

The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)

Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with
Wayne Tyler Beery
USMC
520065

Interviewed by
By John Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter
July 24, 2004

Reinterviewed by
By John Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter
Aug. 20, '04

25 Feb., '43 - 12 Dec., '45

Wayne Tyler Beery
USMC
520065
USMC

Pacific Theater

Medals earned:

American Campaign Medal
World War II Medal
American Defense Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
Okinawa Liberation Medal
Solomons 1st Marine Division Medal
Guadalcanal 1st Marine Division Medal
7th Regiment 1st Marine Division Presidential Citation
Ruptured Duck

Original Interview by
John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter
completed
July 24, 2004

With reinterview with Mr. Berry on
by John Tombaugh

My name is John B. Tombaugh and Peggy Van Meter and I are interviewing Mr. Wayne T. Berry.

Mr. Tombaugh

Please state your name and address.

Mr. Beery

Wayne Tyler Beery; serial no. 520065.

I served from 27 July '43 through 4 April '46.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you have your discharge papers?

Mr. Beery

Yes, these are the boot camp pictures. I was in the 710th Platoon, San Diego 43.

Mr. Tombaugh

What was your wife's maiden name?

Mr. Beery

Mary McGlothans, I married her on Dec. 28, 1949

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you have any children?

Mr. Beery

A son, Rob.

Mr. Tombaugh

What were your parents names?

Mr. Beery

Russell and Carrie (Tyler) Beery. He was from Burton school district, Rochester Township of Fulton County, Indiana. She was from Illinois.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Beery

Leiters Ford School grades 6 through 9 and joined the Marines my senior year, figured I'd get drafted so I joined '43.

Mr. Tombaugh

Why did you join the Marines?

Mr. Beery

I never like water which the Navy is all about; and saw what my Dad went through in the Army; and figured the European Theater would be worse than the Pacific. When your a kid the Marine Corp had a glory to it.

Mr. Tombaugh

How much did you make a month?

Mr. Beery

Regular pay was \$44.00 a month and overseas was \$52.00.

After boot camp I spent a year around the Mare Island Navy Yard; it's about a mile west of San Francisco. It's a Naval Unit port which could bring anything in there but big battlewagon. It took care of destroyers, submarines, and other ships and had the naval prison there where I was attached for guard duty at that Navy yard. It was all navy marines there more or less for guard duty. Never saw so many navy guys in your life; you didn't say to much among those guys. Yea, I spent a year there, after the Palawan Invasion which I didn't know about at the time.

Mr. Tombaugh

How was the food at boot camp?

Mr. Beery

Food was pretty good there at San Diego. Overseas was the cold pancakes. At the Navy Hall you and the 1st Class and officers all ate same food.

In the summer of '44 I went to Camp Pendleton and then to Solomon Island's, where the 1st Marine Division base was after Guadalcanal, then went to Australia.

Mr. Tombaugh

Did you go overseas by Ship?

Mr. Beery

Yes, a slow boat which took 30 days.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you remember the name of the ship?

Mr. Beery

No.

Mr. Tombaugh

How was the food on the ship?

Mr. Beery

I can tell you that the Navy ate the best. We had a good meal before we departed the ship.

Mr. Tombaugh

Living on mutton down there?

Mr. Beery

Talk about that, our food came from Australia. You called mutton

wool, with corn and preserves and to this day I can't eat any mutton.

I was fortunate, as a kid I joined when I was 18 years old. Went down to San Diego which was in the fall of '43 and took basic training out there. According to the talent and age they decide where you are to be sent and I was sent to Mare Island. About the time I got out of boot camp it was the time of the Palawan Invasion. By the time I got there they were bring back the wounded. One of the men we brought back had been a State Policemen in Illinois, and I had gotten acquainted with him in boot camp. He was about 20 years old and was transported to the naval hospital there.

I was fortunate as after boot camp I never was sent to one of those areas, partially because I still needed more training.

If you talk to Lawrence Norris, he's a good example what the Marine Corp was like at that time. I was just 17 years old while Lawrence was 28 years old. They were well trained and knew what they were doing. For the guys 17 and 18 years old, it wasn't an easy situation to get into because somebody got this plan like Tarawa. Some of the guys had to go in at low tide and attack the Japs.

I don't know how much fire power they threw in there on that little island, but the Japs had a good line of defense and there simply wasn't enough shells fired. They had to take the 2nd Marines in there and I call it a suicide deal.

Mr. Tombaugh

Did you see any of the suicide plane attacks?

Mr. Beery

That was down at Bali, I think. But none there at Okinawa. We relieved several Army Units. When you moved you saw the aftermath of the war; sometimes you'd get killed by own fire.

There at Okinawa the battlewagon (USS Iowa) and couple of others were there and when they fired you really knew it. The next couple weeks it looked like the 4th of July at night. We didn't see any fighting till the men reached the north end of Island.

In my estimation the Okinawa Invasion was the best we had in the Pacific Theater. The reason being that the leaders of the 10th Army had the know how and so stated how they wanted it done from the battlewagons down to the foot soldiers. At that time the Japanese thought we were going to Formosa. (The Japanese commander also realized that the losses in the coming preinvasion bombardment would be excessive for the defense of Okinawa and pulled all the troops back to make their stand in the hills.)

During the landings by the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment I believed Lawrence Norris was farther down the beach at Nakagusuku Bay, later to become known as Buckner Bay. I couldn't believe the silence on the beach not a shot was fired as I stepped ashore.

The first day of the landing which was 1 Apr., 1945 I was with the Battalion HQ Company and rode with the Colonel, and his radio. My job was telephone communications and I carried this reel of telephone wire which had to be strung out when we stopped. At the

point where we stopped my buddy and I had to string the wire across a series of rice paddies. To this day I can't eat rice either. We carried our wire five or six miles on this one day alone.

Mr. Tombaugh

The Japanese had learned from the previous invasions and they simply retreated into the hills and was 5 or 6 days before they put up any resistances.

Mr. Beery

The thing that amazed me was when we went in we walked a mile or so and you could see where they had put emplacements in at one time.

And to this day you'd have to talk to the Japanese guy to know if they really reenforced Formosa. It was right off the mainland of China a bigger island. Maybe they did get the word out that we were going to kill them. Lawrence got into some pretty tough stuff. I went in as replacement when they came back to Bora Bora after that powerful invasion. The fall of Nov. '44 our battalion landed there as a replacement and later I spent a year as guard company at Mare Island and all I carried was auto-rifle.

Mr. Tombaugh

BAR?

Mr. Beery

An automatic had clips I never fired it, I think was more for looks that I carried that baby. If I had to fire it probably taken off on me. It was almost like machine gun.

Mr. Tombaugh

Thompson sub machine gun?

Mr. Beery

On that order, it was small.

Mr. Tombaugh

Caliber?

Mr. Beery

It was a bigger caliber, the ammo was like a 45 pistol.

Mr. Tombaugh

A Model 1928 Thompson.

Mr. Beery

Like that the hoodlums carried. I remember we went to Chicago and one place we ate had these hanging on wall the gangsters used.

Mr. Tombaugh

Capone?

Mr. Beery

Yes, but the ones the Japanese had we called a Nambo these guys - Japs- would place those guys to cover certain areas with those guns.

Mr. Tombaugh

High speed firing?

Mr. Beery

They were kind of small and we had the BAR and I thought that was what I'd be, but luckily it didn't work out that way and so they put me in HQ Co. At that time and I didn't know anything on how a division worked or anything like that. So they put me in communication on the telephone. On the island I used to watch guys climb a pole and we practiced on coconut trees. I got a real education on that and we had a guy in the outfit that was Lawrence Norris's age who had been working on the high line. That guy could go up and down a pole and do a lot of other things connected with climbing. The funny thing was that when you got over seas in the Pacific it was completely different. You'd trail the wire on the ground and you're not tying it up in the trees unless you're setting up the HQ and going to be there a while. When your moving with a company battalion you try to keep in communication and they have the radio operator and guys like me stringing wire to keep company commander in touch. The platoon used walkie talkies and he'd have a radio operator like Charlie Clevenger. Those guys carried that SCR 300 radio on their back and they could cover some distance. The worst problem we had with the telephone was when it was strung out between Co. and CB battalions where we tried to space them no more than 1/4 of a mile apart between your front lines and the battalions setup. If you had shells hit the area and destroy the wire or a tank run over the wire you were out of business but most of time it worked and every time we went on the move we had to string wire to keep in contact with the battalion.

A lot of time I was attached with A Company. I worked with Co. Command in communications, but I never got up in the front platoon area. I was fortunate, like everything else in combat, you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, and fortunately I was not and never got a scratch, so to speak.

I was not only there at Okinawa; when the war ended I went to China in the fall of 1945. After the war ended they sent the 1st Marine Division and 6th Marine Division to handle the Japanese surrender part. I got to see China as far as the northern part pretty close to the Mongolian Republic Border. It seems like they sent our battalion to the last outpost and the farthest from the division. At that time Chaing Kai-shek was having internal problems and we had never heard of the communists. It was while in China that I turned 20 years old.

You were always kept in the blind and you went where you're unit went. In China they advised us to not go up around the Great Wall. Well heck, after hearing that I was not about to go up there. From our position we could see their soldiers up in that area and of

course the Japanese hired a lot of Chinese which we called the puppet armies. They worked for Japanese after Japan had surrendered but still went on patrols with guns and all. You could see them from a distance but we never bothered them.

The fall and winter there things began to change as Chaing Kai-shek's troops began to come in pretty heavy and putting up a front, so to speak. Of course we heard fighting up around Manchuria and but I came home in Feb. 1946. They had military, policeman and what have you and from where we were along the Yellow Sea we could easily spot a commie or whatever. Another thing that got me was to see a Russian soldier once in a while in the town of Ching Won Too which was about as ancient as going back a thousand years. This is in a primitive area and the area up there probably contained White Russians, but the chinese were dirt poor, so communism, was it good or bad? Chaing Kai-shek controlled the wealth and his personal people - officers - were pretty well educated. They didn't know about the outside, they had better equipment than we had like jeeps and motor equipment, no heavy artillery, but did have the light 37mm pack howitzers, rifles and mortars. We were always left in the dark. Come Feb. 1946 I had 45 points gathered in the point system so I got sent home. They issued me my ribbons: 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

Mr. Tombaugh

Three stars, Okinawa, Guadalcanal?

Mr. Beery

That's the 1st Marine Division, Guadalcanal for the first medal; the second is the 1st Marine Division, Okinawa; and the third is Presidential Unit Citation; 7th Regiment. I don't remember what the regiment got that for as it was before I became a member of the division. What makes me mad is that in the 1st World War they had the 5th Regiment over there and they got shot up and shot up bad and the French gave them the Croix de Guerre with two palms and one gilt star and the 5th Regiment got the Fourragere which is worn on the left shoulder, only unit in Marine Corp that wore all these ribbons. The only other medals that I know of are the 2nd World War ribbons.

Most of the time I was Pfc and when I got home and ready for discharge I was a Cpl. I believed they were trying to get me to me reenlist as they made me corporal.

(The group now looks at the photos he has from the days on Okinawa and China.)

Mr. Beery

The group views a picture of winter and samurai sword. (Talking about the samurai sabers.)

Mr. Tombaugh

Today if you had any of those swords they would be worth lots of

money.

Mr. Beery

You're right. Now the camera, I had mine but it got burned up afterwards; (picture - Beery on donkey and the China Sea in the background) 1.5" x 2"). We went from tropics to frigid weather real quick.

During the Chinese new year they put on new clothes. They would wear those clothes year round but when comes to New Year they put on new clothes. I could see the handwriting on the wall that within the next year someplace would be in war so when I got back to Navy base in Chicago I got discharged. I started my Military life there and got discharged from the same place. My young life - I went in at 17 years old and returned 21 years old, I was in for the duration. If I had reenlisted I would have been in on that Korean deal and that was a rough one.

Mr. Tombaugh

Korea couldn't tell who was fighting who with the exception of those Chinese?

Mr. Beery

You're right a different type of war and each time is different. We need to be farsighted instead of hind sighted, service people today they are professionals and the best there is. We didn't have the best training but we had some darn good officers and I was fortunate.

Let's put it this way, each generation seemingly has its own war. My Dad was in first World War when he was 32 years old and I never really ask him why he got mixed up in that damn mess. He was a 2nd Lt. in the 26th Infantry and I knew more French names than I did when I was on Okinawa. He was the in the push to Paris. He and his runner got hit by an 88mm shell. His was in his leg (thigh area) and as a result he had a limp. I wasn't born till he was 40 years old. The 2nd World War was just 20 years later.

Mr. Tombaugh

What was the biggest change you found in the states upon your return?

Mr. Beery

Just turned 21 that summer and came home to farm. I took up the GI bill and attended the Agriculture school at Grass Creek, Indiana and I graduated from that same Grass Creek Ag. School.

Mr. Tombaugh

Are you still in contact with the buddies you made in the service?

Mr. Beery

One from St. Louis, a truck driver, and Jerry Van Lue from Rochester. I ran into him in China, his dad was brick layer, I

think he's still living. Not too many left anymore.

-End-

25 hours