The National Museum of the Pacific War

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with W.C. "Bill" Beyer

3rd Marine Division-A Battery-1st Battalion

Guadacanal-Bouganville-Guam-Iwo Jima

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Mr. Cox: Today is March 14, 2001. My name is Floyd Cox and I am a volunteer member of the oral history team of the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. As part of our oral history program we are interviewing Mr. W.C. ’Bill” Beyer from Kingsville, Texas concerning his experiences during World War II in the Pacific. Bill to start out would you give me some information about your background.

Mr. Beyer: I’m William C. Beyer, normally called Bill. I presently live at 1139 West Henrietta in Kingsville, Texas. I was born on January 5, 1921 in Paris Texas. On June 14, 1921 we moved to Boerne, Texas because about the first of May a tornado had blown our house over on its side. A severe tornado had struck the area a couple of years before, consequently my parents decided it was time to move to south Texas. We moved to Boerne when I was approximately six months old.

During the depression my parents were forced to sell the farm to make the last two or three payments. That was in 1934. My Daddy had some trucks

and there was a pretty good sized job going on down the road so we moved to George West, Texas. I went to school there and graduated from George West High School in 1939. I wanted to play football at A&I University in Kingsville but I decided to lay out a year until I got bigger and faster.

I got a job at the Naval base in Corpus Christi, Texas. The union at that time required them to pay union scale. I was a helper on the base with a group of electricians. Actually all I did was drive a truck and supply them with parts. I think there were eight journeymen and several more helpers. I made eighty-five cents an hour and of course it didn't take very long before I had wheels. (Laughter) I was working on the Navy Base when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I was not quite twenty-one years old at the time. I normally went home on the weekends to see my buddies or anyone else who might be in town. On December 7, 1941 I was driving around with about five boys in my 1937 Ford and about three-thirty p.m. it came over the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. We pulled over to the side of the road and were listening to all the news reports. About that time Harry Hinton, the football coach, drove up. He was a single man at that time, about twenty-six years old. He was a teacher and also one of the two coaches at the school. He asked us if we had heard the news. He was really upset about it and he said he was going to resign the next morning and join the service. One of us asked him "coach what service are you going to join?" He looked at us like he used

to look at us when we had done something real stupid. He said, "well I tell you fellows, all of you, if you want to get in something and do some fighting, the only one is the United States Marines." We didn't know a Marine from a cow, hardly. (Laughter) After a few more encouraging remarks like that, he took off. He was always able to influence us. In fact he influenced me for the next fifty years. I admired the man until the day he died. He did go before the school board but they told him "everybody has a job to do and we have kids to educate. You stay here until school is out in June and then if you want out we'll let you go." He did that and he took about eight senior football players with him when he joined the Marines. One of those boys was seriously hurt on Guam and another was killed on Iwo Jima.

I went home that evening and told my parents that I was going to Corpus the next day and join the Marine Corp. They thought things were rushing a little bit. My Daddy had been called up for World War I. I don't think he ever got into it because he was a German. At that time they really didn't know if the Germans would fight the Germans or not. I think he wound up someplace for two or three months and then they let him go home. I told my parents I just had to go. The Japanese had bombed us and I just had to go. It could be that be that we were looking for excitement and by the time we got through talking to the coach we were ready to go. (Laughter)

I look back on this now and I think if my kid did me this way I would probably wring his neck. My parents got up at three-thirty the next morning and my mother made biscuits, gravy, bacon and coffee. It was a big breakfast. I was going from George West to Corpus Christi. Which was just about an hour trip. I had made arrangements for a friend to bring my car back the following weekend. I got down to Corpus, real early on the eighth of December and although it is early in the morning, I'm not the first one in line down there. There were probably six or seven ahead of me. The recruiting office finally opened up about eight o'clock. There was only one post office in Corpus at that time. And the recruiting office was located in the same building. It was on a hill. In fact my rooming house was only about three blocks down below the hill toward Water Street. We finally got in and the recruiting officer said, "are you guys twenty-one?" About half of them said no. He asked if we had our releases and we said no we didn't. They talked to us individually. I thought this guy that talked to me was old. I imagine he was bout thirty years old. He said, "I tell you what I would do if I were you. I'd go home and enjoy the Christmas holidays. You'll be twenty-one one January 5th and you can sign your papers and do what you want to, it's going to be a long war." I thought well I'm getting my first orders here and it's not all that bad so I took off. By ten o'clock I was back home. The folks wanted to know what happened and I told them. They thought that was good advice.

I waited and did the whole thing all over again on January 5, 1942 which was my birthday. At about four o'clock they shut the office and about twenty-five or thirty of us got on a train in Corpus. We stopped in Victoria and picked up some people or another car on our way to Houston. We arrived in Houston about ten-thirty or eleven o'clock at night. We were in the train yard and they marched us a couple of blocks to this large building. We went upstairs to a big room and we were all told to make a single line around the wall. There were about one hundred and twenty of us. About all they were doing was checking the names and had us step on the scale to weigh us. A sailor had this measuring device on the wall and he would bring it down on your head to see how tall you were. I was behind a big guy and I didn't know what the limits were in the Marine Corp and I didn't know this guys name but he is standing up there. The sailor put this thing down on his head and said, "son, you are a little bit too tall." Then the sailor said, "let me do that over." So the guy spread his legs out and kind of bent down and the sailor measured him again and said, "oh yeah, you're o.k." Later on I found out this guy was Merle Connelly and later on he would be the director of the election for his brother, John Connelly, to be the governor of Texas. Later he would direct John Connelly's bid for president, which wasn't successful. I shared boot camp with Merle. We got on a train and Merle was in charge of our train car.

Mr. Cox: Had they sworn you in at this time?

Mr. Beyer: Yes, we took the oath about one-thirty in the morning. Within an hour after being sworn into the Marine Corp, we were back on the train and heading for San Diego, California. It was about a two-day trip by train to San Diego. We arrived in San Diego about midnight and military trucks picked us up and took us to the Naval Base. We were let off at a large barn like building with a lot of open windows. It was really cold at that time of the night in California in early January. On our way to California the train stopped for sandwiches once in awhile and that is all we had until we got out there. I never thought of the military living on sandwiches but I guarantee you the Marine Corp lived on sandwiches. They would give you a slice of bologna, two slices of bread and an orange. They were not very strong on apples but they gave us plenty of oranges.

Everybody was in this big hall and they told us to line up against the wall, take two steps forward and take off all our clothes. Shoes, socks and everything. They told us if we had any jewelry they would be around with a little basket, pencil and paper so you can put who you want to send it back to. So we took our two steps forward and stripped down. We were told us to just leave our clothes in a heap. I felt real bad about this because I had spent six dollars on a pair of new shoes that I thought were really uptown. So there we are with all of our clothes in a pile and they had us go down the hall to the supply counters. The first guy looked at you and gave you your underclothes. Two sets of everything, two shorts and two

undershirts. The next one looked at you and he gave you a couple of jackets and the next one gave you a couple pair of pants. They didn't ask you what size you were. One would look down at your feet and give you a pair of shoes. He didn't ask you if you were a ten, eleven or what and if a guy would say, "these are too big" they would tell him "you'll grow into them son." (Laughter) We got our clothes and when we got to the end of the line they gave us a sea bag. We started marching across the parade ground and they had all of these temporary tents set up. Every time we would go by a tent six people would drop off. There were some cots with blankets in the tents so we went to bed. The next morning we started becoming Marines. We lined up and the drill instructors showed us how to get in formation. We started training and learning to march. I'm telling you I had the hardest time trying to march. I tried to watch the guy ahead of me and when he stepped I would try and step. After about two hours I could hardly step anymore. After about the third day I got so tired and I thought there has to be an easier way. I just relaxed and you know I fell into step and it was about the easiest thing I ever did. Once I quit trying to place my legs I got into it. I had never been in the band or anything and when we would be doing these about face, left face and all that I just kept wheeling around. Finally that drill instructor, we had two of them, said "Tex come on out here and show these people how to do a real about face like they do it in Texas." I had to get out there in front of all of them and they made a big deal out of it. He said, "now Tex is going to show you

how to do it. But if I teach you how to do it, you are going to do just like him and he is going to go get his locker box and put it on his head and run around this parade ground until I tell him to quit. So you all better watch him close.

We get into boot camp and learn all these things. Later we went up to camp St. Luis Obisbo on the rifle range for about two weeks. We laid out there on a hillside and pulled the trigger without ammunition. That is the way they teach you to shoot. You never want to know when that trigger goes off. It's kind of hard to do if you are shooting at somebody to lie there for thirty seconds trying to wait until the trigger goes off. You'll probably be dead by then. When we shot for rating, I made "expert" with the pistol and I really don't know how I did this because I had never shot a pistol before. I made "sharpshooter" with the rifle. With a "sharpshooter" rating I got paid three dollars more a month and it also got me out of serving time in the galley so that was worth it.

After graduating boot camp I was put in artillery in the second division. I went to a lot of school in artillery as a gunner. We took some tests and I was pretty fast with numbers. In fact I think I may have been the fastest one there in a class of twenty. My first assignment on a seventy-five Millimeter howitzer.

I went home on furlough about four or five months after boot camp. We had a ten-day leave. With travel time you had about four days at home. When my leave was up and before I left home my mother and I got

together and we made us little code. If I asked how uncle Albert is, that means we are in Africa. At that time that was where all the fighting was. If I said how is uncle Charlie that would mean I was in China. We set up names like that. My mother kept her codes written and supposedly I had mine in my mind. I'll get back to this later.

Further along in our training, we went down to the desert in Nylon in lower California. It got to about one hundred and ten degrees everyday. We spent about a month out there in little tents. We had these Howitzers out there and we would pull those things up to the Chocolate Mountains, which rose up out of the desert pretty sharp. The seventy-five Howitzer when we first got them had come out of the storeroom from World War I. They had wooden spokes and still had a steel rim around the wheel because during World War I the army used them but they pulled them with a team of mules. They are beautiful weapons. World War II came along and the Marines put rubber tires on the wheels and got a bunch of toggle ropes and made the amount of people pulling that thing a section of fourteen people if you have everybody there. You pulled them with Marines rather than mules. That is really the difference between World War I and World War II. We had rubber tires and used Marines instead of mules. We pulled them about four miles up to the mountains. I was the gunner in training on Guadacanal and Bougainville and the section chief on Guam and Iwo Jima. A seventy-five Howitzer weighs about fourteen hundred pounds. It quickly disassembles and the heaviest piece is the

tube, which weighs two hundred and twenty pounds. Everything else is somewhere around a hundred pounds. The carriage that the gun sits on can be separated from the wheels or you can leave them together. At times we took those things apart and we carried it. The projectile has a brass case around it and the projectile itself weighs about sixteen pounds. It comes with four powder charges. With the bigger powder charge coming out first so when you are firing real close you pull three and leave one in. That would be just a small powder charge. If you are shooting at maximum distance or direct fire you would use all four-powder bags. There is a ring on the projectile and you can set that ring to time it to burst in the air or set it for a delay. If you are shooting at a pillbox you would set it on the delay setting so you get it going through the wall of the pillbox before it blows up. There are smoke bombs that help observers see where you are hitting.

I was either gunner or in charge of the second gun section

all the time that I was overseas and in combat. Our battery laid from number two gun. It wasn't unusual to get the command that the Regimental adjust. That means that all the guns in the Regimental adjusted on number two gun. We would fire two or three shots for accuracy. When we were on target, all the other guns would all follow. They would close or open which meant

they would either close their tubes in toward you or if they were on the other side, they would open up to be near you. The guns could be up to

one-quarter mile from you. I'm real glad that the Japanese did not know how to shoot artillery like we did. We could literally put forty-eight projectiles in a very small place. Several times when the Japanese were amassed we fired thirty minutes and when the rifle men got there the Japanese were all stunned or dead. I read somewhere that over fifty percent of all the casualties in the Pacific were caused by the seventy-five and 105 Howitzers. I can understand that because several times the Japanese got us under the gun You are a prime target, everybody wants to get rid of you. When we were on Bougainville a Japanese Seaplane would come over treetop high and the Jap observer in the back would grin at you and you knew you were going to get bombed that night. The bombers want to bomb you, the other artillery wants to get you, everybody that has a mortar wants to take a shot at you and it is not unusual to get small arms fire at you too. These two types of Howitzers are always high on the enemy's priority lists because they can do so much damage.

Mr. Cox: You finished your training down there in California?

Mr. Beyer: Yes. They finally got enough people to make three Marine divisions and I was transferred out of the Second into the Third. Then we go on one more big training mission. The first thing that happened was on August 7th they invaded Guadalcanal. That was our first counter offensive against the Japanese. We are still in the States at that time but we are getting ready. The last of January or the first of February we get hauled into San Diego

and over the course of four or five days they fill up a bunch of warehouses down there on the waterfront with Marines. One night about eleven o'clock we board the USS Mt. Vernon, which had been a luxury ship between South Africa and New York. It had been converted into a troop ship and the bunks were four bunks high. The bathrooms hadn't changed very much but the rest of it had. In thirteen days we went to New Zealand. By the time daylight came the first morning, we were out of sight of land. Supposedly there were eight thousand of us on this ship and it stayed pretty

close to Central America until it got way down around Chile and then it turned toward New Zealand. They did that because they didn't think the Jap submarines could operate that far away from their base. This big ship shuddered about every three or four minutes because they turned. They made a directional change every three or four minutes to avoid a torpedo if an enemy submarine fired one at them. We got to New Zealand with no problem. The New Zealanders were down on the dock with a band playing and everybody waving when we got off. Later we got on a little trolley train with little narrow wooden seats. The little cars held about twenty people. We went about fifteen miles out of town to an old New Zealand base called Manureva. The New Zealand men were all over in North Africa.

Mr. Cox: They were over there fighting the Germans?

Mr. Beyer: Yes. It was mostly running and marching while we were there. In training, there are very few places we could actually fire because there are sheep everywhere. We had already killed enough sheep accidentally so we don't do much of that anymore. On our marches and hikes we did a lot of running for ten minutes and walking for five. They really get us in shape. When we went by one of those sheep slaughterhouses, we didn't need any help, we would really take off. The odor is the most awful thing in the world. We didn't know the half of it. When we started getting rations up in the island that is where they came from and it wasn't beef and potatoes. It was sheep meat and potatoes. (Laughter) You had to get about three days hungry before you could eat that but you know after a while you kind of got to like it. Every Wednesday night the New Zealand women came out to the camp and they made tea and these little cookies. These were small camps. I think there were about twelve camps scattered around. The one I was in didn't have a dance hall but that didn't affect me because I couldn't dance anyway. Some of them did. Everything was kind of like stateside. They seemed better off than we were in the States because I remember when hiking in the country you would see all the farmhouses were painted. I remember growing up in the depression you hardly ever saw a house that was painted down in south Texas. Most of them had bare wood showing. We could get a big meal in New Zeland comprised of a big steak, potatoes, a pitcher of milk, and bread and butter for about thirty-six cents. The only bad thing was they always wanted to

put two fried eggs right on top of those steaks so we always had to tell them to cut the eggs. They drank their beer warm. They couldn't understand anyone wanting to mess it up getting it cold. The beer was so strong it would knock you down tail so I never drank too much anyway. We didn't stay there very long. We were on Guadalcanal by the first of May, 1943. The last time we had liberty before we left New Zealand some guy right on the street behind a plate glass window was making hamburgers. He had a hot plate and he had got some buns from somewhere. All of these guys wanted hamburgers and the British don't have hamburgers but this guy was capitalizing on the market. He was frying those hamburgers and everybody was watching him. Those New Zealanders had their noses up against the window watching him. We were buying hamburgers right and left.

The first time my buddy and I went into Auckland he wanted to buy a handkerchief. He went into a store that looked kind of like a J.C. Penney store while I waited outside for him. I was leaning up against this post when a guy came walking over there and he said "are you from Texas?" I said "well yeah." He asked, "What town are you from?" I'm pretty sure he doesn't know where George West Texas is so I said "a small town near San Antonio." He said, "Well you know I used to live in a small town near San Antonio. I lived in Boerne until I was twenty years old." He looked like he was about fifty years old and pretty dark skinned. He had a perfect British accent. His name was

Max Schwartz. I said "well, to be honest I lived in Boerne until I was thirteen years old." We got to talking and he invited me down to his place. He told me to come and spend the weekend and gave me some kind of address. Well I knew I would never go but anyway what happened, was, he wrote his brother in Boerne. His name was Schwartz. Hugo Schwartz in Boerne used to be big buddies of my parents. In seventh grade I was in school with twins Maureen and Irene Schwartz. So there was this deep connection. His brother wrote my parents and said he had met this American by the name of Beyer who had lived in Boerne but now lived in George West. I got a letter from my mother by the time I got to Guadalcanal and she was all excited. She said she had looked up New Zealand and that it looked like a wonderful place and they didn't have any fighting going on there. She said they were totally happy with that. We'll leave it at that. I'll tell you more about that later.

Right before we leave we are up in the northern part of New Zealand. All the trucks we had got stuck in the mud. The natives call it gum stump holes. We march over to a small camp and a truck met us there with some dry clothes. We had been out there about a week wallowing around in that mud. We all cleaned up and our platoon sergeant came by. He was from Chicago and he said "Hey Tex let's go down that road and go to town." I thought if I'm with the platoon sergeant, I couldn't do any wrong. We go down to the end of the road and here comes a car. He stopped and asked us if we wanted a ride. We got in the car and he asked where we were

going. We said, "where are you are going." He said, "I'm going to Wangare.

Mr. Cox: This a civilian driving the car?

Mr. Beyer: Yes, actually he was an original native of New Zealand. He was they call a Mori. He said, " I'm taking a bunch of drinks to a family that just received notice a few days ago that their son is coming home from North Africa. He was severely wounded but he is all right and their sending him home. The neighbors have all gotten together and are having a big party tonight. They would like to see you guys I know. He took us there and introduced us. They had a house down by the railroad tracks. They had taken everything out of one room of the house and put it in the yard. They had a kind of a thatched roof thing out there in the yard that they had all of this food on a long table under it. It was after dark when we got there. They also had about seven or eight young girls there that were about sixteen to twenty that I think were some kind of town entertainers or dancers because the Mother of the boy that was coming home said, "those girls want you all to come in. They want to dance for you." They were doing these Mori dances with the string and little paper balls and they wore these hula dresses. They really had a lot of talent. As the evening wore on, about ten o'clock, the Mori men sat on one side of the room and the women sat on the opposite side. After we watched the girls dance a

couple of times the men came in and said they wanted to show us where they worked. We asked, "Where is that?" They said, "oh just a little way over here." We went with them over the railroad track and about two more blocks. There was a big cave. They said, "Oh we have lights." There were about four of them. Two of them went ahead to light the lights. There were big rooms that they had quarried out. It was a limestone quarry. They had these little cars where they took the lime-stone out. We go into this cave and we go through about two rooms. There is just a little walkway around the edge to get to the next one. This big Swede with me, my platoon sergeant was a little older than I was. He was probably about twenty-six. He had been in the Marines before the war. He kind of punched me and said, "This is as far as we are going." We are about fifty yards into this cave but we stopped. The two fellows with us said "oh come on, it is just a little farther, we have something to show you." Swede, said, "no, we've seen enough, we're going back to the party." They actually put their hand on him to push him forward and he knocked it down and said, "No, we are not going any farther." Swede was about six foot two inches tall and weighed about two hundred and twenty pounds. I weighed about one hundred and ninety-five and was six foot one inch and these were small people so there wasn't much they could do so we went on back to the party.

Mr. Cox: Do you think they were going to get you back there to do some harm to you?

Mr. Beyer: My wife and I went back to Guam, Australia and on to New Zealand in 1995 for the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Guam. The governor of Guam put out an invitation to all Marines who wanted to come. They were going to have a parade and all. We went to New Zealand and I showed my wife the old camp. We rode the little train there and got off at Manureva. At the first store I asked the lady there if that camp was still out there. She was about three years older than my wife and she said, "oh, you mean where all those handsome young Marines were?" The land is there but they made it into a botanical garden. Would you all like to go out there? I'll take you." When we were there in 1943, we used to walk to town and catch the train because it was only about three fourths of a mile. She got somebody to watch her store and took us out there. It was a very beautiful place and it was hard to remember it as it looked when we were there.

When we got back to Auckland my wife and I were in this jewelry shop and I got to telling the owner this story about the Mori party and our escapade at the at the quarry. He said "there was a bunch of Marines in here ahead of you and that is all they did was fight up and down Queens street. In fact they called it the Battle of Queens Street." I had heard of the Battle of Queens Street. He said "those Mori's really didn't like you

all up in that area and I think they were going to shove you in a hole or something." If this had happened, they would never have found us because we weren't supposed to be there. My wife and I went up there and found that Quarry. They took part of that Quarry and made kind of a museum out of it. We were in a taxi riding around looking for it and I saw that big hole in the mountain and I knew it was the Quarry. Not long after the incident with the Mori we left New Zealand on the Crescent City. We knew we were going to Guadalcanal.

Mr. Cox: Crescent City was a ship?

Mr. Beyer: Yes it was an assault personnel carrier. It seemed to pop up every time we wanted to move. There were four boats, the Crescent City, the American Legion and the Hayes that did most of our 1rst Battalion transfers. I don't remember the fourth one. When we left the port of Auckland, the sailors asked us if we had been in combat and we told them no. They said "we're going through torpedo junction tomorrow sometime, we'll probably have a submarine attack." We thought he was blowing smoke up our tail. The next day sure enough they have all of these calls to make the troops aware of what is going on. Two whistles you go down stairs, three whistles you jump overboard or something like that. We are all laying around on deck playing cards and just having a good time when they blow the whistle to go down in the hold. We all run to go down in the hold. We had to go

down about three ladders. We were way down there somewhere. By the time the last one gets in these sailors come along and door shut and screw the lock in and you are there. You are not going anywhere. Whether you like it or not it makes sense. Should a torpedo hit the ship, the sealed compartments would lesson the damage and help keep it afloat. Then they started throwing those depth charges out and we couldn't tell if it was a torpedo hitting the ship or if it was depth charges. That went on about thirty minutes and they finally let us out of the hold. We asked some of those sailors if they got the submarine and they said they did because a lot of oil came up. We said the Japanese were probably smart enough to release a little oil and then take off again.

We got to Guadalcanal, the land fighting was over but the Japanese still ruled the air and most of the water. We were still having problems out there. The bombers came in the daylight and they were escorted by the Zeroes. We set up camp near Henderson Field which was the main fighter strip there. After we set up camp one of the guys named Junior Steele, a fun loving guy, who was our number one man, had heard there were a lot of Japanese skulls in a certain area. He and a buddy proceeded to go and see if they could find one. Sure enough they found one. I don't know if it was Japanese, American or what. Junior took the skull and went to the galley. We are having two meals a day with powdered eggs in the morning with dehydrated potatoes. They don't separate them; they just mix them together and fry them. They make the coffee in a twenty-gallon

can. Junior gets one of those cans that the dehydrated stuff comes in and puts water in it to boil that skull. He cleans it up and sits it out in the sun. It really shines up pretty nice. It got real white. Junior wrote Tokyo Glamour Boy on the skull and then we all autographed it. At that time if you were pretty good buddies with the Maintenance Sergeant or the supply keeper, they would box up your stuff and for a little something he would get it on a ship to send it home. Junior sent this skull home. I think his Daddy might have had a little booze hall even though Oklahoma was dry at the time. In due time Junior got a letter back and it said they were raving about that skull. His Daddy said he had been offered five hundred dollars for that skull. With that in mind we got more skulls later on.
The Japanese bombers would come most every day on Guadalcanal. Our guys were flying the little Wildcat 4-F. The Japanese were flying the Zeros and if I understood right the Zeros didn't have any protection for the pilot at all while ours did. We had two meals a day and we would sit where we could watch Henderson Field and these pilots would get in a dogfight with the Japs if the Zeros didn't go too high. We would see a ball of fire up in the sky and we would clap and say that's a Jap. Then if we saw a trail of smoke and that was an American it was considered a bad day. That was kind of like a basketball game. I guess we didn't know what was good for us but it was just a way of entertaining ourselves. We would go to a lot of working parties at least once a week unloading ships with supplies and we worked twelve hours on and twelve hours off. The

ships had to stay out about four hundred yards off shore. Everything that came out of the hold had to be put in a big bag and net, lifted up, put in a boat and taken to shore, then to the truck and then to the storeroom. All of us always wanted to go out to the ship. Nearly everything that was on the ship was in cardboard boxes if it was food. The boxes were never marked at to the contents they contained. Just marked with serial numbers. When we went on a working party we made sure we always had a knife and a bamboo cane that was hollowed out. When we would get down in the hold of that ship unloading those boxes we would walk around and punch the knife in a box and give it a twist to make a hole. Then we'd put that bamboo straw in there and suck on it to see what was in that particular box. Sometimes you hit a can of beer, sometimes you hit a can of baking powder there was no telling what you'd hit. (Laughter) A guy would say, "Hey, I think this is beer." Another one would say, "Nah, that's not beer, it's vinegar." One night I'm in charge of a working party and we are going to work the midnight shift. It is dark by the time we get organized and the other shift comes in. The other shift was just about on the boat in the bay when our planes came in and we are right there within fifty yards of the landing field. As our fighter planes and bombers are coming in, a Japanese plane comes in right behind them but instead of going to the landing field he veers off to the right and launches a torpedo nearly right on top of that boat. He hit that ship out there and it went up in a ball of fire. They had aviation gasoline in fifty-gallon drums on the ship. There

were quite a few casualties but not as many as you would think there might be. I was quite lucky I was not on the ship at the time. I and another corporal had flipped a coin to see who take his working party out to the ship. I lost the flip, which may have saved my life. Soon after we were there they started flying a different plane, a Hellcat F-6F. It could stay with the Zero. The bombers bombed at night now. To defend the airfield, they had a lot of those big spotlights that they would shine on the bombers. There would be four or five of them that would crisscross the Jap planes and the anti-aircraft would be shooting at them. This had been going on for about a month when one night these spotlights got on a Japanese bomber. The Japanese had a habit of coming over and veering off and then one or two would come in at a time to bomb. They were bombing and also harassing. The spotlight is on the bomber and he continues to fly over. Maybe thirty seconds after that we could see this fire coming out from another plane, which is behind the bomber, right in rear end of the bomber and he explodes. He is just a big ball of fire. We didn't know what that was. Within about another twenty seconds the spotlights are on another Japanese bomber. Here comes this plane again and he fires a string of bullets into that bomber. You can see them just like a string of red. He does that for about two seconds and then stops. That gunner in the rear of the Japanese bomber shoots back at this fighter plane and when he does the fighter pilot pulls his trigger and that stream of red went into the bomber and it caught fire. That stream of red continues

to go into the bomber and it seemed like the fighter pilot wanted to make sure he was going to use all his ammunition. The next day our officers told us what had happened. They got two P-38's as night fighters and they had all the latest stuff. That put a crimp in the Jap's bombing activities. They started coming over a little less often and they didn't tarry.

On another working party the Marines ran into a whole bunch of hammocks that were stamped Navy. They had a waterproof roof on them and two sides of mosquito netting. They were real fancy. Of course everybody on that working party left with one of those hammocks. (Laughter) By 10 o'clock the next morning there were Marines stringing up fancy hammocks all over the place. After lunch here a fellow who looks like a Navy Lieutenant came over to our area. The First Sergeant went and got the Captain. The Captain told that Navy guy "yeah that's probably yours alright, it's got Navy on it but the way I understand how those boys got them was when they were unloading them the guy with the hoist accidentally dropped all that stuff in the water and they salvaged it. Otherwise it would have just been floating off. They are claiming it under the recovery law." We kept them. Joe Kite, a guy from Pleasanton, a good friend of mine got one of the hammocks. He was in his hammock when the Japanese bombers unloaded in a coconut grove close to where we had our tents. Kite heard the bombs falling and was trying to get out of the hammock and he didn't have it open so it flipped on him. He is hanging upside down in that hammock with the bombs hitting real close

and he is getting real desperate. In desperation, he took his knife and cut the sides of the hammock to get out and into his foxhole.

We headed out to Bougainville on the first of November 1943. We were there until January 15, 1944 when the Army relieved us. The night before the landing we were going across Empress Augusta Bay and the Captain of the ship comes on the PA system about suppertime and says, "through the night we'll be going through Empress Augusta Bay and it is un-chartered waters and it is possible any ship, maybe even this ship may run aground but you Marines don't worry about it. We are going to get you ashore in the morning. If we run aground we'll pump all the oil out or anything necessary to get afloat. We might be attacked but we're pretty good on maneuvers so keep calm." So that sounded pretty good. Some of us are up on top and about one o'clock flares started dropping. The Japanese are looking for our convoy. The bomber that was dropping the flares left after about an hour. We went down below and the ships started wiggling and wagging around. We didn't get hit but they did hit one ship but didn't do much damage. About four o'clock that morning we had chow and by daylight we were up on topside and ready to go down the nets. We didn't have a lot of Navy at that time so there wasn't a lot of bombardment. There were a couple of destroyers shelling the beach.

Mr. Cox: Now that is the beach of Bougainville?

Mr. Beyer: Yes, the beach of Bougainville. Rabaul is not too far from there. I'm going to guess about two hundred and fifty miles. Bougainville is an island that is two hundred miles long and about eighty miles wide. It had jungle like you had never seen before. There is about two hundred thousand Japanese on the other side of Bougainville but Admiral Halsey is supposed to keep them off of us. In the center of the island there is a range of mountains and jungle no one can cross. There was an airfield over there that is very active. We were supposed to have air cover the first two hours of our landing but that didn't happen. We got down in the boats about sunup. At that time we just had the old Higgins boats. They just had a door that flopped open and you jumped out. We are in those boats and we are starting to form little circles to get everybody where they are supposed to be. Some boats are running around looking for their circle. The Japanese are shooting a few rounds out there but it is not that bad. About that time the ships blow their whistles and they take off for open water where they can maneuver better.

Mr. Cox: The transport ships?

Mr. Beyer: Yes, the ships we just got off of. Of course they have our supplies too. We thought that this isn't real good. Due to the shortage of air power that we were supposed to have, I think they issued an ultimate order to get everybody on the beach as fast as they could. I think that happened about

the time these ships left. We were probably in a circle about a quarter of a mile from the beach. About that time the first so-called wave went in. I think the way it was set up was, each ship that something to discharge had a section of the beach. We were way down on the left flank circling around. The second bunch was getting ready to go in. The water was rough, the waves were rough and there really wasn't but a five or six foot beach and then there was a wall of roots and stuff maybe twelve feet high. Here comes the Japanese Zeros about treetop high strafing down the beach as the second wave was hitting the beach. They had very high casualties. They lost a lot of boats. I was down in that area about four days later and there were boats swamped all over. I think I heard someone say there were sixty or seventy boats lost. That, plus the fact that we didn't have air cover made for a very difficult landing. We were about three or four minutes behind the first wave but the plane strafed them and then went on. We got about ninety feet from shore when the coxswain threw the engine in reverse, threw the door open and said, "this is it." I could understand because he could see all of those boats swamped sideways. He figures he going to lose control if he goes in further and beside that he didn't like the look of that beach any more than any of us did.

Mr. Cox: Were you taking a lot of automatic fire right about then?

Mr. Beyer: Not a lot as landings go, but enough to give you an extra incentive to get out of the water. Farther on down the beach they were getting heavy fire from the Japs on a peninsula. The planes that were strafing screwed up the area about as bad as anything. We jumped out of that boat and it is kind of a hard when you are trying to hold up your rifle and everything you've got when the water is up to your armpits. We finally got into shore and had the good fortune of not having heavy fire. There was some sniper fire going on but it is not real bad. Things start getting organized and we start doing some firing at the peninsula to help them to get rid of those Japanese there. As a result of all the landing boats being lost we were out of ammunition about the third or fourth day. We had been firing quite a lot but we flat ran out of ammunition. Some time in the evening a Lieutenant came by and said, "hey I need some of you guys." He got a crew of about sixty of us. He told us what he wanted. He said, "You know we lost a lot of supplies down there the day we landed. We got some bulldozers down there and some wagons trying to bring it up here but there are so many snipers we can't do it. We need you guys to go down there to clean out the snipers." That all sounded pretty good, so we join him. He is one of our forward observers and he does have a radio with him. He tells us just to fan out like we learned to do when on patrol. He said, "At last report, a lot of those Japanese snipers are up in trees so be careful." So we fan out kind of like a bunch hunting squirrels. Sure enough my buddy and I get down there and after about 30 minutes we

begin to hear this pop, pop popping sound about a mile toward the beach. So we keep going using the trees as cover. A Banyan forest was about what it is. It was a jungle but there were some openings where it is so dark that nothing will grow. We finally get the tree spotted that the sniper is in. He's up in this tree but we can't see him. We keep getting closer and closer and when we get under the tree he is still firing and we still can't see him. This Banyan tree is probably eight or ten feet in diameter at the base and then it had roots that had grown up about fifty feet. It was heavily foliaged. The good part about it is someone had dug a foxhole there and it was a nice one. It was about six foot long, four foot wide and three feet deep. It was dug in the sand. We got in the foxhole were looking around for the sniper and I guess we kind of dozed off. I guess that guy could have come by and stole our lunch if he had wanted to. We catnapped about thirty minutes when a Jap out in front of us who had either an automatic or a light machine gun began spraying up the woods. We took that in for about ten minutes. My Buddy asked, "Do you think they see us?" I said, "I don't know." The automatic fire would come over our foxhole then it would continue to move. Then there was more gunfire; in fact the popping was increasing pretty much now. My Buddy picked up a piece of cardboard and he just kind of pitched it out. At the same time the Jap sniper decided to spray us again. There were quite a few of them busy around there now. We are totally unorganized. We didn't see any of our people but I think we are the closest ones to the beach but that is about

all I know. It is already getting dark. Howard, my buddy and I each have four grenades with us. Both of us are pretty good throwing those things in practice but this will be the first Japanese we ever threw them at. We decide that I'll throw first and he'll throw second but we'll each throw two grenades. So the sniper does his usual spraying and we've already spotted him real good. We don't want to shoot him with a rifle because we think there might be two and we might miss him. We decide we better do it with a grenade before he does us that way. I'm able to stand up partially and throw two grenades real quick and fall back. Then Howard steps up and does the same thing. I knew my first grenade was right there on the target and also the second one because the canopies on the trees were such that to reach it you had to throw hard enough to go under them. It really wasn't that far. We did that and there wasn't anymore spraying. About an hour after dark we're wide-awake, I can assure you of that (Laughter). We start hearing artillery shells go over and they are bursting out in front of us. Sometimes they were working back toward us and they are getting tree burst. That is fine with us because our hole is on one side and they are down there and we think if we get a tree burst we are in pretty good shape. This goes on all night. We had no communication, we didn't know anything since that guy told us to "fan out and do the best you can as infantry men." We do know that he had a radioman with him and he was a forward observer so we figured that must be him. The truth was the radio didn't work. He crawled back and he got out of that mess just like

he had come in and went down where there was a good radio. The Fourth Battalion had landed that morning and they had zeroed in on different places. He had directed Battalion 105 to keep us covered. We thought he was doing that from somewhere around us so we felt pretty confident that he wouldn't rain it down on us. We felt like the Japanese wouldn't try to crawl around. We had heard that the Japanese would crawl around and get up against you to get away from the firing. I know that neither of us slept that night. The next morning we wondered what was going to happen next but we figured the best thing was to just stay in our foxhole. We figured some troops would be coming this way. We decided to take our jackets off and put them outside of our hole so if one of our guys came along we were hoping he would see our jackets. We weren't really concerned about a flame-thrower because we didn't think they would be in that area. We just wanted they would know we weren't Japanese before they started shooting. These weren't really snipers. They were Japanese that were coming from Rabaul on destroyers. They brought in approximately 800 to 1200 fresh troops this way. There were several of them over a couple of days that had come in there. In a sense they were actually on that beach that we had landed on Monday morning, they started coming in on Wednesday.

Soon after we put our jackets out, a lot of firing started coming from the direction we had hoped some our troops might come from, if they came at all. It was real obvious that we had Japs behind us as well as those in front

of us and any body we might see, who we thought might help us most likely be Japanese.

Mr. Cox: The sniper that was in that Banyan tree, did you ever get him?

Mr. Beyer: We never saw him again. I don't know if he hung himself up there or if he saw a bunch of troops coming and decided that was a good place to stay. Maybe he came down during the night but we never saw him again. We did get the two guys in the hole with our grenades. We joined up with the infantry guys when they reached us after a short encounter with a small band of Japs, which they estimated to be about twenty more or less. We got down to the beach and we stayed in the command center. Before that was over this group had killed about six hundred Japanese. That went on until about noon the next day and what was left of the Japanese went into the jungle they were never a problem anymore.

My buddy and I were more concerned during those two days and nights than any other time I can think of. We were out there all evening, all night and all the next day with Japs in front of us, some behind us and some to the left of us toward the beach. We had no communications and when a part of a marine regiment came through our area they were shooting everything that they thought might be a Jap or if they saw any movement.

Mr. Cox: What rank were you at this time?

Mr. Beyer: I was a Corporal. My job was to set the sights on gun at that time. Of the group of about 50 people that were sent out to get rid of the snipers, all of them returned to our unit before nightfall, only Howard and I were the only two that were unable to return that evening or the next day. I'm glad we didn't know how really bad thing were. I'm sure that on the first day, we passed the Japs very close to us as they went East and we were going West. We were about one to one and one-half miles from our unit the first night. I never heard that any one was killed in the sniper seep escapade but I didn't hear that any more snipers were killed either. . When we were on Guadalcanal we used to get a jeep with a radio on it on Wednesday night for about two hours around nine o'clock. We listened to a broadcast from San Francisco, California and they would give us the day's count. When we were on Guadalcanal they would say, "the Japanese attacked with sixteen bombers, we shot down five." Actually the bombers went on off we didn't shoot any down, but it was all in good spirits. That was the only time I heard Tokyo Rose. She came on that night and said the Americans had landed on Bougainville but the Japanese had pushed them into the swamps where they would be eaten alive and would suffer a fate worse than what it would be with the Japanese. She was spouting all the propaganda but actually it was really the other way around. Later on we got up to where the Fourth Battalion was and

Howard and I went to where the 105 Howitzers were as I had a friend with that group. We looked up my friend Jack Campbell and he is sitting there, no doing anything at the time. He asked what I was doing around there. He said, "you're not one of those idiots that got caught off from the main bunch the other night are you?" I said, "Well something happened to us Jack." He said, "Damn, I never worked so hard in all my life." Jack was a loader and their projectile weighed about forty-five pounds. They were shooting at a very high angle of fire so Jack spent all night pushing those forty-five pound shells up those tubes. He said, "I never got so tired in all my life." We said, "thanks Jack we appreciated the help." and we went on.

A few days after that our Captain of our gun crew comes over and tells us that they were having a problem with some Japanese on the down side of a knoll. The Japs were in a cave and they can't really get to them with anything so they would like a seventy-five Howitzer to shoot a little direct fire. He told us to break down the second gun and they would get it up there. He said, "what we're going to do is when we get up there we'll put the gun back together and in the morning we'll get a some coverage from riflemen and machine guns and that will keep them down. Hopefully by that time we'll have a good idea where the target is and then you'll push your gun up and start firing. The rifles and machine guns should keep their fire off of you. Your first shot should put everybody looking for cover." We started breaking down the gun about two- thirty in the

evening. It was about a half of a mile to where they wanted us to go. This road wasn't a road it is just a swamp through what the bulldozers had cut out swath. This buddy from Pleasanton, his name is Kite and I started carrying the barrel. We're nearly knee deep in mud and that barrel weighs two hundred and twenty pounds. The barrel of the gun has a hole on each end and you put a strap on it and put it on your shoulder to carry it. With all of that weight and being knee deep in mud, every once in a while somebody would have to give you a hand. That is the story I wrote here.

Mr. Cox: What Bill is referring to is an article that appeared in the George West newspaper the Progress that is dated Wednesday March 3, 1999.[1]

Mr. Beyer: I'll tell you briefly what it is and then you can insert it. We were going down that road and we met a bulldozer pulling a trailer like a cotton trailers with about six inch planks on the side and maybe four or five inch openings that they used to stack the cotton in and take it to the gin. This thing had about four or five layers of Marines in there that are dead. I'm estimating there are about forty-five or fifty Marines in there. This bulldozer is pulling them through this mud. The driver is nearly up to his seat in mud and this trailer is not rolling, it is sliding in this mud. We step aside, all of us, to let this trailer go by, we have to. We notice all of these dead Marines in there. Some of them have their ponchos over them and some are just lying there barefaced, if they have a face. One of them I

[1] Copy of newspaper articles in Appendix

guess had been jolted and he is falling in a corner on the rear of this trailer. His arm is sticking out of the back of this trailer and he is laying down head first down in there. His arm is stiff and it is dragging through that mud and the mud is just firm enough that it makes a slick table so to speak when the trailer goes across it. There are three little trenches being made in that mud by his fingers. The mud is stiff enough that it holds the shape of those three little trenches for a little while. I know that I, as well as well as everyone else in our gun section, was praying and hoping that we are not on the next days trailer coming out of this. In my mind that trailer represents part of yesterdays harvest by the Japanese. All of these young men died way to early in life.

The CB's completed a fighter strip down near the water. I didn't know much about him at that time but Pappy Boyington brought his Black Sheep Squadron to Bougainville and they few off of that little airstrip. We got to spend about three days there at the airstrip and the Army relieved us about January 15, 1944. These people were fantastic. On one side they had little work areas and when the planes came in they would go in there. The mechanics serviced them up, put gasoline in them and everything. There were two strips there and these planes would come and one would go this way and one would go that way and then they would both take off nearly side by side, one on one strip and one on the other and the others would be right behind them. It was more like a rodeo. If this happened now, they would drive the air safety people plum out of their head. The

propellers were nearly chewing out the tail end of the one in front of them. We got a bang out of watching them. Every plane had these decals that designate how many Jap planes they had shot down such as one, nine, fourteen and the like. The first day that we were at the airfield, we went down and talked to the pilots and looked at the planes. Most of the planes were really dirty where fuel had blown all over them. The pilots were talking about a pilot named Pappy Boyington that should have been in an hour or so ago. He was more or less missing. One pilot said, "Well, I'll guarantee you he is not dead, you can't kill that s.o.b. I remembered that because after the war I read where he had been shot down and had been a prisoner. He was the first one to break Eddie Rickenbacker's [World Warn I fighter ace] shoot down record. He shot down over 25 Jap planes. Rickenbacker shot down 25 German planes during World War I. The Japanese shot him down but they picked him up with a seaplane and he was a prisoner of war. I never got to meet the guy. He was at the Naval Air Station at Corpus Christi, about twenty years ago, for a Marine birthday. I planned to go and meet him but I got sick and was in the hospital the same day. Not long ago at a Marine Iwo Jima veteran's memorial service that they had at Corpus Christi, a distant cousin of Pappy Boyington's was there. He is an admiral at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station. He is a young man; he doesn't look like he is thirty years old. He is a cousin of Pappy.

Getting back to our story concerning Guadalcanal. We went from Bougainville back to Guadacanal. The boy that I previously mentioned who had sent the skull back to Oklahoma wanted some more, so Kite and I went with him to get some more heads. We got some tow sacks and went to where we knew that we could find some. It is where the artillery caught a bunch of Japanese and we know they are still there. Those Japanese have been dead about forty-five days or so and their heads are loose from their body but it is still pretty bad.

Mr. Cox: The smell is terrible I imagine isn't it?

Mr. Beyer: Yeah, you know people now days can't believe people would do things like this but it wasn't unusual at all then. We had no more respect for those Japs at that time, than we had for a chicken. It was all the same. We doubled the sacks and decided that we would put one head in each sack. We limited Junior to three heads. I was going to send one to a teacher back home. She wasn't my teacher but everyone knew her and I admired her for all the time she spent with the students. She was a pusher on the school sports program. She was a widow lady, pretty old, but any place on the football field that I was I could always hear her. She was always talking to me "do something Bill, look, look, get back farther, come up", I could hear her all the time I was on the field. I was going to send her a head by fixing it up like Junior did. I guess collecting body parts got to be

pretty wide spread in our division. When we got back to our bivouac area they really read us the riot act. They told everybody, there wasn't going to be any more body parts shipped home and if you had any get rid of them. But Junior cleaned his up. I boiled mine for a while but I finally buried it by the tent when they said we couldn't ship any of them home. I didn't want to lug it around.

On May 27, 1944 we boarded the ships. One of our divisions was going to land on Saipan and another on Tinian on June 17th . We were to land on Guam on June 19th. The very first day when they start landing on Saipan and Tinian it became a lot bigger thing than they thought. The Japanese Navy came out of the Philippines at that time and that is when they a gigantic Naval and Air battle was fought. In a sense they destroyed the Japanese Navy and a lot of their Air Corp. Instead of us landing on June 19th they hustled us off to Eniwetok or Kwajalein, I don't recall which one for certain. We stayed down there for about three weeks. While we were there we did all kinds of exercises. While the ships are anchored in the lagoon, we climbed high nets every day. We got very tired of being crowded upon on the ship and Marines got into a lot of fights probably due to the very crowded conditions. The sailors put heavy grease on the many cables on the ship and most of it gets wiped off on Marine jackets that didn't help the moral at that time. It was very hard to get the grease out with salt water.

One morning a Sea Train came up and fixed up and supplied all the battleships, destroyers and carriers. They all took off and we took off about two days later we landed on Guam. It was July 21st. We climbed down the nets into Higgins boats but transferred into Amtracks about a half mile out because the beach was too shallow for boats as it was a coral beach. Before we land we came under intense fire. The Japanese were shooting everything at us. When we were just coming up out of the water there was a tremendous shell burst just to the right of us. We are all just barely peeking over the side of the Amtrak and we didn't get hurt. An Amtrak is able to go in water or on the land due to it's caterpillar type track.

When my wife and I went to Guam in 1995,years ago, I took her to the beach, within ten feet of where that tractor came up. Of course at that time everything was cut down but now they have made a park out of it. There was a little ridgeline of hills up there that I could spot and actually an old creek still runs through up there. On the day we landed the Amtrak went up the creek a little bit. I was telling the tour guide about the guns that were shooting at these Am tracks. He said they still had the guns and he took us over there and showed us two eight inch guns mounted in a cliff looking right at this park. He said, "this was probably your problem, we just left these here for you all to look at." The Japanese defenses were worse than I thought.

We got in there and set up our seventy-five and immediately got into action. About ten o'clock that morning we're shooting but we are shooting for some other people down the beach. We're right up against

the hills. We are so close that at night we can hear the Japs dropping mortar shells down the tubes. As they go up, the powder bags on the mortar shells are still burning but about the time the shells starts down, the powder fire on the powder bag goes out and you always thing its going to hit you right in the head.

We always set the guns up in a diamond formation, with number two guns up front and the number four gun right behind approximately 100 feet. The number four gun got a direct hit that night. Two people were killed and about four injured so we had to switch people there. During the night we also lost our cook, our helper and one other guy out of the wire section. The area from the shore to the first range of mountains was approximately a quarter of a mile. We were down on the flank and there was a row of hills coming nearly out of the water. That night the Navy was shooting up flares for us to see the Japanese and the Japanese were shooting flares to see us. I think everything in the valley that had gasoline in it was on fire at one time or another. The shells were hitting all around us at the time they hit number four. I believe it was eighty-millimeter mortar shells. They were hitting so close in our area that it was throwing mud on us. It had been raining so it was splattering mud all over us. We could also see a big flash, even though we were below the level of ground, because they were so close. For about thirty seconds after those things you have to lie there and figure out if you are alive or are you dead. You don’t want to jump to conclusions because it is a frightening experience. We had that all

that day, all that night, all the next day and night. Starting up the third day things started to improve. The Navy started strafing the devil out of that hill up there. Our fire Direction Center said we fired the first shot on Guam with our seventy-five Howitzers because the number two gun always fired to lay the fire pattern for the battery regiment.

When the Navy fired for us that morning prior to landing we were still up on the ship. It was about daylight and we still up on the ships deck. They were firing those sixteen-inch guns and I think all of our battleships were there. You could see those sixteen-inch shells all the way in this big arc going in. You figure there would be nothing alive when you got there but there was when we got there. We finally got to move out of the beach area after about ten days. After about another five days the Japanese decided they had about had it so they headed for the end of the island. They turned their prisoners loose. There were some young men but most of them that I saw were women. Before we got to them we hitched our unit behind a truck and covered about ten miles that one day. About the time we were going along pretty good there were two Japanese 77 millimeter field guns along the edge of a field that started shooting at us. The truck pulled over. There were two or three tanks near us and I don't know if they were shooting at the tanks or shooting at us. We set up our gun, the number two gun, and one of the other sections set up theirs. The Japs kept shooting their seventy-seven and about the time we start firing the tanks get into position to fire so we didn't shoot but about six rounds.

The Jap's seventy-sevens were in so close, they make your hair stand on end. The best thing you can do is keep shooting and hope to hell you hit something. The tanks do the same thing. The Jap guns stopped firing after about ten minutes, but it was one of the longest ten minutes in my life. When we were on the way to Guam we read in the ship's newssheet about this new weapon we had. I think it was a B-25, Billy Mitchell bomber that had been converted to an attack plane. It was a two-engine bomber and they put a seventy-five millimeter rifle in the nose of it along with four machine guns and it was considered a new weapon. Sure enough about the time we got ourselves collected after the encounter with the Jap 77's, here comes two of these attack planes and boom, boom, each shot twice but they shot over us, not very far, but they shot over us. I don't know if they were shooting at the tanks or us. Thank goodness they missed he tanks and us. This is the way we were introduced to the new weapon we had been reading about.

Mr. Cox: You mentioned that the Japanese release some prisoners. Were these were civilian prisoners?

Mr. Beyer: Yes. They were all native Samolians. These women started coming through our perimeter lines and they were barefooted and in rags. They had obviously been treated very badly. Most of them had a little baby in their arms about a year old. Some were also pregnant, and pretty far along

in their pregnancy. When they saw us, in spite of all the things that they had been through, they started smiling and grinning. It was worth your weight in gold to see those people. We gave them what little food we had. One of our special units came and gathered them up and took them to a safe place.

After that campaign everybody on the island got sick.

Mr. Cox: What kind of sickness did you have?

Mr. Beyer: I think it was a lot of diarrhea and malaria but whatever it was everyone's urine got pitch black. Everyone was lying around and a Navy doctor came around to give us some type of medicine. I was sick quite a while too but by the time I got over it, which was about ten or twelve days, replacement recruits in. We swept the island again to give them a little practice but we didn't do too much. Then they decided to cut the island into sections and another Sergeant who was from Waco, Texas and I volunteered to take an area. One was assigned to us and we patrolled it in the daytime looking for Japanese and set up ambushes at night hoping to get rid of them. There were still a lot of Japanese still running around. They were getting into large groups and causing a lot of problems. This Sergeant, by the name of L.C. West would take his group out one day and I would take mine out the following day. The truck would take us over to the area and take the one who had spent the night there back. Our area was a big valley

and it had a lot of thatched huts and a little creek. The valley was probably a half a mile wide and we could see five miles in each direction. There was also a pretty high mountain. We got into the valley by going down a trail in single file, as it was so narrow, and we would come out on a trail in single file. We would get there by daylight to relieve the group that had spent the previous day there and you could look in that valley and see five or six plumes of smoke coming up where the Japanese were cooking breakfast. We had the patrols and we did real well.

Mr. Cox: When you say you did real well, did you kill them or did you capture them?

Mr. Beyer: No, no one ever said capture them. In one area not far down in the valley the Japs had some thatched huts and they had some pickled brine with crabs and a lot of rice in sacks. I guess these Japanese knew we were in the area so we sat up under a tree that had some big rocks near it. The tree was like a big Elm tree with big limbs spread about three feet off the ground. We took out twenty men patrols. The object was, if they came down the road on our side and if it was a large group, we would just let them walk by. They wouldn't see us. If there were just a few we'd take care of them.

Mr. Cox: If it was a large group, you would get them in a crossfire?

Mr. Beyer: No, we would just let them go on down the road.

There were some pretty funny things that happened. They were serious, but you could see the humor in them. It had been raining and there was this little creek. Normally this creek was about twelve feet wide. On this one occasion, about twenty Japanese walked up on the other side of the creek and they were smoking and talking. It wasn't a full moon but pretty light. You know, if you get out there at with no light at night, after a while you can see pretty well. So we're sitting there watching them.

They're reaching down dipping up water, sloshing around and one of them wades out in that creek. They're talking and I think they decide that water is too deep so they walk down a little farther and they cross the creek.

They get in front of our guys who are down that way and our guys shoot down on them. The Japanese start running toward us. We hear them before we see them. For a moment they try to more or less take cover under this tree where we are. Man, we're hollering and we're firing small arms and stuff like that. I guess they decided that it isn't a friendly place so they go on but they didn't go too far. They stopped on the other side of us. They know now that we are under that tree. The survivors that didn't get killed, I think that there was only three or four of them, ran and jumped in that creek and got out. These guys lay down in a wagon trail.

When we looked for them the next morning they were laying in that wagon trail with a couple of rocks around them. They start firing and we

just held our fire. We didn't think firing on them was going to do any good because they were lying out there, protected pretty well. Well, I'm pretty good with grenades and I think that is the best way to get them. I just whispered to one of our guys, "let me do this." I couldn't throw from under that tree, so I had to step out from under it. I waited until they are in the process of reloading in and I jumped out from behind one of the rocks that we were behind and threw just one grenade. I think it was pretty good throw. I jumped behind the rock and they didn't shoot anymore. Daylight came and everybody started peeking around and counting noses. We went down where they were and it looked like the grenade landed right in the middle of them because they were really tore up.

Mr. Cox: How many did you kill with your grenade?

Mr. Beyer: There were two in there.

Everything doesn't always work out great you know. On another patrol we had we were going through the bushes, using a native guide. The Japanese were letting the natives live there where they were protected. It got to a point we didn't go into the bushes without using native guides. We had two Samoan guides, who supposedly knew the area, and we were going up through the valley up past this place. The fellow I was using as a guide put up a pretty good talk but first thing I knew I was having trouble finding him. All of a sudden we hear this fire and I hit the dirt. There was

a guy close to me and I hear that bullet hit something. It sounded kind of like when you shoot a deer in the belly. I looked over and I could tell that Marine was already dead. That bullet hit right in his windpipe and blew it all to pieces. I tell this story because about three years ago a fellow Marine from Minnesota, who comes to Texas and spends the winter in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, looked me up. His name is Milton Petersen. He knew that I lived in Kingsville. He was on Guam at the same time I was. He wasn't in my gun section so I didn't really know the guy well. He knew that Sergeant West and I took patrols out. He told me that he wanted to come to my house. He came and he told me, "you remember so and so that was killed?' I said, "oh yes, I remember him real well. He was near to me when he got shot." He said, "you know for fifty years I have felt bad about this because the day he was killed he took my place. I was sick all that night and when they got us up to go I went over and told the first sergeant I had been throwing up all night and I could hardly stand up." The sergeant told me he would get another guy and I could go the next day. He said, "this fellow took my place and I found out he was killed." I said, "well, you know that is what war is all about, but you know if I had to tell the story, the shot was probably for me. I was in front of him. From where the fire came I don't know how he got hit like he did. If I were you I wouldn't feel bad about it except for the fact that he was killed. There is no way that anyone can accept the responsibility because it is only inches and feet that separate you from the dead anyway." You

go through that fire like that on Guam and Iwo Jima somebody has got to be taking care of you. His wife was with him and I think he felt better. It had weighed on his mind after all these years. He found me because he knew I was the Section Leader and that I took the guys out on patrols.

I want to go back and tell you about my mother and I having our little codes. She kept telling me about Guam and how she had read this and read that. Of course a letter takes about a month coming and going which was fine with me because I really don't want them to know everything. If she thinks I am in New Zealand and they are happy, I'm happy too. That is one thing I wouldn't have to worry about. They thought I was in New Zealand and they would love to see the place themselves and of course they don't have any more chance on seeing the place as Depression babies than I have. One time, I wrote, "I heard from Ned and Zelda and I understand they moved, do you know where they moved? I always liked Ned and Zelda." I meant to indicate that it meant that I was in New Zealand but we didn't have New Zealand on our code and that just blew right over her. Her next letter would say, "well I read it is summer in New Zealand when it is winter here and your Daddy says he thinks it is pretty nice country. We've got some pictures and stuff." So I would tell her "you know last time I told you Ned and Zelda had moved and I understood they moved way off." She wrote back, "why do you keep telling me about this Ned and Zelda, who are they? Is that some of our kinfolks in

Nebraska?" We had some kinfolks that none of us knew except that they lived in Nebraska. (Laughter)

I'd like to tell you about a funny incident that happened on Guam. We were putting sand in our tent area. My friend Jack and some other scouts found a Seabee storage and they were able to buy eighty cases of beer for twenty dollars if we knew how to get it out of there. The Army is taking over patrols on the roads by this time and we are hauling sand. The Army had roadblocks and the Marines were in their shorts and they would go down to the beach to get this sand. For two days the Marines would go by the roadblocks hauling this sand to put in our tents and those guys on the roadblocks would just wave us through. Little did they know that the beer was hidden under the sand. The night after we got the last of the beer past the roadblocks, we had such a big beer party the Japs could have taken over the whole area. (Laughter)

The malaria finally gets Jack Campbell sent home and the first thing he does is go by and tell my mother and daddy where I am. He told them, "You know, I had to fire all one night because Bill and another guy got caught down there between the Marines and the Japanese. We held them off and they finally got out of it." Then he was telling them about when we were on Guam. He said, "oh yeah, he led patrols there for a long time, while they were trying to clean out all the Japanese." Mother wrote me again and she said, "well Jack came by and we were shocked. We haven't slept hardly at all. The only thing I can tell you Son is be careful." When

I got that letter we were getting ready to go to Iwo Jima. That is about the last letter I got from home when she told me to take care of myself and be careful.

Mr. Cox: Tell me about your experiences on Iwo Jima.

Mr. Beyer: The Third Marine Division was actually a day and a half late landing there on Iwo Jima. The Third Marine Division originally wasn't scheduled to land on Iwo Jima. We didn't even know at the time where we were going. We were destined for another island. The Fourth and Fifth Division ran into so much trouble on Iwo Jima and they were losing so many people so fast that the General committed the Division by the evening of the first day. So the next day we started unloading. We were given the center portion of the island.

Oh, there is something that happened on Guam that I forgot to tell you about. On the second morning after we landed, my friend Howard was setting there changing his socks and there were Japanese about one hundred yards from us shooting at Marines trying to come up the hill. I told him he was going to get shot sitting there. He said, " I don't give a damn, I want to put on these socks." He was sitting, leaning up against a coconut tree stump and when he had his socks about half way on there was a bullet hit that tree. Howard, who was Irish, turned around and he knew the direction it came from. We can see them up there but we can't shoot

them because we don't know which ones are Japs and which ones are Marines. Howard turned around and thumbed his nose at them. About ten seconds later another bullet missed about two inches and he didn't hesitate on getting out of there after that. As I said we weren't destined to land at Iwo Jima but we did. I guess the beaches were terrible the first day because it was still bad the day we landed. Hardly anything can get up those banks of black volcanic sand. I don't know how deep that black sand was but it is just like quick sand. The bulldozers had to get a cable and pull everything up there. There were boats and other equipment by the dozens, swamped and wrecked and clogging up the beaches.

Mr. Cox: Are you still taking a lot of ground fire? A lot of fire from the Japanese?

Mr. Beyer: Yes. They were still pumping it in there. We saw Mount Suribachi which wasn't very far. I guess it was four or five days before the guys get up there and raise the flag. We were firing everything we had, day and night by that time. They were throwing [firing] everything they had at us. We are kind of aware when the American flag goes up. It is kind of hard to add anything that hasn't been said about that particular battle. The small size of the island and the number of personnel involved produced a nightmare for everyone involved.

I don't have a sufficient command of the English language to properly describe a day of combat or why some people die while sometimes others,

who are only inches away, live. In combat, it happens around you every hour and every day. The wonder of it all is, how as many people do manage to survive. Nighttime seems to intensify the problems. You are often under heavy mortar attack and you can follow the enemy mortar shells as they go up, by the burning powder bags that are still attached. About the time the shell start arching down the glow on the shells goes out and at that time they appear to be coming down in your area and generally are. It is an unnerving experience when the shells are hitting so close to you that they are throwing dirt on you and the flash from the explosion comes into your foxhole or whatever you are in. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of being able to get below the level of the ground to enable you to get as low as you can and still perform your job. It is remarkable that you can do your job under such conditions. At that time of your life, you just ask God to get you through, knowing that there will be thousands of times you will call on him for help. After a campaign is over, you feel like God and you are pretty close buddies. The part that you never understand is why many of other, good, young guys didn't make it also. You see this happen in everyday life also; a baby accidentally dies, surely there are no bad babies. We only know that our life is easier when we trust in God. I truly believe the old saying; "There are no atheists in foxholes."

As a charter member of the 3rd Marine Division, I suppose most of us survived just about everything the enemy had. We survived a submarine

attack, being strafed by fighter planes on Bouganville, Japanese bombing attacks on Guadacanal and Bouganville and the usual artillery, mortar and rifle fire associated with everyday war plus the rocket attacks on Iwo Jima. There was one occasion while I was leading patrols on Guam that turned into a kind of a Wild West affair. We had a few laughs about it after it was over. We were on a patrol in this area where there was a large cornfield. The corn stalks were about six feet high. There were about a dozen Japs in some small shelters at the end of this area, which I estimate was about a 20-acre field. Half of my patrol went way out through the brush and tried to get close to the huts. The Japs discovered them and the Japs got into the cornfield before the patrol could get some good shots in. The Japs were running somewhat toward us, but also heading for the brush. Our half of the patrol charged in and started shooting at them and three or four of them started shooting at us. We got within perhaps 50 yards of each other. For about ten seconds there is a lot of shooting, maybe 50 rounds between the two sides. By the time it was over, I think it dawned on everyone that it is very difficult to shoot people running through rows of corn because there are so many corn stocks between you. We didn't follow the Japs into the brush as it was too dense and in all possibility it would have caused us some casualties without getting any Japs.

I wrote a few little things down here in case anybody who reads this text is doing some research on Iwo Jima, so they will have some facts ahead of

them. I wrote, “Iwo Jima, eight square miles of sand, scrub brush, rock, caves and fortifications. Mount Suribachi as we approach it is on the left and I think that is west. Where we landed Suribachi was on the end and in front of the part that they call the pork chop. It probably wasn’t over a mile wide right in front of that and we are sitting about a half-mile in front of it. Mount Suribachi is three hundred and sixty feet high. It is an extinct volcano. I read one time where they destroyed over four hundred pillboxes made out of rock and concrete on that hill. There were eighty-five thousand men committed to that. Sixty one thousand Marines and twenty four thousand Japanese. They fought until twenty-six thousand were dead. This happened in twenty-six days. Sixteen thousand were wounded. If you take eight square miles and you kill a thousand a day that is 125 people killed per mile each day. I don’t remember when the island was secured. I can tell you that all the time that we were there it is a miracle that everyone wasn’t killed because everyone was firing, whether they were being fired on or not. I remember that they had rockets and they fired them in a salvo.

At one point during the battle, we were out of water and I decided to go and find some water. I thought there were some water stations down the road. I started down the road I heard these shells go over and I was pretty sure that they were rockets. They went right over our heads there were also some other Marines near me. I jumped to my right and rolled because I figured they would fire in salvo. That is the way they normally shoot

them. I rolled into a ditch and sure enough some more hit right where we were.

Mr. Cox: These are Japanese rockets?

Mr. Beyer: Yeah. After the shells hit, there were four or five dead people right where we had been walking just a minute before. I rolled in the ditch but the shell hit so close and it seemed to lift me up and the concussion knocked me just as deaf as could be for a few days. I went back to my position and I didn't go get the water. I turned my section over to my number one man. I really couldn't hear even if they hollered my name right in my face and it stayed that way for a couple of weeks. I was stone deaf and during that period of time I didn't actually know where I was.

I think there was another thing that starting to get to all of us and the Marine command realized it. We had been out of civilization about two years. All this time we are up in the islands we never saw another white person unless they are a sailor, soldier or a Marine. We never saw any civilization. The people on Guadalcanal are natives. They put stuff in their hair, they dye their teeth and they forage out in the jungle. One time the Navy thought they could work them in a working party and they were going to feed them dinner. They cooked them food and had plates and everything for them. The natives looked at that food, put it down and went outside and started picking stuff up out of the ground to eat, berries

and potatoes, you name it. The people on Bougainville were supposed to have been headhunters. I only saw one of two and they had all of these tattoos on their cheeks. They ate these beetle nuts and they had sharp looking red teeth. Another thing that started to get to all of is was fatigue. You know we didn't sleep much. We couldn't sleep until we got so tired that it didn't make any difference. The guys were so tired in our Division on Iwo Jima that they got to where they didn't give a damn whether they got hit or not. I know that. I felt the same way myself. I thought what the hell, we're never going to get home anyway. I guess the concussion from that near miss just put me over the edge.

One thing that is really clear in my mind is when we were on this LST and there are about fifteen of us Marines on it along with a crew of about twenty crewmen on this LST. We were in a convoy with two other crippled LST's. We had a rudder problem because he would run on one motor and then two motors and then the other motor for a while they said we were traveling only about eight miles per hour. The LST was not a little thing like you make beach landing with, but it is not a great big one that would take tanks either. It was somewhere in between. It was in the morning and we all had just finished breakfast. We generally would get on deck and do a little exercise and sit around and play cards, but I recall what we were doing. This fellow, I think that is was a First Lieutenant that was in charge of this boat comes out on deck and says, "Hey men, I want your attention. The President of the United States died some time

yesterday and we are going to hold a memorial service for him." I really don't remember what date it was, but I'll say it was April 20th. We had a little service for President Roosevelt. The next morning about ten minutes before eight the Lieutenant came out and said, "I want your attention. We have to do a memorial service for President Roosevelt on April 20th. We crossed the international dateline last night and yesterday is today again." So we did the memorial service twice. That is kind of unusual, I don't know how many other people did that.

From then on, if my mind ever got better, it was better after that. I've got a skip from there until the end of March. I think this is altogether about a month. I don't know exactly what I did. I don't know if I went back to Guam or what. Up until lately I've never cared about trying to figure it out. . I don't remember exactly how long I was in California or what I did but I got home about May 20th. It was just about three years since I had left the United States. I think I might have been half worn out and also I was very, very lucky, for we left a lot of good men over there.

I went to the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi after my furlough and while there, I was called down to the Operations Center and some Colonel said, "I see you are from George West." I said, "Yes sir." He said, "How would you like to go to Beeville and be Brig Warden?" [In charge of the military jail] I said, "I don't know anything about being a Brig Warden and what's at Beeville?" He said, "We have a Naval Air Station there." When I left and went into the Marine Corp, there was nothing like that in

Beeville. I said, "Well yeah, that would be closer to where I live if you think I could handle it." He said, "oh, you can, the Navy will take care of it, you will just be a kind of figurehead." So I went to Beeville Naval Air Station at Beeville, Texas that is where I was when the war ended.

Mr. Cox: What rank were you then?

Mr. Beyer: I was a Sergeant. When we left Bougainville and went back to Guadalcanal the First Sergeant came into our tent one day and said, "hey if any of you guys that are non-coms want to try to be a pilot, they'll pick you up and take you to Henderson Field. If you pass the mental and physical test you may get o.k. to be a pilot. They need some Marine Sergeant pilots." So I said, "hey man, sign me up." After seeing them in action, I was really enthused about that Black Sheep Squadron. They'd come down and strafe and then they would drop their bombs and then come back and strafe. I knew they flew off somewhere and probably had a good meal while we had sheep potato mutton stew, while we were lying in water about half the time. When the Japs came over at night, to dodge their bombs, sometimes you would dive into a foxhole full of water and nearly drown trying to get away from them. They took me down to Henderson Field and a guy gave me an exam. They just asked me some simple things, a little arithmetic, calculating what I probably could do. Then he gave me a physical but that was mostly my eyes. I put the little

things together down a chute. He said, "Oh you are good." He gave me an o.k. and told me they would probably pick me up within ten days or so and send me to the back to the States. He said, "You might be back over here a year from now and be a pilot." I was walking on air when I went back to our camp. A couple of weeks went by and I asked my First Sergeant if he had heard anything about me getting home to be a pilot and he told me that he hadn't heard anything. I would ask again periodically but finally I figured out they had probably filled their quota of pilot candidates. One day I got to thinking; Here I am about thirty years old, I'm an experienced gunner on a seventy-five and we're always shorthanded on the gun crews and the guy says yeah we can send him back to the States and make a pilot out of him. They call up the Captain and tell him they think he has a potentially good pilot and they could use him. I can nearly hear that Captain laughing and saying what in the world would we get out of letting that guy go back to the States and be a pilot while we are already shorthanded. He can handle that sight real well; in fact he is the guy that lays the battery when we do firing. And he probably ended up throwing my application and test results in a trashcan.

I was in Beeville about two weeks or longer and I got a call to go down to the main station. I go in there and the guy is looking at a piece of paper and he says, "I see here where you want to be a pilot." I say, "Yeah, I do remember making out an application." He wanted to know if I still wanted to be one. I said, "Yeah I think so." He then told me I would have

to sign up for a total of three years and I still had four months to go on my enlistment; consequently I would have to sign up for thirty-two more months. He told me to think it over and that they would need a birth certificate. I went home to get the birth certificate and on the way I hear they had dropped the Atomic bomb. After hearing this, I thought there is no way I want to put in another thirty-six months now. If I couldn't fly my little plane and shoot me some Japs, I don't want any part of this. I was still gung ho, even after what I had already experienced. You know you are just kind of goofy at that age. I told them to withdraw my application and I spent the remainder of my time at Beeville as Brig Warden. I finally got out January 10th.

I went to work as a temporary at the Celanese Chemical plant near Kingsville. I wanted to start school and play football at Texas A & I College in Kingsville. I went over to the college with a group of other veterans. The coach there said, "You guys that have been off in the service are too old to start playing football." We didn't have television at the time so we didn't have all of these professional football teams so he thought he was giving us good advice. The only thing I hold against him was that he told us "if I were you, I wouldn't even think about going to college. If you have a job, I'd keep working because it looks like you'll be middle age before you get out of school." I don't remember but one or two guys who stayed there and made him eat his words. I went on back to Celanese and told them to put me down as permanent instead of

temporary. I had a good working life. I did real well for them. I traveled over to German, Canada and Holland. I was kind of a trouble-shooter for them. We had one hundred and four plants. When I was at home I was production superintendent. Out of the three areas in the plant I had by far the largest. I started out in a highly dangerous area in the plant. We were operating with hydrogen at eight hundred pounds and alcohol. I kind of inherited that place after a while. Then when we started methanol synthesis we went up to seventy-two hundred pounds. No one would take that over but me.

Mr. Cox: Our mutual friend, Bob Reagan (who was in the Personnel Department at Celanese) told me that you rose through the ranks as a superintendent rare for a man with no engineering degree. I think that is a wonderful compliment to you.

Mr. Beyer: Most of the engineers that came to work out there would be working out there two or three years. As superintendent I attended all the staff meetings and sometimes they would have these junior engineers there and they would see me sitting there. I guess they thought I had some kind of a chemical engineering degree. Eventually someone would tell them I didn't have a degree. They would be there two or three years and one of them would ask me if I had a degree and I would tell him, "no I don't have a degree, I got all of these people fooled." I kept a plant from closing up

in Canada one time. That was one of the high lights of my career. There was a plant up there that tried to start up production from October to February of one year and they were unsuccessful. They split our plant and we had a new plant manager and he was kind of funny. They called and wanted me to go up there to help out and he told them no. Normally, the other plant manager would try to help other plants out if he had people that could do it. About a week later the guy that did all of this arranging for people to go to other places called me up and said they wanted me up in Montreal Wednesday and it was like Monday evening then. He said, "we've got your tickets over at the counter in Corpus, can you leave?" I said, "Well, I guess so." I got up there and the plant manager of the Canadian operation meets me there and tells me what the problem is. The plant has tried to start up and it is costing about thirty thousand dollars every time they try to start it up. It is a little plant sitting out there all by itself. He told me they were going to make a run and that they were presently in the warm up stages. It was taking them about three days to start up and in doing so; they always burn out the heaters. The contractor would charge them about two thousand dollars to put the heater in and when they got a new one he would charge them another two thousand dollars to put the lid on and it still was not making any methanol. I told them I would watch it start up and there really wasn't any reason it doesn't make methanol because they had before. He said, "yeah but we had a strike and lost all of the guys that know anything about making methanol

and we mixed up a bunch of stuff with pretty inexperienced people. You look it over. If you think we can, you figure out a bill and I'll be talking to you in about three days." I looked it over and discovered that they had mixed all their catalyst up. They didn't know if they had put new back in it or old. The gas wouldn't heat up. It couldn't heat itself up in order to get the bypass action going around and around. It wasn't getting lift from the exchange at all. The heaters would go so far then burn out. To make a long story short I told him I had a bill figured out for a new catalyst. Altogether I told him it would run him about seventy thousand dollars. He asked me "do you think we can make methanol?" I said, "about all I can tell you, you can probably shoot me if you don't, but I feel real confident. I've already seen your heat exchanges and it has a hole in it as big as my leg and you are not getting anything out of it." He authorized it and we did it. I wrote up the schedule for them to start up. I wrote up exactly where they were supposed to be for thirty-two hours. By my figures at nine o'clock that thing would be self-supporting. He had a big dial on there that said the heater is at eighty percent or whatever it was. He kept cutting it down and at eight o'clock he just had ten per cent of the heater and at nine o'clock he cut it off to zero. He kicked in a recycle and smoothed it off like a plane taking off. There were thirty-four people working that plant and every one of them were in that control room that night. We went into town about eleven o'clock that night and went to a big Chinese restaurant. It made me feel real good to help them out like

that. They knew that was the end of it. That guy didn't mince words, he said, "if it doesn't start this time, that's it, the plant will be gone." They were out there by themselves. It was a bad place to be built but that was where it was.

Mr. Cox: Thank you Bill, we certainly appreciate you taking the time to come to Fredericksburg and contribute your story for inclusion in the archives of The Center for Pacific War studies here at the museum.

Mr. Beyer: You are welcome. It has been my pleasure.

Transcribed by:
Cynthia Gay Cox
San Antonio, Texas
April 10, 2001

Appendage

The National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with W.C. “Bill” Beyer

3rd Marine Division-A Battery 1st Battalion

Guadacanal-Bouganville-Guam-Iwo Jima
1942-1945