

Clement Steenburgh
Veteran

Herkimer County Veteran's Video Project

I was 19 when I joined the marines one month after Pearl harbor. I was in boot camp for 13 weeks, I was actually in battle at Guadalcanal six month later, the japs of the Guadalcanal had control of the sea. And we got our supply lines cut off and we live offed coconuts and fish heads. Guadalcanal was first defensive of ww2. It was a very important battle. Because the japs were on their way to going to new Zealand, Australia and eventually the United States.

We were on the Guadalcanal for 4 and a half months, and we get rid of the japs in one battle bring them in by sea on the other end of the island and we had the same kind of battles all over again. There for four and a half months, battles going on all the time. After that we went to Australia for training, and regrouping and got new guys in, replacements then we back to the island retrained with them, and went to Cape Gloucester (?) also fighting the japs battles there for four and a half months, after that they didn't take us to a civilized place anymore. Because we raised a devil in the first place, they took us back to the islands with new replacements. Same thing, then we went to Peleliu which was a small island five islands long. Worst thing I've ever seen, veterans getting killed and ah, and a lot of guys getting killed. Worst amount of casualties In World War Two. This is a picture of my outfit on Guadalcanal, the cornel is giving out silver stars to these guys in different companies, and there is a guy in my company receiving a silver star.

This is a picture of one of my best friends who got killed in (unclear), this is just another friends in the marine, and this is cornel crawler giving a silver star to the Abdela(?), a guy from Albany, he was a headquarters guy. This is a couple of shots from Cape Gloucester (?), and it happens to be a bunch of guys raising the American flag from my company. And this other guy is from my company. This just is one the first unions of ah the guys from my company and the division. You can see how young we really are in these pictures.

Interviewer: you joined when you were just 19 years of age, you must have been out of high school only for a year.

Steenburgh: , I was still in high school because I had quit two years ago, and I went back to finish and then pearl harbor happened, then I joined right away. I went right into boot camp for a week.

Interviewer: what were you doing before you went back to school? Steenburgh: depression time, western union telegraph, leader hero, and things like that jobs that kid do. Interviewer: usually, something sticks out, most memorable moment of any military career.

Steenburgh: , what really sticks out in Guadalcanal, was we were only there for a few days, and we got ambushed by the japs, and 9 guys got killed in my company right away. And that's when the pharmacist tried to save the marine that was wounded there. And he got a congressional metal of honor for that. And they named the ship after him, and this

was taking aboard the shit, *USS Daniel Gerard*, he use to say he hated the marines, but they really took care of him when he needed it.

But that stands out and also on the brighter side, we went to Australia and they treated us like kings. Because we more or less they figured we saved the japs coming from Australia. And we messed it up with young boys do, go out drinking, getting fights in the bar, go out with the 8th army wives and girlfriends. We got in all types of trouble over there. So they never let us go back to Australia again.

Interviewer: so you left the army, excuse me I mean Marines after how many years.

Steenburgh: I came back to the states after Peleliu I didn't leave the marines Okinawa happened after that I was in the states; in fact I was in the convalescent hospital I was on my way out of the marines. When we went to the island of Peleliu, third campaign, it was the worst battles ever because guys that I thought were okay were in two other campaigns were getting shot by snipers and we were only actually there 11 days, but the casualties were enormous. I read in the history book since, that out of all the battles, this was the worst one. When we got relieved, I got awful nervous and this is probably where I got my disabilities. I thought that we were going to have to go back in after the army relieved us, the guys who relieved us looked like old men. I figured we were going to go back, and there were storms at sea so they wouldn't let us aboard ship to go away from there. And this is probably the worst nervous part that happened to me. And I was real glad I got out of there.

Interviewer: so you thought when you first arrived at Peleliu you thought it was going to be a cake war. So to speak, and it turn out to be,

Steenburgh: I also read they didn't have to take some of these islands, but they did anyways, the higher up the military and the politics, but there was a lot of guys, lot of casualties, lots of dead people, that's where I lost my best friend. His name was tommy from Ohio, he was ah 17 when I meant him, 19 when he got killed. Every gage of my whole outfit was 19, I would say.

Interviewer: so after Peleliu, you came back to the states.

Steenburgh: after Peleliu I had 29 points enough time to automatically come back to the states and leave the first marine division. I didn't do much after that. Guard duty over my own guys, and stuff like that which I hated. I didn't like it. Guys which in navy and marines I used to guard them. I didn't like it all, after a while I got a medical discharge.

Interviewer: how did you accumulate enough points to discharge?

Steenburgh: 29 months overseas, I forgot to mention, my outfit got 4 battle stars, and two presidential citations.

Interviewer: and this all counts into towards your

Steenburgh: time overseas, and the points come from just being over seas in battles zones, and if you get 29 you can come home. Actually when they first started sending guys home, they didn't know any better, they sent guys home with malaria, every got malaria, so they couldn't do that anymore.

Interviewer: so you got that too?

Steenburgh: I got malaria on Guadalcanal, a mosquito bit me there, and I was also a runner for the company, and a scorpion bit me, when I went into my sack one night. And it was a poisonous thing, I was lucky there was it was right near the doctor there, the head quarters, I walked around with a sling for a few days. And they sucked, those days they sucked the poison out with salt manage, I walked around with a sling and I was alright. But its in my record I got bit my a scorpion.

Interviewer: the malaria attacks still come at time?

Steenburgh: malaria, I was lucky very lucky with malaria. It came out on me in Australia, and then I never got another attack of malaria, but other guys in my company use to say that guys who drink a lot bring them out , they say different things like this, they use to get malaria all the time. Frank was in my outfit, he was in my outfit, and he got a silver star. He use to get malaria all the time.

Interviewer: so after you were discharged you came back to Gloversville,

Steenburgh: come back to Gloversville, married at 45 have two sons.