

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR
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Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

**An Interview With
Valentin R. Ybarra
3rd Battalion 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division
Peleliu, Okinawa
Korea, Vietnam
April 29, 2004**

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is April 29, 2004. I'm interviewing Mr. Valentin Ybarra at his home at 1803 Cenesia, Alice, Texas, 78332. His phone number is area code 361-668-9841. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War Center for Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Valentin, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today. Let me ask you a question. Do you have a middle initial?

Mr. Ybarra:

R.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay. What is your birthdate?

Mr. Ybarra:

1-26-28.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Ybarra:

I was born in Banquete.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many brothers did you have?

Mr. Ybarra:

Living right now are two, no three brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many did you have altogether?

Mr. Ybarra:

Four.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were any of those in World War II?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir, my oldest brother, Jose. He's deceased now. He was in the Navy. He went in 1942 and I think he passed away about five years back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You and he were the only two in the war then?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to school—high school?

Mr. Ybarra:

I hate to say this but I didn't get to high school. I got to the ninth grade and I quit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay.

Mr. Ybarra:

Or I was asked in the ninth grade to leave and I joined the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, okay, and when was that?

Mr. Ybarra:

1944, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you recall the date?

Mr. Ybarra:

July 26.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Marine Corps?

Mr. Ybarra:

My brother was in the Navy. He was on leave one time and he asked me if I wanted to join a real good outfit to choose the Marine Corps and I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where did you join at?

Mr. Ybarra:

I joined in Corpus Christi and I went on to San Antonio for my...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where you were sworn in?

Mr. Ybarra:

Inducted there in San Antonio and from there I went straight to San Diego.

Mr. Misenhimer:

San Diego, California?

Mr. Ybarra:

California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now how did you go out there?

Mr. Ybarra:

There was nothing but either bus or train so I went by train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip?

Mr. Ybarra:

Long—it was a long trip.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have to sit up in a train chair car or did you have something to sleep in? Pullman cars?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, they gave us a place to sleep.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, did they? That's good. And how was the food on that trip?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, the food was good and after that I just reported to recruit people in San Diego and from there on was nothing but hell.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about your training. How was your training?

Mr. Ybarra:

Well the training wasn't very long, but it was rough. What I had was a month's training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, okay. You had about a month's training.

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir, and then from there I went to department of Pacific. I mean up and down the coast that's by 15---oh, after that I went to New Zealand, staging area, and then about September, the middle of September, we hit Peleliu.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which division were you in now?

Mr. Ybarra:

First Division.

Mr. Misenhimer:

First Marine Division. What company, what battalion?

Mr. Ybarra:

I was in Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Division?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me back up a little bit before we get any further. In your training, what all did you—
in your month of training—what all did you learn there?

Mr. Ybarra:

How to survive. How to survive.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a lot of weapons training?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir, that's one thing, the good old M-1 was your weapon, your big buddy. It was everything to you. You couldn't do anything without it. I mean you had to sleep with it, whatever you did you had to have that M-1 with you, either carried or that's about it. Just carry that rifle and a pack.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get sharpshooter or anything like that?

Mr. Ybarra:

No, not at this time but I was pretty doggoned good, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your drill instructors, were they pretty rough on you?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir, they had to be. They had to be so a guy could survive, you know. He said, "I don't want to leave you guys on the beach or stay out there. We want you in."

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then you left there and went to the South Pacific to New Zealand? What ship did you go on? Do you recall?

Mr. Ybarra:

Hell, at that time we didn't pay no attention to ships or anything like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it crowded?

Mr. Ybarra:

It was more than crowded. It was like a pack rat in there and then from the staging area I went to, like I said, Peleliu.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went to New Zealand. Now on the way down, did you get seasick or anything?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, no sir. I was just one of the lucky ones that didn't get seasick but a lot of my buddies did especially when they would cross the equator and they initiated us. We were pollywogs and they made us shellbacks. They were already shellbacks. And they had one of those ceremonies crossing the equator you know, that was the biggest initiation. They rubbed garbage and all that on you and you had to come and kiss it and all that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Quite a ceremony, huh?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir, it was. We had to slide through our garbage. They threw it on the deck and you had to—well after that we had to crawl through mud and every damned thing, you know, and then after Peleliu...

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did that trip down there take?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, I'd say about seventeen days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you by yourself or were other ships with you?

Mr. Ybarra:

No, we had other ships.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how long were you in New Zealand?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, for about a month.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there?

Mr. Ybarra:

Training. We walked.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any training of landing on beaches?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir, there at Pendleton.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, you did there. Went down the side of the ship on those nets?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And into the small landing craft. How was that?

Mr. Ybarra:

For a seventeen year old kid, you didn't mind it because you were full of pep and you could do it, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you left New Zealand and went to Peleliu?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you land there the first day or what day?

Mr. Ybarra:

No, I was on the third day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in the weapons company?

Mr. Ybarra:

Weapons company.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what kind of weapons did you have in that company?

Mr. Ybarra:

Heavy weapons like machine guns, 30's. We had 81mm mortars, bazookas...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Flame throwers?

Mr. Ybarra:

Flame throwers were in the weapons company, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job there?

Mr. Ybarra:

A rifleman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Even though you were in the weapons company, you were still a rifleman?

Mr. Ybarra:

Uh huh.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay and you landed on Peleliu about the third day?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was it there?

Mr. Ybarra:

Scary. Scary.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Pretty rough there.

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes sir, it was. They said it was about a five week operation and it took us about five months—a little over five months—to secure the island.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the first place that you landed, was there a lot of wreckage on the beach and that sort of stuff?

Mr. Ybarra:

I don't think there was enough resistance, you know on the beach, until after they got inland.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there in Peleliu?

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, whenever a rifle company asked for heavy weapons, we had to go there. We had, like I said, I was a rifleman. We had to escort the people that were going out there to whatever company they requested.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get into any direct fights with the Japanese?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yea—yes sir. You'd hear this—they had radios set up, you know, loudspeakers.

“Marine, you die tonight”.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was Chesty Puller the commander of that regiment?

Mr. Ybarra:

Chesty Puller had the Seventh Marines, 7th Regiment.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you were in the 1st regiment?

Mr. Ybarra:

No, I was with the 5th.

Mr. Misenhimer:

5th Regiment. Oh, okay. You were 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division. Tell me more about Peleliu—some things that happened there.

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, after we cleared all the mountains, the island was secured. We went back aboard ship and we headed out for...I think it was back to New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Solomon Islands—maybe you went to the Solomon Islands or do you know? New Zealand?

Mr. Ybarra:

New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back to New Zealand.

Mr. Ybarra:

And then on 1 April, we hit Okinawa. And again not much resistance when you hit the beach, but inland we had quite a bit, you know, especially up on the Sugarloaf. That's when we started getting really getting really hairy—scared, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in the same outfit then?

Mr. Ybarra:

Same outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you land on the first day on Okinawa or what day did you land there?

Mr. Ybarra:

Second day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Second day. And you were at Sugarloaf?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were some other battles you were in there?

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, that's about the only one, the heaviest to me I think, and that was it, you know.

Especially like I say 17 or 18 years old then, you know, you don't pay too much attention. You're just trying to stay alive, you know. You hear those 81's or whatever mortars they're sending us. You hear the whistle and you have to run for cover.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you anywhere near Shuri Castle?

Mr. Ybarra:

No, I believe that was either the 1st or 7th the Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I kind of think the 1st Marines were there. What were some other things that happened on Okinawa?

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, I know on the 15th of April, we got hit by a typhoon and we had to secure ourselves. We went to these Japanese caves. After the typhoon and about 15 or 20 days later they said the war was over. Then we went to Japan. That was in August.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were on Okinawa all the time the fighting was going on there?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes. Now I went to Japan and I was in Japan for about sixty days and then the division was reassigned and went to northern China.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do in China?

Mr. Ybarra:

In China we got Tientsin and between Tientsin and Tsingtao and we were guarding these railroads, railroad trains and whatnot, you know, for possible sabotage or stuff like that and also picking up Japanese things or weapons. So I was there until 1949 when they kicked us out. The Reds took over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were there all that time?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, you were there about four years almost. Did you, in China, were you all taking the Japanese prisoners, taking them back?

Mr. Ybarra:

We were getting them but somebody else, another outfit, was taking care of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you were bringing them in?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes. Yea, I was there until November, '49, and that's when I said, "I'm going home."

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's the first time you've been home since you went in, right?

Mr. Ybarra:

And I decided not to get out, you know, so I said, "What the hell, another cruise." So in the meantime I was getting lectures this and that, you know like they had two possibilities going to explode, either Korea or Vietnam. Well, at the time it was Indochina. So I was prepared and we trained all this time, you know, so Korea exploded and here I asked to volunteer. This time I joined a regular infantry outfit. I was with the 5th Marines again, Item Company. I was there September 15th to November of '51. I made the Inchon landing. I went up north, you know, around the reservoir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right, the Chosin Reservoir.

Mr. Ybarra:

Uh huh.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were there in that?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was rough there.

Mr. Ybarra:

It was cold and a guy from here in South Texas never seen that much snow and the ground was frozen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you all were surrounded up there, I believe.

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

By the Chinese.

Mr. Ybarra:

We had a general that said, "We got them where we want them—all around us. Shoot any direction and you'll get them." I came back in late '51 then I went to Marine Corps School. I got leave. I got home on leave. Then I went to Marine Corps Schools at Quantico. There at Quantico I went to small weapons repair school and I lacked too much, anyway. I said, "What the heck, another cruise." I would care to go to Spain. So in Spain I was about four years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you bring any souvenirs home from Spain—anything from Spain that you brought home?

Mr. Ybarra:

Her and two boys.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your wife and two boys. That's a nice souvenir.

Mr. Ybarra:

We'll be married come February 14th, we'll have 47 years of marriage.

Mr. Misenhimer:

47 years, huh?

Mr. Ybarra:

When I got to Spain I was Marine barracks armorer and I always had all through the armory on Morocco and I had to make a trip over there once a month to check the weapons over there and come back and make my report and wrote up. We used to go to Kenitra, Casablanca. We'd spend a couple of days over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you were in Spain, of course you spoke Spanish here in Texas.

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Could you understand the people over there? Could they understand you?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir. But when they talked to me, it was "say that again".

Mr. Misenhimer:

They speak Castilian Spanish.

Mr. Ybarra:

We had to eat and live in the village. You know in the restaurants they'd bring a plate for one thing, a plate for another thing, a plate there. I said "Can't you put everything on one plate? The plate is big enough, you know, to put everything in." "You eat our way or don't eat. When you're at home you eat the way you want."

Mrs. Ybarra:

When he asked for the tortilla, tortilla de maiz, they told him tortilla de que clase— tortilla espanol or tortilla, you know, con potatoes and eggs. "No, I don't want potatoes."

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else did you do in Spain? What rank did you have then?

Mr. Ybarra:

I was a buck sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Buck sergeant, okay.

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, there for a while I was the admiral's interpreter. It didn't last very long because there was a language barrier but I did alright for a month or so and you know the thing is we couldn't wear a uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You couldn't wear uniforms?

Mr. Ybarra:

No, that was Marine Corps. Well just before I went over to Spain, they told us at Washington, D.C., that over there Mr. Franco don't like to have the uniform in town. So they issued us a coat and tie and a white shirt. So that's what we'd wear, you know. But we had to go by Spanish hours also. Our days consisted of 9:00 in the morning, work 'til 2:00. The place was going to be our Marine barracks and after that we had to take a break 'til about 6:00 and after that we worked until about 7:00 in the evening and then you were off until the next morning at 9:00. Those Spaniards know how to live.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What admiral were you interpreting for? What was the admiral's name?

Mr. Ybarra:

I don't even remember the admiral.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in that write up, you said that you got a purple heart. Where did you get the purple heart?

Mr. Ybarra:

Vietnam.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Vietnam. Okay. You were in Vietnam also?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Still with the First Marine Division?

Mr. Ybarra:

No. After I got back from Spain, I was assigned to, or I was on the east coast with the 2nd Marine Division. In '63, when they had those missile crisis, I went over to Cuba and to reinforce at Gitmo Bay. I was there for about a month and came back to Camp Lejeune. Then an uprising over in Santo Domingo, Hispanola, so I went up there for another month or month and a half, come back, and then we had orders—mount up, you're going to WestPac, Western Pacific. We were on WestPac and my people, they said, "Where are going this time?" I said I'm going to Japan and my brother, Joe, who was on leave said, "Why don't you tell them the truth? You're going to Vietnam." "Yeah, okay." So I let them know that's where I was going and I spent thirteen months over there with the First Division in Vietnam. I came back to the states and you get used to or maybe I'm the only one that got used to it, I couldn't stay here. I mean not in this—living in the barracks and going to classes and all that, you know, so I said "what the hell" and me and this other guy, "let's volunteer again". So we did. I spent eight months over there on my second tour and I got sent back because I got hit on the leg and they blew my kneecap off and I spent a little while in the hospital and now I thought. Well, then I got out of the hospital and I was assigned to the 5th Marine Division Engineers and then all of a sudden they called me to the office and says "You know you're going over there for the third time?" I said, "How can I? I've got a walking cane." I mean I was using a walking cane. I said, "Sergeant Major, you tell me what the hell am I'm going to do with a walking cane and do all of that walking, 'cause I put my letter in for retirement." He said "You have the time?", and I said "Check my jacket." He checked my jacket and says I could already have retired five years ago. I said okay. So in 1969 I was approved to be

retired. Twenty-five years of active duty and then I spent five years in reserves. And then I got my letter in for a completely retired thirty year service. Then I worked for Pablo Gonzalez Hardware for twenty-two years. I retired from there and I was a plumber's helper helping my buddy out. He's a plumber—helping him out with plumbing and all that just to be busy, you know. And that was about it. I retired. When I was working at Pablo's, I got my G.E.D. and I went three years with Coastal Bend or Bee County College and that's the end of Ybarra. I mean, besides being a member of the VFW and I always help them out with bingo until I got sick. They found I got colon cancer and I just got over it. I still have to go and check with the doctors and all of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they do surgery for it?

Mr. Ybarra:

No—radiation. And he didn't want me to be outside without that lotion. Get a suntan and sometime get that lotion...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were 16 when you went in?

Mr. Ybarra:

17.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If you were born in '28 and you went in '44, that's 16.

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, sometimes you have to lie to get what you want.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You told me that you were 17 but you were 16? You were about 16½ when you went in.

Did you folks have to sign for you?

Mr. Ybarra:

My mother did. When I told her that I—I didn't tell her that I was expelled from school.

They just asked me in a nice way. I said but you have to sign these papers that I'm coming back to school. So she signed the paper.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was to go into the Marines?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you fooled her, huh?

Mr. Ybarra:

I don't know if I fooled her or fooled myself, you know. But I think I made a pretty good choice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was she mad when she found out what you had done?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, no. After I got out, after I retired, she was proud. My brother, Joe, he retired from the Navy. I mean he was in Korea and Vietnam. He would see me in Korea. He would see me in Vietnam.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get from World War II?

Mr. Ybarra:

Asiatic Pacific with two stars.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Two battle stars?

Mr. Ybarra:

Uh huh. Victory Medal. Then in Korea, I got Korean Service with four battle stars.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Four battle stars in Korea.

Mr. Ybarra:

In Vietnam, I got three stars.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank that you got to?

Mr. Ybarra

Gunny

Mr. Misenhimer:

Gunnery sergeant—and that's how many rockers?

Mr. Ybarra:

Two rockers—three up and two down.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Three up and two down—right.

Mr. Ybarra:

And there was about—well, that was my goal, you know. After I finished boot camp and all of that, I said I'm gonna be one of those. And God helped me, I survived and I made it back and I got what I wanted. I got my goal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me ask you, back on Peleliu or Okinawa, did you see many of the pharmacist mates or medics?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think of those?

Mr. Ybarra:

They are number one people—number one people. I tell you because they, even under fire, they tried to get to you and most of the time they did. For the corpsman, being unarmed and all of that, they made a tremendous job.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They're brave people.

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were on Peleliu, were many of the people around you hit, wounded or killed?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir, quite a few of them dead, wounded, and it's hell when you have pick up those guys that are dead and take them out to the beach and try to get them in the body bags.

Sometimes I helped them out with the wounded. One thing they, the wounded, they always asked for mother. They asked for momma. And that's when I said I hope I never get wounded like that but, you know, you're trying to hold back from not crying because you see so many of them crying and calling "momma"/

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand that the 1st Marine Division took a very large number of casualties there.

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes we did, sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And on Okinawa also.

Mr. Ybarra:

Over at Chosin, coming out of there, we had a colonel that said—Colonel Murray—that we were getting close to our lines and "Straighten out troopers. We're coming out as Marines or none at all". We brought out dead and wounded and equipment. In Korea, we were one outfit that really cared for one another.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right. I have great respect for the Marines.

Mr. Ybarra:

In Korea, I was—well we made the Inchon landing. First of all, we hit one or two

islands just off Inchon and they gave us 24 hours to secure that island. We secured that island in eight hours and no casualties, thank God, you know. We did it so we could go aboard ship and make that Inchon landing the next morning. Well, it so happened that the engineers made us stepladders. Just 2x4's and we had to go over a wall—a brick wall—they put up made up of coral and whatnot, you know. We went over that and into a cornfield and you really could hear “whoosh”. They don't sound too good when they're hitting the cornstalks, you know. They just whistle and you hit that ground and raze that ground.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you in World War II when they dropped the atomic bomb? Did you hear about that?

Mr. Ybarra:

Okinawa

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you think when you heard that?

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, it's going to be over or it—and that was it, you know. Hell, we're going home shortly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when Japan surrendered, did you have a celebration there?

Mr. Ybarra:

Some of the guys had some beer and that was about it, you know. We used to get beer—Pabst Blue Ribbon—two cans per man. It's a good thing because it was free and it helped you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand that a lot of the ships shot stuff into the air and did a big celebration like that.

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yeah, you could see out there and see the ships firing, you know. The war's over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And Peleliu or Okinawa, where you bombed by the Japanese?

Mr. Ybarra:

Not really—we did in Okinawa, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you see many of the kamikazes hit the ships or anything?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes sir. Saw a lot of them. The kamikazes were going after the big ships, not the small ship—the destroyers. The destroyers used to be away from there LCI's and all the small ships but the kamikazes were going after the big ones.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course, you were shelled by artillery on Peleliu?

Mr. Ybarra:

Yes, sir. Both on Peleliu and Okinawa you'd hear those bombs coming in—you know that whistling.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And I understand that little mortar that the Japanese had, what they called the knee mortar, that was pretty bad, wasn't it?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yeah, because that was close range—not like the 60's that the troopers carried. Those people were trained for it—they knew just what angle to put it on, drop the shell in...

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider the most frightening time that you had?

Mr. Ybarra:

Well, I would say one night in Korea we were taking the Heartbreak for the Army and the people threw everything they had. I saw part of stuff that they threw at us was our own that they had captured. We wanted the ridge secured but 2400 because of the cost and the morning before they had Catholic and Protestant chaplains down in the middle of the road with holy water and we took it as we walked by and I told this friend of mine from San Diego, I said there's going to be a very bad fight and some of us aren't coming back and that night, I tell you. All the forestry and all—I mean it was nothing but trees broken down, so much fires here and there and that smell of gunpowder. We didn't secure the hill until about two o'clock in the morning and the smell of gunpowder. I said how in the hell did I live through this? It was kind of scary and my platoon leader caught

a grenade right inside his dungaree jacket—tore up his chest. He died later on that day.

Then I started shaking a little bit—I said what the hell, I mean...

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was worse than Peleliu or Okinawa?

Mr. Ybarra:

To me it was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in the Pacific at any time, did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Ybarra:

Oh, yes, I heard her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of that?

Mr. Ybarra:

I just wouldn't pay attention to it. Even though I'm the type of guy that didn't—all I want to do is to stay alive, survive you know, and like my wife says. Some of my buddies were taking pictures. I said hell I wasn't there for—I was not a tourist—I wasn't taking no pictures. I was just trying to survive.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr Ybarra:

No, I'm the type that didn't like to carry no more than I had to. Like I was saying, over in the Mediterranean 'cause we had a battalion afloat all the time and I made a cruise on that one battalion and we had some protected places we had, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you had liberties?

Mr. Ybarra:

But I couldn't take picture. I couldn't carry a camera, you know. What the hell am I going to carry a camera for? Now, I wish I had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else that you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Ybarra:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on Okinawa, General Buckner got killed. Were you anywhere close to that when that happened or anything?

Mr. Ybarra:

No

Mr. Misenhimer:

He was in the Army, right?

Mr. Ybarra:

He was commander of the Army and Ernie Pyle was with the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Ernie Pyle was killed there.

Mr. Ybarra:

General Geiger, Marine Corps, and his son got killed there in Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else that you recall?

Mr. Ybarra:

I pulled some sea duty—about two years I was aboard a carrier and everytime they made air operations, we had to be at battle stations. I was the first loader on 40 mm's on the aft deck where you see everybody coming in.

Transcribed by:

Joyce Dunn

Alice, Texas

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Oral history by:

Richard Misenhimer

P. O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Telephone: 361-664-4071

Cell: 361-701-5848