

World War II Living History
Mr. Matthew Rozell
Fall, 2003

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Interviewee:
Joseph P. Fiore
22nd Marine Division

Table of Contents

I. Interview release form	
II. Statement of Purpose	3
III. Biography of Joseph P. Fiore	4
IV. “Island Hopping: A look at American Marines hopping from the Marshall Islands, to the Eniwetok Atoll, to Saipan in the Pacific Theatre of World War II” (Historical Contextualization)	6
V. Evaluating the Source: The Effectiveness of Oral History (Historical Analysis)	11
VI. Bibliography	15
VII. Interview Transcription	16
VIII. Personal Artifacts	29

Statement of Purpose

Oral history gives us the ability to hear and learn from the experiences of those who have lived in the past. We can all learn something from those who have already experienced it and this project enables us to do so. The purpose of this project is to learn what life was like for an American soldier “island hopping” through the unknown Pacific in World War II, specifically the American Marines. The feelings and ideas of those who lived during this eventful period greatly contributes to the understanding of the horrific events that took place and enhances our knowledge on the subject, so hopefully we will never live through such a war again.

Biography

Joseph P. Fiore was born to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Fiore on December 31, 1922 in Glens Falls, New York. He attended school, but with the event of Pearl Harbor, he was quick to enlist in the Marines in December of 1942. Before he entered the war he worked in a packing company in Glens Falls. He was also married before he went into the service. He and his wife had a baby July 27, 1942; he enlisted after his daughter was born. Mr. Fiore participated in the Pacific Theatre, both central and southwest. He contributed to the campaigns in the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Engebi Island in Eniwetok Atoll, and also Guadalcanal. While in the war effort, Mr. Fiore received the nickname “Pineapple Kid” from his buddies. This name derived from Fiore’s swift grenade handling throughout the battles. In the 2 days and nights on Engebi, he used more than 70 hand grenades and other explosives to rid the islands of sniper nests, As the Post Star states on May 1, 1944. The paper recalls that he did not simply throw the grenades, but “run up, pull the pin, and merely place the grenade in the opening of an emplacement or an underground sniper nest. Then he would step back and wait for the explosion.” Mr. Fiore escaped death more than one time, as did most soldiers. While in battle, he came across a Japanese soldier in one of the holes, he threw a grenade into it. The wide awakened Japanese man threw the grenade back and Mr. Fiore ducked and rolled into a nearby hole. Another grenade of his came soaring back. As he threw the third, another Marine standing above the hole fired and hit the Japanese man. Three days after Engebi, Mr. Fiore landed with the first wave on Parry Island, Eniwetok Atoll. He was hit with shrapnel in the leg and received first aid treatment from Navy corpsmen and taken to a hospital ship. For that he received a Purple Heart. On December 10, 1944, Mr. Fiore

would finally arrive in San Francisco, home at last. After the war, he would become the coordinator of the generous holiday program “Toys for Tots,” in which he helps kids in need on holidays.

Historical Contextualization:
“Island Hopping: A look at the U.S. Marines from the Marshall Islands, to the Eniwetok Atoll, to Saipan in the Pacific Theatre of World War II”

The Pacific Theatre proved itself to be much different than any other Theatre of the war. Not only were the men, who were battling in the Pacific battling the ferocious Japanese, they were also in a fight against heat, disease and different weather patterns. The tiring, inconsistent tactic of “island hopping” became fiercer the closer the island got to the Japanese mainland. The many small islands surrounding the Japanese homeland provided many air bases for American units to deliver devastating blows on the Japanese economy and bases. These island locations were strategically important in what the outcome of the war would be. After capturing the Marshall Islands and heading into the Eniwetok Atoll and the Mariana Islands, mainly Saipan, Lieutenant General Holland Smith said “Now we are up against the mountains and caves where the Japs can really dig in. A week from now there will be a lot of dead Marines.” Indeed he was right, for the battles that lay ahead were ready to rage in a viciously.

Beginning on January 1, 1944, the Marshall Islands began continuously being bombed by Army planes from targets such as Tarawa and Makin. The mission of the Marshall Islands went successfully overall. With the Marshall Islands secured, the next assault would be made in the Eniwetok Atoll. The Eniwetok Atoll consisted of thirty small islands. The three largest were Engebi, Eniwetok, and Perry which were all intensely defended. Aerial photograph had proven that the Japanese were slowly building these islands into defensive

positions. The assault of Eniwetok Atoll was going to be mainly a Marine invasion. It was an amphibious assault led by Admiral Hill, who was Commander of the Eniwetok Expeditionary Forces. The 22nd Marine Regiment was the main unit involved with Engebi Island and Perry Island. Engebi, the first island assaulted, began being fired at on February 17, 1944 and continued through the following day. By February the 18th, Engebi Island was declared secured. Although the island was heavily defended, the lack of preparation for the attack put the Japanese down, and quick. For the American casualties on Engebi they reached an overall of 251. 78 were killed, 166 wounded, and 7 missing in action. For the Japanese, 934 would die and 16 would be taken as prisoners of war. On February 22, 1944 the assault of Perry Island would begin. Like Engebi it too had been bombarded by the Navy before the Marines had arrived. The Marines arriving on the island found less resistance than they had expected and secured the island in the same day. American would suffer 57 loses, 261 wounded and 16 missing in action. The Japanese would bury 1,027 of their men on the island. By the evening of February 23, 1944, the Eniwetok Atoll was secured by American forces.

The next move for the American troops was the Marianas, which also consisted of three main islands which were Guam, Saipan and Tinian. Every ship would be gathered for the assault on Saipan as the opposing naval forces were preoccupied fighting in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. The assault began on June 15, 1944, just a week after the Allied invasion of Europe. Like in Eniwetok, there was heavy preliminary bombing on the island, seven American

battleships and eleven destroyers shelled Saipan for two days before the landings, on the second day they were accompanied by eight more battleships six heavy cruisers and six light cruisers. Still the naval guns could not penetrate the mountainous terrain in which the Japanese had nestled themselves into. An armada of 535 ships carrying 127,570 U.S. Military personnel would land on the island for the assault on Saipan. This battle consisted of two thirds Marines; they were holding the brunt of the battle. This location was strategically important to both sides. For the United States it provided key bases to launch it's newly formed B-29 Bomber, which could travel a normal range of 2,850 miles, Saipan is conveniently located 1,300 miles from Tokyo , making this a crucial position. To Japan, Saipan is that of what Pearl Harbor was to the United States. Both countries were in dire need of this tiny island, a brutal battle was surely to be waged. A new objective had been set for Saipan called "unconditional surrender." This meant that the Japanese ability and will to resist had to be shattered by blockading, bombing etc. Also the next step was to invade the Japanese mainland and destroy their economy, something that no one was looking forward to after seeing the crescendo in brutality as the miles grew smaller from Japan. Not only were the Marines battling on this island, but the brainwashed civilians were fighting a battle of their own. They were performing ritual suicides, otherwise known as 'hari kari" in fear of American capture. They had been told that if they were captured they would be tortured by the Americans, many jumped from a cliff called Marpi Point. All in all it took the American troops on the island three weeks to secure the island and on July 9th

the fighting on Saipan ceased. The Battle was ferocious and many were lost. The losses doubled that of the large amount lost on Guadalcanal. Out of the 71,034 troops that had landed on Saipan, 3,100 were killed, 13,100 were wounded or M.I.A. Out of the 31,629 Japanese on the island, approximately 29,500 died in combat. Almost no prisoners were taken, showing that the Japanese would much rather have committed suicide rather than be captured, just as they were telling their people. The rugged, brutal fighting on the island brought nicknames to some of its terrain such as Death Valley, Purple Heart Ridge, and Hari-Kari Gulch, proving the bitter fighting that had taken place.

After the capture of Saipan, fighting in the Pacific occurred on various other islands as the “island hopping” campaign proceeded on for thirteen more months. The goal of this campaign was to establish key bases to either make an invasion of the Japanese home land or a staging ground from which they would heavily bomb the Japanese Empire, like the tactic of “unconditional surrender” states. On August 6, 1945, an American Super fortress flying from the secured island base of Tinian would do just that. The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, influencing Japanese capitulation. On August 9, 1945 the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, which would formally end the war with the signing of the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945. The actual surrender on the island of Saipan would not occur until December 1, 1945, until the concluding 46 Japanese in a guerilla unit surrendered their samurais. The battle of Saipan was a terrible fight not only for the combatants, but for the civilian population as well. In Saipan in December of 1949, a recorded population on

Saipan was 6,225 people. In 1937, a recorded 23,658 civilians thrived on the island of Saipan. This is too large of a gap for a death toll in the length of twelve years, it's just too much. "The bullet that killed us today goes into the death of centuries and generations, killing life which didn't come to exist yet," a survivor of the war, Grigori Baklanov states.

The "island hopping" campaign in the Pacific was a good strategy in the overall effort of the war. Many lives were lost as the battles tended to be savage, strategic and important to both sides. Americans fought alone in these battles against the Japanese making the American losses astronomical. The losses of Japanese and civilians exceed that of the Americans because it was on their territory that the battles occurred. It was their homes that were destroyed, their families separated, their backyards blown up and their eyes that witnessed the horrible accounts of war. We as American people have been gifted with the lack experience in homeland battles. War is not a thing to play around with, and causes far more cons than pros. So what is the purpose? We may never know. William Clark once said "Why? Why must men be such fools? No war can possibly be won when so much human suffering must be endured."

Historical Analysis: Evaluating the Source: The Effectiveness of Oral History

“When a person dies, it’s like a library burning down,” states oral historian Don Ritchie. The ability to learn from the experiences of other people is one of the greatest qualities that a human has. Oral history is a great form of learning. It really fills in the small gaps that the newspapers never printed, the History Channel never aired and the media never told you. With oral history, you get the facts, the feelings and the small details that only a veteran could give you. It is very important to recognize these people, for they have already lived through an awful thing such as war, and by talking about it, history will be preserved and people will be educated about the atrocities committed in war and perhaps we can avoid such an awful experience for the future generations.

By hearing and visualizing the stories that men and women of the “greatest generation” had undergone, it underscores the historical importance and puts into perspective what it might have been like living in the shoes of these people and seeing through the eyes of these people, in a time of war and terror that I would never want to experience myself.

The interview is a collection of facts telling a historically accurate experience, but with this bit of history we also get the emotions, expressions and an overall feeling of what it may have been like for the person who had experienced it. We need to be given first hand knowledge by a person who has witnessed war, nothing can compare to being educated on a topic such as war from a person who had experienced every aspect of war.

My personal interview was with Joseph Fiore, A World War II Marine who fought in the Pacific Theatre. I met him at a diner while he and about five of his buddies

were discussing World War II type issues. I asked them if they were veterans of WWII and they all replied “yes.” When asking if any of them would like to do an interview, the four quickly said no and pointed to Mr. Fiore, who pulled out his wallet and handed me an article that the *Post-Star* had printed in May of 1944 (see Appendix) . The article had a picture of Mr. Fiore, labeling him the “Pineapple Kid” for his excessive hand grenade use. Later in his interview Mr. Fiore would tell me that it “was written by a correspondent and that it went all the way through channels to Pentagon” before being published in the *Post-Star*”. The interview introduces many facts that I have learned about and filled in many of the confusing gaps that were left in my mind. His story is very factual and can almost be followed on a World War II timeline. It is necessary to evaluate the interview and make sure that factual evidence is used. Looking at the interview through and objective point of view is the best way to check the value of a historical source. Looking at the interview from this point of view, as a skeptic, and being completely content with it is the main goal.

All of the locations that Mr. Fiore had seen combat on had instantly jumped into my head the moment he mentioned them. He describes the Marshall Islands briefly, which was his first assignment. He then tells about his trip to Eniwetok Atoll and then on to the Marianas, mainly the large island of Saipan. Everything that he had mentioned related to what I had learned. He was with the 22nd Marine regiment who made the landings on Engebi Island, Perry Island, and Saipan, as historical context proves. He mentions the fact that they were “island hopping and every time we took an island, it usually had a runway for planes, our fighter planes.” The main goal of the “island hopping” campaign was to secure bases to launch an attack on the Japanese mainland,

which Fiore also describes. He briefly describes the fighting on the island of Engebi Island and Perry Island in the Eniwetok Atoll. He tells about the sixteen inch shell holes dug into the ground from the Navy's preliminary bombings and how he "got in the big holes, it was in the Coral Reef, and dug into the sides and waited until daylight." Four days after being on Engebi, Fiore went to Perry Island where he received his first Purple Heart and where the war correspondent wrote the article on him. He begins talking about his friend who had saved his life and starts to sound a little emotional, which is explainable. The first time he was injured he was filled with shrapnel on the side and back of him. He ended up on the *USS Solace* and on his way back to Pearl Harbor; it was then that he lost his outfit. The worst of Fiore's battles were yet to come, after being discharged from the hospital he entered another battalion and became a flamethrower. "At that point in time there was the next invasion starting, they were going to Saipan..."

Fiore states about his next mission. He tells about him fighting on a mountain and receiving his second injury on July 2nd and reporting back to the hospital with wounds. It was at this time that Fiore says the Marpi Point incidents (mass civilian suicides) were occurring. When talking about his two Purple Hearts and the reaction of his parents to him being injured, he gets really emotional and begins to weep when telling of the feelings of his mother when he received his second Purple Heart. I felt like I wanted to cry with him, it made me realize how brave this man is, and how much he is affected by the scars he still endures from the war. It is amazing to me how these people came out of such a war and could actually cope with the world they came back to, I wouldn't know how to deal with life after witnessing such lack of respect for life, and you can see that at times it is hard for these veterans. After shedding a tear, Mr. Fiore silenced and lost his

openness and will to talk. He answered my following questions, but quickly. He fails to go into detail about the island and it's fighting but when asked "On which island did you experience the most fighting?" He quickly looks down and replies "Most fighting? Saipan, no question about it." He seemed to veer away from the subject, the hurt inside of him could still be felt, you could tell that the images of Saipan affect him to this day.

Mr. Joseph Fiore is such an important contribution to historical records because that is one more story told, one more source of history preserved, one more experience released. Without the stories from people like this, we would not know the details of war, just the paths. Talking to a first hand veteran, details that would never be heard from the censored media are heard. He was present during the final stages of the Second World War and experienced some of the fiercest battles. It feels like Mr. Fiore has some amazing experiences deep down inside that he didn't share with me, or perhaps he felt he couldn't share with me, which I understand. Mr. Fiore seemed to be fairly new at telling his story and even mentioned that he didn't know what he was getting himself into, this could possibly be why he lacked detail, he may still not be ready to tell his whole story, as the hurt inside of him is still clearly visible. In the future, before it's too late, maybe Mr. Fiore will tell his whole detailed story, to me or someone other than myself. He is a factual piece of history that is important to the historical records as it tells another mans story of his first hand accounts of the agony of injury and the brutality of war.

Katelyn Mann

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Matthew Rozell (Notes and class)

Joseph P. Fiore
Interviewed by Katelyn Mann
January 13, 2004
Hudson Falls Senior High School

KM: Today is January 13, 2004, my name is Kate Mann and today I am interviewing Mr. Joseph Fiore. Where were you on December 7, 1941?

JF: I was on Warren Street in front of Lenny Boldhock's news room, there are a lot of old buildings there, and he had a newsstand out front. He had a table with all the newspapers on it and a big strap across it with rocks on it holding it on the table so they could put the extra that the Post Star put out and the headlines were, "Japs bomb Pearl Harbor!" So I looked at Ted Toomey and he looked at me and I beat him to it. I said, "Where the hell is Pearl Harbor?"

Well, about not quite a year later I knew where Pearl Harbor was because we came in on a ship, and when we entered the harbor, I'll never forget this, is you couldn't hear a thing a thing. The only thing you heard was the slush of the water as the boat was going in. And we saw all these ships leaning over on their sides and so on and so forth. So that's where I was and ended up in Pearl Harbor. From there it's another interesting story.

KM: Did you train at Pearl Harbor?

JF: No, no. We already had our training with the Marine Corps when we went to Paris Island and became Marines and when we were graduated, I ended up in Quantico,

Virginia and then New River, North Carolina and those were our training areas until we got to the west coast. The last thing we did before we boarded ship for Pearl Harbor was fire the rifle range and more or less to tune us up for what was going to happen when we got into combat.

KM: Where was your first location of combat?

JP: Well, it was in the Marshall Island Campaign. We went aboard ship, Navy transports, with all our gear and we left around the first of January 1944. We stayed aboard ship for almost the rest of that year, in training, in combat, back into Hawaii for R and R, what they call R and R but it was just going into a camp and starting training all over again for the next action.

KM: How did you feel about going into combat in the Pacific?

JF: I was scared, yes, I was scared, but after we made the first landing which was on Engebi Island in Eniwetok Atoll. I was in a Higgins boat, I take that back I was in an amphib with no ramps; we had to go over the side, jump maybe three or four feet from the ground. And all I could think of was, when I jump out of this thing here, I am going to be facing a Jap holding a machine gun on me. Well when I hit the ground I looked around and I didn't see anything. We had landed just at the end of the runway that we were there to take, because we were "island hopping" and every time we took an island, it usually had a runway for planes, our fighter planes. We just start walking on the runway

going up to the other end of the island where headquarters was. Three or four of us were talking as we were walking, we weren't running or anything like that because we didn't see any Japanese or anything like that. All of a sudden I looked down to the ground and I said, "Jeepers sakes, look at those little marks there, I says they look like Mexican jumping beans." Well there were Japanese snipers way back and they were firing and their bullets were hitting the ground at our feet. We didn't realize it until we realized it and we started running! We made the rest of the island in no time flat. Tony Luciano would've been real proud of me because I broke more records in that day.

KM: What went through your mind in combat or just before?

JF: Well of course, me being Catholic, the Priest with us was Father, Father; I can't remember his name now. That was the first island, and we heard confessions aboard ship and then we were up at four o' clock in the morning and we went down to the cargo nets into our Higgins boats. But before that, they gave us breakfast, which was a steak with three or four eggs right on top of it and that was our last meal. Everybody said it was going to be our last meal before we get to get out of here. So, we made it ashore, we secured the island and spent the night there which was hectic. That's when the Japs would try to sneak into our positions but we had machine gunners covering us. The Navy left an awful lot of bomb craters, huge shells, sixteen inch shells that exploded on the runway. So we got in those big holes in the ground, it was in the Coral Reef, and just dug into the side and waited until daylight. When daylight came, then they'd send us back to our ships out in the harbor, to get ready for the next operation, which was in the same

atoll, Eniwetok Atoll. I would say it was about four days later and the islands name was Perry, P-E-R-R-Y, Perry Island and that's where I got my first Purple Heart. I used an awful lot of hand grenades in those days, as a matter of fact I got an article in my pocket, I'll leave it with you and you can have it, that a war correspondent wrote me up on and called me the "Pineapple Kid." I used seventy hand grenades in one day and one night on that island blowing up foxholes. And underneath the coconut trees the Japs would build a little nest for themselves, so I was working my way up to an insulation that I was going to blow up and my partner Seymour Draginsky from New York, Polish Jew, he was backing me up and a mortar came into our area and that's when I got my first Purple Heart because mortar landed over my side and the back of me and I already had pulled the pin. But there's a spoon that goes in your hand here and as long as you keep that grip and that spoon doesn't move, you can walk around the whole island all day long until you're ready to throw it. So I went down on my stomach in a depression in the ground and before I knew it Draginsky had jumped on me because he figured of course I was wounded, then I found out later that he was wounded with the same grenade but he felt by jumping on me, he really saved my life. So he picked the grenade out of my hand and he threw it as far as he could and then started dragging me back by my collar and Sergeant Wolf came up on the other side, so between them they got me the hell out of that area because they didn't know if there was anymore Japanese, you know at that point. So a tank was coming up and they put me in the back of the tank and this Corps man worked on me and got me in a stretcher and they brought me to the beach and I ended up on a hospital, *USS Solace*, and on my way to Pearl Harbor. But I didn't realize I was losing my outfit and I didn't want to lose it. I saw Dreginsky only one more time on

Guadalcanal later on that same year and he says, “Don’t forget, when you get to the Bronx, look up my mother.” I said “I sure will,” which I did but nobody was home, I left a note on the door, of course, the rest is history...

KM: Did you say you went back to Pearl Harbor after you were injured?

JF: Yes, the first time. I went to Pearl I was in there about a month recuperating wounds. I got a shot here (points to chin) and one in here (points to lower lip/jaw) and of course from my ankle to my buttocks was full of shrapnel. That hurt! And I didn’t realize how much shrapnel I had in me until they got me off the stretcher, these two hospital corpsmen, and they sat me in these metal chairs, well I went right through the ceiling! It was like sitting on a pin cushion. I said “Ay, I’m not sitting on that chair!” So I got right back down on the stretcher and stayed there until they got a bed for me.

KM: Where did you go from there?

JF: Well after I got discharged from the naval hospital I went to a transit center waiting for an assignment and sure enough at that point in time there was the next invasion starting, they were going to Saipan. By losing my outfit they assigned me to a demolition battalion, B118 Second Marine Division, and that’s when I became a flamethrower, using demolitions instead of just hand grenades, if you know what I’m trying to say. So I improved until I got hit the second time which was July 2 and I was on top of a mountain and another friend of mine, as I said I never saw Draginsky again until Guadalcanal,

another one by the name of Steve Juggowitz, another Polish Jew from New York, both of these guys were from New York, New York City. So they got me back to the battalion CP and they had a Jeep there. You've probably seen a picture of a Jeep, there a small machine. But where the passenger would ride, and the guy next to him would be the driver, they took the seat out and made a stretcher bearer out of it. So I happened to be a stretcher patient at that point in time and they put me in that thing to take me down the mountain. There was an amatory patient who was hit in the face and head and his arm was in a sling. They tied him in the seat; he could sit in the seat. So they got the two of us in there and it took them about an hour to get down that mountain because it was just like this (makes a downward, spiral motion with hands) all the way down. I figured I was going to tip over on that beach, going down that mountain. But anyway, got to the beach, went back to the same hospital ship and well, I got to tell you this story in between. On the beach that night, the Japanese bombarded our abandoned radio station, all concrete, a huge, huge monster of a building, and no roof on it, the Navy blew it all up. So that night we were bombarded and I started crawling right out of my cot, I got on my hands and knees and I start going to the stairway, I wanted to get out of there. But anyway, finally they let up and what it was a huge smokestack, part of that complex, and the Japs had a spotter in there and he was directing the fire from the mountain that we took later on. And he was calling in the fire to the guy in the smokestack who was calling his artillery unit and that's how they found where we were and they laid down a pretty good barrage. I thought I was going to get hit again but I didn't. But anyway on the beach I was in the stretcher and it had to be 95 in the shade and it was terrible. This big, black sailor came over, I never saw a man so big in my life, that was one hand (holding two hands together)

and he says “Hey Marine, you want a cold drink?” Well I gave him a few choice words and I said “Drag!” So he came back and he had a can of Dole pineapple juice about this big around and he says “Come on,” and he knelt down and lifted my head, gave me a drink anyway and I said “Holy cow where did you get this?” He said “the Seabees right over there.” I said “Oh yeah, that’s right too.” They set up a refrigeration system right on the beach and that’s how they kept the stuff cool you know? And I never got the guys name. So then they took me out to the hospital ship and they got me aboard and we ended up in the Russell Islands. We didn’t get a chance to go back to Pearl where they had huge beds and sheets and mattresses this thick, it was a fleet hospital. You’ve seen M*A*S*H, haven’t you?

KM: A few times.

JF: Okay, M*A*S*H, that was a front (unclear) of M*A*S*H, these wooden barracks. I was in isolation because my wound, most serious one a bullet went in here and came out here (points to upper thigh). It was a piece of shrapnel. So I was in tough shape there for eighteen days I was out of it. I was receiving Morphine every twelve hours, at noon and at midnight, and it would wear off at ten o’clock right on the dot and I’d beg the nurse to give me another shot and she said “No way!” So anyway I finally got out of there and back to my outfit and I was back in combat again and when I left the hospital I still had a bandage around this leg (points to left thigh). So for some reason we were up in the mountains again and this Jeep came up and says “Where’s Fiore and Medura?” So I said “I’m right here” and Medura was the guy who came back with me, he had two Purple

Hearts too. And he says "Captain wants to see you, get in the Jeep. So we went down and he says "There's a boat in the harbor down there and he says you got one hour to get your gear and get down to that boat." The boat's name was *Quarter Blue*, an Indian boat. I says to Captain "What am I going to do with the other 59 minutes Captain? I got nothing here; I just have a pair of shoes, no socks, no nothing." So we got there and we got back to Pearl Harbor and I came down with Malaria and Medura said "I'm going to take you to the hospital," I said "You aren't taking me to no hospital, I'm getting on that boat tomorrow, I'm going back to the states tomorrow!" So I said don't put me in the hospital and he said Okay, alright. So we got back to the States and ended up in San Diego, they gave me a new I.D. card and I ended up on my thirty day furlough in the middle of January of 1945. From there 1st Sergeant McClowsky came in when I was on guard duty and said "Fiore you can type right?" I said "Yes, sir," he said "Okay pack your gear, your going into the office, you'll be working for me." That's okay with me (chuckles); Give me liberty every night and every weekend off, the whole works. So that was just about it, I gave you the whole picture. It was quick; I was only overseas about thirteen or fourteen months, being wounded twice. Why we went back, the new commandant in the Marine Corps was A.A. Vandergrift, who on Guadalcanal was a committee officer in the 1st Marine Division and he became common with that and he said any Marine, executive order, any Marine wounded twice in a six month period, no questions asked, put them on a boat, send them back to the States for R and R. Thank-you very much! So while I was in there I was ready to go pack my gear and they were going to make the invasion of Japan in November of 1945 and they needed flamethrowers and demolition and that's my

specialty. But anyway thank the Lord for Harry Truman, he dropped the bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima and the rest is history. So you got my story sweetheart...

KM: Well thank you; I have a few more questions. While you were on Saipan did you hear or witness anything like Marpi Point?

JF: The what?

KM: Marpi Point, the civilian suicides?

JF: Oh yes, yes, yes. I was aboard the hospital ship at the time. That happened after I left the area. Yes that was tragic because when I got back they told us what had happened you know and they had Japanese soldiers that were smart enough to realize we weren't as bad you know? They told these people there that if the Americans grab you, they are going to torture you and kill you, especially Marines because in order to become a Marine you had to kill either your mother or your father, which was garbage. But those people ate it and they jumped, they jumped off that cliff. Terrible.

KM: Did your parents know of anything that was going on?

JF: (looks down) Oh yes.

KM: How did they feel about you going into the war?

JF: Well they were proud that I enlisted and went into the Marine Corps, but my mother took it pretty bad when she got the telegram that I was wounded. So my sister and my brother said “Well Ma, he’s alive!” And I felt sorry for her when she got the second Purple Heart (puts his head down and softly begins to cry)

KM: On which island did you experience the most intense fighting?

JF: Most fighting? Saipan, no question about it, yes.

KM: If there was one thing you could change about your Marine experience, would there be one?

JF: No, No. Marines taught me everything I know, how to survive, never forget that. I’m going to give you this before I forget, okay put it in your file. This was written by that correspondent and that went all the way through channels to Pentagon.

KM: Wow.

JF: They ran it in the Post Star November of, May... That’s the date right there, 5-18-1944, right.

KM: How old were you then?

JF: 19.

KM: 19 wow. Do you have any pleasant recollections about the war?

JF: Oh yeah, we had good times. I was stationed in Philly. I could come home on long weekends, what they called a 72 hour pass and catch a train out of New River; come home, oh no Philadelphia right. It was about an hour, hour and a half to New York and get the train from Penn Station over to Grand Central Station and come up to Albany, there always was a bus going to Glens Falls. So you get there like Saturday morning and late Sunday afternoon you started back to New River, yes.

KM: How do you feel about current wars going on today?

JF: Well, I hate wars. It's something we have to do, we are a free nation. Who am I to say we should go or we shouldn't go? I didn't have to worry about it because I knew I was going and enlisting into the Marine Corps because I wanted to be a Marine my whole life. I haven't really got an answer for that, but anyway...

KM: Well, if you want to you can describe your medals.

JF: Okay. (Points to Purple Heart #1) That's the first medal I received. They gave me that at Pearl Harbor, as a matter of fact Admiral Nimitz pinned that on me, took a picture of it and never saw that picture.

KM: That's a bummer!

JF: Yes, I would have loved to have that, oh God yes, and it says 22nd Marines on Eniwetok Atoll 2-22-44. And then this one here is the second one that was printed by a shop in Honolulu (points at first). Then when I got home I had the second one and there was nothing on it. I brought that to Scoville Jewelers and they did a beautiful job.

KM: That is very nice.

JF: As I said this is the Asiatic Pacific Medal and the three stars represents the three islands I fought on. This is the World War II Victory Medal, all of us got one of these and then this one here is the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross and that also represents that I have two of these. And the stars on these two medals (Points to Purple Hearts), if I wear one medal for an occasion, that star represents the second Purple Heart. But very seldom do I wear them. I have miniature medals, I guess I didn't bring the miniatures with me; it's the same thing only that long, that wide.

KM: Well great, if you have anything else you would like to add, feel free to. I am done with all my questions.

JF: Well, I didn't know what I was going to get into over here but I told you my life history.

KM: Well I thank you very much!

JF: Well at least my history of my three and a half years in the Marines, four years, whatever it was. And then when we got home we organized the Marine Corps League here in town so we are 58 years old. We got our Charter in March of '46 and we've been going every since. Toys for Tots, food baskets and so on and so forth. So that's about it then, huh?

KM: Thank you very much for your time, I appreciate it.

JF: Well I had a hand grenade home, I was going to bring it but I said "Nah, I better not....."

Local Marine Hero Called 'Pineapple Kid' by Buddies

(Special to *The Post-Star*)

SOMEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC—(Delayed)—In the action on Engebli Island, Eniwetok Atoll, Marine Pvt. Joseph P. Fiore, of Glens Falls, N. Y., was known as the "pineapple kid," according to Sgt. Benjamin J. Masselink, a Marine Corps combat correspondent.

In the two days and two nights on Engebli, he used more than 70 hand grenades.

He carried them, along with other explosives, in his pockets, fastened to his dungaree coat, and in a leather Japanese demolition bag which he picked up right after landing on the island.

He did not throw the grenades, but would run up, pull the pin, and merely place the grenade in the opening of an emplacement or underground sniper nest. Then he would step back and wait for the explosion. He put in as many grenades as he thought necessary.

In this manner, he blew up nest after nest throughout the honeycombed island.

One time he ran into a little trouble. A wide awake Jap in a hole threw a grenade back, Pvt. Fiore ducked and rolled in another. The second one came soaring out of the hole. Fiore ducked again and tossed a third. At the same time a Marine standing on a little rise above the hole fired and hit the Jap. The third grenade went off in the hole, finishing the Jap.



PVT. JOSEPH P. FIORE

Landing with the first wave on Parry Island, Eniwetok Atoll, three days later, Pvt. Fiore was hit in the leg with shrapnel. He was given first aid treatment by Navy corpsmen and taken to the hospital ship. The Purple Heart award he received for his wounds is being sent to his parents.

Pvt. Fiore is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Fiore, 47 Walnut Street.

Glens Falls
Post-Star,
May 1,
1944.