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INTERVIEW WITH GARETH MOON

October 25, 1987

G: We left San Diego and went to Auckland, New Zealand. From Auckland we went up through Caledonia to Guadalcanal. From Guadalcanal we went up and made the invasion of Bougainville but before that we went to New Hebrides. After the attack at Bougainville, back to Guadalcanal, then after a while we went up to Kwajalein, went over--while they made the invasion of Saipan we were a floating reserve--then we went to Eniwetok. When we landed there we had been aboard ship for weeks so they took us ashore to get our sea legs back. There was a big rotary snowplow on the end of the runway at Eniwetok. How a snowplow ever came to be in the South Pacific I'll never know. From Eniwetok we went to Guam and from Guam to Iwo Jima, back to Guam, then home. That was about 28 - 29 months. I was in the 2nd Battalion, Ninth Marines, which is in the Third Marine Division.

To talk specifically about Tokyo Rose, I got out another map. When we listened to what the fellows called "Tokyo Rose"--it was a lady talking--and they kept saying, "That's Tokyo Rose." I had no way of knowing whether it was Tokyo Rose or not. And later I read where there were several Tokyo Roses. This was at night and I suppose in the early 1940s that was the

best radio reception. I don't remember it in the daytime at all, but we were busy in the daytime too. I can remember sitting around the radio in Guadalcanal, particularly, and listening to this woman talking and I can remember the music they played. That was what we liked, the music. The music she played was all the music that we heard in high school in the early '40s and it was what we liked and remembered. It was good music. I can remember the fellows talking about her and talking about the radio; for example, they would say, "Today, she said something about our particular unit." She was supposed to say, "I see where the 2nd Battal. 9th Marines has left New Zealand and they're now in Guadalcanal." These were the kind of things that I suppose made her good at her business because she--they knew where we were at just as well as we knew where they were at. I think that was the kind of thing that got through to the fellows, although I think sometimes it was the just the fellows talking because rumors started easy. I know just for the fun other fellows and I would start rumors to see how far they would go, and it was real interesting to start one and see how it would end up 3 months later. Some of those fellows, I'm sure, gave Tokyo Rose credit for saying things. On the other hand, I know from my own personal experience on one occasion. We arrived in Guadalcanal

in July of 1943, then we left there in October and went to the Hebrides. Then we went directly to the island of Bougainville and made a landing there. After the campaign was over with--they lasted about 3 months--we came back down to Guadalcanal right after Christmas in 1943. We stayed at Guadalcanal until June and left and went up to Guam. So I don't really know whether we were listening to the radio in that period from July 6, 1943 until October 1943, or whether it was after we returned about the 1st of January in 1944 until we left in June of 1944. So it's either one of those two periods and I don't know which, but the thing that was interesting was that I remember one night we had a real heavy air raid and about two days later we had a heavy daytime air raid. The sky was full of airplanes. I remember there was a bunch, Joe Foss and that bunch, was just about 12 miles from where we were at Henderson Field. And I was originally from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and that was where Joe Foss and several of them in that squadron were from and we got to see each other and visit at that time. They took off from Henderson Field and met these Japs--I think they were coming down from Munda--in the sky and we just watched the fight. We didn't know if it was ours or theirs that were shot down, but the only thing we did know was that it went on for a while. But after it

happened the planes came down and came back in formation to land at Henderson Field and as I remember now there was only 1 or 2 missing. The rest of the planes we saw shot down were Japanese. That evening as we listened to Tokyo Rose she told how the Imperial Japanese forces had made an airstrike at Guadalcanal, and then she proceeded to tell the exact truth. She told how many planes they lost, 6 or 7 of their planes were lost and 2 of ours were lost, and she told how the battle hadn't turned out as well as they wanted, that the Americans had actually chased off the Japanese planes--partly because they had run out of gas and had to go back to Munda, I suppose--but she told the truth. And we were amazed about that. And we talked about that. But at the same time she was talking about another battle they had made somewhere up the line (and up the line was somewhere near New Georgia or Vella Vella, on up toward New Britain) but somewhere in there she talked about another battle they'd made the same day and wiped out a whole bunch of Americans and they'd sunk a bunch of ships and dropped a bunch of American planes. Well, afterwards, when we were able to put the thing together and talk about it--several weeks afterwards--we found it real interesting in this respect. On Guadalcanal there were thousands of men. Literally thousands of men. The place she talked about

there were maybe a couple hundred. What we found out afterwards was that what she told about the other place was absolutely false, there was no truth to it at all. But we, having heard her talk about what happened at Guadalcanal in which she told the truth, were almost inclined to believe that there had been a terrible massacre up on the other island and that we'd had some bad luck up there. This was my first real experience in what I'd call the use of public relations or whatever to fool people--what did they call it? They had a term for it--but throughout the war the Americans and the Japanese and others would use stunts of this nature to confuse the troops that were fighting and get them upset and worried and so forth, but it always interested me how she would tell the truth where there were thousands of people listening and then when it was a little island somewhere with only a couple hundred she would make up a whole bunch of stuff. But it confused the fellas and the fellas really thought that it happened for that reason.

C: How did it make you feel to hear the music when you were so far from home?

G: Just like anything else--when we were out on the islands anything we had to do was diversion. We did things that would be boring as hell back home but out on the islands it was just something to do. (Talked

about hearing music on records as there were no tape recorders or whatever. And reading magazines that were quite up-to-date, only about 2 months old.) (Talked about every battalion having men whose job it was to improve morale.)

C: Did it scare you to hear her predict where your troops were, where the Americans (unintell.)

G: Not particularly. When we were out there--of course, the unknown always scared anybody, but that type of thing didn't bother us. As far as her being effectual in getting the troops unnerved, I don't think she was. I think they had fun, listening to the music, and I think they enjoyed it. I think she was well-liked from the standpoint that she brought a lot of good music to us. The other part, you know "What are your wives and girlfriends doing back there?" nobody paid an awful lot of attention to that. They just kind of laughed about it and joked about it. And those of us who were single out there had a lot of fun teasing those who were married out there and we would give them a bad time about the same things she would. So it wasn't anything new, just the same old stuff between a bunch of fellas particularly in the typical Marine corps.

(Discussion about battles and the fact that it was 45 years ago. Said it was the first battle against the enemy. Didn't remember if Coral Sea was before

Guadalcanal or not.) Said he wasn't homesick for the entire time of 4 years until the last 2 hours coming home on the train.

With Tokyo Rose, we were listening to the music and instead of making us homesick it was real comfortable. That was the stuff in high school and we enjoyed it. I don't think that Tokyo Rose as such every made us--certainly never made me feel homesick or upset. As I say, she was kind of an idol of a lot of the fellas.