

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 30, 2017

Ernie Pyle (1900-1945) and Jules Reiver (1916-2004): Most of those who remember Ernie Pyle have passed away. He was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for the Scripps-Howard newspapers, first championing ordinary people during the Depression and then ordinary servicemen during World War II. He was a battlefield journalist, and wherever these brave men went, Ernie went with them and sent back accurate stories of just what they were experiencing on the front lines.

Pyle was in North Africa and Europe with American doughboys on all the dangerous invasions. He was alongside everyday soldiers in the mud of the Italian campaign and was a part of the D-Day invasion of Normandy. Accompanying Allied troops as they broke through from the beachhead and eventually captured Paris, he was still on the front lines as Americans reached the German border. All this time, he was sending back detailed reports of the courage of common GIs in extremely dangerous situations. His columns appeared in over 300 American newspapers.

Julius "Jules" Reiver of Wilmington had joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and quickly became a captain in England, awaiting the invasion of the Continent. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he commanded the first anti-aircraft battery to land on Omaha Beach. He was there for the liberation of Paris in August that year and found his battalion surrounded by the Nazis in the Battle of the Bulge. By an act of fate, the Germans thought *they* were surrounded and surrendered to Jules's men.

Ernie Pyle had been with "Reiver's Retrievers," as he named them, and he devoted a chapter in his book *Brave Men* to Jules and his men. When Jules accompanied me in our Model 87 on two of the "Trans-Con" tours in the 1970s, we had time to talk about such things before retiring for the night. He made light of the incident in the Battle of the Bulge, saying it was pure luck that the Nazi confrontation turned out in his favor.

With the war in Europe winding down, Ernie Pyle came home to Albuquerque to be with his emotionally disturbed wife of 20 years. Early in 1945 the Pacific campaign was still in full swing, however, and he had to be involved. After the successful but very costly campaign for Iwo Jima in February and early March, American troops took on Okinawa, the closest island to mainland Japan. Again, the desperate Japanese were dug in, and the campaign raged from April to June, before Okinawa and some tiny islands surrounding it were secured by the Americans. Early in the campaign, Ernie Pyle found himself on Ie Jima, a tiny atoll just northwest of Okinawa, where U.S. Marines were besting their Japanese adversaries. On April 18, 1945, thinking the situation was under control, Pyle was riding in a jeep with a colonel from the unit to which he was attached. A bullet from a Japanese machine gun went through his temple and killed him instantly. In the last battle of a long war, Ernie Pyle gave his life doing the job he loved and at which he was so skilled. His wife died six months later. They had no children.

Jules came home to Wilmington to head Hyman Reiver & Company, a family floor-covering business. He acquired some fine classic cars, but his main hobby was in collecting coins, for which he was a national expert. He died at the age of 87 and left his wife Iona and four children. Iona has since passed on.