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## St. Johns High School

Home of the Redwings!

# Joseph "Bup" Yurek

Interviewed by Trisha Gilbert

- Home
- Administration
- Attendance
- Counseling
- Activities
- Clinic
- Staff
- Media Center
- Cafeteria
- Student Handbook
- Map to School
- School Calendar
- School Profile

At the early age of 17, Joseph Yurek entered the Marines in late 1943. He was the youngest one in his class and all of his friends had already went to defend their country. He wanted to be a hero, although, he doesn't consider himself one. In retaliation to the incident at Pearl Harbor he felt it was his duty to help defend his country.

In the Marine Corps he was in the infantry and artillery. The goal of the Marines was to get you so emotionally and physically strong, that the actual combat would be a "piece of cake." The Marine Corps had the toughest training program around. He woke up around 4:30 A.M., at that time he would shower, shave, and do whatever was necessary. Then he headed to breakfast around 5:10 A.M. where he sat silent and in attention eating his first meal of the day. After that, he ran around a 20-acre parade ground where he marched with rifle movements and commands.

Combat, as Mr. Yurek explained it was, "organized confusion." Mr. Yurek and his fellow Marines would creep into their war zone extremely early, around 2:30 A.M., because their goal was to not get caught by their enemies. From how Mr. Yurek explained it, combat wasn't just a "casual arrival, you didn't begin combat at a scheduled time." The idea was to knock out their enemy's artillery, advance as fast as possible, and encounter their enemy's soldiers. Mr. Yurek was at D-Day four times ashore within two hours, and twice ashore within the first hour.

In reply to war movies, Mr. Yurek stated that they were a joke. He replied that no movie will ever come close to the actual smell of burning flesh, the shrieks of soldiers, and the possible diseases you could contract while there.

The Japanese weren't very respectable to the Marines. Personally, Mr. Yurek felt the Japanese were afraid of him. The Japanese didn't imprison or treat their captured prisoners of war, in most cases they beheaded them. He stated that many men carried an extra bullet on them, in case they were captured by the Japs because they would rather kill themselves then suffer the death that their enemies would provide for them.

His ranking was a sergeant, and he was the youngest in his outfit. Since he was the youngest he inherited the name 'Chicken,' as did every one of the youngest soldiers in every platoon. He felt that there was a lot of responsibility being a sergeant because he wanted to keep his men safe and save his people. Overall, it was a huge learning experience and ironically the best three years of his life. He learned for the first time that people in the south talked with an accent. He met a lot of new people including two Mexican men, which made him realize that they were different but also alike in many ways.

In the Pacific, he spent 25 months overseas. There, he endured 127 degree weather, and it's very hard to believe that 110 degree weather was considered a 'cool,' day.

When free time resulted, or rest camp took place between campaigns, it was spent doing close-order drills, otherwise combat drills, various sports, like volleyball, baseball, basketball, playing cards, and he even learned how to play poker. He stated that soldiering is tense and boring, and everything is very routine and repetitious. You do things over and over again until you get it right, and the top officials made sure that you never got it right.

The best memory of the war for Mr. Yurek was the Atomic Bomb. Mr. Yurek witnessed the bomb 'Fatboy,' being loaded onto a plane. He said that it was simply an amazing sight.

Mr. Yurek witnessed Pearl Harbor while it was still smoking. He still believes that it was all because of the Arizona. When asked the common question of whether he feels the government knew about Pearl Harbor before it happened, he stated that he didn't think that President Roosevelt would withhold such information about Pearl Harbor because he was such a supporter of the Navy. Mr. Yurek was aware that the Americans broke the Japs code but he felt they didn't break it in time enough to prevent or be prepared for Pearl Harbor.