

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

**Center for Pacific War Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with  
Ralph Kreamer  
520137  
USMC**

Ralph Kreamer  
520137  
USMC

Pacific Theater

Medals earned:  
American Campaign Medal  
World War II Medal  
American Defense Medal  
Marksmanship Medal  
Bayonet Expert  
Ruptured Duck

Original Interview by  
John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter  
completed 7 Aug., 2004

With re-interview of  
Ralph Kreamer

My name is John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter and I are interviewing this gentleman. Would you please state your name and address.

**Mr. Kreamer**

Ralph Kreamer, 11125 W Willow Point, Kewanna, Indiana.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What was your parents names and where were they from?

**Mr. Kreamer**

Henry and Aretha (Baker) Kreamer.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What is your wife's name?

**Mr. Kreamer**

Ivy G. Stay; we were married on Jan. 1, 1973.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you have any children and if so what are their names?

**Mr. Kreamer**

Yes, Jerry and Verl Kreamer and Bonita, Linda and Barry Stay, born in England.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where were you born?

**Mr. Kreamer**

Fulton County, on July 16, 1919.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where did you enter the service?

**Mr. Kreamer**

Marine Barracks, NTC, Great Lakes, Illinois.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where did you take your boot camp at?

**Mr. Kreamer**

San Diego, California.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you have any memories of boot camp?

**Mr. Kreamer**

I volunteered for KP duty, we were feed better and also got ice cream.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go next and how did you go?

Mr. Kreamer

Arrived Noumea on 4-6 Oct. '43. on AP 22 USS Mt. Vernon.

Mr. Tombaugh

Any friends left?

Mr. Kreamer

Think all dead. 2nd Marine Division all 237 left, I believe.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go next?

Mr. Kreamer

Wellington, New Zealand. 10 Oct., '43 to 1 Nov. '43

Mr. Tombaugh

What did you do in Wellington?

Mr. Kreamer

I went roller skating. I then woke up under a warehouse, I had lost three days.

Mr. Tombaugh

Did you remember much?

Mr. Kreamer

No, only women.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go next?

Mr. Kreamer

Tarawa, 21-28 Nov. '43.

Mr. Tombaugh

What did you do in Tarawa?

Mr. Kreamer

We were pinned down for three days.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go from Tarawa?

Mr. Kreamer

We went to Camp Tarawa at the Parker Ranch on Hilo, Hawaii 10 Dec., '43 to 7th May. "This Hawaiian Campsite was in the saddle

between the two great volcanoes of Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea, on land belonging to the huge Parker cattle ranch.

"Christmas of 1943 was not a holiday that many Second Division Marines remember with any great pleasure. The reasons for the selection of Kamuela campsite have never been publicized, but they are fairly obvious. The cold climate was beneficial to men still haunted by Guadalcanal's malaria. The Parker ranges provided excellent training terrain - and the Corps command knew (if the Division did not) that the next battle would be found in mountainous territory. Finally (and this was probably only by accident), the initial isolation gave the Marines time to make an important adjustment- time to realize that Hawaiian residents of Japanese ancestry had no relation to the enemy Japanese they had just conquered on Tarawa. It also gave the island populace an opportunity to identify the Marines for what they were: brave young Americans and not "paid killers."

"In Honolulu some observers (and they were not all civilians) wondered if the Second Marine Division could be restored to first-line battle efficiency. The Tarawa losses had torn a great hole in the fabric of the Division's organization, and few of the wounded had been returned to duty (nearly all those who entered hospitals were sent to other outfits). For years the Marine Corps had boasted that its ranks were filled exclusively with men who had "chosen to be Marines." That was no longer strictly true. There were plenty of seventeen-year-old volunteers in the replacements sent to Camp Tarawa, but there also were a good many Marines who had come to the Corps through Selective Service. Although it was pointed out that such boots had preferred the Marines to the other services, they still were not volunteers in the old sense.

"Nobody need have worried. The 20 year veterans were cynically resigned to any and all camp conditions. The Guadalcanal and Tarawa veterans occasionally were bitter, about both the camp and the U.S. reaction to Betio, but their bitterness was not directed toward the Marine Corps. The newcomers, volunteers or selectees, came to an outfit whose pride in achievement had, if anything, been enriched by adversity. The Marines of the Second Division knew that they had given a name to the ages, a name to stand with Belleau Wood and Chateau Thierry and the Bonhomme Richard. The whole Division now had matched or surpassed the heritage of the Sixth Regiment and the exploits of Guadalcanal. New Marines would have to live up to a new and immediate tradition of greatness.

"The new Marines had no opportunity to escape that responsibility, even for a moment. In the long days they trained under officers who had fought at Tarawa or the 'Canal. In the long evenings they drank beer with enlisted men who had known Betio's beaches and the Lunga jungles. Days and nights they lived in a camp that somehow a good camp, cold as it was, because it was called "Camp Tarawa."

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where did you go next?

**Mr. Kreamer**

Pearl Harbor, 9th May '44, got new recruits there. We were on Maui 14-20th May '44 and Honolulu 20-30th of May '44 then on to Eniwetok, Marshall Islands 9-11 June '44, then Saipan 15 June '44 to 24 July '44. Tinian 25th July '44 to 12th Aug., '44. Saipan 12th Aug., '44 to ----. Pearl Harbor to Nov., '44

Now we never took a prisoner. On Saipan we said where did they all come from. The mud and sand and men would be following and go back and all be dead. Got a concussion from bomb explosion on Saipan and when was discharged they locked me up for 6 weeks and watched me all the time.

I was 27 years old when I came home.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What were the changes you seen in America?

**Mr. Kreamer**

People making money.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Reading: Participated in action against the enemy at Tarawa 21-27 Nov., '43; Saipan 15 June '44 to July '44; Tinian, Marianas Is. 25 July '44 to 1 Aug., '44; Presidential Unit Citation for action at Tarawa due to Unavoidable War conditions.

10 hours

---

Added interview with his wife who was born in England and was present during the bombing and the V1 and V2 period

:

**Ivy Kreamer**

In England the sons would do the farm work, they wanted part time jobs that they could earn money. My niece would go down to the bar and be a bar maid or wash dishes or prepare food or run the vacuum sweepers and clean up the place and put logs in the fire. In most of the lounges in England you have a bar in most of those pubs. A bar for the men where they play darts and cuss if they want to.

And the next one is private for ladies and they can go and have a drink on there own, and not be bothered by men trying to make a pass at them or - you know. So they would sit around and have a beer or glass of wine or something and talk about what they had done all week. So it was more like a women's circle with the added privilege of having a drink.

And the next one is the lounge within the English Pubs. This was for men and women and it usually had a big fire place and had nice tables and chairs and then they had a long bar that went around so each one of the rooms with people in it could go to a part of the pub, but the rooms were sectioned off within the pub. If you wanted to go and be with just women you could, or if wanted to be social you'd go to the lounge and if wanted to play darts and cuss up a storm you could go to the pub with the men, I mean the men were along then.

But now it's even more social because women will go in where men are and it's not as restricted as it used to be, but it was giving you a choice of going to have a drink and something to eat in a nice environment. Their very nice places aren't they Ralph. A nice class of people. If workmen came in for a drink they would go into the bar for the men the darts, games and pool table. I was used to it.

#### **Ivy Kreamer**

My niece's daughter Jacque worked down there, her girl friend was at school with her. Her Mom and Dad ran this Whitbread's at the Red Lion (always got the Red Lion on the Prince of Wales). She would go down at night after they closed at eleven and wash dishes, clean ash trays and run the sweeper and they'd give her a little money. When she was eighteen she could go there and be a waitress in the bar, take drinks to a table and so forth and wash dishes on the side and generally be useful. It gave her a little money that way. Because she lived within walking distance from her house to the Red Lion. A village of 400 people, Theydon Bois 20 miles northeast of London but it had three pubs and they were busy all the time. They like their beer and every night the people would go down and have two beers then come home, it's a routine they do it every night. They would sit all day at home or work then they would walk to the pubs. They don't use cars for short distances. You don't hop in a car and go three blocks, you walk. Because your walking off your supper and you walk down and socialize and visit and then you walk all the way back before you go to bed.

We love to watch the American airing of the BBC's program 'As Time Goes By' with Lionel and Jean. Now Jean is quite a actress over there, she's a Dame (a lady; a rank for a lady in the Order of the British Empire). People are suppose to curtsy to you. When they say hello; they bow toward you cause you have a title.

#### **John Tombaugh**

I like the one 'Waiting for God.' In my correspondence with Mr. John A. Cummings of Kennington, Oxford, England I mentioned that I enjoyed it and he responded in his letter with a part of the brochure from the Oaken Holt retirement home at Farmoor, Oxford. In his letter he stated he played a musical instrument as part of a band once a month there. The brochure showing the building and where Diana's and Tom's apartment was and you can just see the show unfolding.

I'd be thrown out of England if I went over there. I would be bothering the museums constantly.

#### **Ivy Kreamer**

Oh your kidding. Anymore it's hair raising. The bad thing for me right now is I picture it like it used to be and the change is so great. When you see those skin heads walking and those guys down in London protesting and they look like hell.

#### **John Tombaugh**

What's that park over there where they can talk about anything they want too.

**Ivy Kreamer**

You mean Hyde Park. That's one thing; now that's freedom of speech, and don't tell me you don't have it (over there in England) because you can tear the government up, but you can really-really-rip them up, you get a wooden box and stand on it and start yelling and people will automatic start standing around.

Now is right agree with the guy standing up there complaining about the government or some form of what ever, maybe they don't like the medical system and if they say so they don't like it and people will agree or disagree and pretty soon you got a bunch standing there yelling like mad 'cause their opposed to what he's saying or agreeing; then they start on each other and pretty soon it's a punch out. Then the police come and take them to the gaol (in America it means jail) and let them cool off for a night but it's funny because sometimes sunday afternoon we jump on a train and go up there just to see what was going on in Hyde Park.

**John Tombaugh**

If I went over there I'd be kicked out because I'd be going in and spending my whole time in the museums and archives trying to get all that information and they'd be trying to close.

**Ivy Kreamer**

That was one thing I thought about the schooling and which you do over here. The kids mostly will go to the White House (they used to). One thing that I thought was extremely nice in the last two years at school from 14, 15, 16 years old; we would go on field trips and they would take us into London (we were located on the outskirts of London) they would take us to the old Vic (theater) which would see that ballet dancing. I mean ballet dancing at its very best. I mean real ballerina from other parts of the world and so we got the culture. You got taken to the Kensington Museum, the London Museums. You know, you were subjected to the cultures, they would take you to the Tower of London, they take you to Telly, they take you to Parliament; they take you all through and let you view government like the Houses of Parliament. Parliament in session and the Conservative and Socialist and you would get to view them and you had to be very quite tippy toe and see what was going on and then they would take you to the Tower of London which is thousands of years old almost a B.C.

**John Tombaugh**

Is that where Walter Riley was put in?

**Ivy Kreamer**

Yea, and did you ever hear about the twin boys that were Prince's and the uncle didn't want the Prince's to be king, and he killed them. He put them in the Tower of London and beheaded them. He



killed them; of course this was way way back. This was when they were born to be king, in that era. These Prince's were in line for the throne and this uncle knew that if they were out of the way that he could be king. He framed offenses against them and had them put in the Tower of London. When we were in that Tower we were just kids 15 and 16 year old and went up those little stone steps into the towers. As you're going there is this little room, all stone, no wallpaper, you know, and you get the creeps. Its damp and cold and after that bad part they'd take you down into the lower dungeon, a part of the Tower of London. That's where the crown jewels are kept, that is it's a huge circle encased in glass and it's got wiring and stuff you wouldn't dare touch anything. You see all the crowns that the Queen wears on state occasions and on social events the tiaras and how much they were worth. All the jewels that belonged to the Royal Family are kept in there and you get to see all that good stuff and it's good educational.

So you get these field trips and you go one time to a ballet and another time to another type show or another time, music at its very best, classical music. You get taken to theater and I laugh 'cause when we went to town of London, only about 14 yrs old at the time, we all took a sack lunch. Of course we were eating on the grounds sitting and with these ravens around. I was setting there and was putting my sandwich on the seat to talk and that raven came out and swiped my sandwich and I had to go without eating.

**John Tombaugh**

Now the Raven, they are considered something of a Royal bird and don't they have a keeper for them?

**Ivy Kreamer**

There like a Royal Bird or something. This was strange I'll never forget I thought that rotten bird, stole my cotton picken lunch.

It's a lovely place to see so the grounds are kept so beautiful, the grass is like velvet and the shrubby is like all in bloom, very nice I enjoyed it tremendously; a heck of bunch of history goes clear back.

**John Tombaugh**

I can't imagine walking around an having castles and moats and have all this stuff from back in Roman time forward with an easy sight, it's got to be fantastic.

**Ivy Kreamer**

You can go to those places and then you think of history and think back and there's pamphlets you can read up on and refresh your memory. I always thought that was the nicest part of school near the end when we got to have field trips and get taken out to places a lot of children wouldn't of gotten to see anyway.

**John Tombaugh**

You said you were out of school at 16 yrs old now was your school year longer?

**Ivy Kreamer**

Yes, you don't get as much time off as you do here. Maybe I'm prejudiced but common sense tells me its more acceptable. I like the idea of school uniforms for a very very good reason, it stopped the bad feelings of kids that are real poor as they are criticized and felt awful. It must be a painful time for them and school uniforms are so neat and tidy. I used to wear brown at school and we had brown-velour hats with school badges on them and brown blazers, and had cream shirts with a tie and it would match your emblem blazers. You would have like tunics go over and they would be pleated and you have belts and have brown shoes and cream socks to match your shirt and everybody looked so nice, neat, tidy and clean. Everybody looked the same, you couldn't tell which ones were poor. Each school had it's own color, some were navy blue, dark green, we were brown and it was a nice feeling. What I like so much about that was it made you feel like you were like everybody else.

**John Tombaugh**

You felt as one.

**Ivy Kreamer**

Yes, you didn't spend time being catty or nasty. You know the other thing was time span. Christmas you got 2 weeks and Easter was 2 weeks and in the summer for Pentecost you got 2 weeks and you didn't get time off for teacher institute, you went to school and you didn't duck out. If you missed school an officer came to house to make sure you were sick, and if you couldn't give doctor certificate you were sick you got a black mark against your record for not being in school.

**John Tombaugh**

No summers off?

**Ivy Kreamer**

We had total of six weeks off and liked it so much better, We didn't have time to forget. Here you spend so much time in refresher course while there we didn't have time to forget what you learned.

**John Tombaugh**

If we had year around school would we be graduating at 16 years old then?

**Ivy Kreamer**

Most likely, but there again the reason I like it is that you have boys school and girls school. You don't have so much attention and the lovie dovie; and the girls of today 7, 8, 9 year old got boyfriends and pay more attention to the boyfriend and less attention to the teacher. So I still say I think that you are there

to get an education and a lot of the time is spend with your mind wondering were it shouldn't be.

**John Tombaugh**

If we got out at the age of 16 here what would the kids here do.

**Ivy Kreamer**

Do the same as if you were 18, get a job.

**John Tombaugh**

Couldn't because of the laws.

**Ivy Kreamer**

Then they'd need to change the laws.

**John Tombaugh**

This paper I am handing Ivy contains a list of the rations that the English people lived on during the war.

**Ivy Kreamer**

There was some types of food more in abundance; do you know that when it was rationed, the Germans were sinking all our ships and so we all relied on our friends. We can grow peaches, cherries, apples and plums but no citrus or bananas so were weren't self-sufficient and England is small and couldn't provide for that many people. I'd laugh as they had the great big billboards and say potatoes are not good for you, their fattening; then next week they'd come along and say that potatoes are good for you but only because they had plenty.

I think we were willing to starve because its little 20 mile channel was important. They really expected the Germans to enter the country; and we were schooled on it. I mean we were told this could happen so think what you going to do!

**John Tombaugh**

I would really love to see the instructional films at that time. The amount of thought that had to go into that and the way of the learning of the people at that time compared to today would be laughed at by a lot of people. They couldn't comprehend what it was like at that time.

**Ivy Kreamer**

I think back and there was this feeling of unity and I have never ever felt it since. Everybody was friendly and helped one another. It was a wonderful time of coming together you didn't think of yourself eventually only of the out come. You were willing to give up something for it. I used to go down to subway and sleep./ It was the only way to get any sleep. Used to say Survival of the fittest.

If you saw a long line of people you got in on it 'cause you knew how things were in short supply and didn't know what you were in line for or if they'd have some when you got there to get it.

You couldn't get nylons or silk hose. We'd get this cream, dark

stuff and put it on your legs and then stand on a chair and my sister would take eyeliner and draw lines up the back of the leg.

Clothes you bought were only on what was available and if you could sell anything you were very lucky and if you had a sewing machine you were better off.

### John Tombaugh

I had just finished reading a magazine entitled RMARGazine Number 19-Spring 2001 and in it they were telling about life during the war in England. The following article entitled: "Lambourn at War Boyhood Memories" by Red Giddings.

"...All the Americans we knew were air force personnel and they were quite a friendly bunch of guys but a very big shock was awaiting us one morning on the way to school via the local sweet shop. We were coming down what is called Edwards Hill when we caught sight of some strangely dressed soldiers standing near the top of the High Street. Not being close enough to hear what they were saying, plus the strange uniforms they were wearing as they weren't dressed like the British soldiers or like the American airmen. They wore helmets and boots that looked German and their uniforms were nothing like any we had seen before, so we all came to the same conclusion that they must be Germans. We took to our heels and ran to the school. On reaching it and all in a panic we found one of the male teachers and told him what we had seen, he then told us not to be so stupid and to stop telling stories but we insisted that we were telling the truth, so along with another teacher they proceeded to go down the alley towards the High Street. On spotting these strange looking soldiers they got as near as possible without being seen. After a few minutes of listening they decided that the men were of American origin, the long and short of it being that one of the soldiers came to the school and told all the assembled children that they were indeed American Paratroopers and that they meant us no harm.

"So began another adventure, and being much closer to home this took on a different theme because, with the food rationing that was on at the time, the local boys asked if their mothers could do any laundry for them in exchange for items of food, and much to our surprise the paratroopers agreed, my mother being quite happy to go along with the arrangements. Every Sunday afternoon along with my brother we would collect the dirty washing and return it clean on the Wednesday night and also collect the next batch to be returned on the Sunday again, this work carried on until the paratroopers were flown out for the Normandy drop (6 June, 1944), but before this event took place I think all the local folk got their fair share of goodies. I know that I did and the most prized thing was a pair of jump boots that were about two sizes too big for me and a trench knife plus all the normal things the troops gave us, but I believe that our gang went to the 1st Battalion HQ at Windsor House Stables and were the only kids to get home made fudge from the Americans in Lambourn."

Ivy Kreamer

The only time I've seen unity like that is 9-11. It really got to me, it got me in the throat. I was sitting there choking watching buildings getting burned.

The night they set fire to the docks in London the warehouses they bombed and bombed all along the waterfront. We lived in Chaingford and we were up on a hill about 3 or 4 districts away and whole sky was blood red and we knew what was going on and the people that died that night was terrible, they bombed and bombed.

What was so funny was the 2 blocks in the center of London was unscratched that's where all the money was and Hitler wanted it and it was never bombed, that section.

I'll close with this, if I had never come to this land I would not have met my husband Ralph.

19 hours