, you said you tried again with the Marine Corps, and then you were accepted. OK, and so you transferred to Paris Island?

Cadenhead: Yes. [36:54] I went to the Navy building. You see, the Marine Corps, at that time, was part of the Navy. I went to the Navy building in Atlanta to be sworn in. And there was ten of us from Georgia who were sworn in the same day. We were loaded on a Navy bus and transferred to Paris Island, South Carolina. And from the distance of Atlanta to Paris Island (motions each location with hands), we all became friends, and we were from different parts of the state, and I thought, "This is not going to be that bad. We have a wonderful fellowship here, and it will surpass a lot of the problems I know I'm going to have." But we pulled into Paris Island, the bus door opened, and a big old sergeant crawled into the bus and went all the way to the back without saying a word. And then he said, "Get off of this bus!" And you could have heard him in North Carolina. Well then we had a problem: there was a jam at the door! Nobody could get out! (Knocks hands together). And it was four days later before I realized I was buried. I tell you (laughing), boy that was rough! [38:20]. But, if you're physically fit and you stay mentally alert, you can make it. Otherwise, you can't make it.

Interviewer: But what were you going through in those four days?

Cadenhead: Well, there was no walking. I was running. Somehow they forgot that Man was made to walk, and everywhere you went, you ran at full speed. First thing Monday morning – all this happened on Sunday – and the first day at Paris Island was on Monday. And there was no rest, no sleep, but we thought, "Tomorrow will be a new day, and we'll be a part of the Marine Corps, and things were to be different." Chow was to be at 6:00, and so instead of 6:00, they came in and, "all right, everybody up at four!" Blowing the whistle – they had swagger sticks in those days, and beating on in front of you, "out of here! Out of here!" Well, some of us wound up with the wrong shoes on the wrong foot, and all those things, but we made it out of there. Then we had to go – we had to go get our hair cut, and it was just as slick as that tablecloth. And then there was another thing you had to go into. You'd run through this shallow branch, you would call it, and in that, it would kill all diseases, remove all hair from your body, and it was that strong. And invariably, you were going to fall. (Shakes head). And they want you to fall. And you're going to fall into this water, and you come up spitting and spurting. You don't know whether you can breathe or not – whatever chemical was in it. Then we moved over – they gave us clothes. There was only two sizes – too small and too big. And so we got the uniforms, put the uniforms on – we had to run and pick up a rifle. And so everything we did was in motion. And humanity, caring,

helping was not in the language. But it took me a long, long time to really understand why all this was going on, and so when I did understand it – and they don't want you to reason it out yourself – but they've got to flush out of you. When we join the Marine Corps, we saw the blues, the dress blues, we saw the parades, we saw the marching bands. Oh, what an elite crowd! But that was not the Marine Corps we joined. And so we had to get rid of all that. Wipe out all of that from us, and let them build us from the bottom up (raises hand in a building motion). The first thing you've got to learn to do is not question a command. If they say, “fly,” try to fly. And that's what you had to learn to do. And you could not do that, if you had some of this other stuff (motions inward) and it was compounded all together. But we made it. We made it. The last three weeks on Paris Island – it was four weeks long – the last three weeks we spent on the rifle range. And you had to qualify for 45s, Smiths, submachines, and you had automatics. And your primary rifle was what we called an M-1. And you had to qualify with all of these, and the M-1 was a real major factor. You had to qualify 500 yards (enumerating on hand), 300 yards, 200 yards. Prone position, kneeling position, and standing. And the last day that you were there, all of the qualifications went through. And there was no second chance – no try – you can't try again. And they would frighten the heck out of us, because if you don't qualify, you wound up on guard duty somewhere, or you wound up on mess duty. In those days, every branch of service had its own cooks on mess duty. So who wanted to do that till the war ended, and we didn't know how long? So everybody was trying their best to qualify. [43:26]. To qualify, you had to shoot what we call a 280. Expert then was 290. 287 was a sharpshooter. For sharpshooter, you would get \$10 a month extra for one year. For expert you would get \$15 extra. To heck with all of that. All I wanted to do was qualify. And I had a good day. And I lacked two points shooting expert, but I was glad I just – I qualified. And so at graduation you received your grades, you received the Marine Corps emblem, and you were no longer a recruit: you were a Marine. And then, of course, you were headed up to Camp Lejeune for advanced training.

Interviewer: So, you headed to Camp Lejeune, and how far is that from Paris Island?

Cadenhead: It's in North Carolina. It's not very far. Well, Camp Lejeune is in the upper part of North Carolina.

Interviewer: It's right there on the coast.

Cadenhead: Mmh hmm. Because you'd have beach landings there. And you had a ten-day furlough. Well, the ten days – you'd spend one day getting home, and then you've got to spend day ten getting to Camp Lejeune – so you only had eight days. And by the time I spent time with my parents, and with her parents, there was no time left. And they took me to the train, to catch a train to Camp Lejeune, and I said

goodbye to my beautiful wife, and it dawned on me, you know, I may never see her again. So I had a real – it was all night traveling to Camp Lejeune on the train, and there was no sleep, no rest. And then I blamed myself for it all (points at chest), because I didn't have to do it. I had been refused. “Why were you so anxious to get in?” I didn't have the answers for myself (taps top of head). But anyway, we got to Camp Lejeune, and I met my friend named Roland Byron from Athol, Massachusetts. And we became – he was the best friend I ever had in this world. [46:13] He was just so quiet, so intelligent. I just enjoyed being with him. And we were like brothers until we were both wounded on the same day. And he took me under his leave and guided me, because he had had ROTC in high school, and he knew a lot more about things than I did. And so at Camp Lejeune, of course, you were human beings. You were treated as humans. But you had to understand you were in the killing business. [46:57]. And what you're going to take here is to make you qualified, to make you resistant, and you were going to be able to conquer the enemy rather than having the enemy conquer you. But you were going to have to listen to every word that was given to you, make sure you understand every bit of your training, because when you leave here, the enemy will not be your fellow Marine. The enemy is going to be the enemy itself. So Camp Lejeune was – it was different training. You had hand-to-hand combat. You were wrestling with someone, the enemy. You had a knife; he had a knife. And you had to work, because until you felt his body go limp, and when you felt his body go limp, you knew that you were the winner. I know that's ugly training. I know that's dirty training, but that was necessary. Same thing with bayonet training. Sticking a bayonet in a man – in a human – would not be an easy task. But you had to put all of that to rest and make sure that the other bayonet didn't come into you. So that's the sort of training we had. We had – you had to go out at night on what we called a three-legged-azimuth.¹ You had to accomplish – and you had to accomplish all three azimuths. Was it easy? No. Did people get lost? Yes. They'd get lost, and we'd find some of them the next day. It was not an easy task. But Camp Lejeune made the difference. And they had an understanding with you. If you don't think you qualify for the killing business that was the time to drop out. But no one dropped out.

Interviewer: So they gave you that option.

Cadenhead: They gave you that option. But [clears throat]. I remember one of the captains making a statement. How true it was. He says, “your training is going to be so, so strict. Your training is going to be so filled with everything that it needs, that one day, without thinking, you're going to be able to accomplish your mission. And you ask yourself, why did I select that weapon? All because of your training.”

¹ The most common military method of expressing a direction.

Could we take a break, just a minute? San Diego was a just a temporary place for us. It took us four days to go across the nation, because we went up and down, up and down. It was hard to realize where we were. But we reached San Diego, and they had put a temporary camp up for us on the side of a mountain, and it rained every day and every night, and you had to tie your shoes to your bunk because if you didn't they'd wash away and you'd have to go to the bottom of the hill to get your shoes the next morning. We were only there for four days and they woke us up at four o'clock one morning and said, "Get dressed. Bring all of your equipment." And they trucked us to the harbor. And we went aboard a ship to a, went up to San Francisco and there we joined a convoy that would be headed to the South Pacific.

Interviewer: So you were in the Third Marine Division?

Cadenhead: That's correct. Ninth Marines, which is a regiment.

Interviewer: Can you describe sort of that organization of divisions overall?

Cadenhead: Okay. In World War II the Marine Corps assignment was quite different from what it is today. There were six divisions in the Marine Corps. Everyone one of them was a separate entity. They had the total equipment, every needed-, every need they had was filled for them to fight alone. Each division had a home base somewhere in the Pacific. Now our beginning base was in New Zealand. Uh the-. Two of the divisions had home off of the Hawaiian Islands. It was just that sort of-. And you would-. You go out on a mission, whatever your mission might be, and once you had fulfilled that mission, had secured that mission, you'd come back to your home base. Replacements would come in from the States, and you'd start training again as a unit.

Interviewer: And in that way it's different from the European theater?

Cadenhead: That's correct. Totally different and uh-. I don't-. It worked well because what we had to do was to-. You know, we lost everything in the Pacific Ocean. The Japanese got down to almost on the shores of Australia, and they had to be stopped because President Roosevelt made the statement, if we don't stop 'em, if they take Australia and New Zealand, I don't know how much longer the war will last and what the cost might be.

Interviewer: So your division was based in New Zealand originally?

Cadenhead: Right.

Interviewer: And can you tell me about the mission to retake Guam?

Cadenhead: Okay. We lost Guam as you're aware of that. We lost Guam during the 1940s, early part of 1942. And Guam-. There were three islands in the Marianas: Guam,

Saipan, and Tinian. All were huge islands. And all would become future bases for the B-29s. And so those islands had to be retaken. And so we came from the States to join the Third Division. We would become the Third Battalion and we would land on Guam as part of the Third Division. Uh, can I go through a mechanic with-? This is a routine. The night before you land, you always have services in the galley of the ship. You listen to the chaplains and then after the services are over, you find your friends. You shake hands with 'em and wish 'em well, hope everybody will, will make it through it. And then you go back to your bunk on the ship. And you make sure the equipment is right again, everything is up to par. You've got five bandoliers of ammunition, and you've got eight hand grenades. All of that's got to go in with you. And then you're supposed to sleep. But before you go to sleep, you're supposed to write a letter to home. And the letter has to be written as if you didn't make it. Uh, I know it and I'll explain it. You would write the letter. You couldn't say, "I'm going into combat again and I know I'm not gone make it." That's not it. "I understand that we're headed into combat again, and this one could be kind of difficult, but I want you to know if I don't make it this is what I want you to do with your life." You give the letter to the chaplain. If you make it, he give you your letter back. If you don't make it, he mails that letter so that the family gets it before they get the document from the war. And that, that mother and that father and that wife, whoever the case may be, will simply say, "He knew he was not going to make it. That's the reason he wrote this letter." And it softens the [pounding fist against palm]. It's a terrible thing when you get that telegram: "we regret to announce to you that your husband so-and-so or your son so-and-so was killed in action." Now that's about as cold as it can be. But they get this letter first, and that's a Marine Corps theory that they would survive the blunt a lot better if they had a letter from you. So you write the letter and of course you're supposed to sleep. And you know you're not going to sleep. You gone be back up on deck at five o'clock the next morning. And they tell me we had breakfast. I don't remember what it-. Somebody said we had steak and eggs, but I don't-. I didn't- [laughs]. But anyway, at eight o'clock we are supposed to be in the landing craft. And you go down the cargo net into the landing craft. And the landing craft will circle out there 'til all the crafts are loaded. And then they form the waves and you go in. And there's an awful lot of seasickness because in those small crafts, landing crafts, they are tossed about in the ocean, and you can become seasick very easily. And people say, "Look, boy, he's scared to death. He's 'bout vomiting his head off!" It wasn't fear. He was seasick. And I've corrected so many people for making that statement. I say, "No, I've been where he is. I know what caused it." But then you go in by waves and you land. Bear in mind, this is the first landing with your friends. Ten of us were from Georgia, okay? Uh, one did not hardly make it out of the water. When the ramp came down on the landing craft and the machine guns opened up on the

shore, uh you are there before God and everybody. And one man fell, and then another fella, two men fell before you got-. We had a water tower to our right. We were supposed to make it to that water tower and reassemble. Reassemble is a word because these fellas who dropped out here-. You were in teams. Each team had a part to play. Each member of that team had a part to play. If he was missing, the team was missing. And you wind up sometimes with only two members of your team there. Somebody else has to come together and re-form your unit. And so that's what we were to do at the water tower. When we got to that water tower, it was as expected. So many were missing. And at that point we were to entrap a village called Agana.² We were told it was the most beautiful village in the central Pacific. All old buildings from, from years ago. The streets would be narrow. Some of them would be cobblestone. And they did not want to destroy that. So we entrapped what we thought was Agana, and what we entrapped was a group of Japanese marines, which is the finest fighting unit they had. And that village was infested with them. Well here we are. We're going to try to save the village. But then to our rear was a mountain. And at the base of that mountain they had dug cavities. And in those cavities were mortars and machine guns. So here we were between the two of 'em [the village of Agana and the mountain cavities]. And we were falling. We were falling. And the tanks had not landed so they could not help us. We called for the ships to help us if they could shell to our rear. And they did what they could, but the accuracy not that good. And then we got permission to use flamethrowers on Agana. And we-. They reluctantly gave, let us use flamethrowers. But we burned that city down. The only thing left standing was the front of the Catholic Church. Everything else was rubbish. Then we had to turn then in night quarters before we could get this mountain here quieted. And so we dug in knowing they were gone make a counterattack. And we would try to hold what he had salvaged that day. And certainly help would be on its way tomorrow. So we did. We dug in. We fought off the attack they had that night. We were able to us the-. We had Browning automatic rifles and machine guns. And they were very effective in stopping the enemy. And so dawn came for the second day and we were told that the tanks were on the way. The tanks came in and we used the tanks to help us clean out the mountain cavities. And that made-. That gave us room to maneuver. It gave us room really to reestablish and from then on it was a different battle for the island of Guam.

Interviewer: One where you had the advantage?

Cadenhead: We had the advantage, yeah. Guam was a very large island as I said previously, and we were able to make additional landings, which would come in behind there. They had this heavy artillery that they had recessed into the sides of mountains

² Today, Agana is known as Hagåtña and is the capital of the United States territory of Guam.

periodically throughout the island. And those things were deadly. And so we had to break up into units. Forget about the machine guns. We got to knock out those heavy artillery guns, and so we went to work on that. My platoon was scheduled to take on a heavy artillery that was far to our right. And we encircled it we thought, but then we heard the most unusual whistling. And uh-. What we-. What are we listening? And everybody knew it was a trap so we just fell. The whistling continued and our platoon commander said, "Cadenhead, you and Byron take your two squads. Find that whistling and see what it is." So we did. We pulled ourselves up to the edge of a cliff and looking over that cliff, there was a little Guamanian boy looked like he was six, seven years old, up in the top of one of those coconut palms chopping away the cabbage. That was part of their diet from that tree. And he was whistling, "I don't want to set the world on fire, I just want to start a flame in your heart." You never heard it, but it was very popular in my day. And for 20 seconds I was back home. And we're not going to disturb that young fella because the war is 10,000 miles away from him. But he doesn't know it. It's right at the root of his tree. So we backed away and continued our circle until we found this heavy artillery. And we took mortars and knocked it out. So that was the-. From day one that's the type of battle that we had to fight on the island of Guam. Every inch of it had to be circled and taken, circled and taken. And it was a-. It took 30 days to do it.

Interviewer: And once you'd taken Guam, then did you return-?

Cadenhead: No, let me go further. We were told the night before we landed that we will not return to New Zealand. Guam will become the home base for the Third Marine Division. Admiral Nimitz is going to move his headquarters from New Zealand to Guam.³ Guam would become part of the Navy. We would have nothing to do with it. We would be given a home base and a new base would be built for us. And so we understood that. And that's exactly what happened. The CVs had-. They came in and, "What's your home base?"⁴ It's just a bunch of tents with dirt floors. That's what-. That was your home. And so Guam because our home base. And when we'd leave Guam, go out on a mission, we'd come back to Guam. But it was a-. It was a beautiful island. Oh, it was beautiful. It-. Filled with coconut palms, banana groves, uh pineapple orchards. I remember one afternoon we were moving up to take a banana farm, and the machine guns opened up on us, and the most wonderful odor you can imagine. We all-. Of course you fall to the ground when that happens. We silenced the machine guns, and come to find we were in the pineapples. And those machine gun bullets had just sawed up the pineapples.

³ Admiral Chester Nimitz was an American naval officer who commanded the Pacific Fleet during World War II.

⁴ CV was the hull classification symbol for aircraft carriers in the United States Navy.

And that's what we were, what we were experiencing. But Guam became our home base, and it was a-. It was a beautiful island.

Interviewer: Well let's proceed to the next invasion. Iwo Jima.

Cadenhead: Okay.

Interviewer: Can you talk to me about, you know, the lead up to that and the details, in the same way that you talked about Guam?

Cadenhead: Well, first of all you had replacements coming in from the States to replace all the people. Three of my friends from Georgia were buried on Guam. We had to reorganize and then go back through training again. But the training this time was so different in that it was such a man-to-man, hand-to-hand uh. And grenades became-. You would be graded so many feet, yards from you there would be a circle. And you had to time your grenades if you wanted them to explode when they hit the earth or if you wanted them to explode a yard above the earth. You had to count when you released the spoon. Uh and [laughs] you did count a little fast sometimes. But all of that was new training for us. And we had these new people in, coming in from the States. And they have a thousand questions and rightly so. But we enjoyed, enjoyed 'em. We went back through training again. This time to be what we thought would be some island, where it would be fighting the Japanese themselves. And so that-. The message came down one day, "Take all your personal items and return 'em home. There'll be a tent set up above your company. Take 'em up there. They'll handle 'em for you and return everything home." Well Byron and I did that. We gathered everything that was personal: photographs, anything. And we returned, sent 'em there, and returned 'em home. And as we came out of the tent, we saw a jeep coming up the trail, was not a road. And on the front of that jeep was a piece of plywood, had five stars on it. And so Byron and I stopped. This was something important. And it was Admiral Nimitz. And he came up. He just stopped his jeep momentarily and said, "Good luck, Marines." And he drove on off. Only time I ever saw him, but it was there. And so we went back and the next day, sure enough, "Pack your sea bag and leave it. Somebody will take care of it for you. And trucks are going to pick you up. And this is what you're to carry with you." So on. And that happened. We went aboard trucks and then went aboard ships from Guam. And there's another thousand questions: "Where we going this time?" Nobody knew. Every sailor wanted to ask you the same question: "Do you know where you're going?" "No." But we were at sea two days. And we were told what our mission would be. It would be a small island called Iwo Jima. And up on the top deck there's a replica of it, and three hours each day we had to go up and study that. Each one of us had a miniature map of the island. It was given to us. And then we would-. They would show us where we would land on the island, what our first mission would be, where you're

to be at the end of the first hour, the end of the first day. It was to be a three day mission. So we went through that schooling. And then they came back and said, "There's going to be three divisions: third, fourth, and fifth. The fourth and fifth will land on the 19th. You will be held in reserves." So that was okay with us. So when the 19th came, and the night before we went through the same ordeal that we went through before we landed at Guam – that was a procedure that was followed. And then before the 19th was over, the middle of the afternoon they made the announcement on the ship that the ninth marines will land tomorrow morning at eight o'clock. Well it must've been a rough day, and it turns out it was a rough day. And so the next morning we went aboard, went aboard the landing craft that we thought was-. The ship was so new, so different. The landing craft would be pulled up to the deck, you'd get on it. The landing craft would be let. No cargo nets. Well it didn't work. So over the cargo nets we had to go. The sea was extremely rough. And the cargo-. That landing craft would come way up, and the cargo net would drop between. And the landing craft, about that time it would slam against the ship. And anybody caught in there, it was dangerous for them. Two or three men were lost at that particular time for that. And so, when we all got, was landed, we went in. We were supposed to land on Red Beach, but the landing areas on that island were so limited until the Japanese knew it. They knew what our problems would be. And they were so accurate with their weaponry until they just kept that beach pounded, pounded, pounded. Going in the next morning at eight o'clock, uh landing craft would blow up. A shell would hit it. Now this is going to be rough. And what we were supposed to do, we were to land and we were supposed to head to the first airstrip, the first of the three. And we would land-. Before we got to the airstrip, we were to stop at a so-called wall, which was nothing but volcano ash. And when we reached it, we didn't have near all of our people. The first man to fall, he didn't make it in. He was my platoon commander. I thought the world of him. He was a young fellow from, from the state of Virginia. And the night before he said, "Now I want everybody to give me a note of somebody at your home that I can contact. Now you all gone make it fine, but I want to be able to contact them for you." Not one dumb skull thought about getting his home phone, home address. And he was the first man to fall. It was-. [Pause] If you've ever seen a man cut in two, it's a horrible sight. If you've ever seen a body laying one place and a head laying somewhere else, it too is a horrible sight. And when you had one of your friends to fall and you wanted to stop and help 'em, but you couldn't. You couldn't stop for anything. You had to keep moving. And I know that some of those men that, maybe we could've helped, but we couldn't. We were so thin that night because of the losses had been so great. Sometime during the night I began to swell up around my stomach. And I thought, "My god, I been hit. How am I gone get help this time of night?" And I reached down and I still had my lifebelt on. We had these waistbands, had a little

cylinders in here. All you do, you mash it and it would inflate it for you. We were supposed to drop 'em on the beach. That was the first time I'd thought about it. But somehow I had ruptured those cylinders, and that-. And I wonder how many people looked at that lifebelt up there and said, "Why did that nut wear that lifebelt [laughs] all the way up here?" But I did. But there's no way to explain the drudgery that was adjusting. You come to the point that you understand and you begin to believe nobody's going to get off this island alive. Why is this real estate so important? And the man-. Well just to give you an example, 6,800 Marines died on that island. Another 22,000 were wounded. Now you put the math to it, and you'll find out in the 33 days it took to quiet that island. With those losses you were losing a Marine, a thousand Marines a day. And so who could consider himself to be fortunate enough to live through it. You just-. You just gave up the thought. I'm going to do all I can before my day comes.

Interviewer: And you were one of those Marines to sustain injuries?

Cadenhead: Yeah.

Interviewer: Correct, and what were those injuries?

Cadenhead: This right here [points to left ear]. I had two injuries. I was wounded in this arm [left] at the second airstrip. A shrapnel. And the corpsman said, "You know how short we are. I can send you back but if I can bandage that arm for you – and I'll look after it every day – can you stay on?" And I said, "I'll do my best." So I did. That was the second airstrip [rubbing left bicep]. We finished the second airstrip. Moving toward the third airstrip, which was under construction, and we thought everything behind us was clean. But the machine guns opened up on us. There we were out in front being fired on by two fronts. And my platoon commander said, "Cadenhead, you and Byron work yourself back. And if that is a machine gun, silence it. If it's coming from a cave, blow it." So we did. We worked our way back. I had a Browning automatic rifle, and Byron said, "Al, fire in that cave as long as you can. Let me throw this charger in." So we got pretty close to the cave. I was firing with all my ability. He threw in the compositions. C-2 was what we were using. It was called a satchel charge. It looked almost like an old bookcase you wear on your shoulder. And you use that strap for velocity. And we had been taught to either put 'em down at low altitude or high. If you point 'em midway, they'll catch and bring 'em back out. Well Byron was doing all he could. The fire was so heavy until he threw it in, and it hit a rubber band. Right back out it came. We couldn't get out of the way. When the corpsman was working with me and I asked him about Byron, he said, "Byron's dead." I was stunned, yes, because he was the best friend I had. And the corpsman said, "I'm going to pack your head in oil, and if I can pack it in oil, and I can change the oil daily, can you stay in here for a while?" And I knew that we didn't have a third of the men that we needed.

And I said, "Yes, I'll try it." So we did. And I fought the rest of the battle knowing that Byron was gone. But that happened not to be true. But we fought, and we fought, and we fought. We took every foot of the island. Of the ten of us from Georgia, there was only two of us remaining. The others are buried on Iwo, three on Guam. And so it's a-. It was a battle that just utterly destroyed you, mentally, physically you were defeated because you were so tired and so weary. And fatigue had really taken its toll. And I had my own little pray service every night. I call it my silent prayer. And that night I would pray for every one of buddies who I saw fall that day 'cause I knew their parents would soon be getting letters. And life must start anew regardless of who you are. There were some plans for you, and those plans can no longer there. Something else has to work. And I would close my prayer with Ila, my wife's name Ila. "If tomorrow be my day, I pray that the Lord will be with her. Help her to turn life around, turn a page and start over again." So we-. There were several things that happened that I remember. That the Japanese were fortunate enough to slip through the Fifth Division, work their way all the way back to the beach that we landed on. And the Air Force had brought in P-51 pilots. The P-51 was a new plane. They had brought in fif-, pilots for these planes. They were to accompany the [B]-29s from the islands of Guam, Tinian, to Japan, protect 'em and then drop off and let them go back to their base. Well, the Marine Corps tried to get those men [P-51 pilots] to sleep in foxholes. They didn't want that. No. "Can't you put us up a tent?" So the CBs put up tents for them. And the Japanese came in and they slit the tent. They could hear talking. They slit a tent, insert a grenade. They killed 21 pilots that night in those tents. Well that changed the schedule some. And then from then on every night the battalion would select two people. And you had to work your way into enemy territory, call in every ten minutes to somebody in your base, and tell them if you recognize or hear the movement of the enemy. The Japanese were loud warriors. They had so much tin on 'em until they rattled a lot. And so we would call in. And I called in one time. This fella said, "Who is this?" I says, "Cadenhead." "Listen to this." And I listened. This-. You don't know anything about this either. It's before your day. But Singin' Sam, who advertised for the Coca-Cola, was singing.⁵ And lord I just said, "Here I am 10,000 miles from home. Never make it home. And I'm listening to my favorite singers." And he said, "Don't mention this." So the next day I knew who it was. His name was Ossosky [spelling]. He was head of the platoon, machine gun platoon. And I said, "Lieutenant, how on earth did you do that last night?" Now before daylight you had to leave the enemy, come across to your land and if you got caught in either place you could be wiped out. But he said, "I was contacting the ship that was going to help us today and this came in, and I had to listen to some of it." He said,

⁵ Singin' Sam also known as Harry Frankel was a minstrel performer and vaudevillian who sang and performed jingles for advertisements during the early days of radio.

“Don’t ever mention this.” I said, “No, that’s our secret, fella. Nobody’ll ever know it [laughs].”

Interviewer: So when you had completed the mission on Iwo Jima, where did you go from there? Was it back to Guam?

Cadenhead: Back to Guam.

Interviewer: Okay, so did that complete these, this active service for you?

Cadenhead: Yes, we didn’t know it at that time. We went back to Guam. I had some photographs I wanted to bring to you that the chaplain had given to me. The morale, can you imagine how low it was? Everybody was on a crutch or had a bandage [laughs] of some kind. And everybody had to go to the hospital, which was just a halfway tent, to have your wounds treated and so on. And I was in there one morning and the corpsman said, “Cadenhead, Byron is here.” I said, “No, Byron’s dead.” “No, no, no. I talked to him this morning. He wanted to know if I’d heard from you.” And I told the doctor about it, and he said, “Well come on. Let me take you to him.” So he took me to Byron. He was bandaged up. You couldn’t even- He had two eyes. That’s all you could see. And it was still Byron. And he said, “I can’t wait. They’re going to put instruments in my head, and I’m coming back to your unit.” And I said, “Byron, you’ve made my day, buddy. You’ve made my day.” But it didn’t work. It didn’t work. I talked to his wife. We corresponded for a long time after the war, but then schooling, families pushed everything to the backburner and we failed to communicate for a few years. Four years ago when the internet came on, you know, you can find out anything, and I was trying to find his home address, home phone number, something where I could make contact. But my daughter was able to secure that. I called his home and I talked to his wife. And I- She said, “Byron’s been dead ten years.” I said, “Did he ever get any relief from his head?” She said, “He was in misery until he died.” That’s- He was such a brilliant young man until that was just sad, just sad. But we re-formed again. People came in from the States to beef up our units again, put us back to maximum strength. I was sitting in my tent one night, and who should come walking in my tent but my DI [drill instructor] from Parris Island. I looked up. I said, “Fella, how many times have I said if I ever got the opportunity, I was going to shoot you [laughs]?” He said, “You wouldn’t do that.” I said, “Boy there were times when I’d just be happy to do it.” But uh, we had-. We became friends and he helped me through this inhumanity that was going on at Parris Island. I better understood what I had endured. But it was-. We became friends and he came in my tent one night grinning like the cat that caught the canary. And I said, “Why are you so smile, full of smiles?” He said, “I’m going back to the States.” I said, “You just got here.” He said, “Yeah, but I’m going

back to OCS.”⁶ He said, “Give me your wife’s letter and address, and let me write her. I can tell her some things about you that you can’t. The censors would cut out everything you write.” So I did and he wrote her a nice letter, and it’s still in the file at home. Uh just-. But that’s-. We had been out on a training mission one afternoon. This was in August. We went back to Guam on April. By the way, to get back to Guam, we had to go out landing crafts, five miles out to sea, drop over a cargo net-. I know I’m boring these people here just to death [film crew]...

Interviewer: You’re good.

Cadenhead: And you grab onto that cargo net and they swing you up on deck. In midair we had an air raid. And everybody just dropped to the deck of the ship. You try to find something to get beneath. And one of these huge hoods for moving the air, I crawled under it. There was a young man under there from Headquarters Company. He said, “Cadenhead, did you hear about the president?” I said, “No.” He said, “He died this morning.” That was my friend Roosevelt. [Pause] But we came in late one afternoon from training. Tired, yes. I was tired. I took a shower and I hit the sack. The boy in my tent come running in to the tent. “Cadenhead! Cadenhead! Get up! Get up! Come to the radio shack.” There was a tent where the radio was. I said, “For what?” “We’ve got a bomb that’s stronger than a truckload of TNT.” That was his way of comparing. And I said, “Are you already in a raisin, Jack?” I knew where the barrel was back here, but he had gotten in a little bit earlier. Anyway, I got up, put a towel around me, went to the tent. And in front of the tent, the captain’s tent, we had coconut logs. That was our seats for conferences. And we sat there, and I couldn’t make a thing out of what was going on in the radio tent. The captain came to the door. He said, “Boys, it may be over. We just learned a new word: atomic bombs. We have dropped two and the Japanese are trying to reach us through a third nation. So it could be over.” You know what my first remark was? “I’m going home.”

Interviewer: So when did you return home?

Cadenhead: I returned home uh-. The following week the Third Division was dissolved. We had to take exams again. That’s the Marine Corps way. Some went to Japan for guard duty. Some went to Japan. I mean to China for service. I was transferred to the engineers. And I had a picture to give you, to show you what that was, but it was a pleasant time. I went to work at eight o’clock and got off at five. I had my own tent, had a wood floor, had a lightbulb up here [gestures toward ceiling]. Life couldn’t be any better. But that was two months. And then-. That was in August. November the company commander came in and said, “One week from today, Cadenhead, you’ll be on a boat going home.” And I was. I was.

⁶ Officer Candidate School.

Interviewer: How did it feel to return and what did you do with your family once you got back?

Cadenhead: I was hoping you wouldn't ask that [laughs]. No. On the-. We went aboard ship. There was 11,000 servicemen from all over the Pacific on that ship. And we uh-. The captain put a huge map down in the mess hall. And every day he would tell us where the ship was. And we began to think he'd made a wrong turn somewhere. We were not getting there fast enough. And we were riding him hard. Pull the throttle back and let this thing go. But we finally made it to San Francisco. They pulled us into the harbor. I have to tell you this. I hadn't-. For over two years I'd seen nothing but Marine green in the Pacific. The most beautiful colors I'd ever seen in my life. We went under the Golden Gate. It was hanging with flags and banners and colors. And the banks of the harbor were just massed with people and the most beautiful colors you've ever seen in your life. We had a short service there for us. Or they did. And they loaded us on ferries and took us over to Treasure Island. And they told us, "There are three outside phones on Treasure Island. You can only talk three minutes because there's about several thousand of you wanting to use those phones." So sure enough the line was a mile long by the time we got there. I finally got the phone and I called home. And Ila answered the phone, and I said, "I can only three minutes. I can't tell you anything except I'm in the States. I will be discharged at Camp Lejeune and I'll have to call you from there." But I heard a voice that I hadn't heard in over two years. And so it was a-. I was happy. We left there of course and went to Camp Lejeune by train. When we was going across everybody stopped for us, but this time every-, we were stopping for everybody. We got to Camp Lejeune and I was not happy because they wanted me to go to the hospital. "I just can't go to the hospital. I've got to go home." So it took about ten days for them to finally get through to know I wanted to go home. And so the doctor came to me and said, "Cadenhead, I can send you home if you'll sign this piece of paper. We are not responsible for any of your problems." I said, "Hand it here." So I signed it. It was a mistake. But the next morning-. I called Ila that night and I said, "Tomorrow morning..." Sunday morning again now. "I'm gone be on a Greyhound bus heading for LaGrange. She says, "Well Mama and Daddy are going to take me to Atlanta to meet you and then we gone pick you up, and we're gone come home in the car rather than you riding the bus." Then I had another problem. I hadn't seen her in over two years. What if I didn't recognize her? That would be grounds for divorce, wouldn't it? There would be problems. All to the camp, to Atlanta, I worried about that. When the bus pulled in I saw this girl propped against the building. No way I could've missed that. So they loaded me in the car and we rode back to LaGrange. I had to make certain visits. I had to-. Had to be certain reunions. Her father had planned to take us all deep sea fishing when I returned home. Going aboard ship, going to sea, was the furthest from my desires. But

anyway, to fulfill his dream, I did. And we went deep sea fishing for two days, got sunburned and all of that. But anyway, I came home after all the reunions. I opened the door to my real world and I saw a tremendous mountain. I had no money. My education and my life had been put on a shelf. I had to reclaim all of that. And when I looked at that mountain, it'd be five years before I can support a wife. It'd be five years before we can start a family. It just isn't fair. Everybody I knew was way ahead of me. But I had to-. I don't know. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy and bless her heart, she went through an awful lot. Before I discharged the Marine Corps wrote her a letter and told her that I had trained in violence, that I had participated in violence, and I may have problems re-acclimating myself to civilian life. And they wanted to recommend three institutions that could help me: the home, the church, and the community. Well I was getting back into school, going to school. Things were not right at all. Nothing I was touching was developing into what I wanted it to be. So I was studying one night, and she came in and she said, "I wish we could become more involved in the church." And that set me off. And my response was, "If the church can add one more hour to my day, I'll gladly do it." But she left the room crying, and I knew I had hurt her. And the next morning I asked her, I said, "What do you want me to do about the church?" She said, "Let's talk to the pastor." So we did. He said, "In three days I'll come back to you." And he did. "I have a job for you." A job? I didn't need a job. I had more than I could do. He says, "I want you two to teach twelve year old girls." That blew me away. And I said, well I'll tell you what, I'll go for the ride. I'll let Ila do it. But I got involved and I found myself. I learned I loved to research. I love to research the matters, topics. I rea-. I just enjoyed drawing conclusions for the class and so on. And I became involved in that. And my mountain became a hill.

Interviewer: And you eventually finished engineering school?

Cadenhead: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you're the owner of-. Was it over ten patents?

Cadenhead: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that correct? And so how long did you work as an engineer?

Cadenhead: Uh, let's see. 52 years.

Interviewer: So you didn't retire too long ago?

Cadenhead: 2004.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Cadenhead: I was 80 years old when I retired [looking to his left].

Interviewer: He's moving the mic a bit.

Cadenhead: I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No you're good. You're good.

Cadenhead: All right. But it has been a wonderful life. It really has. Everything-. I did not make it through Civil Engineering. The company that I started with came to me and said, "We started your education. We want to finish it. But we cannot-. We want to get you to change from Civil Engineering." I said, "What do you want me to change to?" He said, "We'd like you to change to structural and mechanical engineering." And I says, "Oka-. Can I think about for a couple of days?" And he said, "Sure." And they said, "When you finish, you belong to us." Well, when I told Ila about it she said, "That's wonderful. We won't-. You know you got a job. When you finish you won't have to look for a job. You won't move anywhere and start over. You're here." So I agreed and it wasn't a mistake. It was not a mistake.

Interviewer: Well, tell me about your children.

Cadenhead: Okay. Al [Roy Alton Cadenhead, Jr.] was born first. Instead of five years, we were able to bring him in in a little over three years. Uh, Al was a, just a extra intelligent child and just did work, did wonderful in school. He was a good athlete. He played football, basketball, and baseball. He was just everything that you could ask for. But just as-. Never a minute's problem. So after two and a half years we decided we'd bring in a second child, and he was born dead. And I-. We almost lost Ila. And I said, "No, that's it. We're not gone take this chance anymore." But anyway, we did because Ila wanted a little girl so bad. But I wrote an epitaph for the young fellow that was born dead. And I told him, "I know that you would've brought so much to the equation in our family. You would've brought joy. You would've been so wonderful in this family, and you would've added so much. We're just great-, sorry that we did not make it together. And that's on record. I felt like I needed to do that.

Interviewer: What's your daughter's name?

Cadenhead: Susan. Susan came four years after all this because I was stubborn. I was-. I was not gonna give in. But she came in and lord, I couldn't ask for anybody. She, great musician. As I told you she received her PhD in-. Just-. And she's an Auburn graduate from [unintelligible] lord, she believes Christ walked there somewhere in Auburn. But I couldn't ask for better children. Never could I ask for them.

Interviewer: Well, Mr. Cadenhead, so you talk regularly about your experiences during the war and you're sharing your story here. So why is it important to you to preserve this history, to share your story?

Cadenhead: Because there's not many of us left. World War II veterans are falling very fast, and when we're gone the story will stop, right? It'll fall from history. And we will not be heard of anymore. And that's why I talk to students every year. I have students visiting my home, and I help them. One student I'm working with right now from the University of Georgia-. By the way I did get a scholarship from the University of Georgia, and I didn't take it. And I worked two years ago, I worked with a student from the University of Georgia. His thesis was on the war in the Pacific. And they sent me the book, a book that they made up of his thesis. And the commandant of the Marine Corps in Washington invited Ila and I to come to his office, and we did. And I have that picture I was gone show you. But I sent him a copy of that book because I felt like it would be meaningful for him. And I got a nice letter back from him that he appreciated that thought. "This will go in my collection," he says. But I'm busy. I told you I have two appointments on Monday. I enjoy going to history classes, have an open table with students, listen to them and talk to them. And I feel like that somehow, some way, we will be remembered. Now I have written 150-page handwritten memoir to my great-grandchildren. Because I got a letter from the Marine Corps wanting me to do just what you did. They wanted me to discuss training, how it fit combat, and all of that. And I agreed to do it and I did. But my wife, Ila, says, "Listen, if you're going that way, I want you to start from the beginning and I want you to go to today. I want our great-grandchildren to get to know you. And this is the way they'll do it." And so I'm winding that up right now, that 150 pages of it, just so that somebody mentions a name, they'll get to know him. But that's not a good answer to your question, I know that.

Interviewer: It is. No, it is. That's what I'm interested in, sort of finding out what motivates you to speak so regularly and so often. So I appreciate it, Mr. Cadenhead. And we will stop there.

Cadenhead: And I apologize- [points to crew].