



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF NAVAL RECORDS  
2 NAVY ANNEX  
WASHINGTON DC 20370-5100

CRS  
Docket No: 8785-08  
1 October 2008

[REDACTED]

This is in reference to your request for further consideration of your application for correction of your naval record pursuant to the provisions of title 10 of the United States Code section 1552.

A three-member panel of the Board for Correction of Naval Records, sitting in executive session, reconsidered your application on 10 September 2008. Your allegations of error and injustice were reviewed in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures applicable to the proceedings of this Board. Documentary material considered by the Board consisted of your application, together with all material submitted in support thereof, your naval record and applicable statutes, regulations and policies.

After careful and conscientious consideration of the entire record, the Board found that the evidence submitted was insufficient to establish the existence of probable material error or injustice.

The Board found that you enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve on 9 September 1943. On or about 15 September 1944, during the Battle of Peleliu, your best friend was killed by sniper fire. In your own words, you became hysterical upon his death, and were sent to the nearest aid station. You did not turn yourself in for treatment at the aid station, but returned to your unit. Several days later, your commanding officer told you to return to the aid station, and you returned to the aid station on 18 September 1944. A pre-printed medical form that was completed on that date contains the printed words "Wounded in action", as well as the typewritten words "HEAT EXHAUSTION". A medical history form which covers the 18-24 September 1944 period, when you were assigned to the USS Leedstown for treatment and disposition, indicates that you were injured while engaged in the invasion and occupation of "Palau". It is noteworthy that the word "injured" was substituted for "wounded" on the prepared form. You reported feeling feverish and nauseated, and were given a diagnosis of heat exhaustion. You were treated with salt tablets, forced fluids and bed rest, and ultimately returned to duty on 24 September 1944. There is no mention of a concussion or blast injury in either of those medical entries.

A medical history entry dated 17 May 1945 indicates that you arrived onboard the U.S.S. Samaritan on that date with a diagnosis of "FATIGUE, COMBAT". An entry dated 29 July 1945 confirms the diagnosis of combat fatigue, and states, in part, "Peleliu for 3 days-**not injured**. Okinawa for 47 days, **not physically injured**" (emphasis added), and "Knocked down by large explosion at some distance, knocked down but not unconscious. No serious complaints now". On 11 September 1945, a board of medical survey determined that you were unfit for further service due to "Psychoneurosis Otherwise Unclassified", which was incurred in the line of duty. You were honorably discharged from the Navy on 26 October 1945, pursuant to the approved findings and recommendation of the board of medical survey. The honorable discharge certificate you were issued on that date, which you signed and to which you affixed the print of your right index finger, contains the following entry: "Wounds received in service: None". The certificate also shows that you were awarded the Honorable Service Lapel Button. It does not show that you were awarded the Purple Heart.

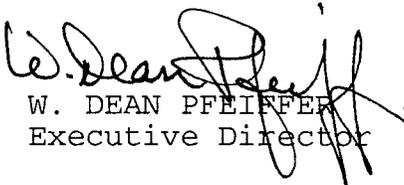
The Board was not persuaded that you suffered a significant blast injury/concussion while engaged in combat on Peleliu Island in 1944. The Board noted that in order to qualify for the award of a Purple Heart, a service member must sustain an injury that requires treatment by a medical officer at the time the injury occurred. The belated entry in your record concerning a "concussion reaction" was not made at the time of the alleged injury, and there is no indication in the record that you required treatment by a medical officer at the time the alleged injury occurred. The newspaper article and picture of yourself you submitted in support of your application do not establish that you were wounded in action. The pre-printed medical record entry dated 18 September 1944 is of no probative value, as a typewritten entry was added to the form to show that you were suffering from heat exhaustion, rather than a wound. The medical history entry dated 24 September 1944, which also appears to be a pre-prepared form, is more explicit. The word "wounded" was crossed out, "injured" was substituted, and a diagnosis of heat exhaustion was added to the prepared form. It is likely that numerous copies of each of those forms were prepared in anticipation of heavy casualties, and that the copies of the forms filed in your record were tailored to reflect that you suffered a heat injury rather than a wound. The medical record entry dated 29 July 1945 suggests that you reported that you had not been injured while serving on Peleliu, and that there was no evidence to the contrary in your record. The report of the board of medical survey which found you unfit for duty does not indicate that you were wounded in action, and you did not submit a statement in rebuttal thereto, despite being given the

opportunity to do so.

In view of the foregoing, your application has been denied. The names and votes of the members of the panel will be furnished upon request.

It is regretted that the circumstances of your case are such that favorable action cannot be taken. You are entitled to have the Board reconsider its decision upon submission of new and material evidence or other matter not previously considered by the Board. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that a presumption of regularity attaches to all official records. Consequently, when applying for a correction of an official naval record, the burden is on the applicant to demonstrate the existence of probable material error or injustice.

Sincerely,

  
W. DEAN PFEIFFER  
Executive Director