



Milton Harper

By El Deano

Milton Harper was born July 20, 1925 son of Elmo and Elma Harper and grandfather Robert Harper. Milton's grandfather and father Elmo were part owner's of Alamo Livestock of the San Antonio Stockyards.

During his high school years Milton made running back at Addison High School and ran the 100 yd dash and 440 relay. Milton's high school days were cut short because he enlisted in the Marines in 1943 at the age of seventeen. He only needed one credit to graduate but felt the call of duty to go and help defend his country.

Milton spent three and one-half years in the Marines and was in on four invasions. He was in Second Battalion, 14th Marines as they invaded Roi-Namur, Marshall Islands, Saipan, Trinidad and Iwo Jima. He spent his 18th and 19th birthdays on Saipan Island.

He was a Forward Observer for Artillery Units. "I had to be quite a bit forward and would call for fire and then run backwards as fast as I could to get away from the explosions of the large rounds." He had a friend named Johnny Lee from Gruver who got shot in the back while they were on Saipan. "I took him back to the beach to be loaded on the landing craft and it carried him to the hospital ship. I ended up staying on the island until it was secure." After Milton and his fellow Marines got a short furlough they went back to Maui on the Hawaii Islands and got some rest. "I was lying on a cot and heard my friend Johnny whistle and we had a good ole reunion. After we had gotten rested up we were sent back to Iwo Jima and my friend Johnny got shot on the second day we were there and I once again loaded him to go back to the hospital ship. He gave me his 45 because maybe he didn't figure that he'd see me again. I didn't as he spent 18 months in the hospital and we didn't see each other for a long time." (In 1997 they had a reunion and did lots



of reminiscing about those days in the military.) Milton got some burns on this stomach as result of the war.

Mr. Harper married his high school sweetheart Winona (Alsup) at Oceanside, CA on July 6, 1946 not too long before he got out of the service. As soon as he got out of the Marines, he went to work for Swift and Co. as a hog buyer. His supervisor was Ervin Talley and after four years with them as a hog buyer they wanted him to start buying cows. He bought cows for Swift for about 13 years and then they closed the plant at that location. After that he went to work for Doc Hagen out of Yoakum who was part owner of Hallettsville Auction and while working for Hagen he bought all classes of livestock.

Mr. Harper then went into the employ of Texas Livestock Marketing Co. and bought for them until they closed their operations at San Antonio. "After that I started order buying for Robert May and Joe Hargrove. During these same times I was also buying packer cows for B&M Packing Co. of Sealey, Texas. I bought for B&M for about 15 years until they were bought out by IBP." He also bought for Mr. E. K. Melton who owed the La Moca Ranch. They kept about a thousand head of cattle on hand at all times for slaughter. Later on, Joe Hargrove bought the La Moca Ranch.

"I finally retired after fifty years in the order-buying business. Oh, I still buy cattle on order for a few people and still ranch." He used to get up at 3 or 4 a.m. and go to the yards to sort fat cattle. "I put in many 12 to 14 hour days but I enjoyed them all." Milton likes to fish, golf, sports and outdoors. He still likes to roundup on horseback at their ranch near Gillet southeast of San Antonio.

Milton has 5 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; two granddaughters, Morne Leigh and Randi; three grandsons; Wes, Steven and Jeff; great-grandson Ian and great-granddaughter Lorean.

Mr. Harper says that you have to love the cow business to stay as there are many long days and always the uncertainty of prices. He went on to say that of all the classes of cattle that he bought, he loved to buy packer and stocker cows the most.

"I attribute all of my safety in the war and the success that I've had and my wonderful wife, family and friends to God's hand being on my life." Mr. Harper told me that one of the favorite things he likes to do is to get home with his wife of 56 years, have some coffee together and just talk and visit.

Writer's note: We certainly need more of that kind of family relationship these days!

That's great man!