

Local woman writes tale of husband's life

By BERNICE BECKER

First printed in *The Tipton Times and Alumni News*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, Sept. 2007.

Henry J. Becker was born to Herman and Anna Marie (Meier) Becker on a farm near Tipton on Oct. 30, 1923.

Henry was a young man who said he had to duck when he enlisted in the Marine Corps in Kansas City on Jan. 14, 1943.

The Fifth Marine Division under Commanding Major General Keller Rockey was activated Nov. 11, 1943. By that time, four Marine divisions of nearly 400,000 men were not enough in a war whose end was not in sight. Rules, such as height, were overlooked as these young men, eager to serve their country, volunteered to enlist.

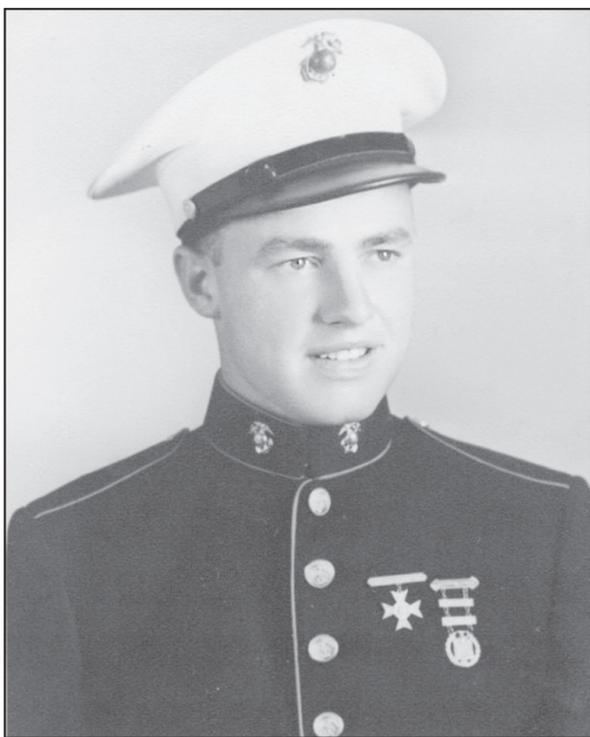
Henry had said that one of the reasons he chose the Marine Corps was because he knew they would not be fighting in Europe where many of his relatives lived. But, he also admired their uniform and the "esprit de corps", and their motto "Semper Parati". No Marine, dead or wounded, was ever left behind in battle and there was much bonding.

On Dec. 1, 1943, the Division headquarters began operating at Camp Pendleton, where Henry did his training. Marines streamed into the division: from boot camps at Paris Island and San Diego; from the training centers at Camp Elliott and Lejeune and Pendleton itself; and from every available source of men and officers. They brought with them combat experience and practical knowledge of the Japanese which would add immensely to training realism and efficiency.

The fifth had adopted "Spearhead" as its nickname and the insignia chosen was a scarlet shield and gold "V" pierced by a spearhead of blue.

Henry appreciated his training because he knew it was important for what could mean the eventual difference between life and death in battle. It was an experience as close to that of combat as possible. The close whine of the live ammunition, the shock of detonation of buried explosive charges and the flying debris these charges rained upon the advancing marines left no doubt in their minds that war was serious business.

Henry was happy to volunteer for K.P. (Kitchen Police) as those who were in K.P. were not as likely to be reprimanded if their boots weren't shined to perfection or their weapons not thoroughly cleaned. The food also was very good and he gained much weight. He also enjoyed the time off for recreation. Although, he did not have enough money to play poker when he accompanied John Basilone to Humphrey Bogart's home where the big boys played poker.



Henry J. Becker

he remembers with fondness, Bogart's future wife, Lauren Bacall.

There was further training for the Fifth Marine Division in Hawaii before they were sent to the various South Pacific islands to fight. I believe it was on Guam when Henry got separated from his unit with no food available. He found a tin of Japanese fish that made him deathly ill. I do not know how he made it off the island, only that in the hospital in Hawaii, he was not expected to survive.

However, he recovered and was sent to Iwo Jima with the Fifth Amphibian tractor Battalion. Before landing, his papers caught up with him and on Feb. 21, 1945, he was transferred to G-26th Marines.

Iwo Jima (Sulfur Island) was described in the Japanese geography books as "an island of sulfur springs, with no water, no sparrow and no swallow". Its only value was military.

Henry landed on Iwo Jima the morning of D+3, Feb. 22. Operations were hampered by bad weather and poor visibility. A hard soaking rain came down to mix volcanic dust into a glue-like mess that fouled automatic weapons and made it difficult to walk. On D+4, Henry and his comrades cheered as the Stars and Stripes were raised on Mt. Suribachi.

Henry's assignment on Iwo was as a flame thrower. The two Marines who came to his funeral spoke of how he had saved their lives. Bob Kapoun came from Omaha and Ed Juborian came from Minnesota. Bob had not seen Ed since Iwo, but kept in touch by

Telephone.

Henry's comrades that died on the battle field were buried on the island. Henry always felt a deep sense of loss by the fact that he was not able to attend the dedication ceremonies for the Fifth Division Cemetery, as his unit was assigned to mopping up and sealing caves. Finally, on March 25, the job was finished.

After Iwo, Henry was sent with the Fifth Division to Hawaii where planning and training for "Operation Olympic", the landing on Japan, took place. However, after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered, unconditionally, on Aug. 14.

As the Marines were to occupy Japan, training in occupational duties was stepped up on the boat. On Sept. 22, the convoy dropped anchor at Sasebo. The Marines debarked with full military equipment. No resistance was met.

Sasebo was a dead and unmanned city of 200,000. Three months before, American B-29s had dropped thousands of fire bombs destroying three-fourths of the city in 24 hours. However, upon closer examination, the men of the Fifth Division found numerous war plants deep underground, untouched by bombs or fire. This was true of most of Japan. It became apparent that invasion of Japan would have been very costly.

During those months of service in occupied Japan, Henry was a military policeman and rode a motorcycle. He said he once ran off a cliff into the ocean when chasing a prisoner. He saw the devastation of Nagasaki and much of Kyushu during his seven months there. He found the people to be friendly and they accepted their defeat with graciousness.

Henry put memories of the atrocities committed by the Japanese on Iwo behind him and he chose to do the job at hand with

integrity and honor. His discharge papers showed that he received a good conduct medal from enlistment to the day of discharge and that his character of service was excellent.

Henry, who had been promoted to corporal, left for the States from Beppu and was discharged May 25, 1946, from San Diego. His monthly pay at the time of discharge was \$54 and he was given an allowance of five cents a mile to Kansas City.

Henry started farming and raising hogs in Tipton. The government had a school for veterans who farmed, so one evening a week some of the veterans who were farmers, pooled rides to go to Downs for school. All were married. Henry had married Bernice Schandler at New Almelo on Aug. 4, 1948. The wives met at each other's homes where visiting and taking care of babies took place until the husbands arrived and lunch was served.

Henry moved his family, his farming equipment and his cattle to a farm 11 miles south of Norton, in 1953. He prospered as a farmer and rancher, a proud father of 10 children, loving husband and good neighbor and friend to all in need.

Henry became active in the American Legion while he lived at Tipton and when he moved to Norton he continued his membership and participation. Henry was proud to be in charge of the Color Guard for all military funerals, Memorial Day services, parades, etc. He and Bernice attended District and State Legion Conventions and the Sixtieth National Convention in New Orleans. They also attended Fifth Marine Division reunions in Omaha and Denver.

Henry met an untimely death from a heart attack on June 5, 1985. He left his wife, Bernice and 10 children, Joyce Wentz, Henry D., Eugene, Debra Bienhoff, Edna Mader, Paul, John, Elaine McCrary, Judy Meier and Chris, along with 13 grandchildren to mourn his loss. St. Francis of Assisi Church in Norton was filled to overflowing. Six priests, coming because in some manner they felt a need to be there, were present to concelebrate the funeral mass.

Henry's body was laid to rest with full military honors. We like to think he is now at the place where the "streets are paved with gold and guarded by the United States Marines".



Northern Valley KAY Sponsor Monica Wilson finished loading all the Almena food items for delivery to Norton recently.

— Photo by Laryl Rous

Students raise food, awareness

By LARYL ROUS

The Northern Valley High School KAY organization needed a community service project. The area food banks needed help this time of year in supplying food for the holidays. The two needs were answered in part with a project recently in the Northern Valley School District.

Students were challenged to bring canned goods to stack in front of teachers' classroom doors. The group of students that could stack the cans high enough to cover the door of a teacher the fastest would not have to go to that classroom

for a day.

Students' donations at Long Island Middle school were given to the Phillipsburg community and Almena's donations were distributed to the Norton community.

At the end of the school day, the competition at the high school began, with students pooling their donations in order to reach their goal.

The community project for the organization was successful in raising awareness of the needs for this time of year as well as what working together "can" do for helping others.

Scholarships are prizes of essay contest

Are you a Kansas high school sophomore, junior or senior and do you have an opinion about whether child predator laws need to be strengthened?

If you do, put your thoughts into an essay enter it in the Citizenship Essay Scholarship Contest sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC). Up to four scholarships of \$500, \$400, \$300 and \$200 will be awarded.

The essay must be 500 words less, typewritten, double-spaced on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. A cover sheet that includes the student's name, address and phone number; name of sponsoring club and district; grade in high school; and the name of the high school and city must accompany the essay. No identification should be on the essay.

Students seeking a sponsor, wanting a copy of the judging

criteria sheet, or help with researching the topic should contact Beverly Kindler, 877-3497.

District winners will be invited to attend the GFWC of Kansas Citizenship Pilgrimage to Topeka, March 4 and 5. They will visit the legislature, tour the Capitol and Cedar Crest and meet with and be addressed by legislators. Students attending the 2008 Pilgrimage will also help choose the topic for next year's essay contest.

ATTENTION OTR DRIVERS

TSI Kansas, Inc., a family-owned trucking firm located in Clay Center, Kansas is currently recruiting experienced OTR drivers to join their team.

Exceptional Pay - Great Benefits
No Forced Dispatch
Consistent and Steady Miles

Call Recruiting at 785-632-5183 for more information!

THANKS

The Norton Telegram has a newspaper carrier shortage. To help, several carriers are now delivering multiple routes. We appreciate your patience during this time.

It's our **Big One Day Sale!**

One Item One-Half Price
off regular priced items

Saturday Dec. 1

One item/per customer
some exclusions apply
in stock merchandise

Serendipity

220 W. Main, Hill City, KS
Open 9 A.M. - 6 P.M. Mon. - Sat.

It's All Connected . . .



News is an Essential Element of Keeping a Community Together

Sharing news and expressing our feelings and opinions about it helps us stay connected with the community. Thanks for supporting your hometown newspaper!

PLEASE SEND A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS

PLEASE START A NEW SUBSCRIPTION FOR ME

PLEASE ADD TO THE FOLLOWING SUBSCRIPTION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ZIP: _____

STATE: _____

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION FROM _____ IS ENCLOSED

MY CHECK FOR \$ _____

PLUS . . . If you need a gift idea, a new subscription to The Norton Telegram is perfect!!

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

215 S. Kansas, Norton — (785) 877-3361

SUBSCRIPTION RATES—

NORTON, PHILLIPS, GRAHAM DECATUR & FURNAS COUNTIES:	
1 Year	\$60.00
6 Months	\$32.00
3 Months	\$18.00
ELSEWHERE IN KANSAS AND NEBRASKA:	
1 Year	\$70.00
6 Months	\$37.00
Student (9 Mo.)	\$52.50
Less than 6 Mo.	would be \$15 per month
ELSEWHERE IN US:	
1 Year	\$76.00
6 Months	\$42.00
Student (9 Mo.)	\$57.00
Less than 6 Mo.	would be \$15 per month
TAX IS INCLUDED	