

Sidney Carl Beinke Biography

Pre-WSC Background

Sidney Carl Beinke was born on May 22, 1917 in St. Louis, Missouri to Arthur H. and Clara Krause Beinke, the youngest of five children.¹ The St. Louis City Directory from 1917 lists Arthur's occupation as a Machine Operator, a position he continued to perform after he moved his family to Seattle, Washington.² It is unknown when the family moved to Washington State, but the 1927 U.S. City Directory shows Arthur and Clara were living in Seattle.³ Sidney Beinke graduated from Cleveland High School in Seattle on June 12, 1935.⁴ While in high school, he participated in track and the decoration committee his sophomore year; the Constitution committee and Hi-Y his senior year; and was a member of the stage crew and Boys' Club all four years. He was described in the yearbook as "A true worker."⁵

WSC Experience

Beinke transferred to Washington State College (WSC) from the University of Washington, attending from 1935 through 1939. He graduated on June 3, 1940 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany; he was a member of Phi Sigma, a national biological research fraternity, and served as president of the organization for one semester.⁶ He served as a AAA

¹ Letter from Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Beinke to E.O. Holland, October 26, 1948, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

² "Arthur H. Beinke in the U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995," *Ancestry.com*.

³ "Arthur H. Beinke in the U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995," *Ancestry.com*.

⁴ "Cleveland Will Graduate Seniors," *Seattle Daily Times*, June 10, 1935.

⁵ "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999 for Sidney Beinke," *Ancestry.com*.

⁶ C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Legends* (Spokane, Washington: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 173; "1938 Scholarship Day Program," WSU 86, WSU Publications Collection: Commencement <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupublist.htm> at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

range specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture from the spring of 1940 until his enlistment in the fall of 1942.⁷

Wartime Service and Death

Beinke served as an enlisted man in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) from December 13, 1942 until February 23, 1943, at which time he received his commission as an officer.⁸ He was promoted to Second Lieutenant in April 1943 and attended Reserve Officers' School at Quantico, Virginia.⁹ The *Seattle Daily Times* reported Beinke received a promotion to First Lieutenant in July, 1944.¹⁰ Beinke was attached to the Seventh Marine Regiment, First Marine Division and served in the Pacific theater beginning June 6, 1943. The Guadalcanal campaign in 1942 was the first time the First Marine Division, or "The Old Breed" as the division came to be known, conducted combat operations.¹¹ It is the "oldest, largest, and most decorated division in the United States Marine Corps, with nine Presidential Unit Citations (PUCs)," created to utilize the Marines' "naval roots, inclination for close combat, and growing proficiency in seaborne landings."¹²

⁷ "Obituaries," *Powwow*, December 1944, pg. 14, WSU 25, WSU Publications: Alumni Office <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupublist.htm> at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

⁸ Letter from Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Beinke to E.O. Holland, October 26, 1948, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

⁹ "Parents Hope Beinke's Alive," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 29, 1944.

¹⁰ "Salute to the Servicemen," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 13, 1944.

¹¹ "History of 1st Marine Division," *1st Marine Division: Official Website of the 1st Marine Division*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070915125808/http://www.i-mef.usmc.mil/DIV/generalinformation.asp> (Accessed June 27, 2019).

¹² "1st Marine Division: Camp Pendleton, CA," *Marines: The Official Website of the United States Marine Corps*, <https://www.1stmardiv.marines.mil/About/History/> (Accessed June 27, 2019); Colonel Joseph H. Alexander, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired), "The 'Old Breed' Girds for Battle," *U.S. Naval Institute*, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/naval-history-magazine/2010/april/old-breed-girds-battle> (Accessed June 27, 2019).

Beinke first participated in the “landing service by assault, occupation, and defense” of Cape Gloucester, New Britain from December 26, 1943 through April 3, 1944.¹³ New Britain provided an ideal strategic location for American forces to capture as it was a prerequisite for an approach to the Philippines, “nullifying the threat from the Japanese positions” in the Bismarck Archipelago and loosening the Japanese grip on western New Guinea.¹⁴ Beinke’s division launched a major landing on Cape Gloucester on December 26, 1943, and by January 16, 1944 the airstrip at Cape Gloucester had been set up and defenses fortified.¹⁵ A newspaper clipping documenting Beinke’s participation in the Marines’ battle to take Hill 660 on Cape Gloucester reflects the difficult fighting conditions, quoting a Guadalcanal veteran as saying it was “the worst fighting conditions I ever saw.”¹⁶ Beinke described his fellow Marines as “climbing almost hand over hand, against an enemy they couldn’t see.”¹⁷ By March 1944, the conquest of western New Britain “secured Allied control of the Vitjaz and Dampier straits between that island and New Guinea.”¹⁸

When the First Marine Division, with five infantry battalions including the Seventh Marines, landed on Peleliu in the Palau Islands on September 15, 1944, they were joined by the Army’s 81st Infantry Division.¹⁹ Peleliu contained a network of rocky caves, which the Japanese forces connected with tunnels and used as launching points from which to attack incoming U.S. troops below. The battlefield included coral reefs surrounding the island, with troops arriving on

¹³ Letter from Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Beinke to E.O. Holland, October 26, 1948, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

¹⁴ “World War II: 1939-1945,” *Britannica.com*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II/German-strategy-from-1943#ref512135> (Accessed June 27, 2019).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “Seattle Man In Battle To Take Hill 660,” clipping from *Seattle Times*, Box 1, Folder 17, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Brigadier General Gordon D. Gayle, “Bloody Beaches: The Marines at Peleliu,” *ibiblio.org*, <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-C-Peleliu/index.html> (Accessed June 27, 2019).

the shore in waves and Japanese forces determined to bog them down utilizing the surrounding topography to their advantage. It took four days for U.S. troops to take the southwestern part of Peleliu.²⁰ The Marines advanced north, ambushed by artillery fire and small arms fusillades by Japanese forces entrenched in caves within the surface of Umurbrogol Mountain, which earned the name of “Bloody Nose Ridge” by the Marines.²¹ U.S. casualties approached 50 percent in “some of the most vicious and costly fighting of the Pacific campaign.”²² Fighting continued through October, with the ridge ultimately neutralized on November 25.

Lieutenant Sid Beinke was killed in action on October 3, 1944. According to his fellow officer and friend, Lieutenant Russell Wilkinson, Beinke was “hit first by a mortar shell fragment which broke two of his ribs in his back. Even so wounded, he continued to carry on his duties. It was but a short time later on the same afternoon...when a sniper high in the hills hit him.”²³ Wilkinson assured Beinke’s parents that their son had received the “finest of surgical attention and immediately,” and that “Sid and the doctors tried very hard but too much damage had been done internally.”²⁴ Of the approximately 28,000 Marines and Infantry troops involved in the battle for Peleliu, 40 percent died or were wounded, with 1,800 killed in action and 8,000 wounded.²⁵

²⁰ “Battle of Peleliu,” *history.com*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/battle-of-peleliu> (Accessed June 27, 2019).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Letter from Russell Wilkinson to Mr. and Mrs. Beinke, November 2, 1944, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “Battle of Peleliu,” *history.com*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/battle-of-peleliu> (Accessed June 27, 2019).

Postwar Legacy

Lieutenant Wilkinson remembered Beinke as a “great guy,” and that he would “always be remembered by all officers and me as one of the finest and capable officers who ever did duty in the 1st marine Division. One enlisted man I overheard probably said what all of us felt—‘They will never find an officer to replace Lt. Beinke. He was really the enlisted man’s friend.’”²⁶

Captain J.F. Corbett wrote to Beinke’s father, stating that Sid was “very popular with the men of his platoon and his fellow officers. He was everything any officer could hope to be. If his men were wrong about something, he showed them how to get straightened out. If there were something they should have, he’d try to get it even if it were impossible.”²⁷ General A. A. Vandegrift, commander of the 1st Marine Division, wrote to Beinke’s parents on July 31, 1945, offering sympathy and condolences in their bereavement. He assured them of his “deep appreciation of the conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity of your son...in action against enemy Japanese forces on Peleliu, Palau Group, 17 September 1944, for which he was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal...”²⁸

Beinke received a Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) with a ribbon bar. He also received a posthumous letter of commendation from W.H. Rupertus, Major General, U.S. Marine Corps, Commanding First Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, dated October 12, 1944, stating the following:

²⁶ Letter from Russell Wilkinson to Mr. and Mrs. Beinke, November 2, 1944, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

²⁷ Letter from J.F. Corbett to Mr. Beinke, December 26, 1944, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

²⁸ Ibid.

*For meritorious devotion to duty while serving with the Seventh Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced) on Peleliu Island, Palau Islands, during action against enemy forces on October 3, 1944, he was leading his platoon in an attack on well fortified enemy caves and pillboxes on the northern end of the airfield. He displayed the highest qualities of bravery and devotion to duty until mortally wounded by the enemy. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country and his courage and conduct in battle were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.*²⁹

Beinke was also posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for his “gallantry and intrepidity as Leader of a 37-mm. Gun Platoon” in action against the Japanese on Peleliu, September 17, 1944.³⁰ On that day, Beinke “courageously” set up his guns “in the open only two hundred yards from the entrenched enemy despite continuous exposure to withering hostile mortar and machine-gun fire.”³¹ He directed fire and offered aid to his battalion in “its successful assault on the Japanese-held southwest peninsula. Subsequently knocked down and wounded by a mortar blast on 3 October 1944, First Lieutenant Beinke, after receiving treatment, valiantly attempted to return to the front and reassume command but was mortally wounded by enemy sniper fire.”³² Beinke is buried at Evergreen-Washelli Memorial Park in Seattle.

²⁹ Commendation citation for First Lieutenant Sidney Carl Beinke (019365), United States Marine Corps Reserve, October 12, 1944, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

³⁰ Silver Star Medal Citation for First Lieutenant Sidney C. Beinke, USMCR, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.