

Rex Calvert

He fought in four WWII battles with the Fourth Marine Division and earned the Purple Heart.

Chapter 1 - 1:22

Introduction

Announcer: Tulsan Rex Calvert graduated from Tulsa Central High School in 1942 and worked 10 months for Midcontinent Petroleum. When he and some of his friends came out of a movie theater in December 1941, Calvert remembers there was a kid on the street yelling, "Pearl Harbor attacked by Japanese!" Rex was drafted. On February 12, 1943, 14 months after the Pearl Harbor attack he enlisted in the Marines. It was at Pearl Harbor in early 1945 that Calvert along with the 4th Marine divisions started their 40-day trip to Iwo Jima. On February 23, 1945, four days into the battle came the raising of the American flag on Mount Suribachi, the highest point on the island. Rex saw the flag as hundreds of Marines celebrated the moment. Previous to this moment, Rex had already been in three combat landings. He had dodged death many times, but was hit by enemy fire one time on Saipan, which earned him the Purple Heart. There were many Marines in the 4th division who made the supreme contribution to victory. They were boys of 18 and they were men of 40. They were privates and lieutenant colonels. They will not be forgotten. Listen now to a World War II hero in graphic detail tell his story—the story of Rex Calvert—as heard on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 - 5:40

Father / Race Riot

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is March 1, 2012. We are recording this interview in the Voices of Oklahoma studio. Rex, state your full name and your date of birth and your present age please.

Rex Calvert: My name is Lavern Rex Calvert. I was born in Tulsa on July 21st, 1923. I am about 88 years old.

JE: Let's talk about your family a little bit. Your mother's name and maiden name and where she came from?

RC: My mother's name was Catherine Jones. She was a beautiful gal. We lived next door to her mother, my grandmother. I pause a little bit because I am not professional in this kind of business, but once I get started you can't stop me. I grew up in Tulsa living next to my grandmother. My family had five boys and one girl. We all went to Central High School.

JE: Where were you born?

RC: Right there in the house next to my grandmother. My mother had me in the front room of our house.

JE: Do you remember the address?

RC: 4912 West 8th Street. The house is still there.

JE: What kind of person was your mother?

RC: She was well-educated. She worked for the Tulsa World as an elevator operator when she was about 18 or 20 years old. She met my dad who was in the National Guard.

JE: Your dad's name?

RC: Earl Ray Calvert. He was about 20 years older than I am. Of course he has passed away. He was here when they had the Race Riot. Being in the National Guard, he was called in to quiet things down, because the Race Riot as you know was in 1921.

JE: It was in May 31 and June 1 of 1921. Did he talk about what he did during the Race Riot?

RC: Yes. They didn't shoot a lot of people. He was guarding the railroad tracks. He and another man were stationed to keep that railroad track open. He laughs and tells the story about a stray bullet that ricocheted off a rock and hit his buddy on top of the head. His buddy said, "I'm shot. He said, "No, you are not shot, it just grazed your skin." Of course the guy was bleeding pretty good. My dad just laughs and tells that story, but that's all he ever said to me about his National Guard efforts.

JE: So he didn't say anything about the burning and the shooting and killing?

RC: He didn't say a word about it.

JE: What did your father do in town?

RC: My father was an expert machinist. If you wanted anything done in machine work, you called him. He ran and owned a machine shop at 1st and Lansing. Dad was such a great machinist. He served his time with the people who made trains. So you had people that can teach you how to run machines when you are making a train engine. So when you served your time in that capacity, when you came out of there, you knew how to work machines and you could teach other people. So my dad's job was making oil field pumps that could run the pressure up to several thousand pounds per square inch. You

had to know what you were doing. The young machinists didn't know, so his job was teaching them to do all of these things. During the war they made a lot of pumps. They worked 12 or 14 hours a day because Uncle Sam needed all of this equipment because we were fighting a war. My dad would give the men a vacation so they could go and rest up because they had worked many, many hours a day for weeks and weeks. They were about 80 or 90 men. They worked making pieces for the pumps and while they were on vacation my dad and his helper put the pieces together so Uncle Sam could have his pumps.

Chapter 3 - 7:10

December 7, 1941

John Erling: What was the first elementary school you attended?

Rex Calvert: It was James Whitcomb Riley School on Charles Page Boulevard. That was the line that ran from Tulsa to Sand Springs. I rode that when I was a student. It was called a streetcar. Besides having flat cars with stuff, the streetcar would come every 20 minutes. That school has long since been torn down. I had graduated and had been through the war in the Pacific with the Marines when I got notice that the school was closing. So I went there and met all of my old teachers and hugged every one of them. They said they remembered me. I couldn't spell so I didn't advance to the second grade and they remembered that. My dad taught me how to spell and I made 100s from then on.

JE: Then you went to high school?

RC: I went to Roosevelt Junior High, which is over near where I live now. That school is still there, but it's a special education school. After I graduated there, in 1939 I went to Central High School at 6th and Cincinnati. My kids went to the new Central High School that was built out on West Edison.

JE: What year did you graduate from Central?

RC: 1942.

JE: So you were a senior in high school on December 7, 1941?

RC: Yes. I was a senior in high school and I was at 3rd and Main. In those days they put out an extra paper. These boys would stand on the street and yell, "Extra! Extra!" The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. We said to each other, "Where in the world is Pearl Harbor?" Boy did we ever find out.

JE: Was it a scary experience to hear that?

RC: I had no idea what that meant.

JE: Did your teachers talk about it?

RC: Teachers did not seem to want to talk about it. A lot of the boys wanted to enlist right away and some of them did. Some of the boys were only 16 and they had to get their parents' permission to join the service.

JE: So you decided to stay in school and graduate?

RC: Yes, I wanted to stay in school. What does a kid who is 19 know about what's going on in the world—I mean, what's war? We weren't trained to know anything about that.

JE: So you went out and got your first job out of high school?

RC: I worked for Mid-Continent Petroleum Corporation. Later on it was called Sun Oil Company. I worked in their laboratory testing oil because in high school I was my chemistry teacher's assistant. That was quite a big deal for me. I loved to figure out how things worked. I once made hydrogen, the lightest known gas and put it into a balloon. I signed my name to it and I cast it off, but I didn't hear anything back about who found the balloon. (Chuckle)

JE: So you graduated and then you worked for Sun Oil. Then one day in 1943 the war was on and you get a letter from Uncle Sam?

RC: Yes. I worked in that laboratory for about 10 months before I got that letter. They liked my work. By then, most of the men in that lab were gone to war and they had women doing that work. I got my letter and I was told to report to a place and that night I was gone.

JE: Where did you go?

RC: Into the Marine Corps. There was Army, Navy and the Marines and they said, "Which one do you want? You can be in any one, which one do you want be?" I said, "I sure like that blue uniform." So they suckered me into the Marine Corps and I was on my way. They said, "There are no trains leaving Tulsa for San Diego, they all leave from OKC." So I had to catch a bus and go down there. They said, "You can have a Pullman car and they will feed you and take you to San Diego." I got to OKC and they said, "They gave you the wrong information, there's no Pullman car for you. I think that recruit man pocketed the money and gave me a coach car that didn't have any seats. It was full of people going to the West Coast to see their husbands in the service. There were women in there with babies crying and vomiting and sour milk smell. There were dirty diapers on the floor. I had to stand up all the way to San Diego—two days and a night. The train stopped every mile or so to pick up a can of milk. You could not get the windows up. There was no air conditioning on the train and no place to sit down and all of these people in there. I hate to tell this kind of a story, but these are true facts.

JE: Yep.

Chapter 4 - 6:35**Boot Camp**

John Erling: That obviously wasn't the worst part of your entire enlistment. You got to San Diego and you had boot camp right?

Rex Calvert: You've probably seen shows and movies of how they treat the Marines who are new recruits. When we got off that train, that's just about the way they handled us. They said, "This is the sorriest bunch of people I have ever seen. Where did you come from?" They just downgraded us. That's a psychological thing that the Marines do. When you go in there are people there from rich homes that had three meals a day served them, and other people there that are there that hadn't had a bath in weeks. So they had to break these people down into one group and tell them that they're all the same. Then they build you up and tell you, "Now you're a Marine!" Well, that began to mean something. That's the psychological thing that they do. You can't feed them ice cream and soda pop all day long and make killers out of them.

JE: What did they teach you in boot camp?

RC: They taught us how to do close-order drill. That's where they line you up and teach you how to make a right face and a left face and a forward march. Of course, we didn't know our right from our left and they would say, "Your other left stupid!" There are people there that had just had teeth pulled. They would take you down there and the dentist looks at 200 or 300 people in one day. You know with that kind of treatment he can't do a very good job. But he could see rotten teeth and he could pull those out and it's not too pleasant. So here's this kid that had five teeth pulled, and here's this sergeant out there trying to teach us on a hot day how to do close-order drill. So this kid is just hurting. He's got blood running out of his mouth and he's about ready to faint really. That sergeant said, "What's the matter with that man? This is the sorriest bunch that I ever worked with!" One of the guys that had nerve enough said, "He just had five teeth pulled." So he had him fall out and go to the tent. We had tents to sleep in. He went in there and lay down in the tent. I guess he got along okay-I don't know. This one kid had zits all over his face. The sergeant said, "Fall out. I want you all to go down and shave." He said, "Sergeant I don't shave." He said, "You heard me. I said go down there and shave. I want you back here in five minutes." Well, the kid went down there and shaved. But if you shave the tops off of those, you are bleeding like a stuck hog. So he sent him to sickbay-which is a place that you go for treatment.

JE: They taught you how to fire a weapon?

RC: They did. Yes.

JE: And they taught you how to fight in many ways. What weapons did they teach you to use?

RC: We learn how to do stick fighting, knife fighting and bayonet fighting where you stab a dummy.

JE: So they taught you how to kill?

RC: Yes, they taught us how to kill and by then we were mad. They planned that. I was going to tell you how they taught us to fire the rifle. We've spent three weeks on the gravel with sore elbows. Three weeks for eight hours a day. One day they came to us and said, "Guess what? We're going to give you a bullet tomorrow and you will get to fire it." Everybody looked to each other like oh boy! We had been practicing—they call it snapping in. They had a neat little way of teaching you how to sight in on the target. It consisted of the end of a tomato can with a hole punched right in the center with an ice pick. They would put it on a stake about 30 or 40 feet away. You are supposed to use the hole in the tomato can lid as the sight and put that little square right at the bottom of the whole teaching you how to sight the rifle, which by the way were M-1s that weighed about 8 pounds. Everybody before I used the O3 rifle which was an old-time rifle that was used in World War I.

JE: So then you graduated from boot camp?

RC: Yes, after 8 weeks of downgrading. They just did everything in the world to us. We never had any sugar. They had Jell-O. I remember that first day when we went to the line, that old sergeant had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He had hairy arms and he was wearing a T-shirt and he said to me, "Where do you want your gravy?" I said to him, "Well, Mama usually puts it on my potatoes." He had a ladle that must have held a quart, or maybe half a pint. He scooped that gravy up and he put it on my Jell-O. (Chuckle) Then he said, "Move on Marine." The next day I thought, I can play that game too. So he said to me, "Where do you want your gravy?" I said, "On my Jell-O," and that's where he put it. He said, "Where do we get these people? We have a war to win! Where does he come from? Why does that kid one his gravy on his Jell-O I'll never know!" (Laughter) He was downgrading me again. Gravy was running all over the floor and we were walking in it—but of course we were going to be the ones to clean it up. They treated you mean.

Chapter 5 - 8:48

Camp Pendleton

John Erling: Obviously, all of the boys were about the same age, but you had to be terribly nervous because you didn't know where you were headed.

Rex Calvert: We never knew. We spent a year learning how to fire all of these different kinds of weapons, machine guns, mortars, flamethrowers and anti-tank guns. After a year, we spent a lot of time in the field eating junk. I was in Area 12. I don't know what that meant, but it was a couple hundred men in these wooden barracks. They each had two floors. We had movies at night. We went down into the boon docks, into the creek bottoms where there was sand and we learned how to do judo. That's where you take a guy and throw him over your shoulder. We had to know all of that stuff. We were perspiring and we had sand all down in us. We went up to the top floor of that barracks where they had a black board and an instructor who was a 1st Lieutenant. They were going to teach us mathematics, because if you are going to fire into the enemy you have to know math to be able to set it on the gun so that it hits the target out there at so many yards away at a certain angle. So we had to know a little bit of mathematics. We would go up there and here we are with our clothes full of sand and we are perspiring and there's no air-conditioning. The 1st Lieutenant says, "Now this is the way you add. You take two and you say plus and you add two, and you should get four." (Laughter) Here we are—we were miserable. We were full of sand from throwing each other around doing judo. Eventually, of course, we learned how to do mathematics, long division and how to figure out how far it is to the enemy and what angle to use so that the bullet goes up and goes down and hits the target. We learned how to do all of that.

JE: So then, you were assigned to a company. What was that company?

RC: It was called the regimental weapons company. We had 30-caliber and 50-caliber machine guns. We had 35 mm and 75 mm anti-tank guns. The 75 mm one fired two or three different kinds of shells—one of them was armor piercing. If you have a tank out here, you can't just shoot buckshot at it—it wouldn't do anything to it. But you could fire that 75 mm—and we also had a little 35mm gun, that if you hit the tank, you might go through it if it was a Japanese tank because they were small tanks made of thin metal. If you hit the mechanism that the tank has on the track, you might disengage the track and then he can't go anywhere and then you could really kill him. Do you see what I mean?

JE: So this company was a weapons company?

RC: Yes.

JE: When and where was that training—in San Diego?

RC: Yes, in San Diego at Camp Pendleton. Camp Pendleton is a famous place. It's the old Santa Margarita Ranch. If you go there, you can travel for days in certain directions. It's also located on the ocean floor. If you are a Marine, you have to know how to land on beaches and on a ship.

JE: So, you did that training?

RC: Yes. They put us all aboard a ship. Nobody had ever been on a ship before and we all got

seasick and were throwing up. Some guys would kid each other and would say, "Would you like a nice glass of melted mayonnaise?" And then get sick. It was cruel. But the Marines are cruel. They are mad. We are going in and killing 2,000 Japanese. You can have little high school boys from their mother's knee going in there trying to do that. If they gave us water, they would give it to us out of a gasoline can. If it tasted like gasoline they would say, "That's good for you!" (Laughter) you know, we were treated nice.

JE: Right. So they made man out of you?

RC: They made men out of us. My wife says, "You wouldn't be the man that you are today if you hadn't have gone through that." Well, I got over being mad because I met the most beautiful girl in the world.

JE: We want to talk about that after the war. So you did that year with a weapons company and then you received orders to move out?

RC: Yes. We were going to move out. I wasn't in the infantry. I was a Marine with a rifle in a company with all of these weapons. If they ran into trouble they will call on me. If they needed a 50-caliber machine gun, I've got it. If they needed a 30 caliber-I've got that too. If they needed an anti-tank tank weapon, I had that and I knew how to use it. There was a little infantry company that had 200 or 300 men in it and they fed them differently than they did us.

JE: Why?

RC: Psychology I guess-I don't know why. But the food was so lousy. You are going to put men out there in the field and they have to learn how to make do.

JE: Yes.

RC: One day they came in and told us we were going aboard a ship. We had had all this training aboard ship. We had been seasick. We had run around out there in the little boats out there that held about 30 or 40 men. We landed. They blew the whistle and they had run the flag down on the flagship. We had the Navy out here. I mean-we are important. We were going to go in and take that island and we would kill everything on it. So when the flag goes down, we had learned how to look at our watches and we knew we were supposed to be a certain place, and we'd better be there. Because if we weren't there then the Navy was going to bombard past us and if you're out there it's going to be too bad. They don't run it long enough. They may bombard out there with 16-inch shells for 10 minutes. And the old guy that's running that ship says, "We can't give you any more help." That kills a lot of the enemy, and then we can rush out there and kill what's left.

JE: They put onboard a ship?

RC: Yes and we would zig-zag around out there on Pacific Ocean. There were a lot of submarines out there waiting for a ship that had 300 brains on it.

JE: So the subs belonged to Japan. Tell us then, you were out there zigzagging around...

- RC:** Yes. The reason we are zigzagging around is you can't go straight to the place you were going. Let's say that trip with 800 miles—you can't do that, because the submarines would shoot you. So zigzagging took longer but it was safer. It might take three weeks to get there.
- JE:** That had to be wearing—to know that at any moment you could be blown up?
- RC:** That's exactly right.
- JE:** After a while did you just say, "I don't care it doesn't make any difference."
- RC:** That's exactly right. There were guys that sat on the deck and made rings out of \$.50 pieces. You have to keep the Marines busy. They were all sharpening their knives and cleaning their guns three times a day—getting ready.
- JE:** So you had no idea at that point where you are going?
- RC:** We had no idea because the Marines talk a lot and you our likely to tell some girlfriend where you were headed. Of course, the Japanese always seem to know where we were going anyway. How they found out, I don't know. But you tried to be as secretive as you can, to save lives.

Chapter 6 - 10:00

Marshall Islands

Rex Calvert: The first operation we had was in the Marshall Islands. These Marines had never killed anybody and they had never been shot at. They schooled us a little bit. We had some lieutenants that were college educated at the officer's training school on the East Coast. They thought they were hot stuff. They told us, "Tomorrow morning we are going to land in the Marshall Islands, which is a bunch of coral sticking up out of the ocean. The pieces that are sticking up are just little pieces of land that have accumulated over millions of years. It might be as big as a football field. If it has Japanese gunners on it, we've got to go in and take it." There were two little twin islands—one was called Roi and one was called Namur. They were two little islands about a block square. They had a roadway in between called a causeway. The Navy was going to bombard these islands for several days before we get there. They had a little plaster of Paris model about as big as this table (motioning). The beaches were numbered and everything. It showed where some of the guns were and where some of the blockhouses were. We were supposed to memorize that and the next day at 2:30am they were going to wake us up and tell us to get our gear on, issue us ammunition and we were to land on those two little islands. We

had 800 ships. It looked like the whole U.S. Navy. We were important, but we didn't know it—but you begin to know it.

JE: How many Japanese were on those islands?

RC: Around 3,000.

JE: So you are going to invade these islands with 3,000 Japanese there?

RC: Yes, and they know we are coming and they are coming. Some of them were in blockhouses and some of them were in spider-traps. A spider-trap is just a hole with a cover over it that looks like grass. They could raise that cover up and if you walked by it, they've got you. They were up in the trees too. We tried to cut all the trees down. If you look at the pictures they were coconut trees, but shell-fire cut those trees down and there were lot do coconuts in the water.

JE: You fired into the coconut trees?

RC: We would shoot into the coconut trees because they were killing us. A guy would fall out of the tree and hit the ground and we would put another shell into him. We were learning how to kill.

JE: Take us to that morning at 2:30am.

RC: At 2:30 am they said, "Get your gear on and we will meet in about 15 minutes down at the galley." There were no chairs, so we all stood. They had trays and you went by that bunch of hogwash (food) that they had there for you. We were supposed to have steak and eggs and orange juice. Guess what? We got down there and it was the same old story. These were Navy people and they don't like Marines anyway. They said, "Well, we ran out of steak, but we've got these weiners and we've got beans and we've got oranges." We would break open the oranges that had been in a crate with the Navy stacking stuff on them. They were bruised and not fit to eat really, but we would grab two or three of them and out them in our pack so the next day when we didn't have anything to eat we would have them.

JE: So then what happened when you left the ship?

RC: They wanted us to go down these rope ladders. That rope ladder was nothing but a cargo net that we used to climb from the ship to a smaller boat. So we were getting ready to go down the rope ladder. There was a preacher standing there. One of the boys said to him, "Father, could you say a prayer for us? Some of us in the next few minutes are going to be casualties." So he laid his hands on one of the boys' heads and said a little prayer to the man upstairs. We were getting ready to climb down and we saw the Father on a 45. We said, "Excuse me, sir, but if you are a man of the cloth, why are you putting that 45 on?" He said, "Well boys, I will tell you. Prayer is good, but this is faster." (Laughter) So, over the side we go and we were milling around out there going in a circle around and around. We were about half seasick. The crew I was with had a 37mm anti-tank gun and

there were five of us to fire that thing if there were any tanks. Now if there weren't any tanks, we had a shell that was like a shotgun. It had 300 steel balls in it. You would put that in your gun and if 200 Japanese came at you, you could fire that. That gun weighed 912 pounds. It was like a trailer that you would hook behind a car here in the states. The trails come apart and you had to have a man stand on each trail. When you fired it, the concussion from the gun dug the spades at the end of each trail into the ground and that gun would stay pretty much there in the same position. The next time you fired it, you didn't necessarily have to have a man on each trail.

JE: How did you get that gun onto the island?

RC: Well, some second Lieutenant about half-baked said, "We are going to bring it in on a raft." We set that 912-pound gun on that raft and we will drag in it behind the boat we are going in on. Guess what? The raft got full of water. I got back in the raft and dipped out the water with my helmet. I did pretty well. We got it there. Did I get a medal? No, because they don't give medals out to the Marine Corps. But anyway, we got in there with the gun and we set it up.

JE: Weren't you afraid that they would be firing at you?

RC: They were firing at us. (Laughter) They didn't want us in there because we were going to kill them—and we did. They killed a lot of us. We lost 400 men that day. When we got in there all we wanted to do was dig a hole and get in it because they were shooting at us. One guy said, "I've been hit!" They were telling him he was just nicked. Well, all the blood left from his head and he was white as a sheet and he died from his wound. There were a dozen guys just standing around and laying on the ground saying, "Where did that shot come from? Did anybody see it?" Nobody saw it. Their gunpowder didn't flash, but ours did. If you were looking right at the enemy and he shot at you, you would see a little flash, but not much. They wanted somebody to stand up hoping they would shoot again. They asked someone to stand up. Who volunteers? "Okay, I will." (BING!) They fired and a guy said, "I believe I saw where that came from." He pulled out the antitank gun and boy that was a good little weapon with 300 balls. You would fire that thing at a 15-degree angle where you thought that shot came from and it might get him. That island was the place they stored torpedoes for submarines. Now, torpedoes are pretty good pieces of explosive. They were in sort of a little concrete blockhouse. Somebody fired into that and that sucker went off. That thing blew pieces of concrete as big as Volkswagens 100 feet in the air and thousands and thousands of chunks that were big enough to kill anybody. When we went over there to look at that thing, there was a hole in the ground 20 feet deep full of water. All of those torpedoes went off. It killed a lot of Marines.

JE: And Japanese?

RC: We killed them all. If there wasn't any dead ones we killed them all.

Chapter 7 - 3:17**Marines Crying**

John Erling: As they were firing at you and you were pulling the gun onto the shore—people around you must have been dying?

Rex Calvert: Oh yeah. They were crying, “Help me.” A guy had his arm blown off and I couldn’t help him because I was trying to keep from being killed myself. We had Corpsman. Now Corpsman were very brave men. The Navy furnished Corpsman.

JE: And they provided the medical attention?

RC: Yes, we didn’t have any people that knew anything about medicine in our outfit, but we had these Corpsman. Each 10 men had a Corpsman and we called him Doc. Now Doc was a little old kid about as dumb as I am, but he had been taught how to give injections for pain and he knew how to bandage somebody up, put a tourniquet on and knew how to give plasma. Out there somewhere was a hospital ship and it had a big red cross on it. If they could get you on that ship, you had a better chance of making it.

JE: Did you find other Marines with you who would just freeze and they couldn’t do anything—they would just stand there?

RC: Yes. These people were what we called cracked up. They were out of their noodle lying on the ground crying. They were out of their head. They didn’t know what they were doing. And, with a lot of pride I didn’t want to do that. So I tried my best to take on the attitude that I could stand it and that I could make it. I had too much pride to cry. I was a Marine. Anyway, you get through as best as you can. A doctor once asked me, “How do you stand that?” I said, “Well, you know, an ambulance driver gets used to it.” He just shook his head. Anyway, we finished that island and they took us off of it.

JE: So did you kill all the Japanese?

RC: We killed all of them.

JE: You didn’t take any prisoners?

RC: We didn’t take prisoners because as you were walking back with them his buddy would shoot you—there were some of them still out there. You don’t know how many are hiding. It’s a dangerous world—I will put it that way.

JE: So you know personally that you killed many Japanese yourself?

RC: Well, I’m on a five-man gun crew. Each one of them, did he kill one or did he kill 15? I don’t know.

JE: Right.

RC: I didn’t go up and stab one of them.

Chapter 8 - 8:18**Saipan**

John Erling: So then the next beach?

Rex Calvert: We went back to Maui. Maui is one of the Hawaiian Islands. It's beautiful.

That's where they put us in order to train more Marines because we were going to go somewhere else in about three months and we'd better be ready. It rained the night that we got there. We drove up in trucks. When we got out of that truck there was mud that deep (motioning). All of our equipment had to be taken off the truck and carried to our tents. They had 400 tents set up and waiting for us. Like I say, they always put the Marines where it rains every day and boy it did. We were in mud and we were all mad. The food was not great. We were supposed to receive the new recruits that were being shipped in from the U.S. They were high school kids and we were going to make Marines out of them.

JE: So where did you go to next?

RC: One day they came in and said we were going to board a ship to Saipan the next day.

JE: So this would have been The Battle of Saipan?

RC: Yes, in the Mariana Islands. It's just a bunch of coral sticking up out of the ocean and in a million years you get birds on it and pretty soon plants start growing and coconuts load in from another island. The Japanese land there and take the island over because they are trying to establish a beach hedge on the United States. They were going to take us over and their big shots told them that. See, they had already landed in China and killed them in the area where they landed. They were going to take over Russia too. Crazy! They are not going to do that and we are not going to let them!

JE: How many Japanese were on the island of Saipan?

RC: There were several thousand and we were going to land there with three divisions of Marines, which is 60,000 Marines. Now, they were going to keep one division back in reserves in case we needed them. We were the 4th Division and the 2nd Division was supposed to land with us. Now, who was the 2nd Marine Division? They were the division that landed on Guadalcanal—they were pretty famous. They have this fantastic group of men that stayed down there when the Navy pulled out of there and left us without any supplies. Here comes the Japanese Navy and our Navy said, "We've got to get out of here! Bye Marines!"

JE: That was at Guadalcanal?

RC: That's the Marine division that landed on Saipan with you.

JE: Then you had another division?

RC: The 3rd division laid off shore. There were 20,000 men on ships and they were there if

we needed them they would come in and help us. The Army came in with us too.

JE: The 27th Infantry Division came with you.

RC: Now, the Army didn't hold up their end of the deal. They got a lot of Marines killed. This is a Marine talking-the Army doesn't like to hear that. Lieutenant General H.M. Smith was in charge. He decided to dismiss that Army outfit. He said, "I'm going to get them out of there." They got a lot of us killed. Instead of charging the machine gun nest, they didn't. And we, like sillies, charged it and got a lot of our men killed.

JE: So this was the 15th of June and the battle continues through the 9th of July 1944. Tell us about you and your role as you came upon Saipan.

RC: Of course, I was wounded there. It was artillery-it wasn't rifle fire. It could have even been our artillery. They call that friendly fire, but it's not too friendly when it hits you. Anyway, our platoon was about 30 men at that time. We were going to go in there and let the enemy know that we were digging in. We were going to defend what we had taken as our property. What we had planned to do, with them thinking we were going to be here and here and here (motioning) we weren't going to do. We were going to trick them and be someplace they didn't expect us to be. Our plan didn't work. They started shelling us and one of the shells hit me. Well, I was the luckiest guy in the world. I was in a potato patch. They raised a lot of vegetables on Saipan and fertilized it with human manure. When it rains it splatters up on the potatoes. They warned us not to eat any of that stuff because we would be sick. They told us that the other guys were used to it. In this particular area I recognized sweet potatoes, which make fruit underground. So when that shell landed in there it buzzed and was spinning but it didn't go off.

JE: How far were you from the shell?

RC: It was coming spinning down like this (motioning) and I moved over, but that shell went up my pant leg. That shell went all the way up to my hip and busted out and when I got through I had a bleeding arm. I don't know what happened, but it didn't kill me.

JE: It went up your pant leg?

RC: Yes and split the seam of my pants wide open. I went into battle with that seam wide open.

JE: But what did it do to your body?

RC: Nothing.

JE: But you said your arm was bleeding?

RC: Yes, I had a little gash in my left arm but I don't know where it came from. There wasn't just that one shell. Several other guys got killed outright. My Jeep was there and two guys were up over the Jeep hanging over the edge of it with their rear ends blown out and I came out of there with just a little blood on my arm.

JE: So you weren't bleeding profusely?

RC: A little bit. A guy came over to me and he was an ol' Okie boy named Smith. He took me to get my arm bandaged. He was getting ready to cry because he knew me well. I said, "Don't worry about it-he just nicked me." I was lucky though. I said, "Here have a piece of candy." Our K-ration was a terrible thing to have to eat but it had two or three pieces of Christmas candy in it. I would get several of those and take all of the candy from them and put it in my pocket. I seemed to be under full control and he was not quite under control even though I was the one that was hit. I told him it was nothing and just gave him a piece of candy. He kidded me about that for a long time.

JE: How long were you personally in battle on Saipan?

RC: Until it was over-like 30 days and nights.

Chapter 9 - 2:21

Lee Marvin

Rex Calvert: I wanted to tell you about the time I met this movie star named Lee Marvin. He was about 19 or 20 years old. He came into our tent. We were stationed on Maui training younger Marines. He came in one day and threw his seabag down trying to find a place to bunk. One of the Marines said to him, "Where are you from Marine?" He said, "Hollywood." This other Marine being kind of sarcastic said, "What in the hell do you do in Hollywood?" Lee Marvin said, "I'm an actor." This other Marine said, "Oh BS. You're no actor." But he sure was. Incidentally, Lee Marvin was on TV. My wife and I got our first TV in 1952. They had a program called Studio One and Lee Marvin was on it. I told my wife, "I know that man." She said, "You don't know him!" I said, "I do too! I got my red book out and I showed her his picture. In his acting career he used the name Lee Marvin, just like he did when he was in the Marines. Later on, he became quite a well-known actor. One time he was on the Johnny Carson Show. He came in and sat down and Johnny Carson said to him, "Lee, I heard you were wounded on Saipan?" Lee said, "Yes, I wasn't a hero. The bravest man I ever saw was when I was lying on a stretcher and they were waiting to take me out to a ship. He gave me a cigarette while I laid there on that stretcher." He said, "Do you know who that man was?" Of course, Johnny Carson didn't know. He said, "It was Captain Kangaroo." I knew who Captain Kangaroo was because my kids watched his show. I didn't know Captain Kangaroo's real name and I have no idea if he was in the Marines or not. Anyway, somebody asked why he would say he was if he wasn't and I said, "Well, he's an entertainer and entertainers can tell a lot of stories."

Chapter 10 - 6:50**Rex the Medic**

John Erling: We haven't talked about the sound of war. Tell us about the sounds.

Rex Calvert: From my backyard you can see the Tulsa Country Club's fireworks. When they send up one of those loud ones, I hit the ground. I'm shell-shocked, and for the moment, I'm in battle.

JE: Even to this day?

RC: Yes, until this day. I worked at the refinery. They would have a fire at the refinery every day. They would put gasoline in glassware and it would break and the fire would be on the table and I would hit the ground. The chemists would laugh at me and ask why I was on the ground. Then they would take an extinguisher and blow it out. I was back in battle.

JE: So then on Saipan did you take any other hit?

RC: No, that was it. I was lucky-luckiest guy in the world. Let me tell you another story. Here I am in the tent and I have had my arm bandaged. There wasn't anybody else in that tent but me. They had had a lot of casualties—but they had taken them all out of there and put them on board a ship. I was bored to death, but at least they were not shooting at me. There was a guy who came in that had authority. I don't know who he was. He said, "Are you walking wounded?" I said, "I guess so. I can walk." He said, "That surgeon in this tent needs help." I said, "My God, I don't know anything about surgery." He said, "Well, you can go in and help him do whatever you can do." It was at night and there were no lights on. If you turned on a light the enemy would shoot you dead. So I went into this tent and he was operating. This kid has a hole in his chest filled with shrapnel, which is like a knife. It will cut you and at the same time it's hot and will burn your skin. You have to cut that skin away if you are going to pull it together because that's infection. I went in the tent and I said, "Doc, I see you are by yourself." He said, "Yes, pull this light for me." He motioned to a flashlight. He said, "I am trying to sew this man up. See that salt shaker there?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "When I take the forceps out and start packing the hole in his chest with gauze, I want you to sprinkle salt on that gauze as I am pushing it in that hole and make sure you hold that light so I can see what I am doing." I was 21 years old.

JE: Why did he want you to use salt?

RC: That was the first antibiotic in WWII that I knew of. It's called sulphanilamide. He said to me, "We have 200 men out there on stretchers, boy we have got our work ahead of us." They had had a bad counter attack. I looked outside the tent. It was beginning to be daylight and there was stretcher after stretcher. He said, "We'll bring them in one at a time. Those that we can help we will. But those that we can't, we'll put them around in back of the tent. We will give them a shot in the arm." None of them were crying

or raising hell or anything. I guess by then they were used to it. There was no use in complaining. We were Marines and this is what Marines do. So we put a bunch of them around the back of the tent because they were shot in the chest or the head. There was one that I remember particularly. One little Marine that was shot in the head had taken some extra rope that was out there and was doing this (motioning). He didn't know what he was doing. I suppose he was trying to make somebody realize that he was still alive by taking that rope and doing that. It might have just been a reflex. Who am I to know? I don't know. Somebody came by that had authority and said, "Get that man aboard ship!" I guess he thought I was going to throw him over my shoulder and swim. He left and the guy died.

JE: Were some of them conscious and they knew they were dying?

RC: Oh yeah. Those Corpsman were the bravest people. They would go up there with a guy that was in the worst shape that you would ever want to see and work on him.

JE: How long did you work there?

RC: It was just overnight and the next day. They came and got me because I was supposed to go back because we were still fighting the war. So I went back to my unit. When I got back, the fighting was over. They had secured the island. I remember a place called Magazine Bay. It was a big inlet where the water from the ocean came in, in a big circle. They brought us over there. We were going to stay there one night and then board ship the next day. During the night, two Japanese ran by and somebody shot him and blew his head off. Out of the sugar cane came a grinning Japanese. We said, "We've got a job for you. There's your buddy over there. Dig a hole and put him in it." It was hard digging in coral. It's like digging in concrete. So he started digging a hole and when he got it dug he put him in it and he covered him up. I think somebody took him back to headquarters where they interviewed him. They said, "Don't be killing all of these guys. We need to interview them and find out what's going on, on their side of the fight." If you did that you would have to take them back and you might get killed doing it, so we would just shoot them.

JE: Did somebody shoot that person?

RC: I would guess.

Chapter 11 - 5:15**Battle of Tinian**

Rex Calvert: We thought we were going to board a ship. They said, "Do you see that island in the distance? That's called Tinian. We are going to go over and take that." I said, "I don't even have any underwear on. I don't have any socks." So I get to that damn island over there without any socks on my feet and with just my socks on-no underwear. I had been lying on the ground for three weeks. Do you think I was very clean? No. Did I smell bad? Yes. Would I be infectious if I got wounded? Yes. But we were going over there to take that island. So we got aboard ship and went over about 4 miles and landed on that damn beach on Tinian. Incidentally that's where they set off the atomic bomb. We took that island so they could do that.

JE: It was a very small island with an area of 39 square miles.

RC: We had lost some men by then but we went over there anyway. There wasn't any beach to land on. The land was about this high (motioning) off the water and it was surrounded by rock and coral. The water was down here (motioning). Here we were trying to go to the island on boats. They said we had them tricked because they thought we were going to land on the other end of the island. So we took some boats and went in there like we were going to land, but we didn't do it. That kept them (the enemy) tied up because they put all of their men down there where they thought we were going to land. They chiseled the land off where we could get a boat up in the there and we landed the Marines in a column of battalions. Just like we are bumper-to-bumper out on the highway, we landed the whole bunch of Marines one behind the other.

JE: Because they chiseled enough land for you guys to get on the island?

RC: Yes, just wide enough for us to get a truck up. So we landed and got set up during the night and when they attacked us we just slaughtered those guys.

JE: How long did it take you to secure that island?

RC: About a day or so-I don't remember. And for me I think I was on that island about 10 days. I had dysentery. I was infected from eating all of that rotten stuff. I'm hardly able to eat chicken because chickens were eating those bodies. I can hardly eat chicken anymore because they were eating the bodies of the Japanese. We ate K-rations. They looked like a Cracker Jack box. You took the lid off of it and it was a little flat tin full of scrambled eggs-it wasn't too bad. If you got another little box and opened it-you had hash. It wasn't too bad if you could warm it up. I'll never forget-there was a packet of little biscuits, I don't know what they were, but they were so hard he could hit them with a hammer and they would fly like glass. Boy they were hard! And then there was a packet of spearmint chewing gum-that spearmint flavored everything in that box including those little biscuits.

We would pulverize those biscuits and water and mash them up with a little knife and sprinkle some cocoa in there and stir it up and we had some milk chocolate with cocoa and cookies. It was better than nothing.

JE: You said you had dysentery-how long were you sick?

RC: About 10 days. A good old corpsman had medicine that would help your bowels. You eventually get over it. That was the end of that and we went aboard ship and went back to Maui and got some more Marines so we could train them to go to Iwo Jima. We didn't know at the time we were going to Iwo Jima because they never would tell us. It was about three months. I was pretty handy with my hands and we were building a target out of an old trailer. I built a frame and put gauze over it so it looked like a tank. So to pull that old trailer I had put in a post and a post over at this corner (motioning) and put cable around that post and put two trucks, 4x4s, one on each end and it would pull that target that I made between those two posts. So I had a moving target and I was a hero. I wasn't interested in firing guns-that bored me to death. I don't have a gun to this day.

Chapter 12 - 6:04

Iwo Jima

John Erling: So then the invasion of Iwo Jima began on February 19, 1945 and continued until March 6 of 1945. So when is your division called into action on that?

Rex Calvert: We were called into action right away. For three weeks or so we were zigzagging around on ships out there on the Pacific Ocean. We had a lot of ships out there and they had a lot of protection for us. They had these ships called destroyers that were supposed to protect us from submarine attacks. The Japanese would have loved to kill 300 or 400 Marines, which they could have by hitting our ship. So, we finally got there and they had a molding made out of plaster of Paris about as big as this table of Iwo Jima. They said, "This is the top of a volcano that is 152 feet high. They are up there and they can see the whole island and they are going to try to kill us. They are going to throw shells on the beach. Get off that each as quick as you can because they've got it plotted in squares. If you've got 10 Marines and a square about as big as this room-they can throw a shell right in there because they have practiced doing it. Don't stay on the beach because it will kill you." When we landed they were shooting at us. All we wanted to do was dig a hole and get in it. So this hero that was in the book that I showed you-John Basilone-was not afraid of anything.

JE: Sergeant John Basilone.

RC: He came from Guadalcanal. He's got a street named after him at Camp Pendleton. He was the guy they came down there and wasn't afraid of anything. He said, "Get off of the beach!" We didn't want to get off the beach because we thought they had machine guns up there, which they did. It was safer on the beach and it was attacking a machine gun then. So he said, "Get off the beach!" He got us off the beach. Somebody was radioing out there. It was the big shots, the generals, asking how things are going. We told them we were catching hell. We had only been in there two or three hours and they had already killed 1,000 Marines. They said that they would send in more Marines—and they did. So the ones that the hero was trying to get off the beach—there were more Marines landing right behind them at their feet. The beach was just from here to that fence out there (motioning). We had to go after these terraces. The terraces were ashes from this volcano. The ashes were 30 feet deep. We could hardly climb them. You couldn't run in it. One guy, an old farm boy said, "It's like trying to run in wheat. Your feet sink into your ankles and you can't run. You can't even crawl." They were shelling the heck out of us and we couldn't get our trucks up there at all with our guns. Like I said, this gun was 912 pounds and it had two trailer tires on it. You pulled it behind a Jeep just like a trailer. We couldn't pull that sucker up that 15-degree incline. And that sand is magnetic because it has iron in it. You could pick it up with a magnet. You can't use mine searching equipment because it's iron (the sand) and it would just gather on the mine searching equipment and they had that thing filled with mines. They were shelling us—it was dangerous work.

JE: Yes. They tried to get you off the beach and you moved up into the island, and then what?

RC: Well, we attacked all of the machine gun nests that we could find. Every machine gun nest had 5 or 6 men killed. They were hidden Japanese and they were all underground. We didn't see any. Here we are and there's a guy here and here and here and here and we are crying and bleeding—and they are shelling us to death. We can't get off the beach. There are machine gun nests just cutting us down and we haven't seen a Japanese yet. Look where we are. They were killing us in there and their answer was to send some more men in. That's a mistake! We had too many men there now. One shell kills 10. They said, "We'll send some more men." They were dumb.

JE: Your commanders, you are calling them dumb because they kept sending in men when they were killing them as fast as we were sending them.

RC: I can't say this. People will hear me.

JE: No, but that's the way it seemed.

RC: It was that way.

JE: Yes.

RC: Back to the sand, that island didn't have any water. The Japanese didn't have any either.

They were starving to death for water. Marines had two canteens full of water for 2 or 3 days. They were looking for dead Marines at night that had water in their canteens so they could steal that water for themselves. They would steal it from a live Marine too, if you went to sleep in a foxhole—that's why we had to have 2 men in each hole. So if somebody reached around and was feeling for your canteen you would know it but that your buddy. Guess who it was? Anyway, I was dead tired. You couldn't sleep in the daytime and you couldn't sleep at night either. I was just completely washed out. They killed everybody that I knew and I was getting ready to just bust up. I couldn't take it anymore. My nerves were terrible. My teeth chattered. I was afraid I was going to lose the enamel on my teeth. I knew what I was doing and I could do my job, but my nerves wouldn't take it. I was about ready to crack up.

Chapter 13 - 8:54

Mount Suribachi

John Erling: One of the first objectives after landing on the beachhead of Iwo Jima was the taking of Mount Suribachi?

Rex Calvert: Yes.

JE: Were you in on that?

RC: No, I was not. The 5th Marine Division, they had to take Mount Suribachi. Okay, they did that with no problem. Sure, they lost a lot of men, but the Japanese were honeycombed in this high ground and they could see all of the Marines down in here (motioning) and they could direct fire. So, the 5th Division went up there and put the flag up on the third day I think. One of the boys said, "Look up there!" We knew that the high ground was very important for us to have so that they wouldn't have a good view of where to throw the shells. So the 5th Division went up there and put the flag up. When they put that flag up the morale went up.

JE: Could you see the flag?

RC: I saw the flag. It was about this big (motioning) because I was about a mile away or several hundred yards. There is a story on that flag that you probably read about. The first flag was put up, but somebody said, "We've got to get a bigger flag for that." So they went down to one of those destroyers and asked that captain to give them a big flag so they could put it up and get rid of that little flag. So in putting it up, a photographer saw then doing it and that's the flag-

- JE:** Yes, that's the famous raising of the flag on Iwo Jima—it's the second raising.
- RC:** Yes. There is a book out if you want to look for it. It's called *Flags of Our Fathers*. That book is the story of those Marines that you see in that picture.
- JE:** It was Joe Rosenthal who photographed the Marines?
- RC:** Yes.
- JE:** Ira Hayes, Mike Strank, Rene Gagnon, Harlon Block, Franklin Sousley and U.S. Navy Corpsman John Bradley.
- RC:** That's right—he was a Corpsman—he wasn't a Marine. The book *Flags of Our Fathers* was written by that Marine Corpsman's boy. He wrote the book and looked up all of these stories.
- JE:** That picture of course won the Pulitzer Prize for photography that same year.
- RC:** Yes. A lot of people griped about that, but those guys were heroes.
- JE:** They were.
- RC:** Three of them were killed before the battle was over. The book *Flags of Our Fathers* tells about those guys. I was about 3,000 or 4,000 yards away and the flag looked like it was about the size of a postage stamp. But I was there and all of the ships were tooting their horns out in the harbor. It was a great day, but the battle was just starting.
- JE:** This was the fourth day of the battle?
- RC:** Yes, the battle was just starting. The battle went on for 39 days. But after the flag was put up, it went on for about 35 days. I wanted to tell you about what happened to me personally. It's a very sad story. This man that was on Johnston Island as a Marine came back to the states. Pearl Harbor happened after he came home. They made him in charge of some Marines who were going into combat. This Marine and I got acquainted at Camp Pendleton before we went overseas. We got acquainted because he didn't want to go to Los Angeles because there was no place to sleep. All of the restaurants were full of all the men who were on the West Coast getting ready to ship out. All of the hotels were full.
- JE:** So you became buddies?
- RC:** Yes, we became buddies here. He was just married. He would tell me intimate things and I would say, "Don't tell me about that! I'm not married!" He was reliving his newly married life and he was going overseas.
- JE:** Was he with you on Iwo Jima?
- RC:** Yes. We got on board the ship and it was hot down in those hulls. There wasn't any air conditioning. There were no showers. We were all down in there perspiring. There were 200 men with smelly feet who hadn't had a shower in two or three weeks. It was bad. So he and I slept by each other on the weather deck where there was fresh air. Of course, it was cold up there and hard as a rock because the steel is cold. We had a blanket and our pack with an extra set of dungarees and we used those for a pillow. We became

pretty good buddies. He came to me one day and he said, "You are going into Iwo Jima tomorrow, that I don't have to go." I said, "How did you come upon that?" He said, "Well, I know where our stuff is. I'm a sergeant. They are going to let me stay here and when you guys call for certain things I'll know where it is and I'll get it to you. So I don't have to come in to Iwo Jima for seven days. I said, "Boy that's good duty." He said, "I'll send you roses—because you are going to get it."

JE: He was going to send you roses because you were going to die?

RC: Yes. Marines are cruel. They swear every other word. So he said, "I'll send you roses," and then he chuckled. Well, he came in after 7 days and he looked me up. There I was—I had a hole already dug. I was lucky I wasn't at the front at the time. He said, "I'm here." I said, "Well, the Japanese are slipping in here at night. They don't have any water so they want to steal your canteen. They will slit your throat and steal your canteen, so we have to have two men in a hole—one to stay awake and keep guard and the other one can sleep. Sleeping was never easy because there was too much noise. At any one time in a four-second period, there was a shell coming over from our group to the enemy. It was noisy day and night. He said, "I'll dig in with you and bunk with you. Who's going to take the first watch? It was dark and he was a sergeant. He's got a better rank than I've got and he's my friend. I said, "I'm feeling pretty good—I'll take the first watch. If I can't stay awake but an hour or two then I will wake you up and you can watch." In about an hour he woke up and I said, "Why are you awake? I'm okay." He said, "I was having a nightmare." I said, "What was it about?" He said, "I was dreaming that I was picking up pieces of bodies and putting them in a basket." I said, "Well, you need this bottle of brandy that I've got here." Of course I didn't drink or smoke—some corpsman gave it to me. It looked like a little bottle of soda pop. I said, "Here drink this brandy and go on back to sleep." He did. During the night somebody tapped him on the shoulder and told him that the next morning they were going to send him up to where they had had a big counter attack and killed all of the officers. They had a private up there leading a company of Marines. They wanted him to go up there and lead the company and handle it because he was a sergeant. He went on back to sleep and the next morning he woke up and he said, "I don't want to go up there. I've got a bad feeling about it." I was trying to be a big shot and I said, "Oh, that's what Marines do isn't it?" I was trying to be brave, but I was scared. I said, "Go on up there and show them what a Marine can do." He did. I shook hands with him before he left. It started raining. So I got back in my hole, not knowing what was going to happen next. In about an hour some guy I knew came over and he said, "Do you want to see your buddy?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, he's lying over there under that piece of tin. They shot him right between the eyes. We covered him up with that building tin over there." It was like corrugated metal that they put on roofs. There was a lot of that

in that area blown to pieces. I said, "I don't want to see him." I was about ready to cry. I said, "I am about ready to crack myself." I guess he was buried there on Iwo Jima.

Chapter 14 - 5:22

Emotional Scars

John Erling: Let's talk about your condition when you said you were ready to crack up.

Rex Calvert: Yes.

JE: How long did that condition continue?

RC: I was stubborn. I said to myself - you've got too much pride to go back home babbling to yourself all mixed up...you are going to handle it-and I did.

JE: On your own?

RC: I handled it on my own. I went to the doctor the other day and he said, "They've got men trained to handle you." I said, "I'm not going to do it. I've done well so far. Sure, I've suffered, but I've handled it so far. I've held a job at Sun Oil and the laboratory. I think I'm a scientist and I love to pretend. I said, "I am going to make it." So I never have gotten help, but I think I am doing well.

JE: You came home and you went back to work for Sun Refinery. You got married and you had how many children?

RC: I have three children, and boy-they are dandies. I've got a son that is teaching math in senior high school. I have two girls. One of them went to OSU and earned a degree in accounting. The other one didn't want to go to college, but she's a good girl too. She is 62.

JE: What is your wife's name?

RC: Kathryn is my wife's name.

JE: I think it's great that you have gone out and shared that experience.

RC: I have probably given 50 talks at schools-every high school in Tulsa, some in Jenks, Claremore and Sand Springs. I do it and I don't tell the kids the things that I've told you.

JE: Yes.

RC: I've given five talks at Boston Avenue Methodist Church and other churches and women's clubs.

JE: Did you have medication to control your nerves?

RC: All I am taking now is a B12 shot. I can't see any difference, but I've been doing that for a year now.

JE: But you don't have the nerve problem today now, do you?

RC: Not really. I'm just fine.

JE: So you just gutted it out and got through it and decided you didn't need to be hospitalized or anything for it?

RC: Right. You know some people can't do that. I understand that and I don't make fun of them. They have flashbacks. I don't have flashbacks. I can remember what happened. At night, I have dreams that I am lost and I don't know where I am and I can't find my way home and I can't remember my wife's phone number so she can come after me and I sweat all night. I don't do that every night.

JE: Do you think that is just a result of your war experience?

RC: Yes. Even after this, it will take me three days to settle down. I don't know if I am doing you a favor.

JE: You are doing the listeners a favor, but you may not be doing yourself a favor, because this will live with you now for several days?

RC: Yes, for two or three days

JE: Will it affect your sleep? Will you dream about it?

RC: I go over and over stuff. Right now I am studying physics. I like to learn about that kind of stuff.

JE: I would like to say to you that you have shared a remarkable story and journey with us.

RC: That makes me proud.

JE: I am so impressed with the details you can remember. I hope you feel honored every day because you should be for what you and your comrades went through in defense of this country. It's truly a remarkable story. I am sure that generations to come are going to listen to that and say wow, that's absolutely amazing.

RC: They wanted me to write a book. I could not write a book. I have the ability, but I start crying. I asked myself why I would want to go through that to write pages of stuff about some sergeant who put gravy on my Jell-O. There's no way to write a book about stuff like that.

JE: But now you've recorded it and thousands of people are going to listen to it.

RC: Let me tell you something I am really proud of. There's a reporter who writes stories for the Tulsa World who recently passed away. He put my picture on the front page of the paper this big (motioning) about two or three years ago.

JE: I just want to thank you for this interview. I am sorry you are putting yourself through a couple of days of reliving this again...but thank you and thank you for your service.

RC: Now you are going to make me cry.

JE: Well, should we just end it by saying Semper Fi?

RC: Semper Fi. I've got tears in my eyes.

JE: You are a brave man and it's my pleasure to have sat in front of you.

RC: Thank you very much.

Chapter 15 - 0:29

Conclusion

Announcer: You just heard the remarkable story of Rex Calvert and his World War II experience with the 4th Marine Division. Be sure to consult our For Further Reading Section and our Bookstore for more information about the Marines in the Pacific during World War II. Oklahoman Rex Calvert's story is now preserved thanks to the generous support of our founding sponsors who believe in our mission—preserving Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on VoicesofOklahoma.com.