



**American Legion Post 178
Millerton NY**

Killed in Action Tribute



PFC Stanley "Jack" Best U.S. Marine Corps

It was D-Day in the Pacific, February 19th, 1945 the United States Navy conducted the longest and most intense pre-landing bombardment of the Pacific War on a remote but important island in the western pacific, nearly halfway between the American Airfields on Saipan and Tinian and Japan.

Off shore, the V Amphibious Corps, which included the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions were in the process of loading landing craft in preparation for the hellacious fight everyone expected once they got to shore. Among these Marines, some of whom had seen continuous action since the landings on Guadalcanal in 1942, some were less then a year into their enlistments, as was a young Marine from Millerton NY, recently promoted PFC Stanley John Best USMCR, assigned to C Company, 23rd Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division who was slotted to be among the first American units to land that day.

Stanley was born on May 17th, 1919 here in Millerton NY right on Fish Street in the house of his Grandparents Charles and Lillie Paine.

Of Stanley's father, little is known. From the 1915 NY State Census we know that the Best Family also had a home on Fish Street at the same time the Paine family did. We also know from a newspaper reference in the Millerton Herald from 1916 that Stanley's father worked as a local carpenter.

Of Stanley's mother, Josephine Paine-Best, a little more is known, as she was a member of our own Legion Auxiliary Unit 178, serving as its Vice President during 1943-44, and a member of its Executive Committee during 1945-46.

Stanley grew up here in Millerton, attending Grammar School, and completing his first two years of high school before leaving to work, and served during his Freshman year as class President. On September 20th 1939 he married Mabel Dewhurst in Sheffield MA, and their daughter Lily Rose was born on November 30th 1941, exactly one week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

During much of the war Stanley worked as a truck driver until he received his draft notice in the spring of 1944. He officially entered the USMCR on May 30th 1944 in New York City, and reported to Parris Island S.C. the next afternoon where he completed his basic training, and in August was transferred to the Infantry Training Battalion at Camp LeJeune N.C. where he received one 10 day furlough to visit his family.



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After he finished his training he departed the United States in November of 1944 and reported to his unit, 1st Platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment in the Hawaiian Islands, where all during December 1944 and January 1945 they conducted a number of amphibious landing exercises in preparation for Operation Detachment, the assault on Iwo Jima. His unit departed from Pearl Harbor on January 22nd and arrived on February 11th on Saipan. 4 Days later his unit departed for the assault landings on Iwo Jima on February 19th.

The fighting on Iwo Jima was intense and bloody. On March 3rd 1945 Stanley while aiding a fellow wounded Marine received a mortal wound to the neck from a hidden Japanese Machine Gun nest. Stanley clung to life for 6 more days but succumbed to his wounds on March 9th and was initially laid to rest in the 4th Marine Division Cemetery on Iwo Jima.

On April 4th both his wife and mother received the following telegram from the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Deeply regret to inform you that your husband PFC Stanley J Best USMCR died of wounds received in action at Iwo Jima Volcano Islands in the performance of his duty and service to his country. Please accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Signed
A.A. Vandegrift
General, USMC
Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Shortly after receiving this telegram his wife Mabel received the following letter from Stanley commanding officer.

March 28th 1945
Dear Mrs. Best,

I wish so much it were possible for me to convey in person my deepest sympathy to you on the loss of your husband Stanley to enemy action on Iwo Jima...all the officers and men of this company feel deeply the loss of a good friend and buddy.

He was mortally wounded by machine gun fire while trying to remove wounded men. It happened so quickly he felt no pain. He was buried with full military honors in the 4th Division Cemetery, Plot 1, Row 26, Grave 1265 on Iwo Jima.

He was a brave and courageous Marine who gave the ultimate for his country and Corps. I can in no way lessen your sorrow...no one can replace him but we can gain strength from his memory to finish the task that lies before us.

Signed, Garfield M. Randall,



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Commanding Co. C.

Stanley was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal.

In 1948 Stanley's remains were repatriated to the United States upon the request of his wife, and laid to rest at the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale New York.

Regrettably, despite all the efforts made, we were unable to make contact with the family of Stanley Best and invite them to be here with us today. On the table to my front is the shadow box we have constructed to the memory of PFC Stanley Best. That shadow box along with a brief overview will be posted in the foyer to entrance of the post home beginning today and will hang there for the next 12 months till Memorial Day 2016.