

Biography of Neven Ray Southwick

My grandpa, Neven Ray Southwick, was born in 1928. He has lived in Lehi all his life. His father was a dairy farmer, so Grandpa grew up milking the cows twice a day. When he graduated from high school in 1946, World War II was just ending. But he enlisted with the Marines anyway. His mother was very unhappy and worried about her son who was now in the military. But Ray felt like he needed to represent his family and do his patriotic duty. He served for two years and was released. He re-enlisted in the inactive reserves and became a weekend warrior. When he was 22 years old he met his sweetheart and they were married in April of 1950.

In June, Grandpa's unit was called up to active duty and assigned to fight in the Korean War. He trained at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California. He went through six weeks of extensive training. They were shipped out of San Diego in November headed for Japan. There they traded for goods and got food and supplies. They also bought winter gear for the vigorous trip. Then they joined up with another Marine Corp unit. It was wintertime in Pusan Korea. They stayed there for three weeks. My Grandpa was assigned to the Infantry Company, Item Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, First Marine Division. He was assigned to the third platoon. They sailed to Pohang Port. There were Koreans all over in the hills. It was hard in the fields. They never bathed and were in cold freezing conditions. It was always rainy and foggy. The only way to receive supplies was by airplane parachute drops. Each Soldier was assigned a fox hole buddy. His was Walt Myers from Seattle Washington. They enjoyed fruit

cocktail from the sea rations. The parachutes sometimes would be let down to low and only the cocktail would survive the hard smack to the grounds. So basically, they lived on it.

There was a ridge line where the North Koreans and Chinese were dug in. They approached the ridge and black things came rolling down the hill. They were percussion grenades. He turned his back to shield his face from the flying debris, but none of the explosions got close enough to harm him or his fox hole buddy. Then Walt yelled at him, "Ray there is a grenade right next to your head." Grandpa turned around and sitting right there was a black percussion grenade. Luckily, it didn't go off and he was grateful it was a dud. Then they approached the ridge, there was fog so it was hard to see the Chinese enemy. They couldn't see anybody and there wasn't any gun fire. Then all of a sudden, this Indian from Texas that served with my grandpa raised up and fired a couple of shots into the thick fog. Grandpa asked him what he was shooting at and he said that Chinaman up there. My grandpa asked how he could see the enemy through the fog and he said he saw his breath in the cold night air. Sure enough they went up to the top of the ridge and there were three Chinamen laying dead. They dug in for the night on that ridge.

The next morning they headed out to join the other battalion. They came to a little Christian community in the area. Which was different because there weren't many Christians in the area. They dug in and spent the night there. They went walking up the ridge, when they came to a Korean grave. My grandpa and Walt went down to check it out. Then they heard a couple of Chinese talking. Then they started shooting at the Chinese soldiers. Then a machine gun opened up on Walt and Grandpa. It was only

about fifty yards away. They dove behind the grave and took cover. Then they took out the bunker both of them firing shot after shot. When it was clear, they walked over and saw that there were four Chinese soldiers laying dead in the bunker with a machine gun. Then a couple of Chinese soldiers jumped up in front of them only about thirty yards away. They were fortunate enough to not get shot by these soldier.

They traveled through many rice patties day after day. Once they came up on a grass shack where they spotted two American G.I. s. taking cover. Come to find out their whole regiment had been taken out. All the dead soldiers were laying all around them. The dead American soldier's clothes had been taken. The only thing they had left on their bodies were their under garments. This is when Grandpa finally noticed how great the tragedies of war were. His platoon was then ordered to head up the canyon and join another regiment.

Food was a big problem for these Marines. It was very scarce. Sometimes they would meet patrols on the road or meet at a specific place to get their food. They would have to do this so they wouldn't be discovered by the Chinese. The food was not the greatest, he said they would have spam and a loaf of bread all the time. He would only eat the bread because he couldn't stand the spam. He would usually trade it for something else.

They spent eighty-seven days in the hills around Pusan Korea. Their shoes would become wore out and their bodies ached and they all were sick in one way or another. One day they were on the move and they came along an Army troop who were just pulling out of the area. They had a truck load of shoes and they gave them to his troop. He said that was the nicest gift he had ever received while he was in Korea fighting.

They spent many days in the hills. He became close to many of the soldiers that he served with and many of them became his friends. Many of them lost their lives while in Korea. One day they came to a place called the Kansas line which was by a road where the American's had a couple of tanks. There was a bridge. An Army man with them wanted them to check it out the bridge to see if they could get the tanks across.

Suddenly, they were shot at by some Chinese on the other side but they all fell on the ground and took cover. The Marines all knew what to do and took over. They proceeded with caution. When they got back to the main group the Army man praised the way Grandpa and his buddies had handled the situation. He told their General. It was a proud time for him.

Later in the year, the Chinese were on the charge again and Grandpa's battalion was sent back up into the hills. They were on a ridge line where they were all taking a five minutes to rest to regain their legs. Ray was getting restless, so he stood up and was leaning by a tree. All of a sudden, he saw something move over in the trees on the next ridge. Suddenly the tree he was leaning on exploded from machine gun fire. They all dove to the ground and started to fire shots back in the direction of the attack. The Chinaman was only six inches off from hitting my Grandpa. It had split the tree into two.

The troop then came upon a stream where they planned to cross. They were planning to get three tanks across also. They all had to slow up for these tanks to cross. They all helped the first one get over. Then the second one successfully crossed. As the third attempted to cross, some Marines had jumped on it to help. One of the soldiers was standing on the fender of the tank when it struck a mine. Grandpa said the noise was so loud it could have blown out his ear drums. It had thrown the man sitting on the

fender 30 to 40 feet in the air. No one else was hurt or injured. They got over to him and he was covered in black and his eyes were the only thing white on his body. Even his clothes had been blown off of him. When they got over to him, he jumped up and started running around and everybody was yelling to him but he couldn't hear because his ear drums had been blown out. They finally tackled him and got him under control. They sent him back to the hospital. Ray never knew if that Marine survived or not.

In Korea it rained and rained and rained. The soldiers were soaking wet and all were told to retreat because it was hard to fight in these conditions. It was difficult to fight because you couldn't see or hear anything.

Soon weather conditions became better and the Marines all gathered on a ridge around a box canyon. There were two tanks and two machine guns. The Item Company in which my Grandpa was assigned, was up on top of a ridge. A Korean farmer was coming so they all went out to meet him, he said that there were all kinds of Chinese headed this way only a couple of miles behind him.

Grandpa and Walt dug in on top of the ridge. As the Chinese arrived, the first thing they hit was a tank down on the road. They killed everybody in it and blew the treads right off of it. That's when all heck broke loose. There was trumpets, bells, flares, and whistles going off every where. Bullets started whizzing by their heads. There were loud explosions going off every where. They could barely see because it was night time. They were in a big mess because they dug in on top of the ridge and couldn't fight off behind them or in front of them. They went back and joined the CP and spent the night with them fighting in their fox holes. Then the next morning a new recruit named Ducky, got out of the fox hole. He was going to go help a firing squad that was in trouble. He

didn't get more than ten feet away when a Chinaman popped up out of a fox hole. They couldn't believe the Chinaman had dug in only ten feet away from the enemy the night before. They didn't know he was there and he didn't know they were there. The Chinaman was a poor shot. He shot Ducky in the right leg. They were able to take the Chinaman hostage.

After that three more Chinamen came up over the ridge with their arms up and their rifles above their heads trying to surrender. Grandpa and Walt went down to get them. Then a US Army man came around the ridge and yelled, "I got them." My Grandpa yelled at him to get back and not shoot. If he had my Grandpa would of been shot because at the time they didn't know there were about ten other enemy soldiers behind the three trying to surrender. The three soldiers put down their guns and came and surrendered their arms. As soon as that was done the ten behind saw that they weren't going to hurt them so they also surrendered their guns to my Grandpa and Walt. They started bowing to Walt and Grandpa. Ray didn't know what to do. So he almost started to bow back but didn't. They took them as POWs. Next, they went down to where they had set up their bunkers the night before. They found two jammed enemy machine guns. They had magazines still in them but wouldn't shoot. If they hadn't jammed Grandpa and Walt would of been dead men.

Finally, American planes and rockets started to scare off the Chinese. Then the Korean farmers came to bury all the dead soldiers. That was really hard for my Grandpa because of all the dead on both sides. It made his heart sink. The US lost 39 people and 9 in his Item Company. Thirty more were injured in that little battle. Intelligence started asking the prisoners what was going on and what China's plans were. Grandpa went

back to his fox hole with Walt. They both popped aspirin in their mouths to ease the pain of their pounding headaches.

After 12 months of intense fight, Grandpa's tour of duty ended. He was shipped out for the United States with a lay over in Japan. He will never forget docking in California and seeing his sweetheart waiting for him on the docks. After one year of fierce fighting, hunger, freezing cold conditions, death and destruction around every corner, he was finally home. But the memory of that year in Korea will always be with him. He tells the stories to his children and grandchildren not to be a hero in their eyes but to instill in them the respect, honor and loyalty of what it means to be a free American.

Ray Southwick is the father of 3 children, grandfather of 11, great-grandfather of 4. He worked for almost ⁴³35 years at Geneva Steel in Orem Utah. He is retired and enjoys spending his winters with his wife in St. George and his summers in Lehi. He will always love his country and is grateful and proud to have spent one heck-of a year as a United States Marine in Korea.