

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR  
(Nimitz Museum)**

**CENTER FOR PACIFIC WAR STUDIES  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with**

**DE LAUGHTER, GEORGE**

**U. S. ARMY**

**7th INFANTRY DIVISION**

**32nd INFANTRY REGIMENT**

ORAL HISTORY  
GEORGE W. DE LAUGHTER  
7th INFANTRY DIVISION

Today is the 19th of October, 2002, I am interviewing Mr. George DeLaughter. This interview is taking place at the National Museum of the Pacific War in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. I would ask Mr. DeLaughter now, for the tape, to identify himself, his name and address.

MR. DE LAUGHTER: I'm George W. DeLaughter. I live at Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 71923, 213 North Park Drive, and my phone number is 870 246 4945.

Mr. Johnson: INTERVIEWER: Your date of birth, sir.

MR. DE LAUGHTER: Date of birth is October the 11th, 1916.

INTERVIEWER: And your parents' names and where they came from.

MR. DE LAUGHTER: My father's name was George W., I'm a junior, and my mother's name was Pearl Cookston DeLaughter. They married in Jonesboro, Louisiana, and then moved to Arkansas, place by the name of Sparkman. I lived at Sparkman for 83 years before I moved to Arkadelphia.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have siblings?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: I had one brother, John DeLaughter. I had Helen, Mattie D., Mary Sue and Glen. There was six of us.

INTERVIEWER: Are any of them still alive?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: Yes, there's three of us still alive.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us something about your education, where you went to school and what kind of education you got.

MR. DE LAUGHTER: I went to school at Sparkman, Arkansas, and after graduating from high school in 1935, I went to Quichata? Baptist College at Arkadelphia. I tried to play football there and got crippled up and dropped out of school after the third year. So I completed three years of college. Then I went to work at a wholesale drug house and worked there about a year, then went into automobile business with my father and my father died in 1941. When the war broke out after December the 7th, automobile

manufacturers quit manufacturing automobiles. They organized ordnance battalions and the dealers were given commissions, even without any military experience, of from 1st lieutenant to major. I was told that I needed to sign up for that because I was 25 years old and I'd be cannon fodder if I didn't. But I had friends that I grew up with that didn't have that opportunity, and also the flag was waving and I felt it my patriotic duty to try to do more than sit behind a desk with an ordnance outfit. The army wanted to put me in ordnance and then they wanted to put me in another branch of the service. I told them I wanted to get in the fighting end of it and I had to sign a waver on my flat feet to get in the infantry. I later felt like I made a mistake in doing that. After getting my basic training at...

INTERVIEWER: Let me back up. When did you enlist?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: After the war started, it was in 1942.

INTERVIEWER: In Jonesboro?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: No, at Sparkman. I went from the induction center at Camp Joe T. Robertson in Arkansas to Mineral Wells, Texas, and got my basic training there and applied for officer training school at Fort Benning Georgia, and was accepted. January the 15th of 1943, I was commissioned 2nd lieutenant. I was sent from there to the west coast and eventually wound up with the 32nd Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division. We left Fort Ord and went to Attu in the Aleution Islands and after the battle of Attu, the port commander there made me dock superintendent. I held that job for about three months and could have stayed there for the remainder of the war but the latrine rumor was that we were going home to train other troops because we had combat experience. I was given the choice of staying or going with my outfit so I chose to come back. After the third day on ship, every morning the sun came up over the bow of the ship, and the third morning it came up over the port side. They had made a starboard turn and headed due south. I didn't know where we were going but I knew it wasn't back home. We went to Oahu, took on replacements and trained, went from Oahu to Quagellan? and after Quagellan? went back to Oahu and took on replacements and were on our way to Yap Island and they changed the plans. We went down below the equator and joined other forces and went with MacArthur back when he returned to the

Philippines. We landed at Dulag on Leyte, and after Leyte I was a supply officer on Quagellan and part of the time on Leyte. I went back to a rifle company that had lost all of their officers and I was with them until two days before we sailed to Okinawa. My battalion commander put me back as supply officer because the supply officer messed up and they hadn't started loading the ship. I was elated, really, to go back to supply officer because I knew how much artillery they had on Okinawa, and I didn't think there was any way I could have made it in a rifle company on Okinawa. August the 14th, 1945, we went to Inchon, South Korea and there was a POW enclosure at Inchon, Japanese POW camp. I had a friend that I was in school with that was on Wainwright's staff and made the death march and I looked for him in the Philippines. When I went ashore at Inchon there was a POW down there where we landed. I asked him if he knew whether there was a Cecil Sanders in this POW camp. Yes, Cap. Sanders is up there. There was one vehicle that came ashore, Col. Finn, the Regimental Commander's jeep, and I ran over pretty excited about my buddy being up there in the POW camp and asked him to use the jeep. He wasn't real happy to let me have it, but he did. This POW went with me back to the camp and he went in and told Cecil I was out there and Cecil came. He was real glad to see me. He had been a POW for four years and we had a good visit. He told me a story that after August 14th our government started dropping supplies in these POW camps in various places. The one there at Inchon they dropped food for them and put it in a barrel and tie this barrel to a harness on a parachute and drop it out of the plane. They could pick up the food and take it back into the camp. When they flew over the one at Inchon, they kicked the barrel out of the plane and the parachute opened but the barrel came out of the harness and fell through the roof in the mess hall. There was an Aussie POW in there and he says, "Ye Yanks are pretty bloody accurate dropping the food in the mess hall." I went on into Seoul and I was battalion commander there. After I got my replacement, I came back to Fort Lewis, Washington, and from there made it on back to Arkansas and was discharged March 14, 1946. I got home earlier than that but that's when my discharge. I went back into the automobile business and LP gas business after that. I retired when I was 60 years old and that was 26 years ago. I've been partying ever since and very few people have enjoyed living as much as I have. That pretty well covers, unless you have

any questions.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I'll ask you a few little details. Were you with the 7th Infantry Division through this whole period?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: All the way through.

INTERVIEWER: From Alaska to the Philippines to Okinawa and into Korea?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Were they part of the scheduled occupation force in Korea. I know they ended up there anyway.

MR. DE LAUGHTER: We went in to relieve the Japanese and I can tell you one more story there. We still had what was for our own benefit but had curfew at 7:00 PM. No one was allowed out. We could go anywhere we wanted until 7:00 PM. I had been the most conscientious person in the army while the shooting was going on. I did everything that I could possibly do to do the right thing but after the shooting was over, I wanted a little bit of freedom. I gave them thirty days, I didn't tell them, but I gave them thirty days to lift that curfew. At the end of that thirty days, they hadn't lifted it. I had a house boy that spoke English and I told him I wanted him to take me to the best restaurant in Seoul. We went to this restaurant and it was a five-story building and I think it was connected to the finest hotel there. I went in and made reservations for seven people for that night, my house boy and other officers in my company. They had me print my name and I printed my name for them. That night when we got back there, we went in a three-quarter ton truck with a covered bed on the back, we parked it out in the parking lot and went to the door and pulled off my combat boots and put on slippers and went inside. On a big board in there they had all the Korean scribbling except there was one name in English and that was De Laughter. We were in dining room number 5 and it was on the third floor. We climbed the stairs to the third floor. We were having an eight-course dinner. We were supposed to have roast duckling and they brought the first course and we had four or five servers and those girls were also performers. I don't remember the technical name for them but they sang and one of them played a little musical instrument like a ukulele. The first song was Adedaum?, and it was a sad song. I asked my interpreter what they were singing about and he said this lover had gone over the mountain far away and would never

return. They brought a little rice wine out with that, and the second course they brought a little more rice wine, and the third course they came back and started to sing a song. I requested Adedaum? so they sang Adedaum? again. I joined in with the singing and then everything got quiet. I looked over my shoulder and that MP looked like he was eight feet tall standing there. He said, "Now which one is De Laughter?" I told him I was and he checked my dog tag. I got in all kind of trouble later on about taking my company down there. I said, "Out of curiosity, how did you find us?" He said, "Well, there was an unauthorized government vehicle on the parking lot, came to the door and there's six pairs of combat boots lined up with a bunch of rubber shoes, and inside on the board it says in big letters "De Laughter, dining room number 8." I tried to get him to let us finish our meal but we had to go right then. We didn't find out how that duckling taste. I just thought I'd throw that in.

INTERVIEWER: Did they lift the curfew pretty shortly after that?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: No they never did. But I tell you I got this house boy to teach me how to write my name in Korean but I never did go back. If I had, it wouldn't have been in English.

INTERVIEWER: The period in the Philippines was what, you were there six months?

MR. DE LAUGHTER: I can't remember, but in the Philippines our battalion took terrific beating on the eighth day trying to take an airfield. Our battalion was so shot up that they sent us to a little island down at the foot of Leyte by the name of Panoen. We were there about a month and we were just thirteen miles from Mindanao. There was thirty thousand Japanese garrisoned at Mindanao but lucky for us they never came over. I found a fellow, before we left Leyte going down to that, was with the AmeriCal? Division and he had a nice hammock and I traded him a nice Japanese flag for that hammock. When we got down there at Panoen, I picked me out a couple of palm trees just the right distance and I set up this hammock. It had a canvas top that extended over the side and the sides with mosquito netting and had a zipper. Talk about luxury, now boy that was so good to sleep in. But I had dug a foxhole right outside of it in case of an emergency. About midnight, there was a Japanese plane flying low and slow and it dropped out fifty-pound antipersonnel? bombs, dropped five of them. When that first one hit, I started trying to

get that thing unzipped. That fifth one hit about forty yards from me before I could get out of there and I gave that hammock away. That's the only time I tried to sleep in it. We were there about a month and went back up and made a night landing on the other side up near Ormoc?, which was on the other side from Dulag where we landed originally. I don't remember how long we were there. I think it was probably the 101st or the 82nd Airborne Troops that made a drop about half way between Dulag and Hormoc? back up in the mountains and the Japanese surrounded them. They called for help and the 1st Battalion was the closest battalion to them, so they sent us up there. We went as far as the trucks would go through the swamp and that's where we had to set up supply dump. That's where the trucks could go. The troops went on five miles farther than where I had to supply them. I knew we couldn't supply the airborne folks along with the whole battalion. I got a couple of farmers who had water buffalo, Carabao they called them, and we tied supplies on those old buffalo and it was a long trip and slow trip. That night I saw there wasn't any way we could keep that bunch supplied that far away with no transportation. I paid those people good for the use, and I told them, "Get me as many farmers as you can." The next morning there was altogether 47 of them out there, but I used all of them. I just used my supply troops, they had the rifles and they'd walk around them for protection. And one thing I'll throw in there, one thing that to me was amusing. Mrs. Roosevelt was running all over the country selling war bonds about that time but some GI. had made a sign out of a ration carton that said, "Eleanor Slept Here." And it was in a vacant foxhole and I thought that was pretty amusing. One day they came back with four bodies tied on these buffalo and one of them was an exceptionally good friend of mine by the name of Hagen. That was the only way to get them back from up there. Hagan was 6 feet nine inches tall and his hands almost touched the ground on one side and his feet on the other when they were bringing those bodies out of there. I'll run up all of your tape if you're not careful.

INTERVIEWER: That's what we're here for. You were infantry company commander, rifle company commander, when you first landed on Leyte, is that right?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: No, when we first landed there I was supply officer. I went back to A company later and then went back to supply. Then on Okinawa, at the end of the

war, I made company commander there. The company commander that had the company had enough points to come back. He had been in the army longer than I had.

INTERVIEWER: So your tour of Korea then was with the rifle company.

MR. MC LAUGHTER: No, I was service company commander. I went from supply officer, as S4 I was in service company, I relieved a fellow by the name of Captain Ernest Higgins. I took over service company of the 32nd Regiment there on Okinawa.

INTERVIEWER: And that's who you went to Korea with?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: You came back through Fort Louis, you said, and you remained in the service for quite a few months after you got back to the States, I take it.

MR. MC LAUGHTER: Well, it wasn't too long after that. I tell you, when we got back to Fort Louis, the first day I saw an ole boy walking ahead of me, about 100 yards ahead, and I could tell by the way that guy walked who I thought he was. I walked real fast and caught up with him and it was he from Nashville, Arkansas, and he said he had been waiting there at Fort Louis two weeks for a troop train, transportation was scarce. I said, "Well, I'm not sitting here watching it rain for two weeks waiting on troop train." So I got three of my buddies and we got on the bus there at the gate at Fort Louis and rode to Seattle and got a room at the Olympia Hotel, enjoyed the food in the dining room with white linen tablecloths and white napkins and silverware spread out there. It beat that chow on that troop ship so bad you wouldn't believe it. I didn't eat very much on the troop ship. It was way overloaded coming from Korea back and I spent all of my time in the bunk reading books, old books that had been donated to the USO. I didn't care what book it was but it was something to pass the time.

INTERVIEWER: Were you injured or wounded at all?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: Not at all. I was in the hospital eight days. I got hurt in Ranger School. I volunteered. I just had problems with making decisions. I begged them to let me go to Ranger School on Oahu, and the last day, two hours before it was over, I got hurt and wound up in the hospital for eight days. As far as in combat, no, a training injury. I was real fortunate. I had some close calls but I never did get hurt. The good Lord was with me.



INTERVIEWER: You weren't married when you went off to service?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: No.

INTERVIEWER: You got married after you came home in 1946.

MR. MC LAUGHTER: Right. I married Martha Jean Taylor. I was real careful not to write her and tell her how much I loved her because I didn't want to get too obligated. I made a mistake, I should have. In fact, the only time in my life that I have been down in the dumps was in the Philippines. We didn't get any mail for five weeks and I didn't hear from her. I thought she's probably married some joker back home. Man, I was really in bad shape there for a couple of weeks, and then we got some mail and had three letters from her. But after that, I wrote her a little bit different letter, not much different but I let her know I missed her. Anyhow, I had some pretty stupid ideas. The first one, I guess, was insisting on getting in the infantry. And then, the next one was volunteering for that darn ranger school, and then not telling her to begin with that when this thing's over I want to marry you, but I didn't do it.

INTERVIEWER: Was she a girl from Sparkman?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: Yes, I had known her and her family for a long time. We've been married fifty-six years. She's not down here with me. My other daughter is with her back in Archadelphia.

INTERVIEWER: You came down here with one of your daughters and son-in-law. Is that right?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: Daughter and son-in-law, Susan and Jerry Young. (end of side 1 of tape) The only decoration I got was a Bronze Star. Of course, I got the Philippine Liberation medal and all Asiatic Pacific medal, Victory over Japan medal, but that was the only personal decoration.

INTERVIEWER: How about unit citations and decorations?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: I tell you what, I wasn't in any unit, we had some large units that got them but I wasn't in that unit.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stay in touch with any of the officers that you served with after the war?

MR. MC LAUGHTER: That's what I'm doing down here now. See these officers, one

officer from California, two from Oregon and two from the state of Washington here. I've been going to these reunions for twenty years.

INTERVIEWER: What units, the 32nd Infantry Regiment?

MR. MC LAUGHER: 32nd Infantry Regiment. The 32nd Infantry Regiment officers that have these reunions. I've also been to some of the 7th Division reunions. In fact, they had one in Little Rock. I kept in touch with them. The first battalion commander I had, a fellow by the name of Ernest Beres?, he's in the other room in there now, a fellow with a mustache. When they made me supply officer they told me I'd have to move in that shack with Col. Beres. Man, I didn't want to move in there because I knew I'd be shining shoes, but he's the nicest fellow I met during the war. I'd be on my bunk and I'd say, "Col., would you mind doing so and so?" He'd do it and say, "De Laughter, you're the only 2nd lieutenant in this man's army that's got a colonel waiting on him." I said, "Col., I appreciate it." But he was a good commander and really a fine officer and I couldn't say enough. I kept in touch with him, too, because I think so much of him. Of course, a bunch of those people that I liked real well have passed on, and I feel lucky that I've been around here this long.

INTERVIEWER: We're glad that you have been.

MR. MC LAUGHTER: One reason our children wanted us to move from Sparkman to Arkadelphia, Saprkman didn't have a hospital, it's a small town. And I tell people that they wanted us to move to Arkadelphia and we do live right close to the hospital there in Arkadelphia. I said they wanted us to move to Arkadelphia so we'd be close to the hospital, the nursing home and the funeral home.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it may not be quite that bad. They're looking out for your interests. I think you have covered your service extremely well. I appreciate your forthrightness and all of the numerous stories.

MR. MC LAUGHTER: I've made a tape recently, at the insistence of my family, with some of the same stuff I've told you. One reason it came as easy as it did. My tape recorder was not a good one and that tape is so scratchy and background noise. I'd know what I wanted to say but then I'd have to stop and think of what I was going to say.

INTERVIEWER: It's easier if you have notes in front of you to remind yourself and

things like that. We try to do our recordings in a relatively calm atmosphere so you don't get a lot of background.

MR. MC LAUGHER: It's sure nice and I appreciate your doing this. I'll not take up anymore of your time.

INTERVIEWER: Well, okay.

Transcribed September 8, 2005 by Eunice Gary