

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

***Center for the Pacific War Studies
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***Interview with Warren C. Betcher
United States Marine Corps***

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This is Ed Metzler. Today is September the third, 2004. I'm interviewing Mr. Warren Betcher. This interview is being done for the National Museum of the Pacific War. I want to start out, Warren, by asking you to go back to tell us where and when you were born, who your parents were and a little bit about your family. And then we'll get into your period in the Marines. So, go ahead Warren.

Mr. Betcher: My name is Warren C. Betcher. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, June 22, 1928. My mother's name was Francis and my father's name was Louis. His occupation was heavy construction and machinery moving and my mother had a business in beautician. I went to school at Lawn Avenue Elementary School. I went to Junior high school at West High School and continued education in John Marshal High School. I left when I was fifteen years old and I sailed on the Great Lakes for a year.

Mr. Metzler: You said you sailing on the Great Lakes for a year. What was that?

Mr. Betcher: On the iron ore boats.

Mr. Metzler: On the iron ore boats?

Mr. Betcher: And I did one summer working for American Ship Building Company putting in air conditioning ducts. That was on a school vacation. And then I came home. I didn't like my father's work, or, occupation. And I said I wanted to go in the service. Now I had uncles in the Army in the First World War and I had a great-grandfather that served in the Civil War. And we were related to politicians, so I said, "Well, I got to take a middle road someplace", so I decided I would take the Marine Corps. It's a little bit of Army and a little bit of Navy. I enlisted, officially, July...No. June 22, 1945 and the paperwork was started July 25, 1945. Went through boot camp, Parris Island, South Carolina. I don't remember the instructor's name. I

know we had two sergeants and a corporal. Went home on leave after boot camp for two weeks. Came back to Perris Island. We were shipped out to Camp Pendleton, South Carolina for, so-called, advance training. And we went from there to the Hawaiian Islands. Transferred ships to a tank carrier, an amphibious tank carrier and half way to Guam, we....the main bearings burned out on the main shaft and jammed the rudder. So we sailed in a circle for a while until the sea-going tugs came out and dragged us into Guam. We stayed at Guam and I liked that place. Wish I could have stayed.

Mr. Metzler: What did you like about Guam?

Mr. Betcher: Well, you might say, it was the atmosphere around there. The lagoon, the sailing and everything else. I can remember there was quite a few people seasick. We had ran into some bad weather and half the crew was seasick and the other half was trying to stay out of their way. (laughs).

Mr. Metzler: Were you one of the seasick ones?

Mr. Betcher: Nope. It never bothered me. For a matter of fact, later in life, my two sons went into the Navy and went through a couple of hurricanes. One went through a typhoon aboard carriers. And him and the captain was the only one eating dinner because we don't get seasick.

Mr. Metzler: That's great!

Mr. Betcher: It's something that we were born with, I guess.

Mr. Metzler: So, anyhow. You were telling what you liked about Guam.

Mr. Betcher: Well, we got there, went passed the old church. And we went up this billet area. All we could do was roam around the island. We went swimming and organized a little bit of training.

Mr. Metzler: Now, what unit and what squadron and everything were you in? I haven't got that part yet.

Mr. Betcher: We were in a draft. It was in the eighties. I forget the number of the draft number. And the war was over, so we

put aboard ship and we landed, I believe it was Tsingtou. Either Tsingtou or Taku. And we split into units for assignment. And I landed in Easy Company, Second Battalion, First Marines, First Division. We were sent to Tinsen and we were in the old Japanese girl school in the south section of Tinsen. The first impression of China that I got was they should have put a roof over it because it sure looked like an outhouse. (laughs).

Mr. Metzler: That bad?

Mr. Betcher: It was dirty. And I mean, we got there and no foul weather gear. No cold weather gear. So, we went into the company, signed the platoon...I forget the first platoon leaders name. And we stayed there until, I think it was summer. No. It was spring. Then we were moved up to Peking to the old English barracks. At the legation and you could look out from the post, right into the Forbidden City. All that's gone now, I understand. And we had various posts. Various places to stand guard duty and protect, like, the other German, Italian and Japanese embassy area. And the American embassy in Peking was held by the 22nd. And then we then moved, that was like, '46, '47. We moved back to Tinsen to another girl's school and basically we had guard duty protecting warehouses and watching.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about the first girl's school that you guys were assigned to. I mean, what was this? A big, large, earth building or what?

Mr. Betcher: It was a...well, I tell you, it was built for midgets. (laughs). I mean the ceilings weren't very high. And we...there was work parties. Japanese. The facilities were rough. And it was basically one big, long building with a large compound. And....

Mr. Metzler: Had it been damaged at all?

Mr. Betcher: No. There was not much damage. The facilities was always breaking down. The boilers didn't work very good for hot water. And the guard post is the main gate and then was a couple of roving guards inside. And I use to play tricks on the sergeant of the guard, officer of the day when they would come around the post.

Mr. Metzler: What kind of tricks?

Mr. Betcher: It was snowing and it was cold and we had just gotten parkas and some boots. They were supposed to have felt linings. We didn't get the linings. So as you're walking your post, there was breaks in the wall the Chinese used to sneak in and get into the trash dump and steal anything that wasn't laying down, ah, nailed down. And I would hear them coming, walking through that crunching snow and that's the first time I had seen snow that had a yellow, or a green, tint to it when it came down. I would get into the brush. I would step into fir trees and would let the person pass me. And then I'd step out, click the bolt and say, "Halt!" And that would startle the heck out of them. So they never challenged me as to what was your General Orders and what's this, or what's that. They just said, "Very good." And went on their way. So I was never bothered. When we were in Peking, there was a lot of fir trees around the general's quarters and you were told that you were to keep your eyes open, because somebody could, maybe, sneak around and get into his billet, or any other staff officer's billet. So the purpose of what I had done before, I had did in Peking to. I wouldn't challenge a person standing out in the open where they could see me, or I was silhouetted. I figured I'm going to take advantage of all the cover. And trying to be smart from advice from other people who had been in worse situations. And I challenged a couple of officers that was walking. They were on a walk, but I didn't know it when I spotted them. And I didn't know who they were. So, I would let them get to a point where I pretty well knew who they were before I challenged them.

Mr. Metzler: So this was still in 1945?

Mr. Betcher: No. '46. And then we moved back in late '46 back to Tinsen and we were in another girl school, ah, another school. I made corporal in that place and it was close to the hospital.

Mr. Metzler: Now, were these still being used as a girl's schools?

Mr. Betcher: They were still Japanese schools, or Chinese schools taken over by the Japanese and used.

- Mr. Metzler:** Now the Japanese were, of course, defeated and had the Chinese come in and....
- Mr. Betcher:** Well, they were in, yes. They were taken, or the Nationalist Chinese were trying to take over and they were having a “fricus” with the Communists.
- Mr. Metzler:** Right!
- Mr. Betcher:** And they would go out, fully equipped, and they’d have a sham battle outside of town someplace and the Nationalists would come running back. They didn’t have their rifles. They didn’t their equipment with them.
- Mr. Metzler:** When you say a sham battle, you mean?
- Mr. Betcher:** Well, they’d go out there and shoot at each other.
- Mr. Metzler:** Just a make believe?
- Mr. Betcher:** Basically, I think that’s what they were doing because you couldn’t see them bringing back any casualties.
- Mr. Metzler:** So what do you figure happened to all that equipment they dropped?
- Mr. Betcher:** They’d drop it and the Communist would pick it up and use it.
- Mr. Metzler:** So they were basically supplying the Communists?
- Mr. Betcher:** Yeah. And we were supplying the Nationalists. (laughs). It was a screwball situation. But I had met some interesting people. I had personal conversation with General Peck. His one son, Lt Peck, was one of our platoon leaders. I remember him. Company commanders name, at that time, was Lt Brooks and when I was in Tinsen in 1947, I was stationed on a post 21, which was a roving post and it was a warehouse. And the Communist had kept trying to get guys to let them into their warehouse, or they’d try to break into the warehouse. There was one post. A man tried to jump from a roof on a house to a warehouse roof and he was stopped, the hard way.

Mr. Meztler: So these are people just trying to get in to steal?

Mr. Betcher: Steal everything they can, because we were starting to withdraw. Because the Communists were taking more territory away from the Nationalists. So this man approached me, this Chinaman, and claimed he was American really. He was educated in the United States. California and all that other stuff. I took his story, "OK." He told me what he was after and I said, "I can help you." So, he wanted in the warehouse. Well there was a post right across the street from the thing, from the Nationalists Chinese. And so, between twelve and four o'clock, he pops out of that billet. Him and five guys. I let them get into the warehouse, then I locked the door on them. And I tried to warn the officer of the day that there was going to be trouble on my post. But, they didn't pay any attention. So I took two clips, instead of one. And when they wanted out they made all kinds of rumpus. So...

Mr. Metzler: Did they know they were locked in at that time?

Mr. Betcher: Well, they realized they had walked into my trap. Not me walking into theirs. I told the relief guard to get the officer of the day and I told him what I got in there. And they went on their merry way and didn't even leave the relief guard with me. So I'm standing extra duty and finally officers and M.P. s came and Chinese M.P. s and I got them back in the warehouse. And they the lights and there was five guys and this Chinaman that could speak English and they had all kinds of stuff lined up to take out the door. And I told them where they came out of and I said, "I think their part of it." The Chinese M.P.s. The Chinese M.P.s went over there and cleaned house, and I mean cleaned house.

Mr. Metzler: What do you mean?

Mr. Betcher: Well there was a couple of shots done. I understand from the Provost Marshal, where I had to make a statement at, what their sentence was. And it was carried out the next morning. So they had their....

Mr. Metzler: So firing squad type stuff.

- Mr. Betcher:** No. They just took them out to the Hiho River and shot them. No firing squad.
- Mr. Metzler:** Nothing as formal as a firing squad.
- Mr. Betcher:** Well if you want to call it a firing squad.
- Mr. Metzler:** Yeah. Unofficial firing squad.
- Mr. Betcher:** Two people. That was the firing squad. And I had to make out a statement and, of course, being young, I thought, "oh boy." You know, it didn't dawn on me that I could have wound up in Levensworth. And he pointed it out to me. He said that if it hadn't gone down as good as it did, we got the black market raqueteer, he said, "you would have been serving time."
- Mr. Metzler:** Serving time for doing what?
- Mr. Betcher:** Breaking into a warehouse.
- Mr. Metzler:** OK. For letting them in so they could be trapped?
- Mr. Betcher:** Right. And it was hairy. I mean he laid it out to me. So that was the highlight, you might say, of my service in China. We left. We came back to the States where we were reassigned to different companies.
- Mr. Metzler:** So what was the approximate date when you came back to the States?
- Mr. Betcher:** We came back 19...Let's see...I think we officially back to the States September 1947.
- Mr. Metzler:** '47. Late '47.
- Mr. Betcher:** And could have been later, because....Let's see, we was given a liberty pass for Thanksgiving. That was the first. Soon as we got our new uniforms. And then we got leave and I had a leave that I had to be back to the base before Christmas. We went on maneuvers in February. We were going to make a landing at Lesow Canyon, but we had to, because of the storm, we had to go back aboard ship and go back to San Diego and ride out the storm. And then we

came back and made the landing, the demonstration for all these people.

Mr. Metzler: So this was a demonstration landing for the brass and observers?

Mr. Betcher: Right. Observers, brass was there. There were some Senators there. There was some people from California State was there.

Mr. Metzler: And you mentioned Lesow Canyon?

Mr. Betcher: That was the name of it. Lesow Canyon.

Mr. Metzler: Can you spell it for me? Or roughly? Because I'm not familiar with it.

Mr. Betcher: L-E-S, ah, S-O-W. I think.

Mr. Metzler: OK.

Mr. Betcher: But it was right near, when you broke over the hills, you were right there at Route 101.

Mr. Metzler: So it's right there in the San Diego area?

Mr. Betcher: No. Camp Pendleton area.

Mr. Metzler: OK.

Mr. Betcher: Camp Pendleton area. That's where we were stationed. And they had quite a few accidents when we first tried to make the landing because of the wave action with some amtracks and some Higgins boats. That's when they cancelled it and we went back aboard ship. So, in trying to get to a firing position, sitting down like you were going to fire a bazooka. Which I had because I had an M1 rifle plus a bazooka. And I put my hand down and something went off. And it threw me about thirty-five feet. And it tore up my right hand and arm. And I called for a corpsman. I'd rolled over and I looked. I was numb on one side and I thought I was hit

in the chest with something. And I was trying to get at my chest to open my jacket up and I realized it was my hand that wouldn't work. And I looked, I had gloves on, and the whole center of my glove was burnt. And I could see through my hand.

Mr. Metzler: You can see through your hand?

Mr. Betcher: Through it. Right through the back here and out between the fingers.

Mr. Metzler: So that's through the palm and out the back of the hand?

Mr. Betcher: Took the nerve out right at the center of the junction. And I called for a corpsman and this corpsman was named, "Tiny". We had nicknamed, "Tiny". He came over this hill and, about half way down, he tripped. And he rolled; about three rolls and he came up on his feet running. And, I mean, he was like a bulldozer. He just scooped me up and ran me right over to the aid station and they called for an ambulance. I heard it. 8:45 in the morning. At 11:45 I was at the hospital, after the aid station, and they were putting me on the table to work on my arm. Luckily, this doctor, I think his name was Small, worked on my hand. He and the chief surgeon. He was an assistant chief surgeon. And I was already starting with signs of blood poisoning and gangrene. So they pumped me full of antibiotics, by oral and by shot and stayed there from February until June. And then I was discharged back to my unit.

And I asked for a transfer to the East Coast. Had a feeling that here was something more wrong. And I knew there were some good doctors on the East Coast. And I went to the East coast and they stuck me in Perris Island. I had asked for Jacksonville, or Charleston and I landed at Perris Island. Maybe it was

lucky because while at Perris Island things were building up in the system. And I went to sickbay and I complained about problems. I was interviewed and by the chief surgeon, by the name of McCampbell, Bruce McCampbell. Lieutenant Commander. And we did a minor operation. I spent a couple of days in bed and when I got up and started walking around, I started bleeding. Passed some blood. They X-rayed and they found both kidneys ruptured. I'd been walking around all that time with ruptured kidneys.

Mr. Metzler: So that happened right at the beginning and they never caught it, huh?

Mr. Betcher: Right. So I wound up losing half of both kidneys and part of the bladder, because of the poison and the antibiotics cleared the system. And I stayed there from November 1948 to September '49 when I was discharged. And then I was overhauled and repaired a total of seventeen times. (laughs).

Mr. Metzler: So you were the bionic man?

Mr. Betcher: I can say one thing. I was lucky enough to run into a bunch of doctors that knew what they were doing.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah. And you can't count on that.

Mr. Betcher: I wound up losing the rest of the left kidney because it failed, but that was before kidney machines and the heart condition didn't start till '84. They overhauled the heart in '86 and did a couple more repairs after that (laughs), to rebuild the abdominal wall. I got sixteen years out of that repair and they just did it in '02 the second time. Had five bypasses put in, a new valve. Put another pacemaker in. Three months later they did another repair. (Laughs).

Mr. Metzler: I'd like to go back to China for a moment. Describe to me when you first landed in China and saw what it looked like and went to the first school when you were assigned. Tell me what your reaction was.....

Mr. Betcher: The first school.....

Mr. Metzler:Tell me what was going through your mind.

Mr. Betcher: Well, it's hard to describe because things don't affect me the way they do other people. We got on six-by-sixes and we drove through muddy roads. I seen vehicles being run by charcoal fumes on buses with a boiler on the back that they were putting charcoal in to make it run. And the road was muddy. There was carts on the road that was being pulled by and alki or mule. And the whole area was run-down. The factories that were around there, I seen a building that had Ford Motor Company on it. And it was, overall, dirty. Now when we went to Peking and was in the British barracks, in Peking, things were a little bit cleaner. We were on paved roads. There was trees and.....

Mr. Metzler: There were no trees in the first place?

Mr. Betcher: Ah, the trees that was there was what you would find as normally growing someplace that was able to grow.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, just native trees.

Mr. Betcher: And when we went back to Tinsen we went to this other place, it was paved roads. It was still clean. There was still honey dumpers and so forth. And we moved from there to the Japanese girl's school. The billet were houses just before we got on the boat, on the Hiho River, to go down as we pulled out. But my overall opinion of China, at that time and the years that we were there, is it was, looked and smelt like a lot of,

you would say, if you went out into the country and was standing around an outhouse. The people themselves, their hygiene, didn't look like half of them took a bath in a year. Their clothes was ragged and they was in sandals, or barefoot, and treading through this mud, barefooted. And if they had to go, they just stepped up to a curb and went. And to a Western person, like we are, that is back primitive time. But it didn't affect me. It didn't phase me. OK, that's how they live. That's fine. I'll exist in, and around, it.

Mr. Metzler: This region, had it been dealt with by the Japanese? I mean, partially?

Mr. Betcher: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: It had been occupied for a long period of time?

Mr. Betcher: You got to remember; the Japanese came in and took North China. They occupied three-quarters of it. They put people to death in the public square that we walked passed. And the electric was of a different phase, I think it was thirty, or. We're on a sixty cycle and I think they were on a thirty, or a forty, cycle. And you could see the difference in the lights. Their light bulbs were orange-ish color. Where, when we were running our generators you had a white light. You could see better and you could read better.

We had contact with the American Red Cross. They had a billet you could go to and there was coffee there and donuts all the time. So there was a bit of America that you could see. But the overall impression I got is it wasn't a place that I would care to spend on my own time.

Mr. Metzler: You used the word, or the term, "Honey...."

- Mr. Betcher:** Honey dumper.
- Mr. Metzler:** Dumper? Tell me what that is.
- Mr. Betcher:** Well that's a cart where a guy comes in and he empties your commode, your septic tank. What we call a septic tank was an open pot underneath the seat. And he would clean them out, out it in the cart, then take it out to the rice fields and put it in the rice fields. Then grew their rice with it and used it as fertilizer.
- Mr. Metzler:** And they would use it a fertilizer for the rice crop?
- Mr. Betcher:** And it was called a honey dumper. It was called a honey dumper in this country. It's just something that was there.
- Mr. Metzler:** Well when you were stationed at these, I'll call them, girl's schools. Were you, what, in a barracks they had built for you, or were you.....?
- Mr. Betcher:** No. We were in, what would, when they say, they told us it was girl's school. And their school, you take the desk out, the chairs out, put bunk beds in. That was your billet. It was the classroom.
- Mr. Metzler:** So you were in a classroom sharing it with, how many other bunks?
- Mr. Betcher:** Well you had one squad in each bunk.
- Mr. Metzler:** A whole squad?
- Mr. Betcher:** So you were double-decked. The whole squad. If you went to go brush your teeth, get washed, take a shower; they had built a Quonset hut outside and had the water out there that you used. And you basically went in and out of that building. That's where you were billeted at.

We were in, ah, one time we were moved from there into Tinsen there, the second time, into a British unit for temporary. And I'd found some flags behind a wall that was knocked out that had some cupboards in front of it. I found a couple of Japanese flags in there, which I donated to a historical, Marine Corps historical unit.

And the tank battalion there; the tank battalion caught fire and the Chinese ran in there with fire engine, hand-pumper, like we had in the 1800's, and they ran the hose out and stuck the hose in this thing in the ground. They didn't have hydrants, they just had a place they stick it in the ground to get the water out of. And the fireman looked at the end of the hose and the water was just barely running from the end of the hose. He was looking at that and he turned around behind him and it looked like a sprinkler hose behind him.

Mr. Metzler: Soaker hose, huh?

Mr. Betcher: That's where you get the expression, "fouled up like a Chinese fire drill." And the tank battalion garage is what caught fire and they're in there with CO2 bottles putting it out, and this guy's standing there with this fire hose and he's telling the rest of them to pump harder. And the more harder they pumped, the more the sprinkler hose kept throwing water out. He never got any water on the fire.

Mr. Metzler: Needless to say, he never got any water on the fire.

Mr. Betcher: No.

Mr. Metzler: What about food? You were, what, had a mess tent and all that there?

Mr. Betcher: No. We had a chow hall set up. You went by groups, like, First Platoon, or, Headquarters Platoon, then First Platoon, Second Platoon. You'd go downstairs. It was like, you got one big room and the chow was the same as you had in the States. It was made out of import....

Mr. Metzler: I'm sorry Warren for the interruption. Go ahead.

Mr. Betcher: We didn't have much fires(?) C-rations, or, K-rations and that stuff because, by the time we got here, the mess unit, sergeant in charge of the galley, had it organized. He had stoves got in. They were rough at first but they cooked a meal in your own chow kit, your mess kit. And they had the barrels for washing it out, sanitizing it. The food was the same as, I would say, I got anyplace. Of Course, being a person that had run away form home, you got dinner where you got it. (laughs). So it didn't bother me.

Mr. Metzler: So this was perfect.

Mr. Betcher: A lot of people complained about the chow, but it never bothered me because, what the hell, I've had worse.

Mr. Metzler: Now what about, you know, getting leave and liberty and being able to see, you know, some kind of....

Mr. Betcher: Well we got liberty. You stood one day, and one day was, close order drill and lectures. Weapons lectures. You would get liberty. Four o'clock. You had to be back by ten at first. And by twelve o'clock later on. And there was no overnight for enlisted personnel I knew of.

And you could drink overseas, but you couldn't drink in the States. (laughs). Over here the law said you had

to be twenty-one. Over there, while you were old enough to get shot at, you were old enough to drink.

Mr. Metzler: That seems fair enough to me.

Mr. Betcher: There wasn't too many people that I know of turned into alcoholics. I mean, we would go out and have a few drinks. We would go dancing. The Chinese call girls, if you want to call them call girls, they would be there. You'd go the Red Cross. There was an authorized restaurant that was run by some Germans that you could go to and get a different style dinner. You know...

Mr. Metzler: German food in China for Americans?

Mr. Betcher: Right. And being of German decent, I know there was some good sauerkraut and sausage (laughs). going around. You know...

Mr. Metzler: (Unitelligible).

Mr. Betcher: So I would go there and....

Mr. Metzler: So would you go into any of the Chinese villages and go to, I mean, did they have....

Mr. Betcher: The Chinese villages were all around you.

Mr. Metzler:what we call a bar in a Chinese style bar, or what?

Mr. Betcher: Well in downtown Tinsen, where you had your billet at, rather, liberty at, there was the Hollywood Palladium, it was called. And there was the Jade Garden. There was a place that served wine and served vodka. The vodka was made by the Russians. And there was Chinese vodka. There was Chinese whiskey. We had English whiskey. I don't know where they got

that, the English whiskey, but they..(laughs). But you could do that. The American club; we had the Seven Service club. We had the First Marine club. You could get a drink.

Mr. Metzler: So they had a system there to support you guys?

Mr. Betcher: Well if you wanted a drink. And of course, when we first got over there we had an issue and you paid for it. But, you could get a half a case of beer, a half a case of toddy, or a full case of toddy, or a full case of beer. And you could get pork and beans and they would give you the K-rations, if you wanted them, that had a fig bar and a chocolate bar in it. Then it had the regular food that was in a K-ration box. And then that sort of died off and then you had the regular galley to go to. But everybody thought I was crazy 'cause I used to take the pork and beans. Campbell's pork and beans in the small can. If I was hungry in between watches, I ate a can. Hey, thought I was crazy. But I like beans. I still do to this day.

Mr. Metzler: Easy man to please.

Mr. Betcher: Well, I mean, I grew up that way. In other words, if you find something that you like, stick with it.

Mr. Metzler: Now you mentioned also that you were overlooking the Forbidden City. This is up in the Beijing area, what we call the Beijing area today.

Mr. Betcher: Right. It's Peking then.

Mr Metzler: Right. Peking then. And tell me what that looked like, I mean, tell me about.....

Mr. Betcher: Well we went to, on our China tour book that was given to us when we was in China, that there was a

pagoda that's got a blue tile roof. We went to that. That had a whispering wall. Circled wall. You could stand anyplace in this wall and could talk to a person clear around the back of the building. And we went to the temple of the sleeping Buddha. We went to Jade Garden, which was a jade boat. This one Empress had a boat built and it had all jade on it. It was layers of jade. Of course, you couldn't touch it. You could see it and could walk passed it, but you don't touch it. And we seen different places. You can take these tours.

But you had to be careful of the Communists because you never knew. They had kidnapped some guys. Hey had taken them and would hold them. There was some shots. And different things like that.

The Summer Palace, that was across the street, The Forbidden City, You couldn't go in. They wouldn't open it up and let you go into it. You could see the outer walls of it but we were never allowed in it. Now, I understand if you go back through China as a visitor, you can go in. They got it opened up and they got it cleaned up. And Poa, who was the Emperor, the, he finally died. But the Chinese and the Japanese...the Chinese Communists worked him over. Made him a peasant. He Japanese, when they were in power, they used him as a front, as a puppet. So it was all these different clashes going on.

Mr. Metzler: Now when you were there, were the Communists making steady advances against the Nationalists? Were they pushing them out while you were there? I mean, things weren't going well, as I remember, with Chang Chi Chek.

Mr. Betcher: That's right. We had an inspection. Commandant Griffin came. Griffin. Made a tour of China and under inspection and that's when, I guess the word came

down, to start moving units out. And from that time on, Chang Chi Chek and Mrs. Madam Chang Chi Chek, was also there. I'd read articles and I'd read papers and so forth. I didn't particularly care for them.

Mr. Metzler: Did you ever see them?

Mr. Betcher: Yes. Was that general inspection.

Mr. Metzler: OK.

Mr. Betcher: And they passed right down amongst the troops, you know, pass and review. And I can say that, I think, they sold their own people down the line for their own personal graft. When we pulled out....

Mr. Metzler: They folded.

Mr. Betcher: The Chinese Communists took over. And by that time all the Japanese families were out. We put them on boats. LSTs out of Taku and out of Tsingtow. Took them back to Japan. And we took Koreans back to Korea. And general court-martial prisoners, well, they went off to the closest ports, was put aboard ship, brought back to the States and that was guys that had got into deep trouble.

Mr. Metzler: Was there quite a few of those?

Mr. Betcher: No. Not too many. The word gets around that if you do something serious, you can go, wind up with a general court-martial and end up in Levensworth.

Mr. Metzler: So you were basically escorting these people onto the ships that took them, or did you actually accompany them to the ship?

Mr. Betcher: Yep. I pulled an assignment, while in Peking, as a prison guard. And I had to take guys to deck court-martials or summary court-martial or general court-martial. That was just a duty, just like guard duty. You escort them there; you escort them back to the brig. And from the brig took them wherever they told you to take them. Sometimes you turned them over to another group that was going....(change tape)

Mr. Metzler:to Japan?

Mr. Betcher: ...Well, some of them did. Some of them went down to Shanghai. Some went to other countries. Some went back to the Philippines for trial.

Mr. Metzler: They all went to wherever, I guess, their worst....(no sound on tape)..

Mr. Betcher:Makes my nose run.

Mr. Metzler: OK Warren, we're onto side two. Warren Betcher. Go ahead and continue.

Mr. Betcher: The patriation duty of taking the Japanese out and different places, and transferring people that was to be either witnesses or to be tried, were transported from one place to another by aircraft or by boat. They were turned over. And the general population of Japanese that lived in China were brought back to Japan.

And I'd met one, he was a sergeant, he claimed to be American who went back, according to tradition, was sent back to Japan by his family, to marry a Japanese girl. And his wife, he knew what happened, but his wife and his family was living in Hiroshima and he knew they were gone. He felt no animosity towards us because we had nothing to do with it. He knew where

it came from, how it came from. He knew the orders came down from high.

But he talked to a lot of us. He told us where he was educated in the United States. And following family tradition this is what would happen. And he says the reason why he was in China is because the Japanese didn't quite trust him because he was educated in the United States. And so, they put him in China. And he says there was quite a few in the same boat that he was in. And he says, "I was lucky. They needed a sergeant, so they promoted me." He said, "Otherwise, I'd still be a private". And I met one officer who, according to him, regretted attacking the United States. He wasn't for it, since he, they did, he was for the war effort. But once it was over, it was over. As far as he was concerned, he wanted to be friends with Americans. He wanted to go back to what it used to be.

Mr. Metzler: When you were over there. What about communications back to the States? To family, or friends or sweethearts, whatever?

Mr. Betcher: Well your mail call was everyday if there was mail to get. The mail, a lot of times, came over by supply boats. Some of it was flown in. Matter of fact, we had to go out one time looking for mail bags that had to be chucked over the side of aircraft, simply because they were going into engine failure. And they had to lighten the aircraft. So they dropped the mail, more or less, in one general area. And we had to go out and.....

Mr. Metzler: Find the mail.

Mr. Betcher:find the mailbags. (laughs) That's where you get airmail.

- Mr. Metzler:** Air drop.
- Mr. Betcher:** So we also had to go out and find a practice bomb, or a real bomb that was dropped off an aircraft. And the United States had to pay the farmer a lot of money, because it tore up his cornfield. So it was stuff like that, you know, that was easy. We were involved in a shootout at Aping, that's halfway between Tinsen and Peking,
- Mr. Metzler:** Aping?
- Mr. Betcher:** Yeah. It's called Aping. That's how you spell it. Just the way it sounds.
- Mr. Metzler:** A-P-I-N-G?
- Mr. Betcher:** Yeah. That's the only way I ever knew to spell it. And a few people got hurt.
- Mr. Metzler:** A shootout with whom?
- Mr. Betcher:** Commies.
- Mr. Metzler:** OK. So you had actually left and had..(unintelligible) with the Communists?
- Mr. Betcher:** Unintelligible...
- Mr. Metzler:** So was this the Marines alone, or are these the Nationalists Chinese?
- Mr. Betcher:** Just the Marines.
- Mr. Metzler:** OK.
- Mr. Betcher:** We were on, what they called, the empty trucks would come down to Peking, and go to Tinsen. The cargo

trucks would come up and meet half way and switch drivers, see? The guys from Tinsen would take the empty trucks and we'd take the full trucks. Well, the cargo got delayed for a while. The lead jeep got hit and we hit the deck and we got our equipment off and we stood our ground. They weren't going to get the convoy. They wanted what was on the convoy. So it was a standoff. Finally we was able to draw a blank, you might say, and got back on the trucks and got the heck out of there. By that time Peking was alerted and there was all kinds of equipment coming. Artillery pieces. Tanks. They were going to tear the territory up. But by that time, the Communists had moved out. And some of the guys at Pedio (?) on the rail trains, coming from the coal mines, they were a different unit, but they were shot at. So we've had run-ins with.

Mr. Metzler: Did you sustain any casualties?

Mr. Betcher: They did, yeah. And we heard about that, when your on standby, that the ammunition dump was blown up down in, I think it was, Tsingtow, or Taku. One of the two places, I forget which. And it was blown up by the Communists. And the ammunition and fuel dump was, attempted where we were in Tinsen. The guards around there, the Marines, we fended them off. They thought it was not protected. And they sent a few people in there and they didn't get there. And there was also Nationalist Chinese soldiers out on the perimeter around it. And they stopped them. We chased a few of them out of our territory, but that was it.

Mr. Metzler: OK. Anything else that you want to share with us while we've got the time here that you experienced when you were in China?

Mr. Betcher: No. That was the most interesting, just the fact that we had baseball games. We had a beer party on Guam. We had a beer party in Tinsen.

Mr. Metzler: This was a party among Marines?

Mr. Betcher: Yeah. Strictly the Marines. I guess the officers is who bought the beer. Beer and Coca-Cola. And I think we got the ice from the engineering battalion.

Mr. Metzler: Those must have been pretty good officers. Hey threw a beer party for...

Mr. Betcher: I can say the people I had was just like talking to you.

Mr. Metzler: Just average Joes.

Mr. Betcher: Yeah. You can, I can remember a few names. It was Brooks and then there was Peck and, as a matter of fact, there was a couple that was named Brooks. They weren't related. And you could talk to them. If a man had a question he could walk up to his officer and talk to him about it. There was no if, and, but or boo. You know, if you had something and they were in the office, you went through the first sergeant and he went in and said so-an-so wants to talk to the commanding officer, or the executive officer, or the platoon leader; and it was arranged. Right in. At least it was to me. I had no problem.

Mr. Metzler: Good.

Mr. Betcher: There was no harshness. If you did your job they were happy. That's all there ever was. Do your job and do your duty and get on with it.

Fights? There was none. We never had a fight in my outfit. If you had a dispute, somebody always refereed it. You know. You talk about it and you talk about it. Now, what's the difference, what's your problem? And it was settled. But nobody ever raised their hand to anybody.

An officer walked in the room, you showed him the proper expression of greetings. You stood at attention. And you sat down. You had your lecture courses unmapped, compass, weapons and there was a question and answer. Then he would get personal. He'd say, "You getting our mail?" "Is your laundry being done correctly?" Because we had to pay for our laundry. And the Chinese did it. And, "You getting everything out?" "Alright, here's something were going to have to do. We're going to have to have a clothing reissue." That's just how they'd talk. They didn't, "We're going to do this" or, "We're going to do that." No. It was, "Gentlemen, we're going to having a reissue." "You got any clothes to survey?" or, do this, or do that. "Have them ready. Saturday we're going to do it". That's how it was.

I stood post on general headquarters on the main door. The Chinese had a riot outside. General Peck was in charge of the Division at that time and he came downstairs with his Chauffer. They got in the car. His aids come down with him. They had to get to the car and told me to open a pathway. I remembered something the Japanese told me. You put a bayonet on the end of your rifle and then you'll part company. You don't have to shoot them. You don't have to shoot over their head. Me and this other, interior, roving guard that was inside the building put a bayonet on the rifle and walked right down there and he walked right between us and got in his car. They separated the territory. They knew that.....

- Mr. Metzler:** Bayonets work!
- Mr. Betcher:** They weren't about to screws around with us.
- Mr. Metzler:** That's right.
- Mr. Betcher:** Because we're going to take somebody down. They left us alone. And they were rioting about what ever they had to complain about. The command from the car, "Take off. Go back to your post." And that was the end of it.
- Mr. Metzler:** Well thank you for talking the time to share your experiences Warren. It's been very interesting.
- Mr. Betcher:** Well I hope I helped you.
- Mr. Metzler:** Most people don't understand the interesting things that went on after World War II in China. You shared some of those with us and this was a valuable addition to our archives.
- Mr. Betcher:** Well a lot of people don't. I was sort of a history buff. I like to read history. And, you might say, it was the only book in school that made sense to me. I could read a history book and couldn't make heads or tails out of an English book. (laughs).
- Mr. Metzler:** I'm with you on that.
- Mr. Betcher:** But I paid attention to what was going on. I know it was history. That I was walking through a piece of history. And talking to the guys that was in different places. I met people that was on Guadalcanal. I met one man that went from Guadalcanal to Kilastor (?) to Pelelu. Then went back to the States and then went to

Okinawa. Then he was in China and you know, different things.

I met some of the prisoners of war that came out of the coal mines and some that was held in another area. I got to talk to them. So it was interesting to hear what they had to say.

And as far as politics go, well I read about them. I make up my own mind about them. But I base it on what I read past history. Because if we don't know history, we can't judge for the future. And if we don't know our history, we can't judge other people. And it's the only way we can get along. It's knowing where that common ground is.

Mr. Metzler: That's well put.

Mr. Betcher: The Corps taught me a lot of things. I learned how to stand up straight. (laughs). Stand up straight and tucked in my gut. But, you know, it's just take your time and take your place. Do our job. And that followed through into public life.

Mr. Metzler: OK. Well thank you Warren. I appreciate it.

Mr. Betcher: Yep.

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