

Burchett, Charlie Interview pt 3 3-6-95

[Speaker 1]

I send the Marines to shoot at the Japanese trying to surrender. You work your way up to a bunker or a cave, and your buddy's a hit, and you get up there, and you guide him, and you holler, I quit, and I was shot in the turn, and then I pinned him. It didn't work, but anyway, they didn't get that result.

I hurt my back real bad, I'm talking now. Well, I was building a bridge. That's what I was diving in with that great plane.

We were sent out to build this, what's called a bangle bridge. It's a steel bridge, and it's a remarkable thing. They put one down here, just where it was found, over there on the drive.

You put two big lowers down, you put it in sections, and you don't have to be on the other side, and that thing goes out, keep your weight behind you. And it should be used with machinery to put it in. And as soon as we got it built, we got out of there.

They first got in after a couple mortars, and then they stopped. But there was a machine gun around, there's a ridge over to our right, and there was a Japanese down there who was shooting out of that ridge, but apparently he did not see us, he was facing the other way. But they had opened on, they dug those, into those buffs, ridges, and they said, well, they can shoot the interaction, and apparently he just didn't know we were there, so we had to watch that.

And, well, we're about mortars. And so I was needed, and I brought two people, and there were two guys in the front. I didn't expect that I should have done it, but like I said, we got out of there.

As I think back on it, apparently I crushed the nest, and I had my coat, but I wasn't wearing any other clothes. You know, if you're bleeding, I've got a broken bone on that, but my back hurts, you know. So then I lay around, and then it started all that rain, and it seemed it was cold, and I got my heart moving, I got torn.

He would sit there, and he would put my hot towels on it at night, and when I was born this April, my neck would get torn in. And later on, the doctor told me what had happened, and that's when I was examined. I think the doctor even was dying, so I didn't want to be stuck in the hospital for so long.

So that did cause me some trouble, but for a while, the only thing I could do, I ended up driving a jeep from the headquarters there, which is good for a backheel, and they didn't tell me why, but a couple of police officers were going to go down there one day, and one of them had two outfits for making me crush, and they said, it's a real spectacular thing to live in on this big hill, and those corsairs were diving, and strafing, and shooting rockets into that thing.

And these guys were down there, and somebody must have told them that there was a sack of stash down there somewhere, and I parked the jeep. They said, park it here, and I didn't

like it. It has too wide of a space, it's just quiet there with them, and those mortars can go a long way.

And they went off and went somewhere else, and I said, I'm going to move that damn jeep. And I got that thing 25 yards, drove from where it was, and told them the mortar hit that thing.

[Speaker 2]

When did you get your discharge from the Marine Corps?

[Speaker 1]

Well, then, after Okinawa, I remember when they said the war was over, the war was over, I was standing by the side of the car, and they put us up into the far end of the rehabilitation camp, and there was a guy up there, and he was a Japanese sailor, and he had some nieces and little maid girls or something too, and they were crazy guys, and the war was over. And they would give a jeep, and they sold it.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah? You're talking about the rehabilitation camp, is that what that is?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, that's it, up there. See, and they said, you know, the war was over, and I was laying on the side, and I heard two great mistakes being made. One, I don't know why they did the first invasion, I said, the war will be over when I get home.

And then another, they said, no. Why did you feel that way? Well, I thought they were the most cruel people in the world, and you know, he lost him and his buddies out there, so I felt that way.

I have a picture I cut out of a black magazine. Well, so what they did in the first renovation was they sentenced them off to China. The only place that they were still shooting is out of China.

Theoretically, to disarm the Japs. Now, when the Japs quit, they quit. That was it.

They went back themselves, as far as I know. What would really have happened was keep the communists from taking intensive area. And then the sixth invasion down around St. Paul. So there were two main invasions on there. Now, around us was hundreds of thousands of communist troops. Now, they wouldn't fight, but they would snipe at you and this sort of thing.

And I lived near them. It was a mesquite shelter there about 8, 10 inches. They would do the same with the Japs.

There was one main concrete highway between Peking and Tennessee. It was about 80 miles. And we were in the sea, I believe, in Peking.

Now, this hurt me a little, but I didn't join the Marine Corps for a rank or a rank or anything. But here I had a platoon of combat engineers to lead, and I was joining the PFC's lead. Did you have a sergeant's rank?

I was acting. We lived in separate quarters. The platoon sergeant or staff sergeant in the Marine Corps was pretty high.

That's a respected position. So I had the platoon, but we didn't get the ranks. In fact, what happened was the Marines would not take blacks.

They had a bad experience, I think, in World War I, and they would not take them. And usually that was, I think, when they were on the Roosevelt, they started taking them. And what they would do, they would not put them in combat outfits.

Now, I've read of stuff. I read about it when I explored some elements, but I never saw one. And they would put them in what they called defense battalions and put them on these land aircraft outfits, and then they'd put them off on some island.

It really wasn't anything to depend on. And I never saw a Marine aircraft outfit on a sail from where we were. And sometimes they were used for loading ships or something.

But to make sure they were pacified, and I saw one of those outfits one time by this company. They had every stripe and every rank you could possibly get. And I suspect the money was going there instead of to us that were getting shot at.

But then again, I didn't join them or anything. But when I was doing the job, I said, anyway, I took a platoon of little bulldozers out there on the trailer to fill that hole up. And we had an infantry platoon with us.

And we were riding along there. It was the best day. And I was sitting in the back of that trailer there.

And all of a sudden, the guy I was talking to grabbed his side. And I looked down at him, and there was a red streak across. It didn't even break the skin, but it sure burned him.

And he got it. It was a sniper. And they shot him from this field we were going through, kind of a wheat field with the roads up high.

And that guy, from where he was shooting, we stopped and grabbed our weapons. And I jumped off the trailer. And I didn't even know which side the shooter was coming from.

I changed that real quick. But the point was, very likely from where we were standing, I was in the back of the trailer. He was probably trying to pick me up.

And his windage wasn't very good. And the war was over. And anyway, we harvested that field of wheat out there.

We hadn't shot our weapons since Okinawa. And we made that claim. They made us get the equipment out of there.

And again, there was one incident in China in which the communists wouldn't be in uniform, but they were everywhere. And they shot a Marine patrolman. We had sent patrols out to know what was going on.

That's kind of an old village. And they shot one of the Marines. And the Marine patrol chased him in.

And they didn't, you know, get him out of there at all. They said, everybody is just a lie. And they got the mayor.

The head man, whatever they called him. They told me, I wanted that guy. And he wouldn't do it because they'd probably kill him if he had to.

And so finally, he said, he gave him, I believe, 30 minutes or something like that. And then he backed off and lobbed some 60-millimeter mortars, I guess it was phosphor shells, with some little shrapnel on them. Some of them shots on fire.

And then they brought him out. And the National Council of the Churches really got on the Marine Corps for using such vicious tactics. They didn't give a damn about the Marine getting shot.

[Speaker 2]

I'll bet you did. Could have been you.

[Speaker 1]

But China, that was an experience over there. We would, there were still some Russians around there. And the Chinese didn't like them.

Of course, they didn't like the Japanese. And little old kids just running in canes all over. They lived in the streets.

You know, we lived in the streets. And we had a, we would go into town. They'd follow us around.

And somebody and I, I wouldn't drink. I don't drink. They were, that crap they were drinking.

And some Chinese that died one night after drinking stuff. The restaurants, the best restaurants had sticky gel, I don't know what gel they sold. I'd stick that on my coat and I'd just walk around sales.

I'd sit in the bar like that. But, you know, back when they were big restaurants, you know, a lot of the sides of me, they just threw it down on the sidewalk. Of course, I guess they'd scrape it off a little when they cooked.

But they'd take little old kids, you know, and they'd have to steal and eat. And the merchants would catch them and start beating them. And when we saw that, that big town had merchants.

Maybe you just don't do that. And they'd follow us everywhere. That would be, our money was worth so much.

I'm proud that we could go in the biggest restaurant they had. You know, for an American dollar, or maybe 2,000 layers or something like that. And so, we'd take these little old kids.

They'd walk around and take them in. And then we'd have a real free start. In this big fancy restaurant with about 15 little old kids.

And the guy would go, No, no, I can't come in here. This old boy wouldn't let me in. He'd kick him.

He'd say, Listen, we can't. He showed him a side that we were supposed to. I got mixed up in another incident.

And we went to, we would set them down at the table. Two or three bucks. And just keep bringing them rice all night.

And I found that chopsticks. They don't do what they do with rice. They get that bowl up in the shell and scrape it.

Man, they get rid of that. We just beat as far as they could go. And the Chinese, they couldn't get used to that.

They didn't have much choice. Could we continue maybe later? Or do you have enough?

[Speaker 2]

I've got enough. I just want to ask you one more question. I was wondering what you did after the war, how the war affected you for the rest of your life.

[Speaker 1]

As I said, I'm laying on a pillow. And I thought for a while. And we get ready to go back to the hills.

And there was a beautiful tropical sunset. You know, in the tropics, when the sun goes down, it goes down fast at the start. And everything gets quiet.

I remember you'd hear a rattle of that bamboo machine gun. Because both sides are digging in for the night. You've got to prepare your defense.

And so we did. And I looked at that, and I said, what a beautiful sight. Now, you don't meditate on nature much in the box hall.

But you don't meditate on one who made it a whole lot. So I said, I'm just thinking to myself, I want to contrast all this killing. I didn't like what we was doing to them.

I didn't like what they was doing to us. And so I said, well, I sure might get out of this alive. Now, if you arranged for me to get out, I'd go back to school and do better.

Which he did, and I did. But I also said, I'd give him something that just brought a better place to live. Because it seemed like there might be a need for some of that.

And so through the unusual sickness of events, I went back and finished college. I got a master's degree in biology. I came up here, and I was working on physiology.

And I got to thinking one day, why am I going to spend my life in a research lab somewhere? I didn't like studying that much anyway. So I either don't get into science education, which I have a science directorate.

But I ended up mostly in counseling and guidance. And I got fed up with the big mass courses. So I never finished it.

All I lacked was a dissertation. I just couldn't. I did not like the philosophy of the College of Education.

I just didn't like playing crap that I thought was going on at the time. But I'm in this job, and it's kept me in it for 40 years. I get kids off of drugs and alcohol.

And I save them, and I get their lives turned around for them. And I'm probably not getting out, because the money's not here, and I don't get along with people I work with. As I said, they've been actively trying to get me out for about 15 years at least.

Vice Chancellors. They like me, too. But I dare them to fire me.

They won't try. There's too many people I've helped in a year and a half places. And I expect that's the reason.

This last semester, we had a kid who was going to get himself a clarifying substance abuse and alcohol counseling. We get those kids off this stuff. We go back, and we stay up.

And we have them in prison, and they have to go back to school. They say, two girls in one semester. One's going to help the other, so there's one jumping out the window.

Well, like I said, there's not much money in this job, and I don't get along with people I work with, because in doing that, I go get some of their little plans and things they want done, and go, you should do it this way or that. I get the job done. That's what I'm doing.

And to say to one of those kids, well, you can't buy that. But, you know, a million dollars a minute. I wouldn't trade it for a million dollars.

I haven't missed any meals. My family's supportive. I got a Harley Davidson sitting in the garage.

I like to shoot. I've got a good family, four grandkids, and more.

[Speaker 2]

It's great money. And you feel your war experiences led you to pursue this work?

[Speaker 1]

Well, yeah, that's the reason I came here. Because I made that promise. Otherwise, I wouldn't have put up with the crap I put up with when I found it.

And they say the Lord opens and closes doors. I can quote these people. I started getting out of this thing, and the door closed, and I started getting out again, and they slammed it, and I said, Lord, I'll stay.

And things opened up. So that's the way I deal with it. And it's not so bad.

It's enough. Man, they say thank you. That's the payoff.

Well, there are a few other things that I have to cover, and I'll skip some of them. I'll tell you what I might do. I'll find those when I get them.

I'm going to be gone for a couple of weeks when I get those pictures. If you want to look at them, I'll probably mail you a bunch one day. Sounds good.

Thank you for watching.