

THE WAY WE WERE

Skills learned on reservation paid off in WWII

By Lillian Cox

In 1944, Army 1st Lt. Donald V. Jamison was delivered by submarine to the shore of Luna, La Union, in the Philippines.

He was an officer in the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Jamison said his mission was to perform reconnaissance and demolition behind enemy lines in preparation for an invasion led by Gen. Douglas MacArthur to overthrow the Japanese occupation. The invasion was to take place in January 1945.

Jamison, now 87, lives in Escondido.

In a recent interview, the decorated war veteran recalled how guerrilla warfare skills he used during World War II were cultivated as a boy on the Rincon Indian Reservation and his family's Lazy H Ranch.

Jamison's father, Bert Jamison, was a Seneca-Cayuga Indian. His mother, Mary Golsh Jamison, was a Luiseño-Diegueño Indian. His great-grandfather was the legendary Santiago Duro, the last chief of the Mesa Grande Indians.

Jamison remembered fierce battles in the Philippines, during which he used marksmanship skills honed on the reservation to pick



Friends who assisted him in 1944 by carrying supplies greeted Jamison (far right) during a 1976 visit to Manila. *Courtesy photos*

off Japanese soldiers.

"This was something I learned from my Uncle Mark," he said.

Uncle Mark was Marcus Golsh, chief of the Rincon Indians during the 1940s. Golsh taught Jamison how to adjust the sight of a rifle to compensate for the effect of the wind.

Max Mazzetti, a childhood friend, recalled watching Jamison practice.

"He could shoot a rabbit right in the middle of the head from quite a distance," Mazzetti said.

Jamison got to know firearms at an early age.

"When I was 5, I was given my own horse and saddle," he said. "At 6, I was given a .22 rifle.

"At 7, I was bringing home food for the family... doves, quail, ducks, mountain pigeons and rabbit. I shot my first deer at 11."

Jamison received numerous combat medals from the Philippine government for his service there.

Jamison also met Ferdinand Mar-

cos, who was serving in the guerrilla campaign to free the country. He began a lifelong friendship with the man who would become president of the Philippines, and was a guest at Marcos' inauguration.

Jamison and his late wife, Virginia, were frequent guests at Marcos' palace in Manila. They were also guests at the White House in

1966 for a state dinner for the Marcoses.

After World War II, Jamison returned to the United States and raised two daughters with his wife. He managed a store on the Rincon Reservation and worked for the aerospace company Convair. He also served in the Army Reserve.

When the Korean War ignited in 1950, Jamison received orders to report to Fort Benning, Ga.

He went to Damon Calac, the brother of a childhood friend, and asked him for money to get to the base.

"He was a medicine man and a witch doctor, and had a lot of money," Jamison said. "He gave me \$1,000 to go to war."

Jamison later worked in real estate and sold turquoise. In the late 1960s, he served on the Intertribal Council of California, helping to develop casinos.

Now retired and a widower, Jamison continues to attend tribal council meetings at Rincon.

Jamison said he wishes more would say Rincon correctly.

"It's pronounced 'Rincone,'" he said, "like an ice cream cone."

Lillian Cox is a freelance writer from Encinitas.



Donald Jamison (center) with President Ferdinand Marcos (third from right) in Marcos' hometown of San Esteban, Luzon, in 1981.