

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

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

Interview with

Harold D. Clevenger

Pfc.

35563085

31st Qm Pack Troop

5307 Composite Unit (Provisional)

"Merrill's Marauders" aka

"Merrill's Marauder Rangers"

475th Infantry Regiment

CBI

October 14, 2005

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Medals Earned:

American Theater Ribbon  
Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon with 2 Bronze Stars  
Good Conduct Medal  
Combat Infantry Badge  
Bronze Star Medal  
World War II Victory Medal  
Presidential Citation  
Ruptured Duck  
China War Memorial Medal

Interviewed  
By  
John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter

October 14, 2005

My name is John Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter and I are interviewing this gentleman on October 14, 2005.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Would you please state your name and address?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Harold D. Clevenger, 500 S. Montgomery St., Apt 219, Breman, Indiana.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What was your parents names and where they were born?

**Mr. Clevenger**

William and Ruth (Rochmond) Clevenger

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What was your wife's name?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Elenda Ruth McClain, we divorced in 1966.  
I married Charlotte Jackson on January 30, 2005.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

When is your birthday?

**Mr. Clevenger**

April 13, 1922.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you have any children?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Virginia; Harold II; Larry; and James.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where did you go to school?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I went through the 8th grade at school in Rochester, Indiana.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where were you on December 7, 1941?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I was in Rochester and heard about Pearl Harbor on the radio.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

When did you go into the military?

**Mr. Clevenger**

It went in October of 1942.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Did you enlist or were you drafted?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I was drafted.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where did you take your training?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I first went to Fort Benjamin Harrison and from there I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

How did you go to Fort Sill?

**Mr. Clevenger**

By train.

From Fort Sil I was shipped to Fort Bliss, Texas.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you have any memories of that time period?

**Mr. Clevenger**

We were in the pack Artillery Division; mule pack. We hauled 75mm Pack Howitzers.

The following taken from the files of John B. Tombaugh:

" -----

Artillery			
cal.	Weight of Shell	Max. Range yards	Rate of fire
75 mm (Airborne)	14 lbs	9,500	3

-----"

**Mr. Tombaugh**

You were issued the standard clothing?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Yes and our boots had three buckles.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

At that time the enlisted men wore brown shoes and the officers wore black. Then later they changed and both wore black.

**Mr. Clevenger**

We were sent to California. They then put us on a train to Newport, Virginia.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Did you stop along the way?

**Mr. Clevenger**

One time in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was around midnight and I looked out and there was a bunch of girls on the siding. We didn't get off. Then we stayed two days in Baltimore, Maryland.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Did you board a ship in Baltimore.

**Mr. Clevenger**

The USS General Butler

The following taken from the files of John B. Tombaugh:

"Butler, Gen. H.W. AP 113 P2 hull."

We stopped in Capetown, South Africa and it was modern and the people all walking around really fast. We stopped at a bar and I had my little haton. There were British soldiers also in the bar and we traded hats with those soldiers.

At Bombay there was 2,800 of us on the train crossing India to Camp Landis.

I got malaria and became so sick I just wanted to die. I was there two weeks and that was followed by a week of light duty.

We killed a snake and it was as big as my arm, I don't know what kind it was and we didn't have any guns so we threw rocks and thought that we had killed it but when we came back it was gone.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

When did you finally become a member of the Marauder's outfit? Was it before you left the states or after you got there?

**Mr. Clevenger**

After I got there.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Where was that?

**Mr. Clevenger**

At Camp Landers, India. They transferred us to the Merrill Marauder's and we were in the Marauder's all the way across Burma.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What was the food like? Was it K rations at that time?

**Mr. Clevenger**

No, not when we were in camp we had a cook. It was pretty good. The only thing you had to do was keep the flies off of it.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Does anything stand out in your mind of the time you spent there?

**Mr. Clevenger**

This one time two guys tried to rob the Post Office. I was standing there and they jumped me, one got my gun and I popped him on his ass. I was going to shoot him and when he got up he backed

up to the wall. He as so scared to death that he couldn't breathe. He took the light out of my papers. I won't tell you again you took my light out also took the fight out, he took off. If I could have gotten around in there I would have killed him. That was about the only thing that was done to me.

I crossed the Ganges River with my mule in a boxcar and when we got across there I got on top of the car, no one could see me and so we waited until the rest of them came across. When I woke up the train was going down through the jungle. One of the guys down in the car woke me up and said I had better get down in here, so I swung myself down into the boxcar.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What was the river like?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Muddy and wide, I don't know how wide. When we got off the train with the mules there were monkeys everywhere and you knew something was going on by the way they were acting.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Did you ever have any of those monkeys come into camp and steal from you?

**Mr. Clevenger**

No, but I know that there were monkeys all over.

We wanted to go hunting for wild boar to have something to eat so my friend and I waded across this little river, it was about two feet deep and clear as a crystal. Now there were leeches everywhere and he was walking behind me and started yelling; "Help, Help me!" I said; "What's the matter?" I looked around and he had his pants down and a leech was right on the end of his penis.

He was yelling; "Get it off!" "Get it off!"

A little bit of salt and they will come off.

I never forgot that he sure was scared to death.

Now the second time I went into combat; we were up in the mountains and you could see the rice patties below. The 75 mm (Airborne) Howitzer which each shell weights 14 lbs, was set up and firing at the Japs. I was standing behind and you could see them firing and the shells hitting. You looked down and saw those guys crawling in those rice patties.

When it got dark my mule had a white parachute on it and they started shooting those machine guns at me. I got hold of a two-way radio and told them to quit shooting down at me and they did quit.

I dug a hole and got down into it and a shell landed and buried me in that hole. I was in the front line hole and they told me to get out of there and that was when I lost my cigarettes.

When we slept in the hole you guarded each other. Nobody pulled anything because they were your buddies.

I would spend half a day putting fuses in grenades. I always personally carried four grenades at a time.

Another time we had no water but saw elephant tracks. They had

water in it so we filled the canteens and put the sulpha pills in and you had to wait twenty minutes. I made them wait thirty minutes just to be sure. We had no water at all and that elephant track was the only water we saw. When you're thirsty you will drink anything.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

While overseas in that area did you collect anything to send home?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I have a Japanese Flag. When I got into China a Chinese man dressed in civilian clothes had a little stand and had all kinds of jade. I asked him; "Do you have anything better than that?" He said something to the lady with him in Chinese's. The jade was beautiful and I picked one up and he said five dollars. I bought two rubies and a sapphire.

Now they flew us back over the hump from China to India and when we landed they put us on a train and we went across India to Karachi. I carried them all the time with me.

This is a picture of Bob Hamilton of Michigan; he was supply sgt. and he supplied me with a machine gun.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you remember your C.O. and your platoon sgt.?

**Mr. Clevenger**

My C.O. was Lt. Vandell from Minnesota. I don't recall the platoon sgt's name but I can still see him.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you have any more stories to tell?

**Mr. Clevenger**

We were going up the mountain and I had a hold of the mule's tail to pull me up the mountain. We were going on another mission.

This one time if another guy hadn't cut the rope we would have gone over the hill with the mule.

To stop a mule from running you would pinch their nose.

The following is taken from "Spearhead" by James E.T. Hopkins:

"Instead of having six hundred mules, we would enter Burma with three hundred wonderful mules and approximately one hundred horses, most of which were in poor shape.

"The saddle problems were made worse by (the) lack of metal pack saddle hangers. These had to be ordered and fabricated to carry fixed loads. They had to accommodate fixed ammunition, radio equipment, medical supplies, machine guns, mortars, and other equipment. The mules could each carry approximately two hundred pounds and most of the horses somewhat less. The horses were said to require twelve pounds of oats per day. If bamboo leaves were available, the mules would eat this vegetation and get by on ten pounds of oats per day. Proper care, feeding and mechanical

ingenuity soon produced a brighter outlook for the run-down and weakened horses.

"During the few days remaining before departure for Burma, those of us who had arrived earlier had trained so had soon developed admiration and respect for the 160 men of the 31st and 33rd Q.M. Pack Train Units."

**Mr. Tombaugh**

When did you leave the fighting area?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I left there in September 1945.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

You came back by ship?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Yes.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Do you remember the name of the ship?

**Mr. Clevenger**

No.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

When you came back did you come past Capetown, South Africa.

**Mr. Clevenger**

No, we came back through the Suez Canal.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Did you come into New York?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Yes, it was New York; then they put us on a train to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

After you got discharged at Fort Benjamin Harrison how did you get home.

**Mr. Clevenger**

By bus.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Did you attend any USO shows?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Yes. I met Pat O'Brien and several other persons. I really liked there shows.



**Mr. Tombaugh**

What was the differences in the United States when you got home that you noticed?

**Mr. Clevenger**

No tires and the rationing.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

Have you attended any reunions?

**Mr. Clevenger**

Just a couple of them.

**Mr. Tombaugh**

What would you tell the young people of your experience?

**Mr. Clevenger**

I took nothing from anybody, also I did my part.

-END-

12.5 hours