

## Marvin Butterfield

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Now the interesting thing about what we're doing is a lot of this is -- to leave a message for future generations. I mean there's a lot of people that were a part of history that I can never go interview, (inaudible).

**Answer:** Hm-hmm.

**Question:** Do you think a message that you want World War II to leave for great-great grandchildren that you may never meet?

**Answer:** Well, one of the interesting things that happened when I was in the Marine Corps in San Francisco, they sent out a request for -- you had to be six feet tall, you had to have a couple of ribbons overseas or combat or something, and what they wanted us to do was to be door openers for these delegates and functionaries and people that were forming the United Nations at that time. And they -- they were meeting in the Opera House in San Francisco, and as these limousines would come in with all these bureaucrats and what not, we were there to open the door and, you know, that's all we -- all we had to do. And all of the fellows in the detail would -- would pick up snatches of conversation from these people. And none of it was any good, I mean as far as we were concerned. They wanted our money, they wanted anything they could get from us, but the control of the world had to be in their hands because they knew best. And we talked about these things when we went back into -- into the guard house. We'd get together and have a beer or something like that and we'd talk about what we heard. And it just reminded me so much of -- I've been a student of history for some -- some number of years. And it reminded me -- at that time it reminded me of the poem, "In Flanders Fields". I don't know if you're familiar with that or not. After World War I, I think his name was John McCrae, wrote a poem called "In Flanders Fields poppies blow. Between the crosses row and row." And it -- to you we pass the torch, be yours to hold it high. And if you break faith with us who die, though poppies blow in Flanders Fields", -- it's quite a famous poem, and it just spoke to me at that instance that these people were at it again. They're going to do it again. And it's not Hitler, it's not Joe Stalin or anything, it's just the people that didn't learn the lesson from 1914 to 1918, whatever that World War I period you want. And God help us if -- if they don't learn -- people in general, if they don't learn that there are better ways to solve problems than to have wars. Now it may take the second coming of Christ, but it will happen sometime.

**Question:** Do you hold an animosity towards the Japanese?

**Answer:** No. None whatsoever. I -- in the latter part of my adult life, I formed a company. I worked -- I was a wholesale distributor of garden products. I sold to landscape contractors and nurseries. Many of them were Japanese, landscape contractors and nursery people. I got along just fine with them. They didn't know anything about my giving this flag back to Takahashi or anything like that and I never told them about it. It didn't make any difference. No, I have no animosity.

**Question:** When you were fighting and you were sent to war --

**Answer:** Scared. Not hatred. Fear. I didn't want them to get me before I got them. And you know when you're coming around telling me what kind of a guy Franklin Roosevelt is and what I had for breakfast and Marines eat this and Marines eat that. It can get a little fearful, particularly when they're just yards away. And we knew what they could do at night. We knew what their capabilities were. It could be a very frightening thing. I was never as frightened, though, tell you the truth, as I was when we were walking in Shantou. We never walked alone there either. Always in pairs. And many of the troops, if they still had them, carried those combat knives, the K-bars. For protection. It was against -- it was against the

## Marvin Butterfield

Tape 2 of 2

Rocks and Shoals to carry weapons when we were on liberty like that, but, hey, better than getting your throat cut. Cause you never knew when those people were going to do it, and they were quite capable of it. Life in the Orient is not as valuable, nearly as valuable as it is here. Never has been.

**Question:** Is -- when you were in war, it sounds like you have to -- I mean the mind is an amazing thing. Was it a dilemma for you to, I mean you're firing a gun. You're knowing that somebody's getting killed out there. Was that a dilemma?

**Answer:** No, not really. I -- whatever your definition of dilemma is. You could feel sorry for a person, particularly if you knew them and maybe you'd had -- had a beer with them a week or so before. But the first, well, yeah, the first thing I did when we jumped off -- got off the amphib tractors and on the beach, was to try to hug the beach. Try to work your way into the beach. Like the -- I don't know if you're familiar with grunion, when they come up like that and they work their way into the sand. That's what we were trying to do on Guam. And the fear that you might have in those situations is the major concern. You're not -- there's no dilemma, was that the word?

**Question:** Is it a -- is it a survival mode, is that what happens to your mind?

**Answer:** Oh, sure, yeah. Hm-hmm. Like when I was laying in the gangway of the hospital ship. Wanted a glass of water. That was the dumbest thing in the world, have a glass of water, as far as I knew. I mean, as it turned out, it didn't -- it was not detrimental and sure tasted good. (laughs) So it's difficult to put any -- anything other than just fear and self-preservation. I remember we were walking back with -- when we were on Guam, there was a stream or a river just off of the Harmon Road there. We stacked our rifles and went over and sat down and washed our feet and splashed around. Get rid of some of the sweat and dirt and what not. And coming back, there was a sergeant in the middle, I was on one side and Jim Branch was on the other. And we were walking back to get our rifles and what not. And all of a sudden we heard a thud, you know, and the next thing I heard was the sergeant said, Aw, shit. He had just been hit. He was out of it. That made him mad. But I don't consider it a dilemma necessarily. We just got our lesson in Oriental warfare. You wound one man, it takes two others to take him off the field. So you got rid of three guys. (laughs)

**Question:** Boy that's right, isn't it.

**Answer:** Hm-hmm, at least as far as the aid station.

**Question:** What does it mean to you when you see an American flag go by?

**Answer:** I'm very proud. Oh let me tell you about a flag. When I was in San Francisco and I'd just gotten through at -- at the Treasure Island Naval Hospital and was declared fit for guard duty. We had to guard the perimeter of Goat Island, Yerba Buena -- it's the island that sits right in the middle of the Oakland Bay, or the Bay there, where the train station, midway. The commander of the 12th Naval District lives there, has his offices there. One morning, Sunday morning, we came off of guard duty and the wind was coming in off the -- off the ocean. And it can blow down there. Well, we had the holiday flag, that's a 40 x 20 foot flag. And the commodore had a bunch of dignitaries -- important people from the city out for breakfast or something. And anyway, at 8 o'clock, 0800, we had to raise the flag. So we're out there and they got a Navy band and the Navy band strikes up attention to colors, the corporal of the guard leans over to toss the flag up into the morning sky. Well, she went up and poor Jarhead on the lanyard, he's pulling, you know, keep the flag from touching the

## Marvin Butterfield

Tape 2 of 2

ground. So he's just hauling in like he never could before. And the flag gets about half way up to the pole and the wind came in. It was a terrific wind. And it smacked that flag just like a five incher, right off your ear, you know. And the flag went pouf, and the guy went up in the air. And there was two of us reached over and tried to grab his ankles before we thought about it. And then -- then he came back down. But, aw, that was a beautiful morning, and all 800 square feet of her was beautiful. And she waved. My wife and I go to a lot of ball games, and only once have I had to admonish a young man for not taking his cap off when they play the National Anthem. And I have at times been very critical of some of the National Anthem singers at these ball games, the way they try to trill their voices and they cheapen it in my estimation. But that's what we fought for. So that people could do that. And that makes you think a lot too. Why did we go through all that stuff? Because it wasn't fun, not all of it. Well, if we learned something, that will help all of us. I'm sure.

**Question:** Would you do it again?

**Answer:** Pardon?

**Question:** Would you do it again?

**Answer:** In a heartbeat. Yep. As I say again, I don't remember anybody ever releasing me from the oath to preserve, protect and defend our Constitution. The -- when you're sworn into the service as an officer, they take that oath, but they give it to us enlisted personnel also. So we have the same oath. And it's just not something that you can take lightly. I never was able to, anyway. Again I haven't always been the best human being, but I didn't want to -- didn't want to screw that one up. It's very important to our nation anyway.

**Question:** When you're out and about somewhere, just traveling or whatever, average kind of day, and you see a person that for whatever reason, you can tell it's a Marine, whether it's a young Marine of today, a Marine of your generation. Is there a special bond?

**Answer:** In a way. I -- when I was coming back from Chicago, I wore my cap and my ribbons, and I was sitting in the airport there and this young man, boy, 12, 13, maybe 14, came up. And engaged me in conversation. He said that he had just bought his Dad a present -- his Dad was in the Marine Corps someplace. And he had bought a -- a Marine flag for his father. And as he left me, we said goodbye, you know, and he said Semper Fi. So there -- there's that bond. Faithful to one another. Had somebody ask me about what Semper Fi stands for, and Semper Fidelis -- the Christmas season coming up, we have Adeste Fidelis, Come all Ye Faithful.

**Question:** When you see somebody from World War II that was in Okinawa, Iwo Jima, you know they're a Marine or whatever branch of the service, is there some understanding that the two you have that I'll never have? Because you were there?

**Answer:** Probably. I can't say for sure but I know that if they were on MT. Suribachi or wherever, and we had the same mentors, if you will. We learned the same lessons, you just do it. You don't ask why, how or when. It's done, right now. Otherwise, like they say in the movies, somebody dies. And we knew that, we had that ingrained into us. As a matter of fact we had a drill instructor when I went through boot camp, OB Joyner was his name. J-O-Y-N-E-R. He was a platoon sergeant and in 1934 he had been the light heavyweight champion of the Pacific Fleet. And we were not to forget that. Or else. (laughs) So. And in his book, sea duty was the best -- was the only duty for a Marine. And I was so proud of this friend, Dick Fielstrom, who I joined the Marines with. He was sent to sea school after boot camp where a

## Marvin Butterfield

Tape 2 of 2

lot of us went into, oh, some went into artillery and I wanted to go into the Raiders. Dick was on board the USS New Mexico when she was off of Okinaw

**Answer:** And he lost an eye. They caught a Kamikaze plane. But I was awful proud of him because he got the premier duty -- the sea duty, which according to Sgt. Joyner, was the best duty there was. And we all respected his opinion. One day when we were at boot camp, some guy, Marine, was standing there with his hands in his pockets. Well that's not drunk driving, to me, but it was to Joyner. Joyner told this guy to fill up his pockets with sand, sew up the pockets, which he had to do, of course, and his pockets bulged for, I think it was almost a week and the guy lost a lot of weight. That Joyner was something else. He had his own ways of -- well, we had to learn our -- when we were issued our rifles, we had to learn and memorize the serial number of the rifle or we slept with it and two guys did sleep with them after they wiped off all the cosmoline and stuff you know, they took the rifle to bed and son of a gun, he came around at zero-dark hundred sometime, you know, just to check on the rifle to make sure it was comfortable.

**Question:** Well thank you very much.