

This is an account of a visit with "Swede" Hanson on August 25, 2005. He was a Marine in Captain Hunt's Company K/3/1 that took The Point. I called and spoke with his wife during a break from a two-day faculty retreat. Turns out Swede had broken his hip and was in the V.A. Nursing Home across from the university and had been there since June. His wife gave me his room number and I stopped by on my way home to give him a copy of my book *Worlds Away*. When I told him I'd been to Peleliu and my father saw action there, he opened up and told me things that were astonishing, especially in the vividness of his recollection.

He said that Captain Hunt told him to get a Sherman tank and he had to go down the beach to find one. Once he got there, the men on the beach told him to stay, and I wondered if he wanted to get back because he didn't want to leave his unit up there overnight. He said that didn't occur to him, he was only following Hunt's orders to get the Sherman. The tank's treads were blown off by a mine (he mentioned the horned mines and concrete tank barriers). I showed him the picture in my book of the Sherman treads and he wondered if it was the same tank because he couldn't remember if there were any other tanks stopped at The Point.

He was awarded the Silver Star for taking a crate of hand grenades from an Army DUKW and single-handedly fending off a nighttime Japanese attack by water around the promontory. He said he counted to three before he threw each one to make sure it exploded at shoulder level. Hunt wanted to show him how many enemy he stopped, but Swede didn't want to see. He was wounded and Hunt asked him to take two other Marines to the beach. Swede's right arm was hit and he couldn't use it, but he got the men and himself to the medics by floating them in the sea.

He told me some things that made my skin crawl, and yet he believed it was the grace of God that spared him certain death.

He spoke highly of Chesty Puller, and said he jumped over him at one point racing to the CP. He burned his overlays and maps when he thought his time was up. He was in the first assault wave. Only five men in his unit made it back.

He also fought at Cape Gloucester and Okinawa, but said Peleliu was the worst.

These guys are in their 80s and hanging on, but I felt privileged to be in his presence despite the depressing atmosphere of the nursing home. He was about to go into intensive physical therapy if his x-rays turned out OK. He broke his femur where it joined his titanium hip replacement joint. His wife told me she never knew what he did during the war for the first 15 years of their marriage. Swede told me at one point he looked at all the bodies of dead Marines and got on his knees to pray that he would live to get married and have three children. He had exactly three.